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Research Articles

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International Journal of China Studies

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'A Chief Instrument for Overseas Expansion': Revisiting the Conceptual Roots of Chinese Foreign Aid through Anti-West External Propaganda (1958-1961)

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Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Abstract

China pursues an official policy of overseas expansion – what leader Xi Jinping describes as becoming 'a leading global power' – with foreign aid playing an important role. Forgotten among the criticisms and countercriticisms of Chinese aid as a power expanding tool is that during the Great Leap Forward, the Chinese government criticized American and other Western aid on precisely this basis. This article explores this early Chinese thinking on Western aid, making use of the voluminous opinions on aid in the *Peking Review* from 1958 to 1961. It finds that beneath the anti-imperialist hyperbole, Western aid is understood as a tool of economic, political and military expansion. This past conceptualization of Western aid prefigures the competitiveness and expansionism in China's present aid-mediated foreign policy.

Keywords: *International relations, foreign policy, Cold War, foreign aid, development*

1. Introduction

It is now commonplace for Chinese aid to be compared to 'neocolonialism' (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011; Reuters, 2011, June 11), and discussed as a tool of economic exploitation, hegemony and expanding influence (Bond, 2014; Chau, 2014; French, 2014; Naim, 2009). No less familiar are official Chinese objections that China could ever be compared to Western imperialism (Tao, 2015), and those pointing out that criticism of China has been overblown (Balasubramanyam, 2015; Brautigam, 2011; Cheru and Obi, 2011; Hirono and Suzuki, 2014; Sautman and Yan, 2006).

This conversation is clearly not going away. A recent authoritative estimate of China's official finance provision sees it as rivalling the United

States in size (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange and Tierney, 2017, October). The benefits from Chinese economic engagement remain mixed or unclear (Chemingui and Bchir, 2010; Dollar, 2016; Elu and Price, 2010; Zhao, 2014). And, under Xi Jinping, China has rolled out a geopolitics-inspired infrastructure finance plan as the centre of an increasingly proactive foreign policy (Brewster, 2017; Du, Duan, Liu and Ma, 2016; Hu and Lu, 2016). This Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) features increased aid to Djibouti in association with China's first overseas military base (Blanchard, 2017). There are examples of military-related aid being stepped up in other ways too, such as the training of Afghan troops (Martina, 2018).

Little noted as this debate rolls on is the startling similarities between contemporary critics of Chinese aid – who Alden accuses of 'spurious and overblown' claims that 'China is planning to colonize Africa' (Alden, 2007: 127) – and the tropes the Chinese government employed in its criticisms of American and other Western aid during the Early-Cold War.

These similarities are no doubt somewhat coincidental. Perhaps both discourses embody a common logic of propaganda (Pratkanis and Turner, 1996: 190) or a shared psychology of enemy images (Asongu and Aminkeng, 2013; Silverstein and Flamenbaum, 1989)? Maybe both the US then, and China now, engage in behaviours common to all would-be superpowers (Mearsheimer, 2010), behaviours that are understood or misunderstood by observers in predictable ways?

A further possibility worth consideration is that these commonalities represent carryovers in Chinese aid thinking. Perhaps the concepts in reference to which China criticized Western aid during the Cold War foreshadowed present Chinese foreign aid policy, at least to some extent?

This paper takes a necessary first step in that direction, examining an official Chinese view of Western aid during the formative Great Leap Forward period (1958-1961). It finds that beneath the anti-imperialist hyperbole, Western aid is viewed as a tool of economic, political and military expansion. The enduring significance of that view at that time in China's history remains to be examined and debated. Nevertheless, this past conceptualization of Western aid presages the friction between China and countries such as the US and Japan in relation to China's current aid-mediated foreign policy.

2. Ideas Drive Aid Policy

The importance of ideas in shaping aid policies is obvious – even if how such a role could be meaningfully generalized is not. As discussed in Stokke (1989), domestic norms and traditions clearly interact with the international context to shape donor policies. Lancaster (2007) also highlighted the important role of these ideas or worldviews in determining aid. This mechanism

has an analogue in the strategic culture literature (Glenn, 2009; Johnston, 1995; Snyder, 1977), where 'socially-transmitted, identity-derived norms, ideas and patterns of behaviour that are shared among the most influential actors and social groups within a political community…help to shape a ranked set of options for a community's pursuit of security and defence goals' (Meyer, 2006: 20). Atkinson (2018) has demonstrated the importance of ideas in understanding other East Asian aid donors.

For China specifically, the role of (semi-)persistent ideas in Chinese aid policy has been quite extensively addressed, albeit inconclusively. Many have seen ideational drivers as predominantly related to China's internal norms: around development and policy (Bräutigam, 2011; Reilly, 2012; Warmerdam and de Haan, 2015), its own long history of aid giving (Chau, 2014; Zhou and Xiong, 2017), and even the imperial tribute system (Copper, 2016). Others prefer to focus on socialization to the international aid donor community (Chin, 2012), and socialization through China's history of aid receipt (Sato and Shimomura, 2013; Zhou, Zhang and Zhang, 2015).

In addition, as ideas are transmitted from the past in 'accumulative traditions of discourse' (Freeden, 1998: 755) (as well as borrowed from outside and invented), Chinese views on Western aid – thinking that occurred before it received Western aid or socialized with Western donors – have become part of present aid thinking at least to some extent. There has been some discussion along this vein in terms of how features of Chinese aid intentionally contrast with Western aid (e.g. Brautigam, 2011: 32). However, overall there has been little appreciation of the role that perceptions and representations of the Western aid during the Mao period may have played in shaping China's aid policy.

3. 'U.S. "Aid" Itself is a Very Good Teacher by Negative Example'[1]

I have three pathways in mind when using the term 'shaping.' The first is that early-Cold War China saw in Western aid what it itself was doing – or at least wanted to do (i.e. mirror imaging) (Bronfenbrenner, 1961). Depictions of the West are thus a record of certain ideas that were operating in China in the past, and these ideas continue to operate in China now. As noted above, several authors have given considerable attention to parallels between China's past thinking on various topics and aid thinking today, so such persistent ideas should not be a surprise. The main reservation would be that, as I discuss below, China's depiction of Western aid was so nefarious that the idea that it represented a mirror into China's motives seems incredible. But when shorn of its most contradictory and exaggerated elements, it becomes more plausible.

The second process would be that China acquired ideas on aid through some kind of 'socialization at a distance' with the West. The soft boundary

between the first pathway and this is the distinction between asocial emulating (copying another's means to reach one's own pre-existing ends) or mimicking ('whereby a novice initially copies the behavioural norms of the group in order to navigate through an uncertain environment') (Johnston, 2007: 23). Mimicking then blends into more 'social' types of socialization. However, rather than interacting with Western donors in social settings, China would be socializing to its own conceptualization of the West. This would further complicate Chin's (2012) two-way socialization, with the norms to which China currently endeavours to socialize the international community actually partly originating in China's perception of international norms decades before.

The third way would be the creation and operation of a 'myth' in the manner described by Snyder (1991). In this variety, domestic actors in China's past created an image of US aid for their own varied purposes. This myth served their common interests as a coalition, enabling a 'log roll' trading of support as each powerful group or individual pursued its specific interests. No one actor need even find this myth plausible – only expedient. However, this elite generated myth then shapes the thinking of others, like the public or the military rank-and-file. Indeed, it must shape thinking in such ways in order to be useful to the elites that created it. This process can result in what Snyder (1991: 41) calls 'blowback' where future generations have internalized such constructed myths and regard them as truth. There is good reason to believe that this internalization of Mao-era generated propaganda has occurred in areas outside of aid (Heilmann and Perry, 2011).

The three mechanisms work on different timeframes, but they all push in the same direction: the convergence of China's early-Cold War depiction of Western aid with recent Chinese aid practices. No doubt there are other ways that such correlation could occur even as other forces work to push China's earlier depiction of Western aid and current Chinese practices apart. We are not at a point, either theoretically or empirically, where such complex interactions and developments can be untangled and explained in any rigorous way. However, Cold War Chinese thinking about Western aid clearly merits consideration.

4. *Peking Review*: A Meaningful Record of Chinese Thinking on Aid?

The source material I use to approach formative Chinese thinking on Western aid are all issues of the English-language weekly magazine *Peking Review* (北京周报) (hereafter *PR*) from 1958 to 1961 (vols. I-IV).[2] *PR* began publishing in 1958, so this seems a natural starting point from which to engage with foundational concepts. The end point of 1961 was chosen as this 1958–1961 span represents a relatively distinct moment in Chinese history, i.e. the Great Leap Forward (GLF) and its immediate aftermath, and before

public acknowledgment of the Sino-Soviet split. This provides for a coherent voice. Without the 'domestic feelings of buoyancy and superiority elicited by the Great Leap Forward' and the positive view of Soviet superpower aid to contrast against Western aid, later periods would perhaps not be as interesting or as relevant to China's current condition (Wang, 2006: 12).

PR itself is a voluminous source, with much to say about Western aid (or 'so-called "aid"' in *PR* nomenclature). As an official voice, it is the output of bargaining, jostling and power struggles among the different groups and players within the party-state. Logically, the various images of Western aid produced and reproduced by these players will have shaped the final 'velocity' of *PR*'s depiction in direct proportion to their power and influence. Hence, in a very real sense, *PR* is a record of the party-state's net thinking on Western aid; not an average view, but a view reflecting the underlying ideas and power of the players involved. *PR* is also intended for a universal audience, speaking for example to developing countries, and to Western leftists and governments. And while not intended for the Chinese public and displaying different emphases to Chinese-language publications like the *People's Daily* (人民日) or *Hongqi* (红旗), it must nevertheless not contradict the aims of inward-directed propaganda (Ungor, 2009: 53-54, 98-99, 111, 113, 118-119, 162). So, it is as close as we can get to being able to ask a personified Chinese party-state what it 'thinks' about Western aid.

One objection is that as propaganda, *PR* bears no consistent relationship to the image in the heads of policymakers. But this problem is manageable for two reasons. First, propaganda is intended to be influential. It may often fail in this respect, but it is certainly more influential than views that remain private to a small cabal of insiders. It is the public image that has the widest and most lasting influence. And even where its creators knowingly produced falsehoods, they nevertheless believed themselves to be conveying a higher order normative and empirical truth – that the PRC is 'good' relative to the US and others, and the direction of history (Ungor, 2009: 59-60, 114, 150).[3]

Second, public and private images of Western countries during this period correspond to a considerable extent, including even where those images appear exaggerated and cartoonish. For example, *PR* warns its readers that despite posing as friend to Africa, as 'a popular proverb in Africa goes, "a monkey is still a monkey even if it cuts off its tail"' (*Peking Review*, 1961e: 14); and, 'the aggressive nature of U.S. imperialism will never change' (*Peking Review*, 1960j: 14). This image of implacable US aggression aligns with what Mao and most members of the Chinese leadership espoused in private. Similarly, Mao and his close associates' belief in 'a global "anti-capitalist wave"' that 'was challenging American hegemony' is prominent throughout *PR* (Westad, 1998: 167). Also present is Mao's view of US nuclear weapons as an irrelevance, a view that famously

dismayed Khrushchev (Lewis and Xue, 1988: 60; Shu, 1999). Indeed, no lesser authority than Hans Morgenthau (1962: 306) saw the US' Western identity and 'semicolonial exploitation of backward nations' contributing to its aid being 'frequently suspect'. It should not be surprise that *PR* held an extreme version of this view.

Despite embodying truths about China's thinking at that time, there are qualifications. Many contemporaneous Western scholars read *PR* far too naively. For example, it is not a straightforward source of 'perceptions' (Ray, 1975). It is written to influence – both as a means to achieve the Chinese leadership's goals – and to present those leaders in the best possible light. In the midst of one of the worst famines and manmade disasters in history, *PR* tells its readers that China's experience is 'a powerful proof' of the benefits of economic independence: 'our grain output has more than doubled…everyone has food. This is a miracle, yet a fact' (*Peking Review*, 1960i: 15). *PR* also informs us that Sino-Soviet relations represent 'unprecedented harmony' even as the acrimonious split turns irreversible (*Peking Review*, 1960b: 10).

PR also draws a strident bright line between socialist aid and the 'so-called "aid"' of the imperialists, which are 'completely different in nature' (*Peking Review*, 1961g: 9). The following passage is indicative:

> the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union is assisting many Asian and African countries to develop their independent economies, with no political strings attached to the assistance. All these are facts that cannot be altered by any rumours, slanders or attempts to sow seeds of discord. The imperialists are always slandering the socialist countries sympathy and active support for the national liberation movement as 'expansion,' 'indirect aggression' and 'infiltration.' Being imperialists, they indeed cannot understand why the socialist countries could have consistently extended such help without any selfish aims. (*Peking Review*, 1958j: 6)

Elsewhere, *PR* relates an elderly Guinean man's opinion that 'Imperialism did every bad thing. By contrast, the Chinese people are giving us generous assistance' (*Peking Review*, 1961c: 17).

A further feature is what could be best described as Orwellian double-speak. I mean this not in the sense of 'slavery is freedom', though it does that, too;[4] but in the way that country *X* is employed as a surrogate to criticize country, group or individual *Y*. So, aid-related statements about the US, Yugoslavia and Albania among others, serve as veiled criticisms of the USSR or Khrushchev. Also, positive statements about the USSR often appear to be aimed at shaming the Soviets back onto the right track rather than reporting truths or facts as *PR*'s producers understood them (see Ungor, 2009: 170-171; Wang, 2006).

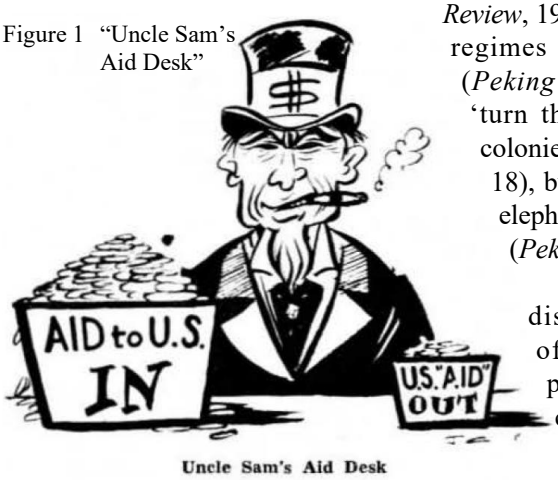
Fortunately, there is no need to unravel what each utterance in *PR* meant to those who produced and consumed it (for historical context see Atkinson,

2019). Our focus is on ideas about Western aid. To the extent that readers understood a particular reference to the US to actually be about the Soviet Union for example, then that logically contributes to ideas about the Soviet Union – not the US. Ultimately, I would argue, it is the public depiction of the US (and to a lesser extent other Western donors) that was transmitted most influentially across space and time, not the various individual and private depictions.

5. On the Correct Handling of Contradictions in PR

The final, and perhaps most important, caveat that needs to be addressed is *PR*'s contradictions. Inconsistencies occur not only between articles and issues, but also within the same article or even within the same paragraph. For example, aid can be 'highly profitable' (*Peking Review*, 1959j: 9), 'extracting huge profits' (*Peking Review*, 1958d: 18) and 'surely helps the U.S.' (*Peking Review*, 1961j: 17) (see Figure 1), while also being a 'burden' that has made the US' 'economic situation…more and more difficult' (*Peking Review*, 1960a: 17). Aid to reactionary regimes 'enslave the population' (*Peking Review*, 1961h: 11) and 'turn these areas into American colonies' (*Peking Review*, 1958b: 18), but these regimes are 'white elephants' and 'bottomless holes' (*Peking Review*, 1959k: 11).[5]

Figure 1 "Uncle Sam's Aid Desk"



Uncle Sam's Aid Desk

Source: *Peking Review* (1961j), p. 17.

As propaganda, moral discourse, and transmitter of veiled messages, *PR*'s producers clearly did not consider that consistency across articles and issues should get in the way of a higher-level consistency about the good and the bad, which direction history was moving, and sending messages that needed to be sent. The producers of *PR* also evidently believed that a 'Marxist-Leninist' interpretation of imperialism should find contradictions. Marx viewed capitalism as exploitative, irrational, war prone, and driven by contradictions (Marx, Engels and Gasper, 2005: 25). Lenin saw the capitalist drive for profits as leading to monopolistic consolidation, and an imbalance between production and consumption. The resultant surplus savings drove imperialism, contradictorily leading to resistance and world war which would bring capitalism to an end (Lenin, 2010). The producers of *PR*

clearly desired this sheen of theoretical authority from Marx and Lenin, and the text displays the relevant phraseology, such as references to 'monopoly capital' and 'capital export' and 'Lenin's scientific thesis' (*Peking Review*, 1959j: 13; 1960f: 19; 1961a: 12). However, they did not want to be bound by frameworks, and the explanations of Western donors lack the internal inconsistency Marx and Lenin could manage. So rather than a framework, 'Marxist-Leninism' becomes something of an affectation.

A good example is the link between capitalism and war. A major sticking point in Lenin's 'economic explanation' of World War I is why profit-seeking and future-orientated capitalists would blindly drive toward a value-destroying war. Nevertheless, the logic of high inequality in developed countries leading to militarized and destabilizing competition for colonies is persuasive enough that it still has proponents today (Hauner, Milanovic and Naidu, 2017). However, *PR* stretches Lenin to the extreme, with the US pursuing a policy of 'aggression and war' (*Peking Review*, 1959c: 28, 29; 1959j: 6, 8) and 'trying to include the whole African continent in its range of military aggression' (*Peking Review*, 1959n: 14).

As a mouthpiece of China's leaders, the closest *PR* has to a consistent framework is what those leaders – especially Mao – were thinking. And these leaders – Mao above all – habitually reduced the world to contradictions.[6]

Perhaps the most important of these leadership-derived and inherently contradictory frames for aid in *PR* is that of US imperialism as paper tiger (Mao, 1977: 308-311). A paper tiger image of the enemy is a relatively common misperception for leaders to have, and for elites to both buy into and foster. As Snyder (1991: 5-6) explains, this image justifies almost any conclusion a leader or group of leaders wishes to come to, and creates a strong justification for pursuing security through expansion. Whether the US seems strong or weak, aggressive or defensive at any particular moment, it is a paper tiger that must be vigorously opposed. This frame results in a depiction of the US aid donor engaging in contradictory and self-defeating behaviour. For example, *PR* tells us that 'since U.S. "aid" aims at dominating the capitalist world it inevitably leads to the very opposite of what the U.S. aggressors wished for' (*Peking Review*, 1959k: 11). Another example is, 'The people will neither be bought by imperialism nor cowed by it. Imperialism is outwardly strong but feeble within, because it has no support among the people' (*Peking Review*, 1958p: 10).

6. Aid for Expansion

Whatever contradictions are present in imperialist aid, they achieve something of a synthesis in its ultimate *raison d'être* – expansion. According to *PR*, 'U.S. aid' is 'a chief instrument for overseas expansion' (*Peking Review*, 1961a:

17). On this point, there is 'fundamental agreement among the U.S. ruling cliques on the use of U.S. "aid"' (*Peking Review*, 1959k: 11). This expansion is aggression carried out everywhere (*Peking Review*, 1960a: 17), the product of 'imperialist ambitions to dominate the world' (*Peking Review*, 1960g: 22). Similarly, 'Japanese monopoly capital' seeks 'economic expansion abroad' to ultimately achieve 'Asian hegemony' (*Peking Review*, 1958f: 8-9).

The implicit model could be described as one of intuitive realism. There is no awareness of insecurity or structure.[7] Instead, the US' desire to expand is seemingly the result of a malign inner drive. The enemy seeks to offensively expand its power everywhere and anyway possible, and will do so until China defensively expands its power to stop it. Not coincidently, there are strong parallels with this expansionist enemy image and how the United States saw the Soviet Union and China during the same period. Notably, the famous 'NSC 68' document from 1950 called for 'A more rapid build-up of political, economic and military strength' as a defensive reaction to Soviet expansion along these same dimensions. The deployment of aid and other tools were seen as taking 'the current Soviet Cold war technique' and using them against the Soviet Union (Truman Papers, 1950, April 12: 54-56).

Within this intuitive model, aid shares a similar condition with Max Weber's 'power politics,' in which a fight *for* the means of power is a prelude to political action *by those means of* power. Thus, 'the *means* of politics…becomes the *goal* of the politician' (Bruun, 2012: 264). In other words, for *PR*, aid is a tool with which to struggle for power, power that is crucial in deciding the overall struggle between China and the West, and with the United States in particular.

In the next section I will break down *PR* depictions of aid as a means of expansion. However, it should be kept in mind that in line with the intuitive model, *PR* sees these different aspects as interwoven and reinforcing (see Figure 2.), even if the nature of this interweaving is not articulated consistently or clearly.

Figure 2 "Sowing the New Crop"

Sowing the New Crop

News Item: Thousands of specially trained American men and women will be dispatched by Kennedy under the signboard of a "Peace Corps" to "aid" many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America

By Fang Cheng

Source: *Peking Review* (1961d), p. 22.

7. Economic Expansion Marxist-Leninist Style

The overarching model or paradigm is what the producers of *PR* would label 'Marxist-Leninist'. This is the Marx-and-Lenin-inspired and contradiction-heavy view discussed above. A good example of this view is the following explanation of why the imperialist powers conclude long term trade agreements:

> for the purpose of permanently controlling these markets so that they can dump their commodities [i.e. tradeable manufactured goods] and buy up strategic raw materials and other goods at fixed and low prices. This is one of the dirtiest imperialist tricks to intensify plunder of the colonies and underdeveloped countries (*Peking Review*, 1958i: 12).

Within this view, a desire for permanent 'control' is central; and, it is both (contradictorily) generated and necessitated by capital export (*Peking Review*, 1961a: 13-14). The US controlling 'instigates' while countries that receive military aid are passively 'dragged' in against their will (*Peking Review*, 1959j: 6). Imperialists (contradictorily) collaborate and compete. So the US holds a 'sinister aim' to take the place of 'older colonialists' (*Peking Review*, 1958s: 21) or step into [their] shoes' (*Peking Review*, 1959n: 14), with economic expansion 'invariably accompanied by other forms of expansion' (*Peking Review*, 1958s: 21) (see Figure 3). This imperialist motivation is contrasted with Chinese and wider socialist economic relations and aid, which promote political independence not control, and aim to build up manufacturing and economic independence in underdeveloped countries (*Peking Review*, 1961b: 7).

Figure 3 Gilded Chains

Uncle Sam: "Now try wearing this one. It's gilded!"
By Jack Chen

Source: *Peking Review* (1959d), p. 24.

This 'Marxist-Leninist' explanation is sufficiently vague and contradictory to encompass the full gamut of Western aid activities. However, beneath this umbrella concept it is possible to discern somewhat distinct models of what is driving the US and other Western countries, models that do not require the protagonists to seek colonial political control.

8. Subsidizing Manufacturing Outputs and Inputs: List Meets Lenin

The first of these could be described as Listian–Leninist in that it shares Friedrich List's focus on strengthening a donor's production relative to both own consumption and the production of other countries without requiring Lenin-style colonial control (List, 1909). However, since the US as portrayed in *PR* shifts between seeking control, having control and losing control, there is of course significant overlap between the two.

Figure 4 US Dumping

Source: *Peking Review* (1960n), p. 24.

Most straightforwardly, the Listian goal is sought through 'dumping' (see Figure 4). For instance, *PR* mocks the US's dumping of 'musical instruments, swivel chairs, cold drinks…and nylons' as part of military aid to Turkey (*Peking Review*, 1958a: 18) (see Figure 5). In Laos, 'U.S. economic "aid"' takes the form:

> of surplus goods flooding the Laotian market. Most of these, like passenger cars and other luxury goods, have no relationship to the needs of the people. On the contrary, they have dealt crushing blows to the few Laotian national enterprises in existence…because of the dumping (*Peking Review*, 1959i: 10).

Figure 5. Cartoon Mocking the US' Dumping of Nylon Stockings as Part of Military Aid to Turkey

Source: *Peking Review* (1958a), p. 18.

PR does not explain how Laotian enterprises producing goods with 'no relationship to the needs of the people' came to exist in order to be crushed by cheap American alternatives. More intelligible is the charge that US textiles and coffee had damaged local industries.

Also straddling the line between Lenin and List is the characterization of the West as combining a focus on securing raw materials and expanding exports of manufactures (e.g. *Peking Review*, 1959k: 10). Through control, the US has turned Latin America into 'single pattern economies' feeding American industrial production: 'Buying U.S. goods at a high price, they are thus doubly exploited by U.S. monopoly capital' (*Peking Review*, 1960e: 10).

Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi's plan for what would become the Asian Development Bank (the 'Asian Development Fund' or 'Southeast Asia development fund') is a 'revival of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"' (*Peking Review*, 1958o: 19). According to the article, Japan aims to:

> exploit the mines in Southeast Asia on behalf of the United States, supply this region with industrial equipment and buy rice and cotton from the Southeast Asian countries. In other words, Southeast Asia is to be 'developed' by means of U.S. capital, Japanese technology, and its own resources, to serve as an outlet for Japan's expanded productive forces. Japan aims to in this way, oust Britain and West Germany, and ultimately the US, from these markets (*Peking Review*, 1958f: 9).

Like the United States (*Peking Review*, 1958n: 15; 1958l: 9), Japan's expansion follows a consistent imperialist formula, patterned on an industrial metropole and 'an agricultural Southeast Asia' (*Peking Review*, 1959l: 15). PR informs its readers that war reparation payments plus 'mostly supplementary…economic co-operation [agreements] are the backbone [of Japan's] overall economic expansion' (*Peking Review*, 1959l: 15).

The economic policy function of Japan's aid results in restrictions that recipients do not like. India was 'most dissatisfied' with 'too many restrictions' on loans. In Cambodia, Japanese Foreign Minister Fujiyama 'was quite embarrassed when leading officials there contrasted Japanese "aid" with the unconditional Soviet and Chinese assistance.' Also, no projects had been carried out in Burma due to 'conditions' (*Peking Review*, 1959l: 16).

As Pettis (2013: 34-37, 146) explains, exporting capital necessarily means importing demand, and exporting capital is the same as exporting goods though the causes are different. Chinese policymakers presumably understood this fact by way of Lenin (2010: Ch. 7):

> Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway was the export of goods. Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of capital.

Accordingly, a 1961 article that discusses West Germany's 'overseas expansion' in the 'underdeveloped countries' and 'spheres of influence of the other imperialists.' According to the article, Germany is 'making a big effort to increase its export of capital and goes in for so-called "aid" to the underdeveloped countries in a big way.' The examples of this expansion is mostly increased exports (*Peking Review*, 1961d: 23). However, in at least one instance, the direction of causation flips, with 'the export of commodities… one of the chief means to compensate for deficits caused by the enormous U.S. expenditures abroad' (*Peking Review*, 1961a: 14).

9. Subsidizing Overseas Investment

For *PR*, overseas investment–capital export is the chief means to frame the US' aid-giving as imperialism (via Lenin) despite its lack of colonies. This involves a long chain of reasoning: aid is exported capital, imperialists export capital, therefore the aid-giving US is imperialist; and imperialists seek/have colonies, therefore the US seeks/has colonies through aid.

Accordingly, *PR* often sees the subsidizing of overseas investment as the most important goal of aid (e.g. *Peking Review*, 1961m: 14). *PR* has Lenin backwards when it explains that, as the US has 'fewer colonies under its direct control than the other imperialist countries…capital export…[is the] chief means of penetrating into the spheres of influence of other imperialist countries' (*Peking Review*, 1961a: 13). Foreign aid is described as the 'most rapacious form of the export of capital' (*Peking Review*, 1960g: 20). It is also 'a special kind of capital export, because it also opens the way for the export of huge amounts of capital by American enterprises' (*Peking Review*, 1959k: 10). One article puts it thus:

> An outstanding feature in the post-war years is that the U.S. Government itself has been exporting capital on a large scale to pave the way for private investments. A good part of the 'economic aid' which the U.S. Government provides for under-developed countries has been spent on building roads, ports or power stations (*Peking Review*, 1961m: 14).

The same article makes clear that overseas aid, including multilateral aid, is in reality a subsidy for capital:

> Government…gives direct financial aid to private investments overseas through the Import-Export Bank and the Development Loan Fund or the U.S.-controlled International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The U.S. Government also undertakes to carry the 'risks' of private investments being requisitioned by foreign countries and of war losses (*Peking Review*, 1961m: 14).

Linking back to the Listian discussion above, for *PR*, foreign investment is particularly focused on resources (see Figure 6). For example, 'technical aid' missions 'prospect the resources and gather information' to facilitate capital inflows (*Peking Review*, 1959j: 7) and

Figure 6 "In His Dreams…"

Source: *Peking Review* (1959n), p. 22.

American 'penetration' (*Peking Review*, 1959f: 16). According to another article, through investments 'the United States is energetically plundering such strategic materials as oil, uranium, aluminium, manganese, etc. in Africa and extracting fabulous profits…' (*Peking Review*, 1959n: 14) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 "Washington's 'Aid' Pump"

Source: *Peking Review* (1961l), p. 13.

10. Cultivating Friendly Elites for Economic Expansion

The US uses aid to maintain and develop relationships with friendly governments or elites to further its economic expansion (see Figure 8). According to one article:

> the so-called 'aid' of the imperialists to the economically backward countries is in fact a kind of export of capital, aiming to intensify aggression, exploitation and domination over the recipient countries, to squeeze from them maximum profits, and to foster the comprador bourgeoisie (*Peking Review*, 1960k: 12).

Figure 8 Cartoon Mocking US Aid to Lebanon

Source: *Peking Review* (1958e), p. 21.

Another informs us that US support for 'a handful of the most reactionary traitors in various countries' is designed to 'encroach upon the sovereignty and national interests of these countries without let or hindrance' (*Peking Review*, 1960i: 6) (see Figure 9). Aid to reactionary rulers and US puppets (*Peking Review*, 1961h: 11) is used to sabotage national independence (*Peking Review*, 1960c: 26). One example is Batista in Cuba; thanks to 'support it gets from U.S. imperialism' (*Peking Review*, 1958s: 29) the 'Batista gang's betrayal of Cuba's national interests' has seen 'U.S. monopoly domination' reach 'its zenith' (*Peking Review*, 1959a: 17).

Figure 9 Accra Santa

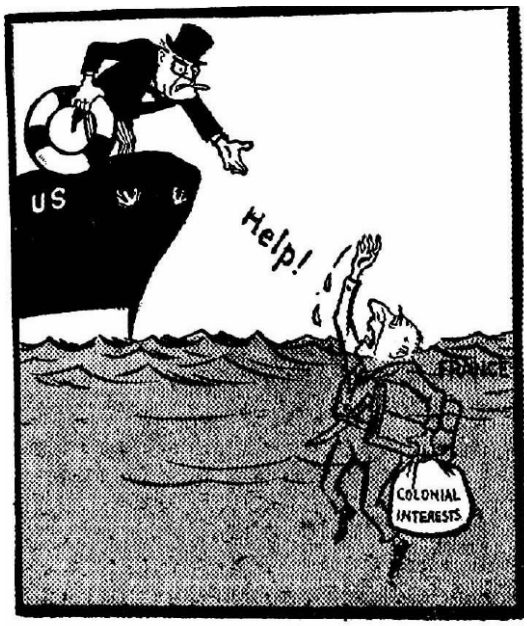
Source: *Peking Review* (1958r), p. 22.

11. Expanding Influence

The US further seeks influence through aid as a goal *per se*, not only in pursuit of economic goals (*Peking Review*, 1958l: 9; 1960c: 26; 1960g: 29; 1961p: 12). For example, it allows the US to 'isolate Cuba' even as it achieves its Leninist goal of economically controlling Latin America' (*Peking Review*, 1960m: 13). The US also provides aid to Yugoslavia to encourage revisionist ideology and divide the unity of the socialist camp.

This drive for influence is within the wider framework of imperialism. Empires seek class-derived monopolistic economic goals via Lenin, but also influence and status more in line with China's native understanding of the imperial drive (see e.g. Perdue, 2015). Hence, 'neo-colonialists have been… expanding their influence by military and economic 'aid,'…and edging out the old colonialist forces in an attempt to supplant them' (*Peking Review*, 1960g: 7) (see Figure 10). Moreover, 'The ultimate goal of the new U.S. colonialists is, obviously, to eliminate the influence of other colonialists and supersede them in Africa' (*Peking Review*, 1960l: 17). The US aims to bring French and British colonies and former colonies 'under its exclusive control' (*Peking Review*, 1958e: 20). *PR* sees the US trying to 'convert Cambodia into a vassal state of the United States' (*Peking Review*, 1960b: 3). Vassalage is freighted with meaning for China, with Cambodia at various times a tributary state of imperial China (Stuart-Fox, 2003) and old Chinese maps referring to the colonies of the imperialist powers as vassals (屬 shǔ) (Callahan, 2012: 100).

Figure 10 "Give Me Your Bag First!"



"Give me your bag first!"
Hung Huang in "Wen Hui Bao"

Source: *Peking Review* (1958d), p. 18.

PR regularly characterizes aid as an influence expanding trick (see Figure 11), often drawing on common Chinese metaphors. For example, aid is a 'cloak' (*Peking Review*, 1960g: 11), 'a black lie' (*Peking Review*, 1961a: 13),

Figure 11 "Beware of the Yanks Bearing Gifts!"

Source: *Peking Review* (1959h), p. 34.

and a 'sugar-coated cannonball' (*Peking Review*, 1959o: 21). It is 'passing a fish eye off for a pearl' (*Peking Review*, 1960i: 15). Perhaps *PR*'s preferred metaphor for aid is as 'bait' (*Peking Review*, 1959d: 10; 1959l: 15; 1960b: 3) (see Figure 12). Once countries are 'on the hook' – a reference to Rockefeller's 'infamous letter' to Eisenhower (*Peking Review*, 1958k: 13; 1959k: 10) – aid becomes a 'lever of political blackmail' (*Peking Review*, 1959j: 9) amounting to a 'sort of plague' (*Peking Review*, 1959k: 11) or poison (*Peking Review*, 1958g: 9) (see Figure 13).[8]

Figure 12 "Bait"

Source: *Peking Review* (1959j), p. 7.

Figure 13 "The Salesman"

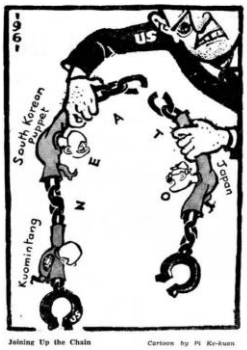
Source: *Peking Review* (1961h), p. 18.

12. Military Power Expansion

Aid is also a way to expand strategic, as distinct from economic goals or diplomatic influence. Such strategic 'development assistance' is a means to exploit strategic resources, induce countries to join the Western military bloc, facilitate military bases and build strategically significant infrastructure (*Peking Review*, 1958o: 19; 1959j: 7; 1960c: 26) (see Figures 14-16).

Military expansion-directed aid naturally also connects into the cultivation of friendly elites (see Figure 17). Through its aid, the US could exercise control over Ethiopia (*Peking Review*, 1958o: 19), and turn South Vietnam into 'a cat's-paw' (*Peking Review*, 1959f: 16-17).

Figure 14 "Joining Up the Chain"

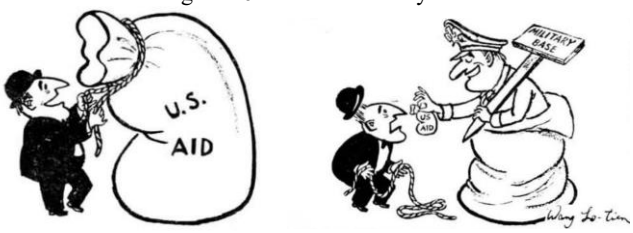


Source: *Peking Review* (1961o), p. 8.

Figure 15 The Nurse

Source: *Peking Review* (1958o), p. 19.

Figure 16 Aid and Military Bases



Source: *Peking Review* (1959k), pp. 9-10.

Figure 17 "Going Down – and Out!"

Source: *Peking Review* (1960h), p. 31.

Discussions of Listian-type expansion and influence return back to Lenin through this strategic dimension of Western aid. However, as it is approaching Lenin from the other direction as it were, it necessarily has Lenin backwards. For Lenin (2010), under capitalism, war is the means for the imperialists to expand their share of colonies and their 'spheres of influence for finance capital' in order to find an outlet for excess production and capital. At times, *PR* adopts the opposite direction of causation, with 'economic expansion… merely a prelude to military aggression' (*Peking Review*, 1959f: 23). Moreover, "'aid"'

can be a means to attain uranium and oil for ultimately strategic rather than economic reasons (*Peking Review*, 1959m: 25; 1961n: 19). Elsewhere, US imperialism violates 'the sovereignty of other nations on the pretext of "aid" to plunder their riches to feed its own munitions industry' (*Peking Review*, 1960a: 16). From this perspective, raw materials are not inputs to capitalism, but to militarism (*Peking Review*, 1960c: 26). In line with this view, another article states that 'the United States has…penetrated Africa under the guise of "aid" and "development" to support dirty colonial wars and for the plunder of strategic raw materials' (*Peking Review*, 1960l: 17).

13. Concluding Discussion

Much has changed in the world – and in China – since the period considered here. Nevertheless, *PR*'s view of aid as a tool of expansion – the one point on which its discourse is most consistent, resonates with aspects of Chinese policy today.

That China has an official policy of economic, political and military expansion should no longer be controversial. Under leader Xi Jinping, China now officially 'strives for achievement' in the pursuit of the 'great renaissance of the Chinese nation' (Terrill et al., 2016; Yan, 2014). Xi told the 2017 CPC National Congress that he aims for China to 'become a leading global power' with a 'world-class' war-winning military (Haas, 2017). The role of aid in this expansion should not be exaggerated, but it clearly 'is an important tool in China's diplomacy, which serves its political, economic, strategic and global image interests' (Zhang and Smith, 2017: 2330). As Chinese scholars Zhou et al. (2015: 9) see it:

> …foreign aid can directly or indirectly realize a donor country's economic interests in the recipient country. In many cases, foreign aid activities serve to pave the way for trade and investment…. In addition, through financial support to the recipient country, it is possible for the donor country and recipient country to enter into policy dialogues about sensitive problems [to cause] the recipient country to adopt donor country values and policy positions. This is why foreign aid became an irreplaceable strategic tool after World War II, not only bringing short-term economic and political benefits to the donor country, but also influencing the economic and political system of the recipient country, and even its choice of development path.

This correspondence between the view of American and other Western 'aid' in *PR* and policy and aid thinking today is no doubt due to many different factors. Still, it plausibly represents some persistence of ideas about aid within Chinese policymaking circles from the late 1950s–early 1960s until now (see also Atkinson, 2021).

Indeed, there are numerous intellectual threads connecting the period considered here and the present day. Some of these threads are direct. Chau (2014: 148) calls attention to the fact that: 'China was never exclusively revolutionary or ideological; rather, it exhibited long term, pragmatic behaviour from the very beginning on the [African] continent.' And, Howard L. Boorman's (1960: 585) description of China's primary foreign-policy goal in the late 1950s – a 'revitalized Chinese national power, under Communist control' and 'recognized status as a major world power on its own terms' – could easily be mistaken for a description of Xi Jinping's China.

There are also intriguing examples of conceptual reversals of polarity. Marx criticized economic nationalism, yet it is List that has 'turned out to be a rather better guide than Marx to the concerns and behaviour of emerging states, including socialist states' (Lovell, 1995: 142-143; Szporluk, 1991), with China no exception (Breslin, 2011). In addition, thinking behind the Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere did inform postwar Japan, though shorn of its military element (Samuels, 2007: 36). This Japanese model was an important influence on Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, with Pettis (2013: 80) characterizing current Chinese economic policy as:

> mostly a souped-up version of the Asian development model, probably first articulated by Japan in the 1960s, and shares fundamental features with a number of periods of rapid growth – for example Germany during the 1930s, Brazil during the 'miracle' years of the 1960s and 1970, and the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s.

There are also reversals in military areas, with, for example, the Mao-era maligned Alfred Thayer Mahan now very much embraced (Holmes and Yoshihara, 2008: 29).

None of this should be read as equating the image of the US and the West in *PR* with China today. However, it reminds us to balance claims of how Chinese aid thinking has evolved and changed with cognizance of how it has also stayed the same.

It is also important to appreciate that, to the extent that it has had an influence, the GLF-era image of Western aid is likely to have been negative. Perhaps through the mechanism Snyder labelled 'blowback,' this image of Western aid has been transmitted across time, without bringing private elite understandings of its context – or an appreciation of the bias and flaws of those elites – with it. The image of the US in particular, is so expansionistic and ruthless that it should be alarming if it has served as a positive model for Chinese aid. No less troubling is the possibility that this image acts as a kind of internalized strawman, working to make almost anything China does look benevolent by comparison to Chinese policymakers, bestowing considerable moral licence.

I want to finish were I started: (neo-)colonialism. As the producers of *PR* well understood, comparing a powerful country's relationship with developing countries to colonialism is a means to problematize, and perhaps even interrupt, that relationship. It is a hard-to-refute charge where there are perceptions of racial differences, and obvious imbalances in the trade of manufactured goods and raw materials, investment, and power. And like historical colonialism, such relationships can be negative or unfair, and therefore deserving of interruption and reform. This is especially the case when one believes, as Lenin, List and many others have,[9] that industrialization is the surest route to development and political autonomy, not free trade. The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria's opinion is informative in this respect:

> So China takes our primary goods and sells us manufactured ones. This was also the essence of colonialism. The British went to Africa and India to secure raw materials and markets. Africa is now willingly opening itself up to a new form of imperialism. The days of the Non-Aligned Movement that united us after colonialism are gone. China is no longer a fellow underdeveloped economy – it is the world's second-biggest, capable of the same forms of exploitation as the west. It is a significant contributor to Africa's deindustrialisation and underdevelopment. (Sanusi, 2013)

Sanusi goes on to talk about his father, Nigeria's ambassador to Beijing in the early 1970s:

> He adored Chairman Mao Zedong's China, which for him was one in which the black African – seen everywhere else at the time as inferior – was worthy of respect. His experience was not unique. A romantic view of China is quite common among African imaginations – including mine.

It is ironic that through the pages of the *Peking Review* and elsewhere, the Chinese government did its best to propagate the concept that securing markets for manufactured exports, raw material imports, and foreign investment are bad. In doing so, it may well have helped provide the tinder for the backlash faced by the current generation of leaders engaged in expansion abroad.

Notes

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1. *Peking Review* (1959k: 11).
2. Scanned PDF copies of *Peking Review* for this and later periods are in the public domain and available from the following websites: <http://www.massline.org/

PekingReview/index.htm> and <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/index.htm>.

3. For a for a parallel with history textbooks, see Callahan (2012: 21).
4. For example, commune 'canteens can help promote the collective spirit among the peasants who have broken away from the centuries-old habit of eating at home' (*Peking Review*, 1958q: 4) and the passage on 'Happy results have been achieved of late in the self-remoulding of the old intellectuals' (*Peking Review*, 1959g: 16).
5. For example, compare *Peking Review* (1959k: 12; 1961a: 12); (1958c: 19; 1959k: 9); (1958i: 12; 1960o: 8; 1961a: 12); (1959g: 26; 1960a: 14, 17; 1961l: 18-19); (1959k: 11; 1961k: 8); (1958m: 3; 1959a: 13; 1960c: 16).
6. See for example (Chan, 2001: 15-17; Karl, 2010: 95-96). Meisner (2007: 110) sees 'ambiguities and contradictions' marking the Maoist variant of Marxism.
7. E.g. the U.S. prepares for a world war and local wars in order to 'interfere in the internal affairs of other countries' (*Peking Review*, 1960d: 16).
8. See also (1958h: 6-9; 1961f: 13).
9. A notable example of course is Chang (2002).

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Absolved by the Telos of History: A Hermeneutic Approach to China's Revolutionary (Non-)Interventionism

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Abstract

This article confronts a puzzle regarding the People's Republic of China's foreign policy: during the Mao era, China adamantly upheld the principle of non-intervention/non-interference (*buganshe*), while at the same time actively engaged in national liberation movements in the Third World. Rather than treating it as a case of political hypocrisy, this article shows that the apparent inconsistency between China's rhetoric and behaviour can be resolved with a post-structuralist perspective. Its analysis of Chinese official, dominant discourses reveals that a moral-historical teleology is at play within the texts, which absolves China of moral responsibilities and presents its worldwide involvement as a legitimate exception. Furthermore, by presenting Chinese discourses on (non-)intervention as a potent instrument of resistance, this article seeks to decentre and remedy the Eurocentrism in the International Relations scholarship.

Keywords: *China, (non-)intervention, discourse*

1. Introduction

Paradox is a recurrent theme of the social and political life in the People's Republic of China (PRC). On the one hand, China claims to abide by the foreign policy principle of non-interference in its conduct of foreign relations; on the other hand, it does not shy away from interfering with the internal affairs of other countries, which ranged from aiding revolutionary elements in the Third World in the Mao Zedong era, to engaging in "united front work" worldwide in the Xi Jinping era (Yu, 1977; Lovell, 2018; Hamilton and Ohlberg, 2020). This article considers the root of this puzzle, which may allow us to contextualize China's active engagement in the internal affairs of other countries despite its stated principle of non-interference.

Unfortunately, existing relevant literature primarily adopts a more rationalist/positivist ontology,[1] rather than problematizing state identity and foreign policy; it also pays more attention to the post-reform era (Carlson, 2006; Qiao, 2011; Fung, 2016; Lovell, 2019; Ren, 2021). By adopting a post-structuralist approach to Chinese foreign relations, this article intends to fill a lacuna in the extant literature on China's intervention, and to add to the scholarly trove on the power of discourse in Chinese foreign policy/International Relations (IR) studies (see Noesselt, 2012; Hwang, 2021). Additionally, this article also helps expand the purview of post-positivist literature interrogating foreign intervention beyond its current focus on those led by the US and Europe (Doty, 1993, 1996; Weber, 1995a, 1995b).

To take the first step towards reconciling China's nominal commitment to non-intervention and continual practice of intervention through a post-structuralist lens, this article focuses on China's relationship with the Third World during the Mao era (1949-76), which saw China intervene in the Third World in various ways – militarily, economically, politically and culturally, including concrete support for insurgency in Third World countries (Cohen, 1973; Lovell, 2018). It is precisely because such practice was not only pursued so adamantly, but also in apparent contradiction with China's stated policies, that there exists an enormous amount of archival evidence recording the official discourses on this matter that lend itself to critical discourse analysis, a post-structuralist method spearheaded by Doty (1993, 1996). By focusing on the Mao era, which allows for leveraging of the abundance of textual data, this article hopes to shed light on how intervention was understood, condoned and normalized in the Mao era, as well as its implications for the current Xi administration.

Before any discussion of the aforementioned topic, definitions of certain important terms are in order. Although the term 'Third World' by no means implies a homogenous entity, it captures the idea that developing countries with disparate economic and political systems in Asia, Africa and Latin America are drawn together by their shared colonial memories and 'experiences of a power disparity with the global elite' (Fung, 2016: 35). Furthermore, this article adopts a working definition of intervention that entails the attempt to affect the 'internal structure and external behaviour' of another country via 'various degrees of coercion', including the use of force (Thomas and Thomas, 1956: 20; Beloff, 1968: 198). In establishing these definitions, this article wishes to clarify its assumptions, which not only allows us to project our understanding of the past policies and rhetoric of China to the current political landscape, but also helps subject the article itself to critical scrutiny of IR scholars at large.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. It first presents a historical overview of China's (non-)intervention with a focus on China's

adoption of the principle of non-interference and its assistance of revolutionary elements in the Third World. This article then introduces the post-structuralist approach, which poses 'how-possible' questions instead of 'why' questions regarding China's practices and discourses in the realm of foreign policy. Then, a detailed rationale for adopting this approach is articulated, as well as this article's methodology, which includes discourse analytical methods and the data collection process. This article then proceeds to analyze selected official Chinese discourses. This article finds that China's interventionist activities were rendered thinkable and acceptable by the naturalistic imperatives of a historical teleology, which was further substantiated and legitimized by the moral binaries associated with China, the Third World, and the First World. In fact, China was in a sense 'absolved' by the moral-historical teleology, which diminished the agency and culpability of China by framing China's intervention as just, righteous and necessary. After the discourse analysis, this article re-examines the advantages of post-structuralism over rationalist IR approaches, and proposes new avenues through which a post-structuralist approach could serve as resistance against Eurocentric, hegemonic discourses on intervention that dismiss and dehumanize the non-Western. Finally, this article discusses the implications of its finding on our understanding of Xi Jinping's foreign policy, and then summarizes the finding in the conclusion.

2. China and (Non-)Intervention: A Historical Overview

Shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Mao proclaimed that China must 'lean to one side': the side of the Communist Bloc (Chen, 2001: 50). The perennial fear of *neiluan waihuan* (external chaos and internal instabilities) recurrent in Chinese dynastic history, coupled with the exigency of preserving the revolutionary momentum and resisting imperialist forces, haunted the Chinese leadership as they strove to transform the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from a revolutionary movement to a ruling party (Brown, 2018; Khan, 2018; French, 2017). History, for the CCP leadership, was more of an unwieldy burden than a glorious past (Jenner, 1992). The intervening years between the Opium War and the proclamation of the People's Republic witnessed the foreign powers' impositions of unequal treaties, reparation demands and colonial dismemberment on China (Brown, 2018). This period eventually came to be referred to as the 'Century of Humiliation' by the CCP, which attests to the significance of China's past to the party leadership. The spectre of past chaos implanted a sense of wariness in Mao and his comrades that was primarily manifested in their aversion towards foreign interference (Khan, 2018). For the party leaders, foreign domination was not 'history' as such, but the ever-present reality with which they had to struggle continuously (Cohen, 1973: 477).

In this backdrop, China adopted the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' (hereinafter referred to as the 'Five Principles') in 1954 as the cornerstone of its foreign policies. The 'Five Principles', which were later included in the Chinese Constitution, comprise of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equal and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA], 2014). These principles, declared at the Bandung Conference in 1955, signalled China's commitment to the principle of non-interference in its dealing with other countries, and its expectation that other countries reciprocate (Alden and Alves, 2008). Since then, bilateral treaties have also been signed on the basis of the 'Five Principles' (Cohen, 1973). In so doing, China wished to align itself with Third World countries by assuring them that despite its relative size and power, China would never violate their sovereignty. To illustrate the 'Five Principles' at Bandung, Premier Zhou Enlai invoked a Chinese adage '*jisuobuyu, wushiyuren*' (do not impose on others what one does not want imposed on oneself), meaning that China would never intervene in the internal affairs of other states, as it did not want others to meddle with its own affairs (Zhao, 1998: 49). Unlike the hegemonic US and its allies, China's shared colonial history with other Third World states made its commitment to non-interference more credible (Zhao, 1998). In the Communiqué issued by China and twenty-eight other states at Bandung, the participants called for 'abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country', and urged 'abstention by any country from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country' (Cohen, 1973: 478). However, its concurrent global promotion of Maoism seemed to contradict China's alleged adherence to the principle of non-interference. Under the banner of revolutionary camaraderie, China was actively involved in national liberation movements in Third World states, aiding revolutionary factions in these countries in their efforts to topple the existing regimes (Cohen, 1973; Kang, 2015; Lovell, 2019; Robinson, 1969). These involvements follow from China's view that world revolutions are simply its domestic revolution writ large (Kang, 2015; Lovell, 2019).

Tempting as it may be to write off those interventions as rare and limited, historical records show that China's involvement in the Third World countries' internal affairs have entailed long-term efforts that ran the gamut from issuing militant propaganda advocating for revolution against oppression, to providing military supplies and training to prospective revolutionaries in the Third World. Among China's most important involvement in the Third World was its exportation of the strategy of waging revolutionary warfare which was developed during the Chinese Civil Wars by Mao, who dubbed it the 'people's war' (Cohen, 1973: 492). China also provided sanctuary to foreign guerrilla

groups, permitted insurgent organizations in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries to operate radio stations from Chinese soil, and engaged in political assassination and bribery overseas (Yu, 1977; Cohen, 1973; Snow, 1994; Alden and Alves, 2008). In one instance, Chinese Communist instructors even participated in the guerrilla warfare launched against Uganda from Tanzania (Cohen, 1973). Granted that China had spread its already limited resources rather thin that the absolute level of its involvement worldwide remained low, its help was enough to initiate and/or sustain revolutionary movements in most cases (Cohen, 1973). In fact, from 1965 to 1967, four African states severed diplomatic ties with China on grounds of interference in their domestic affairs; by 1966, Chinese diplomats had been expelled from a number of African countries for the same reason (Robinson, 1969; Alden and Alves, 2008). It needs to be noted that China's involvement in the Third World under Mao was by no means uniform, unitary, or static. China's most active phase of 'exporting revolution' lasted from the 1960s to the mid-1970s (Heaton, 1982; Ren, 2016). China's active support of the Burmese Communist Party, for example, only took place between the late 1960s and the early 1970s (Heaton, 1982; Than, 2003). In addition, the extent to which China's support for overseas revolutionary movements in Third World countries varied widely and could drop significantly if the countries' rulers were friendly to China (Cohen, 1973; O'Leary, 1980).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Asserting Post-Structuralism as Method

Rationalist theories usually dismiss the importance of rhetoric and focus on the behaviour of agents, often looking to the three levels of analysis – structural, domestic and individual – to explain the paradox posed by China's involvement in the Third World.[2] Simply examining the materiality of international and domestic politics, however, only reveals *why* China embarked on intervention but sheds no light on exactly *how* intervention – situated within the discursive context of the principle of non-intervention – was made *possible and thinkable* for the Chinese leadership. Indeed, China's principle of non-intervention should have made its intervention impossible and unfathomable; therefore, other discursive constructions must have been at work to make China's actions fathomable, justifiable, and even 'natural'. In their failure to take seriously how the principle of non-interference would have precluded intervention, rationalist approaches neglect to explain how or why interventionist practices materialized at all, as the possibility of practices presupposes the ability of agents to imagine certain actions (Doty, 1993).

To explore how agents were able to imagine and embark on intervention, we must turn to the discursive and examine how foreign policy and realities

as such were constructed and made real through discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) – for instance, how was worldwide engagement justified for a 'revolutionary state' resisting 'imperialist powers'? By delving into 'how-possible' questions, this article interrogates how meanings are produced and attached to social subjects and objects, and the ways in which certain possibilities are produced and others excluded (Doty, 1993) with a post-structuralist lens, which supplements rather than supplants the mainstream, rationalist IR approaches. This perspective also proves to be indispensable when it comes to probing into the conditions of possibility for China's intervention, i.e., how the discrepancy between China's stated principle of non-intervention and its acts of intervention was reconciled, and what regimes of power, truth and normality were at play in rendering China's active engagement worldwide intelligible and legitimate. In anticipation of the charge that the application of post-structuralism, a 'Western' theoretical edifice, to a 'non-Western' case study constitutes an instance of ontological and epistemological violence, this article argues that this application exemplifies a post-colonial approach and is evocative of Homi Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' – that is, an 'in-between' space, a process of constant negotiation that collapses the simple binary between the colonizer and the colonized (Bhabha, 2004: 2). Indeed, as a post-colonial society, Mao's China bore many similarities with the neoliberal European societies under the scrutiny of post-structuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault, blurring the tradition-modernity binary (Scalapino, 1999; see Foucault, 1997b). Mao's China was a bureaucratic society that saw numerous biopolitical measures for population control (Nakajima, 2015); the advent of modernity, globalization and transnational movement further connected China to the international community, rendering any claims of the uniqueness of China's approach to foreign policy vulnerable to cultural essentialism and Orientalism (cf. Keightley, 1990).

Another motivation for applying post-structuralism to Mao's China pertains to the perils of reification in China studies and area studies in general (Chow, 1998). Chinese foreign policy should only be studied, some argue, using either 'Chinese' theories or universal, trans-historical ones such as realism (see Zhao, 2005; Qin, 2006; Yan, 2013). The illusory, Eurocentric nature of realism's pretension to universality and trans-historicity aside (Foulon and Meibauer, 2020), the very gesture of avoiding 'Western' theories in China studies only reproduces the hierarchy between the 'West' and the 'rest'. The paranoia in guarding against the ideological legacies of Western imperialism implicitly acknowledges and condones the dominance of the West; to truly 'provincialize' the Western (Chakrabarty, 2000), we need to jettison our paranoia and select theoretical framework on the basis of suitability rather than genesis. In provincializing the Western, this article also

takes a small step at overcoming the perceived provinciality and particularity of non-Western case studies – that the non-Western can allegedly only reveal what is particular to a given culture rather than what is shared among cultures (Davies, 1992). In asserting post-structuralism as method, this article also asserts non-Western case studies as method.

A brief presentation of the basic premises of post-structuralist IR is in order. Refusing to take subjects, objects, and the meanings attached to subjects and objects as given, a post-structuralist approach is more critical than rationalist IR approaches (Doty, 1993). In post-structuralism, individual subjects are not the sovereign knowers in the Western tradition who are pregiven and autonomous (see, for example, Descartes, 2017), but are instead produced by power relations. Power is always relational; it operates to constitute the subject and permeates interpersonal interactions and social relations (Foucault, 1990). Just as there is no pre-existing subject prior to the dynamics of power relations, there is no social relation external to power relations. Indeed, power is productive of 'meanings, subject identities, their interrelationships, and a range of imaginable conduct' (Doty, 1993: 299).

Inextricably connected with the notion of power is the notion of discourse, as discourses are always embedded in power relations (Foucault, 1984; Fairclough, 1992, 2001). A discourse is a 'system of statements in which each individual statement makes sense', producing interpretative possibilities by making it almost impossible to think outside of the discourse (Doty, 1993: 302). The system of statements is produced in an 'ongoing discursive stream', whereby each statement builds on preceding statements to construct interpretative possibilities (Diaz-Bone et al., 2008: 11). Discourses create subjects and position them vis-à-vis one another; subjects are intelligible only within the confines of specific discourses which give rise to knowledge, meanings and practices (Doty, 1993; Weedon, 1997). The subjectivity of the self is thus relational, defined against the backdrop of the Other(s) (Campbell, 1998). As meanings and representations of subjectivity are produced via discourses, subject positions only exist insofar as they are ascribed meanings by discourses (Shapiro, 1988). Discourses therefore produce a 'perception and representation' of social reality (Diaz-Bone et al., 2008: 12; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1987). The subject positions that an entity takes on must be constantly reproduced, as the discourses that produce such representations are never complete and always vulnerable to deconstruction (Campbell, 1998; Derrida, 2016).

3.2. Literature Review: Post-Structuralist Approaches to Intervention

Existing post-structuralist literature on intervention is Eurocentric in orientation, focusing primarily on the US and Western Europe (Doty, 1993, 1996; Weber, 1995a, 1995b). Doty (1993, 1996) adopts the method of critical

discourse analysis to probe into the US intervention and counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines after the latter gained independence. Employing the analytic categories of presuppositions (background knowledge taken to be true), predicates (the attributes attached to subjects and objects), and subject positioning (the relationship subjects/objects are positions relative to others), Doty (1993) argues that the US/Western discourses on the Philippines and the Filipinos constructed self-Other relations in a way that rendered intervention imaginable and even 'natural'. The Europeans and Americans were constructed as subjects who could 'know' the Filipinos; their superiority was taken for granted, and was 'a "fact" not open to question' (Doty, 1993: 307). The Europeans and Americans were imbued with agency, whereas the Filipinos were positioned in a relation of similarity with dogs and children, those that required the supervision and tutelage of others (Doty, 1993: 308-10). Binaries such as reason/passion and good/evil were also at play in the construction of realities where the intervention into another sovereign state was rendered possible (Doty, 1993).

In similar veins, Weber (1995a, 1995b) adopts Baudrillard's notions of simulation (the proliferation of the true) and dissimulation (the proliferation of the fake) to examine the US interventions into Grenada, Panama and Haiti. Weber (1995b) contends that dissimulation is woven through the discourses of intervention, as discourses of intervention are all about false claims – denying that an intervention took place. This case is usually made by arguing that an intervention is in fact not an intervention, either because it represented the sovereign people in the target state, or because it does not fit the category of what a 'real intervention' is (Weber, 1995b). The proliferation of false claims would make it difficult to distinguish between a 'real' intervention and a 'fake' intervention. Indeed, the US-led intervention into Haiti was justified in terms of Haitian human rights abuses; this justification was able to hide the interests of the intervener 'behind a false appearance' (Weber, 1995b: 272). Proliferating the fake – false justifications and false identities – enabled the Clinton administration to deny invading Haiti (Weber, 1995b).

As Callahan (2020) observes, the purview of IR scholarship is limited to studying the West using critical approaches, or studying the non-West using conventional, mainstream approaches. Engaging the non-West using critical approaches remains a lacuna. As such, this article intends to follow the trailblazing scholarship in engaging critical IR with the non-West (see, for example, Callahan, 2020). Adopting a post-structuralist framework to discuss contemporary China also performatively decentres and remedies the absence of non-Western agency in both positivist and post-positivist ontologies. Primarily drawing their theorizations from Euro-American examples, mainstream and critical IR alike either patently or latently dismisses non-Western cases as peripheral, dispensable and unworthy of scrutiny (Callahan,

2020; cf. Mearsheimer, 2014). The imbalance in material power between the West and the non-West is then reflected in the disequilibrium in representation. Therefore, delving into Chinese discourses, worldviews and regimes of truth serves as resistance against (primarily Western) representations and theorizations – or the lack thereof – of the non-West in the discipline of IR.

4. Methodology

Discourse analysis studies discourses archaeologically and genealogically – by identifying different elements comprising the discourses and how these elements cohere, as well as by interrogating the historic formation of these discourses (Escobar, 1984). To analyze discourses is therefore to identify and analyze the imminent logic that renders the web of statements possible and intelligible. As discourses are self-contained, the intentions of individual agents are inaccessible with regard to discourse (Diaz-Bone et al., 2008); discourse is thus independent of and prior to any claim of intentionality or sovereign subjecthood (Doty, 1997). As such, when conducting discourse analysis in the subsequent sections, this article brackets the intentions of actors involved in the discourses under scrutiny. Furthermore, discourses are not analyzed using *a priori* logic, but rather in a historicized and contextualized fashion (Haraway, 1991). Following Doty (1993), this article employs the analytic categories of presuppositions, predicates and subject positioning as heuristics in approaching the discourses. With regard to the discourses on intervention, this article pays special heed to the discursive construction of China, Third World countries, the two superpowers, and the First World (the 'imperialist powers') in general.

The data examined are qualitative. This article limits the scope of the text under consideration to that produced in the Mao era (1949-1976). The texts gathered include relevant Chinese texts pertaining to China's involvement in national liberation movements in the Third Word, which come from official statements and media to explore the (re-)circulation of dominant discourses and out of sensitivity to intertextuality[3] (Kristeva, 1980). The texts include statements by CCP leaders and foreign ministers, the CCP mouthpieces *People's Daily* and Xinhua News, magazines such as *China Pictorial* and *China Reconstructs*, as well as writings by Chinese intellectuals. This article undertakes word searches of key terms in databases (such as *People's Daily* and cnki.net) and within texts to identify relevant texts, selecting the most representative cases among the texts to instantiate the analysis below. The key terms include '(non-)intervention', 'the Third World', 'the First World', 'imperialists/imperialism', 'superpowers', 'US', and 'USSR'. This author includes her own English translations where the texts originally appeared in Chinese, supplementing with transliterations where appropriate.

5. Analysis

5.1. Complicating Conventional Wisdom

The conventional wisdom on China's intervention emphasizes the socialist/capitalist categorization. It is, according to China, functionally and conceptually impossible for socialist states such as China to engage in intervention. Chen Yi, a Chinese Communist military commander who served as the Foreign Minister of China from 1958-72, asserted that a socialist country would not 'engage in subversive activities, … try to impose its will on other countries, … [or] use economic aid to disguise intervention' (Cohen, 1973: 487). Therefore, intervention could only be embarked on by capitalist and developed states, whereas socialist states were the ones that defended the oppressed peoples by supporting national liberation struggles (Ren, 2021). Indeed, a quick keyword search on the Chinese academic search engine, cnki.net, shows that the term '*ganshe*' (intervention/interference) is without exception associated with the US and other 'imperialist' countries. There is thus a demarcation along ideological lines; socialist states such as China could not and would not engage in intervention (although intervention is still possible for the socialist-imperialist USSR). The apparent discrepancy between China's support of national liberation movements worldwide and its principle of non-interference could then be resolved.

In the sections below, this article aims to complicate this somewhat arbitrary categorization of interventionist activities. Indeed, a closer examination of the ways in which China's involvement in national liberation movements was portrayed in official Chinese discourses reveals that there was a more general, overarching textual mechanism at play that subsumed the aforementioned logic. As this article shows below, there was a moral-historical teleology at work in the framing of China's involvement, a teleology that left little room for the agency of Third World states, including China. The teleology underlying the construction of China's intervention thus enriches the conventional wisdom that the discrepancy at issue is resolved by China's framing that only intervention by imperialist, First World countries counts as intervention *as such*.

5.2. The Primacy of Historical Telos

Before delving into the historical teleology inherent in China's discursive construction of its support of national liberation movements, this article first presents Marx's theorization of historical progress, which will shed light on the CCP's conception of historical teleology that is a key component of the Party's Marxist-Leninist ideology (Brown, 2018). Indeed, Marxism provides a 'perceptual prism' through which CCP leaders view the world

(Levine, 1994: 30). In Marx's theorization, the history of all societies is defined by class struggles, which in the capitalist-industrial modern society take the shape of animosity between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx, 1978). The transformation of human society is determined by the 'modes of production and exchange', as society evolves to the point where it can no longer sustain the expansion of markets and the growth of demand (Marx, 1978: 474). The bourgeoning production and demand, which enabled capitalism to replace feudalism, is, according to Marx, about to bring forth the demise of capitalism, since overproduction would give rise to commercial crises and endanger capitalism. Therefore, Marx predicts that the time is ripe for the proletariat to revolt against the bourgeoisie, as the fall of the latter is inevitable (Marx, 1978). Historical progress is thus teleological, as the evolving relations of production inherent in each historical stage serve as the driving force of human society; history is constantly moving towards a given direction, and humans are mere vehicles for the unfolding of history (Cohen, 1986).

Convinced of the existence of objective laws and historical inevitability, the CCP takes on the mission of discovering objective laws and following these laws in foreign policy (Wang, 1994). The CCP's conception of history is ineluctably Marxian (Alden and Alves, 2008): recovering from China's semi-colonial experience, the Chinese people have finally 'stood up' under the CCP's guidance. History is moving in a positive direction, as evidenced in the ending line of the Chinese anthem – 'Onward! Onward! On, onward!' (*qianjin qianjin qianjinjin*). In this narrative, the Chinese people successfully shattered colonial chains and attained national liberation, and are on the path to national rejuvenation. As their vanguard, the CCP will continue to ensure that justice be delivered to the Chinese people, and that the capitalists, imperialists and colonialists who victimized China in the past be defeated (Brown, 2018). Indeed, echoing Marx's prediction that the proletariat would eventually triumph over the bourgeoisie, the CCP's narrative similarly propounds that the victory of socialism would precipitate the downfall of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. With the aid from their socialist brethren, colonized countries around the world would ultimately liberate themselves from the claws of capitalistic, imperialistic colonizers. Such view of the 'inevitable historical trend' could be readily found in a CCP's mouthpiece which triumphantly declares that:

> Under the auspices of the Bandung spirit, the struggles for national liberation of the Afro-Asian peoples have coalesced into an irresistible flood. The ferocious momentum of this flood has begun to cause the imperialist colonial regime to decay. Loyal to the Bandung principles, the Chinese people are always empathetic and supportive towards the revolutionary struggle of the Afro-Asian peoples (*People's Daily*, 1960a).

The flood analogy adds a naturalistic valence to national liberation struggles given that the 'ferocious momentum' of the flood is not something artificial or contingent, but natural and necessary. The impending collapse of the imperialist, colonial regime would therefore not be induced by any particular agent, but by natural phenomena. By supporting the struggle of the colonized peoples, China was merely conforming to the momentum of the 'irresistible flood' of history. It may even be the case that China's support of revolutionary struggles was not voluntaristic or agential *per se*, but instead necessarily prompted by the 'irresistible flood', which expresses the view that:

> Corrupt and reactionary forces always wish to resist the progress of history, albeit often in vain. Post-war liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are akin to a mighty torrent, shattering and destructing the imperialistic colonial system (*People's Daily*, 1973).

The 'corrupt and reactionary forces' cannot defy the momentum of the 'mighty torrent', as 'whoever wishes to resist and reverse the [irresistible historical trend] is doomed to tragic failure' (*People's Daily*, 1955). Indeed, the endeavours of the reactionary forces, including the capitalist-imperialist countries led by the US and later the socialist-imperialist USSR, were often characterized by a well-known line in a Chinese poem '*wukenaihe hualuoqu*' (flowers fall off, do what one may) (*People's Daily*, 1974d). Thus, the conspiracies of imperialist countries were futile and self-defeating: 'for every place the US invades, the US puts one more layer of noose on its neck' (*People's Daily*, 1965). The imperialists' invasion and interference in the Third World was compared to 'moths flying towards the fire', and the 'fire will only burn brighter', which further emphasized the futility of the imperialists' reaction against the historical telos (Pa, 1966: 35). This sense of fatalism and imageries of decay or death are juxtaposed with imageries of life that characterize the Third World revolutionary forces, which are a lively 'new-born force', akin to 'trees in springtime' and burning 'forest fires' (*People's Daily*, 1965, 1973). The flourishing of the Third World and the defeat of the imperialists were thus the 'rules of historical development, unaffected by human will' (*People's Daily*, 1973). The triumph of national liberation struggles was in a sense prescribed by the laws of nature, as reflected in the prevailing trend of international life – 'east wind over west wind' (*People's Daily*, 1959). Indeed, evocative of Marxian insights, 'the decaying social regime is doomed to be overturned by new and progressive ones' (*People's Daily*, 1960b).

Within these discursive contexts, it becomes obvious that if the rise of the Third World and the victory of national liberation struggles are necessary and preordained by laws of nature, in a sense there was no alternative for China other than supporting its socialist comrades; acting otherwise would be

a waste of effort and a recipe for failure. China therefore acted with bounded agency; it was constrained by the laws of history.[4] One that has limited agency cannot be held accountable for her actions; hence, China should not be held responsible for its activities, in a similar way as how one should not be held responsible for being subject to the law of gravity (van Inwagen, 1983). Further, the activities of China never appeared in isolation and were always in conjunction with those of other Third World countries: 'China and the Third World peoples together engage in common struggles against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism' (*People's Daily*, 1973). The discursive framing that China always acts in concert with other Third World states further diminishes its initiative – it never incites the Communist elements in the Third World states to revolt, but only offers 'support and sympathy' (*People's Daily*, 1958a, 1961, 1964).

At the same time, the diminished agency or responsibility of China did not hinder the accentuation of its leadership position among Third World countries. China did not initiate revolutions, but led by way of example (Levine, 1994; Snow, 1994). Indeed, China's domestic revolutionary campaigns were to serve as 'role models' for oppressed peoples around the world, who 'in the Chinese people see their tomorrow' (Lovell, 2019: 134). The Chinese people were therefore the 'tomorrow' of other oppressed peoples, and were the exemplars the latter aspired to – Mao's statement of support alone could serve as the 'strongest support' for the oppressed people of the world (*People's Daily*, 1964). China's revolutionary experience could also 'be studied as a reference' by and 'serve as a glorious banner' for other Third World states (Soong, 1966: 4; Wilson Centre, 1960; *People's Daily*, 1958b). This sense of historical stagism is also present in discourses on internationalist responsibilities: Zhou Enlai asserted that 'we who have first won have an obligation of aiding newly emerging countries' (Wilson Centre, 1964); this claim implies a temporal sequence in which China takes the lead. In these discourses, notions such as 'obligation' and 'duty' imply necessity, and are reminiscent of Kantian (Kant, 2012) categorical imperatives; being obliged means that China could barely have chosen to act otherwise. The notion of obligation therefore echoes the imagery of the 'flood' or 'torrent', highlighting the imperatives of the historical teleology.

Furthermore, what is also implied in the historical stagism is the notion of sameness. According to the laws of evolution, Third World states would eventually become like China. Indeed, Mao averred to a guerrilla leader from Southern Rhodesia that China and Africa were 'one and the same' (Snow, 1994: 285). Intervention, on the other hand, entails alterity and the intrusion of otherness; China's involvement in the Third World therefore by definition could not fall under this category. The sense of legitimacy inherent to the notion of sameness was echoed by the consent of China's beneficiaries

(Wilson Centre, 1964; *People's Daily*, 1959): as China's aid was requested by Third World countries, this element of consent made intervention 'entirely just'; the requests also coincided with the 'genuine desires of the people' (Cohen, 1973: 482, 483).

5.3. Sinicizing Teleology and the Politics of Binaries

In addition to the amoral Marxist-Leninist historicism, there is in actuality a moral valence to the historical teleology underpinning China's discourses on intervention, and is undergirded by various binaries. Albeit a hallmark of Western logocentrism, binaries have been prevalent in Chinese official discourses (Qiaoan, 2019). Within each binary (such as 'presence/absence') there is a relation of hierarchy, as the first term ('presence') is always seen as primary and superior to the second term ('absence'). The meaning of the first term is in fact derived from and dependent on the second term, as it is the very exclusion of the second term that confers meaning to the first term (Edkins, 2007).

In China's official discourses on intervention, several prominent binaries were at work: justice/injustice, good/evil, peace-lovers/warmongers, majority/minority, reason/passion, civilization/barbarism, and candour/deception. The first terms always characterized China and its Third World comrades, while the second terms were associated with imperialist, First World countries and especially the two superpowers. These binaries together constructed powerful self/Other relations. As the subjectivity of the self is defined against the backdrop of the exogenous Other(s) (Campbell, 1998), depictions of the evil, unjust, barbaric, irrational, isolated and deceptive imperialist enemies were necessary for showcasing the virtue, justice, civilization, rationality, popularity and candour of the Chinese self. China's activities then become righteous reactions to the aggression of nefarious Others.

In contradistinction from the Marxist-Leninist origin of the historical teleology, most of the binaries underpinning or embellishing the teleology owe their genesis to China's historical and cultural experience, although it is impossible to completely demarcate between the 'Chinese' and the 'non-Chinese'. Such social and cultural systems produce discourses through which agents first make sense of the world and act in it, and which inevitably influence the construction of particular realities through the (re-)circulation of discourses (Latham, 2007; Qiaoan, 2019). These binaries bolstered the legitimacy of the aforementioned historical teleology, embedded in the teleology a system of morality, and sinicized a perhaps esoteric textual structure. Although the binaries are by no means uniquely Chinese (cf. Doty, 1993, 1996), their resonance with Chinese history, culture and tradition makes them especially palatable to the Chinese people (Qiaoan, 2019).

The 'irresistible flood' became a symbol of righteousness; the Third World countries acting alongside the flood were the administrators of justice, whereas the imperialists resisting the flood were the condemned convicts. This moral teleology also echoed the CCP's narrative of national history, which is rife with 'notions of salvation, the delivery of justice, and the idea of a righteous ending' (Brown, 2018: 26). This moral valence added emotional appeal to China's discourses, lending further legitimacy to its involvement in the Third World. The depiction of US entry into the Vietnam War is especially illustrative of the binaries at work in China's discourses:

> Currently, American imperialists are engaging in murder and other acts of gangsters. They are embarking on the most shameless and barbaric colonial war in Vietnam, bombing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam like crazy… They ruthlessly suppress the revolutionary struggle of the people of Congo, interfering with and invading other countries in the region… All this shows that American imperialism is the cause of all trouble and catastrophes in Asia and Africa, and is the most ferocious enemy of the Afro-Asian peoples (*People's Daily*, 1965).

Americans were portrayed as 'gangsters', 'shameless', 'ruthless' and 'barbaric'. Their invasion of Vietnam was characterized as 'crazy', which reduced the American calculus of fighting in Vietnam to an act of passion and irrationality. American involvement in Vietnam was not out of concerns for national security or the spread of Communism (as shown in the US rhetoric; Doty, 1993, 1996), but was an uninformed and unenlightened act of barbarians. Although unstated, the barbaric, shameless and crazy Others were evidently confronted by the civilized, decent and rational Chinese self. If barbarians – who were the 'cause of all trouble' and the 'most ferocious enemy' – impinged on the sovereignty of China's comrades, it would be just and righteous for China to come to its comrades' assistance. In this logic, the other Third World countries were similarly imbued with rationality, fighting 'heroically' in their quest for freedom (*People's Daily*, 1974a). Indeed, the Third World was often characterized in Chinese official discourses as 'awakened' (*People's Daily*, 1974b, 1974c; Jin, 1960: 6). This sense of awakening captures their burgeoning national strength and contrasts with the 'barbaric' imperialists – awakening implies the possession of reason while barbarism does not (de Vitoria, 1991). The civilization/barbarism and reason/passion binaries further bolstered the validity of the overarching historical teleology in Chinese discourses, as the civilized, rational and sophisticated would be destined to prevail over the barbarous, irrational and primitive according to the laws of evolution.

Indeed, as opposed to the 'American warmongers' that attempted to uphold the 'unjust and passé' colonial order, the Third World people stood by 'world peace, prosperity and progress' (*People's Daily*, 1974d; Jin, 1960:

6). In assisting their Third World comrades, China was an 'ever-wavering champion of the right of all nations to their sovereignty, sparing no effort in support of all peoples in their struggles for social and economic progress' (Soong, 1966: 2). The rhetoric of progress harkens back to this article's earlier discussion on the historical teleology, positioning China on the 'right' side of history. Further, the civilization/barbarism and reason/passion binaries were related to prevalent animal analogies used to characterize China's enemies. In the Chinese magazine *China Reconstructs*' depiction of the Vietnam War, American leaders were described as 'snake' and 'crocodile' that devour people (Ho, 1966: 19). In writings by Chinese intellectuals, US military was framed as 'street rats' and US leaders were often characterized by the act of 'roaring', a verb often used to describe animals (Wang, 1957: 3). Such animal analogies were echoed in official Chinese discourses, which referred to the US as 'mad bull' (*fengniu*) and 'jackal' (*chailang*), and US allies as 'running dogs' (*zougou*); the imperialists were dehumanized via verbs commonly associated with animals (such as 'ejecting their venom', a phrase usually used to characterize snakes) (*People's Daily*, 1958c, 1959, 1964; Lin, 1965).

The civilization/barbarism binary is in fact one deeply rooted in Chinese history. Indeed, a sense of 'persistent conceit' has permeated Chinese thinking ancient and modern (Ford, 2010: 88). Fairbank (1969: 456) points out that the 'doctrine of China's superiority' is one of China's foreign policy traditions. Despite the potential jeopardy of essentialism, it is worth delving into the civilization/barbarism categorization throughout Chinese history to explore its contemporary relevance (Callahan, 2004, 2009, 2012). Early China was considered to be the centre of the world, the 'all under heaven', and foreign peoples were to be controlled and guarded against (Yang, 2018; French, 2017). Indeed, non-Chinese peoples were regarded as subhuman and even brutes; only the Chinese people participating in a Confucian society were deemed to be cultured in *li* (etiquette), as having attained 'full humanity' (Ford, 2010: 88). There was thus an intimate connection between the possession of civilization/etiquette and humanity. This personal aspect of Confucianism permeated the sphere of statecraft: a virtuous *tianzi* (emperor) would be compelled by his virtue to expand his realm of governance, and it would be just for the *tianzi* to suppress barbaric foreigners via forceful means (Ford, 2010). Recounting the tenets of Confucianism does not indicate their direct influence on foreign policy making in Mao's China; indeed, traditional Chinese culture in general and Confucianism in particular were denounced as feudalistic legacies under Mao (Link, 2013; Lin, 2018). Nonetheless, the (re-)circulation of influential cultural legacies made possible the construction of realities via culturally inflected discourses. Mao's rule was indeed claimed to be based on virtue and goodness, in contradistinction from the imperialist powers (Levine, 1994; Link, 2013):

> The superpowers are convinced of their superiority, but actually they are in the minority on the international stage. They act in a hegemonic and lawless manner, bullying the weak, and are therefore unpopular and isolated. The Third World countries are opposed to the contestation between the two superpowers, and represent just and progressive endeavours. Most countries in the world are sympathetic and supportive of the Third World. [The Chinese people] stand on the side of Third World countries, and therefore stand on the side of just and progressive endeavours (*People's Daily*, 1972b).

The superpowers are depicted in a rather sinister light, acting in a 'hegemonic and lawless manner'. In dominant Chinese media, American leaders were also portrayed as having 'committed every imaginable evil', which explains why they were 'unpopular and isolated' (Pa, 1966: 33). The unpopularity of evil doers implied that most people in the world aspired to justice and righteousness, and were therefore judicious arbiters of good and evil. Indeed, Mao alleged in a conversation with guests from Africa that 'only ten percent of the people in developed countries are evil, and the rest are good'; the ten percent were the state leaders and capitalists in developed countries, and the rest were 'proletarians and proletarian-sympathizers' (Wilson Centre, 1960). The evil leaders and capitalists were thus encircled and isolated even within their own countries. This popular/isolated dichotomy is reminiscent of a Chinese aphorism favoured by Mao, '*dedaozhe duozhu, shidaozhe guazhu*' (those who are just attract much support, while those who are not find little) (*People's Daily*, 1958b, 1960b). It was therefore reasonable that the superpowers were 'in the minority', as the justice/injustice binary mapped onto the majority/minority and popular/isolated ones. Indeed, in Chinese political discourse there was a direct correspondence between minority status and moral inferiority (Link, 2013).

Inextricably connected to the justice/injustice binary were peace-lovers/warmongers and candour/deception. As has been briefly mentioned, the imperialists were constructed as 'warmongers': "the two superpowers engage in acts of subversion, invasion, and dismemberment of sovereign states under the banners of 'peace', 'humanitarianism', and 'non-alignment'" (*People's Daily*, 1972a). The imperialists were thirsty for wars but waged wars in the disguise of upholding peace; in contrast, Third World states were truthful in their desire for peace. The truthfulness of the Third World's claim to peace stemmed from their yearning for independence, freedom and 'taking control of their own fate' (*People's Daily*, 1955). Imperialists by definition were the archenemies of peace, as they sought 'to enslave the whole world' (*People's Daily*, 1959). The imperialists' deceptive and hypocritical nature enabled Chinese discourses to foreclose the challenges from alternative discourses (that might accuse China of interventionism), since Chinese discourses were by definition opposed to the deceptive, imperialist ones and thus always truthful.

6. The Power of Discourse

6.1. Rationalizing Intervention

The analysis in the previous section answers the 'how-possible' question posed earlier, namely how China's intervention in the Third World was made possible and thinkable given its principle of non-interference. The primacy of the historical teleology underpinning China's discourses diminished China's agency and initiative, as China's involvement in the Third World was framed as necessary and involuntary. Although China lacked agency and initiative, its leadership role in the Third World was emphasized via a sense of historical stagism – China's past revolutionary success inspired and motivated its Third World comrades to fight for liberation in the same manner. Certain binaries with roots in Chinese history served to bolster the appeal of and localize the historical teleology, which is Marxist in its origin. These binaries constructed China's enemies that meddle with the Third World as barbaric, evil, irrational and isolated; it was thus just, righteous and civilized for China to assist the Third World in order to defeat the imperialistic warmongers and to preserve peace. The somewhat naturalistic imperative conferred by the teleology was thus imbued with a moral valence. The discursive construction of history, the Third World, and the First World then shaped China's actions as it defined the boundary of the thinkable, possible and legitimate. 'Interventionist' engagement in the Third World then became possible, legitimate and necessary in the face of the 'irresistible historical trend' towards the liberation of the Third World and the collapse of imperialism, and when confronted by the nefarious and bloodthirsty imperialists. In a legitimate state of exception as such, China's involvement then became warranted (Ren, 2021).

China's discourses reproduced its subject position and the corresponding foreign policy (Campbell, 1998). Indeed, the discourses made possible a world in which supporting the Third World countries was the 'natural' and 'normal' course of action for socialist, peace-loving countries like China. As such, this post-structuralist approach focusing on the interplay of discourse and subjectivity revealed the deficiency of rationalist IR theories. By interrogating the construction of the meanings attached to intervention and of the identities of different countries, a post-structuralist lens does not take China's involvement in the Third World as a 'rational' and 'natural' response to structural, domestic, or individual configurations of the (geo-) political. The rationalist approaches in fact neglect the apparent paradox between China's principle of non-intervention and interventionist practices, dismissing such paradox as a case of political hypocrisy (cf. Pye, 1988; Kim, 1994). Resultantly, they fail to discern the particular reality enabled by discourses in which the apparent contradiction is resolved, thereby committing epistemological violence. Indeed, rationalist theories overlook the ways in

which China's intervention was intelligible and legitimate for the Chinese leadership and people given the everyday discursive regime in which they dwelled. By bringing the everyday and the personal to the fore, the post-structuralist approach opens up new space for understanding and inquiry (Enloe, 2006).

6.2. Discourse as Resistance

The centrality of power in post-structuralism has been discussed in a previous section. Indeed, power permeates all social relations and constitutes the condition of possibility for actions. As such, power also serves as the condition of possibility for freedom. Freedom does not mean free from power; rather, in relations of power, it is always possible to change and even reverse the power relations (Foucault, 1990). Therefore, power relations are always vitiated by the possibility of resistance, and are as such reversible and unstable. 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1990: 95).

There is likewise always room for resistance in discourses. Although there is no mention of any challenges to China's dominant, official discourses,[5] this article argues that China's discourses themselves can be seen as a form of resistance to Western discourses on the Third World. In Doty's (1993: 313) study on the role of discourse in the US occupation of the Philippines after the Second World War, she argues that discursive constructions of the Filipinos as 'child-like', unsophisticated, and consumed by passion and emotion made US intervention possible. Indeed, the derogatory characterization of non-Europeans as child-like, barbaric and uncivilized has had centuries of historical record: in Francisco de Vitoria's (1991: 250) critique of the Spanish empire, he contends that Amerindians are 'evil and barbarous', akin to 'brute animals'; in Immanuel Kant's (2006: 147) argument against European imperialism, he considers non-Europeans to be ignorant and 'undeveloped'; John Stuart Mill's (1963) distinction between civilized and barbarous societies maps onto European and non-European ones. It is therefore precisely against the background of the uncivilized and primitive non-European Others that the civilized and sophisticated European selves are defined (Lowe, 2015); regardless of whether the European thinkers argue for or against colonial conquest, the intellectual inferiority and barbarism of the non-Europeans are always taken as the *a priori*.

Given the evidence presented above, it becomes clear that the similar logic of binarism in China's discourse is a counter-narrative of and resistance to the Euro-American/Eurocentric discourse. The assertion of China and the Third World in general as civilized and rational, and the US and its allies as the reverse, bespeaks the instability of dominant (Eurocentric) discourses and their vulnerability to deconstruction. Despite the uncanny resemblance this

dynamic bears with the Nietzschean (1998) notion of *ressentiment*, studying China's discourses on intervention draws attention to post-colonial, non-Western discursive regimes, thereby undermining the discursive hegemony of the West. The post-structuralist lens is therefore able to unveil the ways in which foreign policy (discourses) serve(s) as potent instruments of resistance in ways unavailable to rationalist IR theories.

7. Discussion

While post-structuralists usually militate against any effort to extract lessons and experience from past events and apply them to current times, guarding against the perils of ahistoricization and de-contextualization (Edkins, 2007), it is nevertheless worthwhile to probe at the possibility of formulating a genealogy in which the discursive regime under Xi is contingent upon that under Mao. Have the historical teleology and moral binaries in Mao's China left any trace in Xi's approach to foreign policy? This article finds that while their basic logic still holds, their contents have become less polarized and more gradational. Indeed, China's approach to the Third World has become more pragmatic and transactional (Brown, 2020); to look into this shift, we need similarly to look to discourse, particularly how China itself, the Third World, and China's competitors such as the US have been constructed. The aim of constructing such a discursive genealogy lies not in examining Beijing's current approach to (non-)intervention which has changed significantly: China today no longer conceives of itself as a revolutionary power, and has generally upheld the principle of non-intervention except on matters it deems integral to its sovereignty and territorial integrity (e.g., regarding the South China Sea) (Nie, 2016). Rather, contemporary Chinese discourse is helpful as it allows us to probe into the lexical universe adopted by the Chinese leadership today. The goal of this section is to interrogate how the discourses on intervention during the Mao era can be applied to a broader menu of political options today. Furthermore, the genealogy is not meant to be explanatory of Xi's political choices, but to open up more possibilities of approaching, examining and making sense of how China conceives of itself in relation to other countries today.

One noteworthy example that helps us depict the contours of Xi's discursive context can be found during his visit to France in 2014, where he stated that China was a 'peaceful, amicable and civilized lion' that only sought 'win-win' (MFA, 2014). The imagery of the lion acknowledged China's formidable relative power, while the predicates 'peaceful, amicable and civilized' were intended to diminish the sense of intimidation posed by the lion, in a way reminiscent of Deng Xiaoping's famous dictum that China should 'hide [its] capability and bide [its] time' (Brown, 2018: 46).

The notion of 'win-win' was similarly meant to alleviate the potential threat posed by China's relative power, and to demonstrate that China no longer pursues the definitive, one-sided victory as it did in the Mao era (Brown, 2020). As previous sections of this article have shown, under Mao, the defeat of the imperialists and the victory of the Third World were framed as the 'irresistible historical trend' and 'rules of historical development'; the victory of China is necessarily complemented by the defeat of its enemies. In Xi's China, in contrast, former existential enemies have been transformed into economic adversaries with whom 'win-win' is possible. The sense of teleology, however, still remains, as manifested in Xi's oft-invoked phrase of 'community of common destiny' – 'common destiny' implies a sense of pre-determined convergence and synergy. In Yang Jiechi's phone call with Antony Blinken in the beginning of 2021, Yang stated that 'no one could resist the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' (*People's Daily*, 2021a). Indeed, 'the wheels of history will never turn back', and China 'always stands on the right side of history' (*People's Daily*, 2021b). More recently, the spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Hua Chunying, fiercely denounced the US as engaging in divisive, 'perverse' activities in Xinjiang, declaring that 'the perverse actions of the US cannot destroy the overall shape of Xinjiang's development, stop China's progress, or reverse the trend of historical development' (Al Jazeera, 2021). The 'trend of historical development' always favours China and is irresistible; any effort to stymie China's growth is doomed to failure.

Although China still seeks to identify with the position adopted by the Global South on various issues, the ideological valence of Third World camaraderie in the Mao era has been replaced by pragmatic concerns (Fung, 2016; Brown, 2020; Ren, 2021). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to foster connectivity between China and countries primarily in the Global South, is intended to enable these countries to partake in a 'common scheme of peace and development' (MFA, 2013; Nie, 2016). Instead of actively seeking to alter the geopolitical landscape in the Third World, China now adopts a more transactional approach, advocating for 'mutual learning and mutual benefit' (Xinhua, 2017). As the primacy of socialist ideology has been gradually subsumed by that of nationalism (Brown, 2018; Link, 2013), mentions of 'imperialism' and the 'Third World' have drastically declined in state media (see, for example, *People's Daily*; cnki.net). The moral binaries of Mao's time nonetheless remain operative, although the assertion of the positive qualities of the self is no longer accompanied by the derogatory disparaging of the Other(s). In the same speech Xi gave in France in 2014, he asserted that the China dream was about 'the pursuit of peace' and 'contributing to the common good of the world' (MFA, 2014). There was no explicit denunciation of China's competitors as 'warmongers' or 'evil'; in

official discourses, they were only designated by the demure phrase, 'hostile forces' (Johnston, 2017: 36). Animal analogies similarly hardly surface in China's depiction of its competitors; the term 'running dog', for example, has only appeared less than twenty times in *People's Daily* since 2012.

As the assertion of the national self inescapably requires the negative portrayal of the Other(s) (Van Dijk, 1998), some Maoist binaries remain in CCP's rhetoric today. The 'community of common destiny', for example, is intended to draw a contrast with the power politics and exclusive alliance system of the US and its allies (Xinhua, 2017). The candour/deception binary also holds true: in MFA spokesperson Qin Gang's statement regarding China's crackdown on human rights activists in Xinjiang, Qin asserted: "the US boorishly interfered with China's sovereignty under the banner of 'human rights' and 'liberty'" (*People's Daily*, 2014). Indeed, in the Xi era, the use of the term 'interference' is always associated with the involvement of Western powers in China's internal affairs in regions such as Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet (as found through keyword search in cnki.net and *People's Daily*). The complete silence on China's engagement in the Global South (which now primarily takes the form of economic statecraft; see, for example, Norris, 2016) further confirms that the basic logic of historical teleology and moral binaries still looms large under Xi, although their contents have undergone minor shifts.

8. Conclusion

This article is animated by an interest in the tension between China's foreign policy principle and practice: how are we to make sense of China's active involvement in the Third World during the Mao era given its principle of non-interference? There are two ways of answering this question; one interrogates *why* China embarked on intervention, and the other explores *how* China's intervention was made possible, thinkable and legitimate. This article argues that the latter rather than the former provides more fruitful responses, as the former neglects to explain how intervention appeared as an imaginable option for the Chinese leadership in the first place, given the principle of non-intervention which would have precluded intervention. The latter, in contrast, refrains from taking subjects and meanings in international life as given, and is therefore able to show how particular discursive constructions of China, the Third World, and the First World made intervention imaginable, legitimate and even necessary.

An in-depth analysis of Chinese official discourses regarding intervention reveals that China's intervention was framed as necessary and righteous given the imperatives of a historical teleology and the moral binaries underpinning the teleology. Indeed, if the defeat of the imperialists and the triumph of

the Third World were destined and 'unaffected by human will', would supporting the Third World countries not be the necessary course of action? Relatedly, if the imperialists that oppressed the Third World peoples were barbaric, irrational and evil, would redressing the plight of the latter not be just, righteous and legitimate? China was thus compelled by both natural and moral imperatives. The element of external duress was key in reconciling the discrepancy between China's foreign policy principle and practice, making its involvement in the Third World a case of legitimate exception.

An examination of Chinese discourses also unveils their power and potential as resistance to Eurocentric, hegemonic discourses which dismiss and portray the non-Western in derogatory terms. The post-structuralist approach is therefore able to assert the non-Western as subjects vis-à-vis the Western, rather than as mere objects under the Western gaze. Engaging post-structuralist IR to study contemporary China also expands the critical scrutiny of existing post-structuralist/critical IR literature on intervention, which primarily focuses on the Euro-American. It needs to be noted that Chinese discourses (such as the notion 'intervention') under Mao still largely operated within Western lexical, conceptual and legal frameworks, despite their potential as resistance. Further research might examine the extent to which discourses under Xi, such as 'community of common destiny', mark a step towards the extrication of Chinese foreign policy from largely Western-constructed vocabularies and conceptualizations. Indeed, delving into the ways in which such decolonial political vocabularies and conceptualizations interact with China's foreign policy practices under the Xi administration would open up further insight.

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Notes

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1. On the rift between the positivist and post-positivist strands of IR, see, for example, Wendt, 1998; King et al., 1994.

2. For examples of rationalist approaches to China's intervention in the Third World, see Brown, 2018; Goldstein, 2003; Robinson, 1969; Yang, 1996. For an exposition of the three levels of analysis, see Waltz, 1959.
3. It needs to be noted that as official discourses permeated every facet of society and dominated all visible discursive environments under Mao, popular discourses inevitably echoed official ones (Link, 2013). People living in the Mao era had virtually no means of knowing anything about international news except through CCP mouthpieces, thus providing the CCP with a unique opportunity to completely define the discursive context. This article therefore does not explore the dynamics of popular discourses.
4. 'Bounded agency' does not mean the effort of Third World/socialist states is not required; rather, the inevitability of victory is predicated upon what these states are bound to do. On the reconcilability between teleological inevitability and human effort, see Cohen, 1986.
5. Indeed, Chinese discourses constitute a hierarchy of power and a regime of truth vis-à-vis other Third World states.

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The "China Factor" in the Northeast Component of India's Act East Policy: Implications for Security, Connectivity, Commerce

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Abstract

The Act East Policy of India, earlier known as the Look East Policy, was launched in the early 1990s to reach out to the neighbours of the country to its east and beyond. The policy has also acquired a prominent Northeast India component to it. The Northeast of India – comprising of eight states – Assam, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, is presently a landlocked region ensconced, baring a small section, between Bhutan, China, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal. This paper is on the 'China factor' in the Act East Policy with special regard to the aspects of this policy covering the Northeast of India. It is argued here that China impacts the Northeast India component of the Act East Policy in various ways and that the aspects of security threats cast a shadow over the implementation and realization of this policy especially those pertaining to sub-regionalism and infrastructure projects. It is also seen that the provincial governments of India in the Northeast are attempting to carve a space for themselves on matters pertaining to neighbouring countries including China. Furthermore, it is noted that China also reacts to India's actions or inactions in the Northeast under the policy.

Keywords: *Security threats, insurgencies, connectivity, Northeast India, resilient infrastructure*

1. Introduction

India's Look East Policy, which was later rechristened the Act East Policy, emerged as a central foreign policy theme of India, due to a changed international context at the end of the Cold War and the balance of payment crisis faced by India. The rise of regional groupings across the world and

growing Chinese presence in South East Asia were other contributing factors behind the launch of India's Look East Policy. The Look East Policy was initially an attempt to embark on closer economic cooperation with the South East Asian countries, as they were neglected prior to 1991 owing to Cold War compulsions. The first initiatives under this policy included India becoming a "Full Dialogue Partner of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)" and participation "for the first time at the Post Ministerial Conference (PMQ) of ASEAN in Jakarta in July 1996. India also participated for the first time in the meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) which deliberates on the security and political concerns of the Asia-Pacific region" (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 1996-1997).

The policy soon expanded to include not only economic cooperation but also cooperation against security threats with the countries of South East Asia and East Asia as well as Australasia. The latest version of the policy also includes India's interests in the Indo-Pacific region, including its aim to ensure shared ownership of the global commons, especially in the maritime domain which is important for India's economy, energy and arresting security threats.

Apart from these external dimensions, this policy also incorporated a domestic component, related to the ending of the "economic isolation" of the Northeast of India (Haokip, 2015: 158). India's Northeast region is connected to the rest of India only by a 21 km long stretch but shares a 5000 km long border with China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Each of the provincial units/states of the Northeast – Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim, shares a boundary with one or more foreign countries. The partition of India at the end of the British rule led to the creation of the entire region of the Northeast as a highly securitized frontier which was further entrenched after the takeover of Tibet by China, India's war with China in 1962 and with Pakistan in 1965, the closure of the border with Myanmar and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. It also led to the loss of inland water, road, and rail links for the Northeast of India through Bangladesh to the ports along the Bay of Bengal.

The role played by the Northeast as a facilitator of connectivity and its subsequent disruption is succinctly articulated by S. Jaishankar (2021) the External Affairs Minister of India in the following words:

> For centuries, its natural arteries have facilitated the flow of people, of goods, of ideas, not just to South-East Asia but as far as Korea and Japan. The valleys of the Brahmaputra, the Chindwin, the Irrawaddy were central to that process. But the advent of colonialism and the subsequent emergence of nation states effectively disrupted what was a very seamless connection between eastern India and Assam and the world to our East.

The backwardness of the Northeast compared to the rest of India despite its natural resources and advantageous position prior to 1947 is outlined in

a report tilted *North Eastern Region: Vision 2020* prepared by the North Eastern Council of India's Ministry of Development of the North East Region (DoNER), released in 2008 (Government of India, 2008). The aim under the Look/Act East Policy was to revive ancient trade routes to harness the resources of the region through regional cooperation with the countries around it by fomenting the end of its landlocked nature through an impetus on connectivity with the neighbouring nations to arrest such backwardness of the region. This vision underlies the main thrust of the Act East Policy in the Northeast. However, several problems plague the realization of the objectives of the Look/Act East Policy relating to the Northeast, one of which is the 'China Question'. This paper discusses the 'China factor' in the Look/Act East policy pertaining to its Northeast component from three prisms: insurgency, sub-regionalism and infrastructure.

2. Insurgency

One of the visions under the Act East Policy for the Northeast of India was to turn it into an economic powerhouse which attracts investments for its growth and development. However, insurgency that has marred almost all of the states in the region has prevented the realization of such economic aspirations. These insurgencies have had backing from other countries including China which adds an external dimension to the problem.

China has a history of lending support to insurgents from the Northeast. China's direct support to them started when a few of the members of the Naga National Council (NNC) led by Thuingaleng Muivah and Thinoselie M Keyho reached Yunnan in southwestern China in 1966-67 (Pathak, 2021: 10-11). Moreover, the Federal Government of Nagaland sought help from "the People's Republic of China for training and procurement of arms" (Thomas, 2016: 150). China provided military assistance to the Mizo National Front in the early 1970s and used the Kachin Independence Army in Myanmar to train the Manipur People's Liberation Army in the 1980s (Pathak, 2021:10-11).

China's direct support for rebels ended with Deng Xiaoping's rise to power, but Indian insurgents continued to access arms originating in China (Bhaumik, 2005; Sibal, 2012). Continued Chinese armament inflow to India was confirmed in 2010 by the then Home Secretary G.K. Pillai of India (Ranjan, 2015). It has been noted that "The Indian suspicion, not without basis, is that impeding the progress of India's Act East projects has assumed weight in China's strategic thinking. The influx of Chinese weapons is, accordingly, in tune with such thinking" (Dutta, 2020). China maintains deniability by insisting that these are commercially sold in the world market and it has no control over the purchases through separate conduits. Beijing, of course, denies supporting the rebels of the Northeast.

China being a safe haven for rebels from the Northeast is yet another point of concern for India. An interview conducted in 2016 by a reporter Ms Chayamoni Bhuyan from Newslive TV – a news channel in Assam – of the United Liberation Frontiers of Assam (ULFA) leader Paresh Baruah in Ruili, Yunnan in China is a case in point (Newslive, 2016). Earlier in 2012, he was interviewed not in China but at a camp in Myanmar's Hukwang Valley bordering the conflict-ridden Kachin State by journalist Rajeev Bhattacharjee (2016).

There is also the issue of China providing training to rebels of the Northeast as was recently brought to the fore by a militant of the People's Liberation Army of Manipur – an insurgent group which was involved in the ambush of the contingent of the Assam Rifles in July 2020 which left three jawans dead and in 2015, when 20 jawans lost their lives. In 2009, a militant identified as Sergeant Ronny of this insurgent group told his interrogators that "China's People's Liberation Army remains in contact with Manipur's PLA. Sixteen platoons of militants have come back to India after getting trained in China" (Dutta, 2020). Such constant Chinese support to disruptive elements in India creates an environment which is not conducive to the plans of progress for the Northeast under the Act East Policy.

Cooperation with neighbouring nations is important for combating insurgency. Such cooperation between India and its neighbours has taken place with Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh. For example, Myanmar and India in January 2006, conducted joint military operations inside Myanmar to flush out militants from the group – National Socialist Council of Nagalim – Khaplang (Singh, 2015). Even in the middle of the pandemic Myanmar handed over several insurgents to India (Lintner, 2020). With Bhutan, in December 2003, "Operation All Clear" was conducted against insurgent groups like the ULFA. With Bangladesh, in 2015, Anup Chetia – a leader of the ULFA was handed over to India by Dhaka (Habib and Singh, 2018). In the case of China, such cooperation is non-existent. Despite statements by the two countries where they promote cooperation on countering terrorism but as stated in 2016 by Dr. S. Jaishankar – there is no effective cooperation mechanism between India and China to deal with terrorism (*Business Standard*, 2016).

There are some very recent developments in the insurgency related processes in the Northeast of India which also have a China connection. Following the dilution of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 by the Indian Parliament, which ended the special status of the state and created two union territories in its place, several Naga rebel cadres of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) moved out of Nagaland into the Sagaing region of Myanmar and Yunnan in China as they were fearing the same fate in Nagaland (Malhotra, 2020). This brings the centrality of China back into focus as a safe and trusted lair for those working against India to

escape into. Moreover, though there had been some headway between New Delhi and the Naga rebels with the signing of the Framework Agreement in 2015, no lasting resolution seems to be in sight given the continued demand for a flag and Constitution and their recent demand to change the interlocutor (Pisharoty, 2020). Several cadres, it has been reported have been threatening to renege on the terms and revive their insurgent links which imply "a return to Chinese assistance" (Malhotra, 2020).

India's relations with China has been further strained since mid-2020, when the Chinese side "undertook several attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in western sector" especially in Galwan, Ladakh which according to India's Ministry of External Affairs *Annual Report* "seriously disturbed the peace and tranquility along the LAC in the western sector and impacted the development of the relationship" (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2020-2021: 12). During this Galwan crisis in Ladakh which led to further increase in the tensed India-China relations, Beijing's support to rebels in the Northeast seemed to have grown. According to media reports, New Delhi complained to Beijing for lending support to Paresh Baruah, the leader of the ULFA who is known to have been residing in China for several years now (Paliwal, 2020). This accusation by India was made after an attack in Chandel district of Manipur on July 29, 2020 by three rebel groups – Manipur Naga People's Front (MNPF), the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), and the ULFA, which killed four men of the Assam Rifles and injured several others (The Hindu, 2020). In a retort to Indian Prime Minister Modi's statement that "the era of expansionism is over" which was clearly aimed at China, without naming it; the rebels issued a joint statement after the attack, saying "as the entire world has made up its mind against expansionism, the people of [West Southeast Asia] are also countering the expansionism of India" (Bhattacharjee, 2020). Such statements and availability of Chinese-made arms in the Northeast, make the China factor evident in these assertions and actions by rebel groups. The China angle is neatly summed up by Governor of Nagaland and interlocutor of the Naga peace talks, N. Ravi on 24 July 2020 in the following words:

> China looks upon the North-East as a vulnerable periphery…if the objective is to prevent, pre-empt the rise of India, one weak spot is the North-East… Next is to keep India embroiled in itself. If it remains occupied in the major issue of internal stability, it consumes an enormous amount of national wealth…So China engaged in a proxy war with what it calls as 'bleeding through a million cuts'…aiding and abetting insurgencies in the North-East. It also has territorial ambitions, like Arunachal Pradesh, which it claims as its territory (Malhotra, 2020).

Such persistent violence in the Northeast understandably has adverse impacts on plans for progress mulled under the Act East Policy such as sub-regional

initiatives like the Bangladesh China-India Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) and also deters investors.

3. Sub-Regionalism

The development of physical connectivity and trade to boost the development of the Northeast of India has been a central theme in India's Act East Policy. This has been envisaged to save the Northeast from the landlocked nature that it was reduced to after the partition of India in 1947 which made the region suffer from a "developmental deficit" due to its distance from the advanced regions of India and severance of its routes to the countries to the east and Bangladesh (Barua, 2020). Due to a China threat, "periodical review of military preparedness against China rather than trade underscored the development of transport and communication in the Northeast" (ibid). Under the Look East and Act East Policy, there have been attempts to renew trade and connectivity ties with the neighbours of the Northeast through participation in sub-regional initiatives but a 'China' factor continues to dampen much of these efforts.

The region spanning southwest China, Northeast India, parts of Bangladesh and parts of Myanmar) are geographically contiguous but politically fragmented. The countries of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China view their sections of this region mainly in terms of security which has severed economic connections and foiled the upgrading of infrastructure and regional growth. The region has been geopolitically marginalized as it is considered a difficult periphery marked by local fighting, ethnic clashes, drugs, which have made the exploitation of resources as difficult as state control. In the recent past, however, there have been attempts to foreground these spaces in policy making; and planning and engineering feats have started to transform this region. Sub-regional initiatives, which stress on improving connectivity along this region, are a part of such attempts.

One sub-regional initiative which includes both India's Northeast and China's Yunnan is the BCIM-EC which has often been seen as a part of the gamut of such sub-regional initiatives under the Act East Policy of India. Rana and Uberoi (2012) note that the "BCIM is uniquely sub-regional and trans-regional, attempting to harness proximate regions of two large states with two other countries." The BCIM-EC was conceptualized to enhance cooperation in transport, resilient infrastructure, economy, and trade within a certain zone. The proposed corridor starts in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan and covers Myanmar, northeastern India and Bangladesh and ends in Kolkata located in West Bengal, India. Construction of an economic corridor was aimed to accelerate sub-regional economic development and such transformation it was felt would help resolve political problems.

However, progress has been very slow on the objectives of this sub-regional initiative. The very slow movement towards BCIM sub-regional development led Patricia Uberoi to note that it has "remained more or less as it was conceived…a reluctantly acknowledged stepchild of the Government of India, neither a 'bottom-up' nor a 'top-down' political process caught somewhere in limbo between 'Track II' and 'Track I', and destined thereby to practical inefficacy" (Uberoi, 2016). During Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Delhi in May 2013 it was noted that India and China had agreed to consult Bangladesh and Myanmar on "establishing a Joint Study Group on strengthening connectivity in the BCIM region for closer economic, trade and people-to-people linkages and initiating the development of a BCIM Economic Corridor" (Krishnan, 2013). This raised the expectation that India had finally decided to increase its involvement from Track II to Track I and would now propel the concept enthusiastically onwards but this has not happened. Rajen Singh Laishram of Manipur University wrote in 2017 that the reason behind the slow progress on the BCIM-EC is based on multiple factors which can be traced to the interactions and ties between member countries. The reasons which hinder the development of the sub-regional grouping are "rooted in distrust, despite the countries' rhetoric about good neighbourliness, different political traditions and systems, trade deficits, unbalanced security situations, unsettled boundary questions, cross-border migration and competing strategies for advancing political ambition are all contrary to the spirit of the Kunming Initiative – precursor to the BCIM-EC" (Laishram, 2017). There is also the apprehension that given the economic weaknesses of the Northeast, it may become a dumping ground for Chinese goods. Binod Kumar Mishra (2016) addresses this point by noting that with respect to Northeast's tourism, handicrafts, horticulture and floriculture there is a surplus for which China presents the best market. Mishra argues that the danger of China overwhelming the northeast economically can be averted by opening trade in a calibrated and incremental manner. He notes that developing economic infrastructure of the Northeast should be prioritized "before operationalising BCIM, otherwise Kunming – which is economically developed – will become the core and NER will remain a periphery" (Mishra, 2016). Laishram argues that experimenting with "participatory regionalism" as in Southeast Asia may strengthen the Kunming process. He notes that Northeast India has a large market potential, a population of nearly 50 million which makes it a potential trade partner for neighbouring countries. He argues that "information technology, computer hardware and housing materials are increasingly sourced from China, all through grey areas of trade. The huge market potential of the region is yet to be explored, as it opens up and links to the market for the first time in half a century. Formalizing these trades will open up many other avenues of opportunity" (Laishram, 2017).

There are scholars from China, who have provided their understanding of the reasons behind the apparent disinterest shown by India with regard to the BCIM-EC. Liu Zongyi of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies stresses that in fact, various states in northeastern India and West Bengal are very active in promoting the BCIM-EC. He notes that:

> However, since the border issue between China and India has yet to be solved and separatism still exists in northeastern India, India cannot ignore the strategic and significance of the security threats of the BCIM Economic Corridor…. New Delhi calculates that the BRI and the BCIM Economic Corridor are moves by China to gain spheres of influence and they would greatly enhance China's influence on neighboring countries' economics, politics and security, and would diminish India's advantages in the region (Zongyi, 2017).

India's concerns were also raised when a Chinese statement was released that the BCIM-EC now is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which India has refused to join or accept due to the plans for a China Pakistan Economic Corridor which will run across territory that India claims as its own sovereign space. It has also been argued that the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor also poses security threats and concerns for India, as Yunnan province is sought to be linked with the Northeast of India under it, which it is presumed by India would heighten the influence of China in the region (Kumar, 2019: 32).

India's coolness towards the BCIM-EC has promoted some changes in China's policies as well. For instance, the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), a 1,700-km corridor has been planned under the BRI that will provide China yet another node to access the Indian Ocean. The CMEC will run from Yunnan Province to Mandalay in Central Myanmar and from there it will head to Yangon, ending at Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on the Bay of Bengal. Long Xingchun, Associate Professor of China's West Normal University, had stressed that, "The CMEC was proposed during Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Myanmar in November 2017, because India has not been acting on the BCIM sub regional cooperation proposal. So, it is better for China to go for bilateral cooperation with Myanmar and simultaneously wait for India's participation" (Aneja, 2019). Mr. Wang who served as the China's state councilor and foreign minister, was emphatic that ties between India and China were insulated from their differences on the Beijing-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and had also stressed that China-India ties had a "bright future" (ibid).

4. Infrastructure

Another important aspect related to the 'China factor' in the Act East Policy and Northeast of India is with regard to the building of infrastructure in its

Northeast by India and infrastructure build-up by China in the proximity of the Northeast. Under the Look/Act East Policy, there have been several plans for the creation of infrastructure in the Northeast and its transboundary regions to promote connectivity. One of the major investors to have emerged in this sector over the past few years in Northeast India has been Japan. Such an interest by Japan has led to acerbic reactions from China. Japan has cooperated on a variety of development projects in the Northeast, including connectivity infrastructure such as building roads, providing electricity infrastructure, water supply provisions and sewage management, forest resource management and biodiversity protection (IANS, 2017). Such resilient infrastructure is necessary for an ecologically diverse and political tempestuous region such as the Northeast. Japan is looking to build a cultural link with the region as well. The Japanese Ambassador to India, Kenji Hiramatsu, led a contingent of representatives of 38 Japanese companies based in Delhi to Imphal in Manipur in May 2017 to promote investments in the state. The visit was organized to commemorate the 73rd Anniversary of the Battle of Imphal, that occurred in 1944 as a part of the Second World War between the Japanese Army and the Allied Forces. The Ambassador pledged investment in Manipur for the development of the region (Chaudhury, 2017).

A memorandum of understanding to set up the 'India Japan Act East Forum' with an aim to marry India's Act East Policy with Japan's Free and Open Asia-Pacific strategy in the backdrop of China's BRI was among the major agreements signed during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India for the 12th Indo-Japan annual summit in 2017 (ibid). The forum is planned to facilitate Japanese investments in India's Northeast region. A day after the event in which Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe had spelled out plans to set up the India-Japan Act East Forum to facilitate Tokyo's investment in the Northeast, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said Beijing was opposed to any foreign investment in "disputed areas", including that by Japan. Which was remarkably similar to India's objection on China's CPEC plans. It was noted by the Chinese spokesperson that: "You must be clear that the boundary of India and China border area has not been totally delimited…we have disputes on the eastern section of the boundary" (Scroll Staff, 2017). The reference was to India's Arunachal Pradesh, which is claimed by China as its own sovereign space. It was also outlined that India and China were now trying to seek a solution through negotiations, and so third parties must respect this and not get involved in the "efforts to resolve the disputes" (ibid). The parallels of this objection raised by China based on grounds of disputed territory to resist Japanese investment in the Northeast to India's own objection to the CPEC are stark. Earlier, China had "even gone one step further by advising India to exercise 'restraint' on the Bhupen Hazarika Bridge in Arunachal Pradesh" (Kumar, 2019: 35). China

has always rejected India's border claims which are based on the cartography of the era of British India and consequently, the border remains unsettled between the two countries which has led to flare-ups between the two as seen in the recent ones in Doklam and Galwan Valley (Yu, 2021: 4). This unsettled border continues to plague over all India-China ties and has a bearing on the plans to invest in Arunachal Pradesh for its development.

Japan has been interested in shoring its investments in the state of Assam and this has been reciprocated by Assam as was manifest in the 'Advantage Assam' Summit of 2018. The 'Advantage Assam' – the Assam Global Investors' Summit held on 03-04 February 2018, was the "largest ever investment promotion and facilitation initiative by the Government of Assam" which highlighted "the state's geostrategic advantages offered to investors by Assam" (Government of Assam, 2018). Japan was the only other country apart from Bangladesh to have a country session in the summit to showcase areas of complementary economic cooperation. Apart from economic cooperation, other aspects of cooperation with Japan are on the rise, especially in the education sector between institutes in Assam and Japan. For example, in September 2021, the Assam Women's University (AWU) Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ajanta Borgohain announced in her speech during the 8th foundation day of the institute, that the university had initiated bilateral discussions with Japan Women's Forum (JWF) to explore possibilities of developing collaborations between AWU and JWF (*Assam Tribune*, 2021: 8). She mentioned that JWF was keen to harness the potential of students pursuing skill-based subjects which were encouraged in the university which are becoming the need of the hour in the 21st century and have been underscored as being important in the New National Education Policy of 2020 of India. It is seen that educational and cultural collaborations with Japan, which can accrue immense benefits for the Northeast, are not met with any consternation by China unlike those of investment and construction projects, which bear strategic undertones. Infrastructure in the border areas built by either India or China continues to be problematic due to problems of trust regarding the intentions underlying such construction. While India under the Act East Policy envisages infrastructure projects in its neighbouring regions and the Northeast of India, it is wary of China's build-up of such resilient infrastructure along the borders of the Northeast of India and those in Myanmar and Bangladesh, which will provide China a strategic foothold in these countries.

China has completed several important communication marvels along the disputed border with India near Arunachal Pradesh and also across Tibet. According to a White Paper on Tibet released by China in 2021 in Tibet,

> Since 1951…highways with a total length of 118,800 km have been built, providing access to all administrative villages in the region…. Some 700 km

> of expressways and grade-one highways are in service. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway and the Lhasa-Xigaze Railway have been completed and opened to traffic. The construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway has begun. A number of feeder airports have been built, including Bamda Airport in Qamdo, Mainling Airport in Nyingchi, Peace Airport in Xigaze, and Gunsa Airport in Ngari. Tibet now has 140 domestic and international air routes in operation, reaching 66 cities (White Paper Government of China, 2021).

The Chinese government has recently completed the construction of a highway through the deepest canyon in the world in Tibet which lies along the Brahmaputra River and this has enabled it greater access to isolated areas along its border with India which straddles Arunachal Pradesh. This passageway bordering Arunachal Pradesh directly connects the Pad township in Nyingchi to Baibung in Medog county (Krishnan, 2021). China is also building a railway line that will connect Sichuan province with Nyingchi. While underscoring the economic fruits of this railway line, Zhu Weiqun, a senior Party official formerly in charge of Tibet policy, also noted that if there was a crisis at the border then the railway track could fast track the transportation of strategic materials as well (ibid).

India is also concerned with the construction by China of new civilian settlements along the borders which are on disputed regions. Entire villages have been built by China in areas which India considers as Arunachal Pradesh (ibid). In recent times, China has built roads to consolidate its hold along the border areas, which are disputed by constructing several national highways, trunk highways, and plenty of feeder roads (Das, 2009: 106). China has also built frontier defense patrol roads of more than 15,000 kilometers (ibid). China has laid a railway line in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, in 2006, a daily train service runs between Beijing and Lhasa since then. No comparable lines of communication have been achieved by India in its territory along the borders with China.

Not only has China expanded its communication and transportation lines along the Arunachal Pradesh border but it has also expanded transportation links to countries bordering the Northeast of India such as Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal. It plans to open access to the Bay of Bengal through the Irrawady Corridor by constructing roads linking Kunming to Mandalay to Ruili (ibid). It is also building the railway line from Dali to Ruili and intends to construct roads in areas such as Putao, Bhamo, and Pangsai apart from gaining access to the Chittagong port in Bangladesh by building a road connecting Kunming to Mandalay to Chittagong (Das, 2009: 107). India is not able to keep up with China's infrastructure building activities which also acts as a deterrent to its ambitions under the Act East Policy as with an increase in China's infrastructure build-up, there has been an increase in China's influence in these countries as well which has not been commensurate

to India's influence. The gap between India and China in the construction of such routes in the neighbouring regions is increasing, which does not bode well for the connectivity and trade links envisaged under the Act East Policy to facilitate trade and development for the Northeast of India.

Such infrastructure development at a fast-pace on the "Chinese side of the border in recent years and the fact that this is increasingly visible or that news of this has trickled down to the many ethnic groups of Arunachal Pradesh for the Indian central government to begin a process of fast-tracking infrastructure development projects in the state in the mid-2000s" (Jacob, 2020: 153). However, there remain differing views on the pay-offs to be accrued from the revival of some infrastructure in the Northeast. For instance, the Stilwell Road, originally known as the Ledo Road, built by the United States of America, during World War II to shore up its defenses against an advancing Japanese army in the North East Frontier Agency, which is present day Arunachal Pradesh, is one such route. It links Arunachal Pradesh to Yunnan in China through Myanmar. The Ledo Road, spans 1,726 km, "from Ledo in Assam (India) and goes across Nampong in Arunachal Pradesh (India) and Shindbwiyang, Bhamo and Myitkyina in Kachin (Myanmar) and further links Ledo–Burma roads junction to the city of Kunming in China. The road covers 61 km in India, 1033 km in Myanmar and 632 km in China" (Pattnaik, 2016). This road has since fallen into disuse and the part of it that lies in India is in disrepair. Since the India-China war of 1962, there was the "blinkered policy" of keeping Arunachal Pradesh "deliberately underdeveloped in terms of roads and other physical infrastructure for fear of a repeat of the Chinese intrusion of 1962 or at the very least to slow it down" (Jacob, 2020: 153). There was hardly any movement into India though these routes in the present times and the part of the Stilwell Road lying in India remains in disrepair while the parts in China and Myanmar are said to be in good condition. There is also continued demand from Arunachal Pradesh for the reopening of the Stilwell Road. In January 2020, deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Chowna Mein urged the Centre to consider reopening the Stilwell Road up to Kunming in China stating that the people living across the international boundaries of India and Myanmar have common cultural ties, and it would act as a catalyst for cross border trade (Arunachal 24.in, 2020). However, not much has transpired on this front.

5. Conclusion

In 2017, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju who hails from the Northeast said "India can be a superpower, why not? Unless Northeast India gets into that mode of working towards making India a superpower, it will never happen" (*India Today* Web Desk, 2017). The

vision to develop the Northeast of India under the Look/Act East Policy could help in this regard but many factors hinder this possibility. This article showed how the 'China' question restricts the realization of the objectives under the Act East Policy for the Northeast. Security factors such as China's links to rebels in the area and its claim over Arunachal Pradesh impacts the development plans envisaged under the policy for the region and hinders greater emphasis of New Delhi on opening routes such as the Stilwell Road. Security threats emanating from China (including recent aggressions along the border) continue to trump commercial justifications for its revival. China's possible strategic gains from an activated BCIM-EC also account for India's reluctance to pursue this sub-regional grouping which could, if opened, benefit the Northeast of India. India's constituent units in the Northeast have attempted to prod the Centre to open the Stilwell Road and pursue the BCIM-EC as these could deliver much needed access to new markets for this region, despite the Centre's visible reluctance to do so. Post-the Galwan episode, chances of cooperation with China on sub-regionalism have further diminished on matters pertaining to the Northeast or elsewhere. China also reacts to India's actions and inactions on the Act East Policy in the Northeast such as its decision to pursue the CMEC as India was not showing an interest in the BCIM-EC and China's reaction to Japanese investment plans in the Northeast, a region it calls "disputed territory." The stress on building infrastructure in the Northeast of India can also been seen as related to the massive infrastructure build-up by China along the Arunachal border and in the countries surrounding India, which can augment the connectivity routes envisaged as essential to realize the trade and investment ambitions under the Act East Policy. However, other factors related to China hampers the same infrastructure augmentation plans.

Notes

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The Evolution of Mutual Benefit in China's Foreign Aid Policy

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Abstract

Explicitly stating that its aid giving is based on the principle of mutual benefit is a distinctive feature of China's foreign aid. How the mutual benefit principle is interpreted in China's aid policy and why it remains perhaps the most durable aid principle over time is worth investigating. By comprehensively reviewing Chinese policy briefs and reports, white papers, government documents and speeches, this article finds that while mutual benefit has been a basic principle, the Chinese government's statement and its role in the aid policy has continuously varied over the years. During Mao's period, the mutual benefit was introduced as a basic principle but its importance was limited due to the country's policy statement indicating more the beneficiaries' benefit. Then after the Reform and Opening policy in 1978, mutual benefit moved to the centre of China's aid policy statement. Following the turn of the new century, particularly after 2011, China's aid policy again pays more attention to recipient interest, and the importance of stressing mutual benefit decreased. The flexible use of mutual benefit is an important characteristic while it has remained a central element. Additionally, because self-interest is an integral part of mutual benefit, it fits with China's pragmatic thinking on foreign aid, legitimizes the goal of China pursuing economic interests, softens the tone of China pursuing its political interests and to some extent alleviates the domestic critics on China's aid relations. The main conclusion is that Chinese aid would benefit from more conceptual clarity with respect to mutual benefit and a more stable application over time.

Keywords: *Foreign aid, mutual benefit, 'Eight Principles', Four Principles, Foreign Aid White Paper, China*

1. Introduction

In the post-Cold War period, a recipient-centred narrative dominated the discourse on providing aid. The classic Official Development Assistance (ODA) definition requires aid expenditure to strive for the "promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective" (OECD, 2020). Consequently, academic research and independent evaluations take this recipient-centred rationale as a starting point when analyzing development policies and practices. However, the discourse on development has seen some changes. The concept of enlightened self-interest, or emphasizing the donor's interest when giving aid, is receiving increasing attention in the development community. It has been pointed out that some Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members (i.e., the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands and the EU) have gone further by discussing aid motives in more self-interested discourse, irrespective of their position on increasing or decreasing ODA budgets (Keijzer and Lundsgaarde, 2018). Hulme (2016: 5) also argues that rich nations should help the poor not only because it is the morally right thing to do but also in the "pursuit of self-interest, indeed the future wellbeing of rich world citizens (our children and grandchildren)." Similarly, Glennie (2021: 10, 105) boldly proposes new paradigm shifts in how we talk about aid. Foreign aid that is presented as a charitable gift and as money transfers from rich to poor countries has proved to be outdated and embarrassing. Consequently, a new vision for "global public investment" (e.g., spending on global goods and services) with returns for contributors (donors) and recipients is more appropriate to today's reality.

Whereas the concept of mutual benefit has only recently become *salonfähig* in the Global North, donors from the Global South seem to have been working on the enlightening self-interest concern for many decades. They have practically shaped this self-interest concern with the formulation of a win-win or mutual benefit policy on foreign aid. As one of the most prominent donors of the Global South, China mentions its foreign aid giving is not a form of charity but based on the principle of mutual benefit. Since its first appearance in China's official aid document in 1964, which was titled 'China's Eight Principles for Foreign Economic and Technical Assistance' (Eight Principles), 'mutual benefit' has been seen as the most common phrase in China's official reports and speeches when introducing its foreign aid policy. During the Davos World Economic Forum, Chairman Xi highlighted that the goal of China's foreign aid was to deliver mutual benefit and that one of the leading drivers of China-led globalization would be China's partnership with developing countries (Johnston and Rudyak, 2017). At the Forums on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Xi also repeatedly stressed that China's cooperation with African countries works based on "mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity" (Hanauer and Morris, 2014; Zhang, M., 2018).

The explicit statement that foreign aid giving is based on the principle of mutual benefit is considered to be a distinctive feature of China's foreign aid. However, while repeatedly reiterating the importance of mutual benefit from the Chinese government, it is still difficult to understand due to the complex and changing aid policies and practices in China. Previous studies either focus on introducing China's aid policy generally (Kobayashi, 2008: 34; Lancaster, 2009; Liu, N., 2006) or have concentrated on assessing the mutual benefit principle by either arguing China is a "rogue donor" pursuing only self-interest (Alves, 2013; Hodzi et al., 2012; Naím, 2007) or is a messiah to recipients that can bring benefit to local development (Chen, Y., 2015; Dreher and Fuchs, 2015; Kilama, 2016). But these still bring less help with capturing what the principle really means and why China persists in it in its foreign aid. It is therefore interesting to have a look at how the mutual benefit principle is interpreted and applied in China's aid policy and what significance this principle has for aid from China.

Although China is called an emerging donor, it has given aid for more than six decades. During this time, China's aid policy has evolved as evidenced by the release of its central aid documents entitled 'China's Eight Principles for Foreign Economic and Technical Assistance' (Eight Principles, 1964), 'Four Principles of Sino-African Economic and Technological Cooperation' (Four Principles, 1983), and China's Foreign Aid White Paper (2011). Although China's aid policy changes continuously, mutual benefit has always been a basic aid principle in those three documents. Thus, this requires us to see China's application of its mutual benefit principle first and foremost from a perspective of policy dynamics. Against this background, the article first asks: "How is the mutual benefit principle interpreted in China's foreign aid policy and what are the major changes of its policy discourse addressing the principle across different periods?" Then the article continues to investigate "why mutual benefit has remained a durable principle in China's foreign aid policy over time?" By answering this question we intend to contribute to the literature on foreign aid in general and Chinese aid in particular. Both bodies of literature have had difficulties in conceptualizing 'mutual benefit' and we aim to contribute to this by providing a systematic overview of mutual benefit in Chinese aid policy documents. The intention of this research is also to have an impact on aid practice: since there is currently a lack of understanding what is meant with mutual benefit, the label can be misused, allowing for ambiguities to persist. In the conclusion, we make some suggestions to reduce these ambiguities.

Considering both changes in China's overall domestic and foreign policy and the evolution of its leading government aid documents, we divide the analysis into three periods: the first period begins in the early years of aid giving in the 1950s and continues to the adoption of the Reform and Opening

policy in 1978; the second period begins in 1978 and continues into the new century; and the third period, which is ongoing, begins in 2010 when China began to follow a more assertive foreign policy, and published its first White Paper on aid in 2011.

Based on the timeline, this article adopts a discourse analysis approach to examine how the mutual benefit term is addressed by the Chinese government in each period. Two categories of documents are distinguished in this research. The first category specifically refers to the three leading official aid policy documents mentioned above. These central aid policy documents provide a solid foundation for discourse analysis of China's foreign aid policy. The second category includes supporting (complementary) documents, comprising mainly of a selection of government reports and working papers, and speeches and publications of Chinese leaders. Annual reports and working papers from the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) are also important sources here. China's aid policy and thoughts are often scattered among those comprehensive documents, reports and presentations. The key part of the discourse analysis is understanding the concept of mutual benefit in the Chinese aid context. For this reason, it is vital that we thoroughly and systematically investigate the context of the mutual benefit discourse. Several questions are considered in the process: (1) What is the discourse of mutual benefit for the Chinese government? (2) What is the purpose and what are the aims of the discourse for China? (3) When and where the discourse takes place? (4) Who created the discourse and who consumed? (5) What factors would contribute to the existence and evolvement of the discourse. Then we zoomed in on the mutual benefit statement by coding statements reflecting principles such as 'win-win cooperation' (双赢), 'common interest'(共同利益), 'righteousness and interest' (义和利), 'seeking something mutual' (求同), 'the needs of both sides' (双方共同利益), and other related terms. This article looks in particular at the interpretation of the mutual benefit concept that is used in China's aid policy documents and how this discourse has shifted and expressed over a long period. Then the analysis on what factors can influence the discourse continues by taking into account China's economic, political and social transformation in a complex historical and current background. By doing this, we assess and explain why mutual benefit remains a durable aid principle in China's aid policy over periods.

2. The Establishment of the Mutual Benefit Principle in the Early Years of China's Aid

The People's Republic of China (China) has a long history of providing aid to other developing countries. In many ways, Chinese aid started with its

support for the proletarian revolutionary movements in the early 1950s by providing aid to socialist neighbours, such as North Korea, North Vietnam and Mongolia. Following the Bandung Conference in 1955, China rapidly expanded its aid to non-socialist countries in Asia and Africa, including Cambodia (1956), Nepal (1956), Indonesia (1956), Burma (now Myanmar, 1958), Laos (1961), Guinea (1958), Ghana (1961), Tanzania (1964), Zambia (1964) and more. Economic and technical cooperation between China and developing countries in Asia and Africa had been improved considerably with the increase in China's foreign aid. To effectively develop and implement China's foreign aid, the Chinese government formulated the Eight Principles as a set of guidelines for its foreign aid and announced them to the world during Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's visit to African countries in 1964.

As Chinese scholars pointed out, "the 'Eight Principles' united the thoughts of agencies and staff involved in foreign aid, and those actors conscientiously carried out the Eight Principles, regardless of the type of aid, type of projects, scale, standards, etc." (Zhou, H. and Xiong, 2017: 5–6). Originally derived and developed from the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the spirit of the Bandung Conference, the Eight Principles set several basic rules for China's foreign aid at that time. Mutual benefits, along with other considerations, such as non-interference and self-reliance development, is put forward as a basic principle of China's foreign aid policy.

Although mutual benefit was taken up as a guiding principle, China's primary policy statement showed an expression of "caring more about the benefit of recipients" and "meeting recipient's needs" at that time. According to the main text of the Eight Principles, the Chinese government indicated clearly that its aid never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges (see Appendix 1, Principle 2 in Eight Principles). In terms of financial modalities, China's aid was given mainly in the form of grants and low-interest loans (see Principle 3). The cardinal guideline of Chinese loan provision was to lighten the burden of recipient countries as much as possible. For further explanation, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai introduced that Chinese loans have four characteristics: no or very low interest; long-term repayment period, long-term grace period that can also be extended, and even the possibility of no payback (Liu, C. and Chen, 1996: 656). Chairman Mao Zedong also frequently emphasized that Chinese loan-giving was relatively flexible, which means that the grace period could be extended or the debts could be written off if the recipients had difficulty repaying them (Mao, 1994: 249). Regarding the implementation of aid projects, the Chinese government set itself high standards to satisfy the needs of the recipients. On one hand, Chinese aid projects should achieve quick results so that the recipient government could increase its income and accumulate capital rapidly (Principle 5), and on the other hand, China should provide the recipients with the best-quality

equipment and materials produced in China (Principle 6). The effectiveness of aid giving also requires China to fully transfer its knowledge and technology to recipient countries (Principle 7) and would help them to achieve self-reliance and independent development (Principle 4).

Indeed, prioritizing the interests of recipient countries became the main guideline of China's aid policy in the early period. This is associated with Mao Zedong's internationalism thinking, which saw assisting the people and nations that were fighting for their independence and liberation as China's internationalism obligation that it could not reject. In an official report regarding how to guide China's foreign aid work, vice prime ministers Chen Yi and Li Fuchun who took charge of China's foreign aid work, then stated that "foreign aid is an internationalist obligation to unite other brotherhood countries, and thus it is a serious political task for China" (XNA, 1958). Thus, when countries like Vietnam, North Korea and Albania asked for help from China, Mao Zedong without hesitation started to provide assistance. After the Bandung Conference, Mao Zedong decided to expand the scale of aid from the socialist camp to non-socialist countries by providing goods and materials for production and living, and even military aid to assist the battle for national independence in Asia and Africa (Chen, S., 2017: 62). As he pointed out, "helping those socialist countries that are in need is an internationalist issue and an obligation of the Communists…. China, after the victory in the revolution, will make every possible effort to assist nations and people in the oppressed Asian, African and Latin American countries in fighting for their independence and liberation (Mao, 1999: 115–116)." Thus, China's aid policy statement in the early period portrays an image of attaching great importance to the needs and interests of the recipients.

3. Development of the Mutual Benefit After the 1978 Reform and Opening-up Policy

China experienced a tremendous change in 1978. By launching the reform and opening-up policy, the country's main task shifted from promoting an anti-Western, anti-imperialist and socialist ideology to advancing its national interests, which were defined almost wholly in terms of economic development (Copper, 2016: 19). China's foreign aid policy was revised to adapt to this new situation. China's de facto leader, Deng Xiaoping, expounded that China should keep stressing the Eight Principles of Foreign Aid but that the principles needed to be revised and improved, both to benefit recipient countries and to adapt to the situation of China (Deng, 1994b: 112; Shi and Lv, 1989: 70). Against this background, Chairman Zhao Ziyang proposed a new version of the aid document when he visited Egypt, Algeria and 11 other African countries from December 1983 to January 1984. This

document is called the Four Principles of Sino-African Economic and Technological Cooperation (hereafter, referred to as the Four Principles), which has been the guiding document for China's aid policy since the 1980s.

The Four Principles are the inheritance and development of the Eight Principles that were drawn up in 1964, under new national conditions and practice following the Reform and Opening in 1978. They entail several core guidelines of equality and mutual benefit, focusing on practical results, diversity in form, and the attainment of common progress when giving aid to other countries (Zhou, H., 2008). In comparison to the Eight Principles, the Four Principles strongly highlighted the importance of mutual benefit and the need for China's aid giving to meet the interest of both sides.

In detail, as opposed to helping recipients achieve self-reliance and independent development in the Eight Principles, the Four Principles stressed that both parties could learn from each other's strengths, and they should help each other to enhance mutual self-reliance and to develop the national economies of both sides (see Appendix 2, Principle 4). The Chinese government began to emphasize that China itself was a developing country, that its aid worked in the framework of South-South cooperation, and that China itself should be able to benefit from the process of aid giving (Chen, S., 2017: 159). In addition, the Four Principles (Principle 3) also allowed China to make small profits while recipients also benefitted. Thus, China's aid-giving modalities also experienced substantial changes: from the earlier grants and interest-free loans that were intended to lighten the burden of recipient countries as much as possible to a variety of forms, including technological exchanges, contract-engineering projects, co-production, joint ventures and other forms of cooperation. With the expansion of the cooperative approach and scale, China believed that it could forge a closer integration of its interests with those of the recipients, and long-term technical and managerial cooperation would also be established (Zhou, H. and Xiong, 2017: 27).

After the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy, the main tasks for China were to develop its national economy and promote modernization. China's foreign policy and strategy also make a turn, becoming increasingly pragmatic, and shifting to focus and serve China's economic development (Deng, 1994a: 57; Wang, Y., 2011). Against this background, there was a debate on whether China should remain a donor when its limited available resources were needed for domestic development. In response, Deng Xiaoping confirmed that aid would be continued because China's position in the world is inseparable from its support of friendly countries, especially Third World countries. Although China now faced economic difficulties, it would still offer the necessary amount of aid and China would provide more when it achieved development (Deng, 1994a; Shi and Lv, 1989: 69). Thus, when giving aid, China changed its aid practice from

"taking no economic account" in the past to developing equal and mutually beneficial economic cooperation with other developing countries. Aid from China became increasingly pragmatic and shifted to focus on serving the country's economic development. Being pragmatic and pursuing "mutual benefit and common development" become essential guidelines in China's aid policy after the reform and opening up (Huang, 2007).

4. Adjustment of the Mutual Benefit Principle from 2010 Onwards

China's foreign aid has witnessed significant growth in volume and scale since the second decade of the 21st century. From 2013 to 2018, the Chinese government is estimated to have provided a total of RMB270.2 billion (approximately US$40 billion at the current exchange rate) in development finance by way of grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans (The State Council, 2021). China has rapidly grown as an emerging donor with a volume (both ODA and other official flows) that can rival that of other major donors and lenders (Dreher et al., 2017; Kitano and Harada, 2016). In 2013, China announced an ambitious plan: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to construct a modern Silk Road that connects a vast region covering Asia, Europe and Africa. To support the BRI, two financial arrangements were established: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund (SRF), which combined, added up to US$100 billion stated for infrastructure financing along the BRI regions. Moreover, China has also created a massive platform of public and private funds in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, including the China–Africa Development Fund, the China–ASEAN Investment Cooperation Fund, and China and Central and Eastern European Countries 16+1 Fund (Kamal and Gallagher, 2016).

China's aid policy against this background has experienced an adjustment again. The Foreign Aid White Paper released in 2011 became the first official aid document to comprehensively introduce China's foreign aid policy in the new century. In this White Paper, several elements of the previous Four Principles have been removed, including the stipulations that China's aid projects should require low investment while yielding rapid results, and that Chinese workers should have the same living conditions as their local peers. These guidelines are no longer part of China's official statement on foreign aid. In the meantime, there are some new developments in China's aid policy, namely the mention that China's aid should keep pace with the times and pay attention to reform and innovation. Although the White Paper has seen several changes, mutual benefit is still retained as an important principle in the new aid policy document. But the main discourse of China's aid policy regarding the mutual benefit concept is seen differently again.

China's new policy statement shifts again to favour the interest of recipients. The guidelines that China's aid giving must "meet the needs of both sides" in the previous document have been changed to "accommodate recipient countries' interests" and "meet the actual needs of recipients" (see Appendix 3, Principles 3 and 4) in the 2011 Aid White Paper. The Aid White Paper further explains that China's aid, on the one hand, provides foreign aid within the reach of its abilities under its national conditions but, on the other, gives full play to its comparative advantages and does its utmost to tailor its aid to meet the needs of its recipients (China State Council, 2011). Additionally, China no longer stresses that "aid should help each other to achieve mutual self-reliance and develop both national economies." Instead, in its White Paper, China says that it will unremittingly help recipients build up their self-development capacity, foster local personnel and technical forces, build infrastructure, and develop and use domestic resources (see Appendix 3, Principle 1).

China's following government documents and speeches make a clear statement on the principle of mutual benefit, which is known as upholding the "correct sense of justice" (正确义利观, zheng que yi li guan). The notion was first introduced by Xi when talking about win-win relations during his Africa tour in March 2013. Then Foreign Minister Wang Yi further elaborated Xi's statement in the *People's Daily* newspaper later in the year. In his article, titled "Upholding the correct sense of justice, and actively playing the responsible role of great powers," Wang described Xi's "correct sense of justice" as follows:

> 'Justice' (义, yi) reflects our credos, the principles of communists and socialist nations. In the world today, some people live comfortable lives while others do not. This is not a good situation. True wellbeing and happiness come when everyone is well and happy. We want a world where everyone develops together. We particularly want to see developing nations achieve rapid development. As for 'interests' (利, li), this means sticking to the principle of mutually beneficial win-win relations. Rather than one side winning and another losing, both must be winners. We are duty-bound to do all we can to assist poor nations. Sometimes, we must prioritize ethics and justice over our own interests; sometimes, we must forfeit our own interests for the sake of ethics and justice. We must never pursue our own interests alone, or think only in terms of gain and loss.
>
> (Wang, Y., 2013; cited in Kawashima, 2019)

Dealing with the relationship between "justice" and "benefit" and the concept that China should uphold the "correct sense of justice" becomes the main statement of China's aid policy. It briefly means that China will give more consideration to the recipient's interest while pursuing its own

– China will even sacrifice self-interest when necessary. This has become a key diplomatic tenet and a crucial guideline for foreign aid in China (Zhang, Y., 2018). In the years following Wang's article, the phrase "correct sense of justice" has been repeated dozens of times by Chinese leaders in public speeches or reports. During the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs (中央外事工作会, Zhongyang waishi gongzuo hui), Xi stated that China will adhere to the correct view of "justice" and "benefit," putting the latter at the core of all thinking, and taking morality as the starting point in solving problems (Men, 2020: 185; XNA, 2014). At the opening ceremony of the 2015 FOCAC Summit, Xi delivered a keynote on cooperation between China and African countries. He said that justice and interest are seen as two equally important parts of a whole, but that justice must come first and self-interest second; to African countries, China will always prioritize justice (Xi, 2017a: 456). At the following FOCAC Beijing Summit in 2018, Xi again stressed that China would follow the principles of "giving more and taking less," "giving before taking" and "giving without asking in return" (Xi, 2020: 430).

5. Significance of Stressing Mutual Benefit in China's Foreign Aid

The statements on China's aid policy regarding the mutual benefit principle have shifted over the years. During the early aid giving period, China's aid policy statement gave full concern to the recipient's needs and benefits, thus the importance of the mutual benefit principle can be questioned. During the opening-up and reform period, China's stated its aid-giving needs to meet the interest of both sides, and mutual benefit came to a central place on China's aid agenda. Following the turn of the new century, particularly after 2011, China's aid policy statement again stresses more on recipient's interest and the importance of emphasizing mutual benefit declines. This is, however, not the full picture of China's foreign aid policy. Since emphasizing mutual benefit, there has always been a self-interest consideration in China's foreign aid policy.

5.1. A Soft Tone for Pursuing Political Interests

Although not clearly interpreted in its policy statement, foreign aid has always been an integral part of China's foreign policy, serving the country's political interest. During Mao Zedong's period, foreign aid played an important political role. Led by the Communist Party, the new government (People's Republic of China, PRC) felt the need to develop its own foreign relations instead of adopting the diplomatic ties that were established by the Guomindang (Republic of China). Therefore, foreign aid was an essential

foreign instrument for developing foreign relations for the new government to acquire diplomatic recognition (Fuchs and Rudyak, 2019). This consideration has clearly been seen in the formulation of the One China policy, which expresses the PRC's ambition to replace Taiwan as the only legitimate representative of China in the United Nations. To gain more international support, China adjusted its aid policy by rapidly expanding foreign aid to Asia, Africa and Latin America between 1969 and 1974, which peaked in 1971 and 1973 (Chen, S., 2017: 127). In 1971, the PRC had enough support in the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) to become the only legitimate member on behalf of China and it took over the permanent seat on the UN Security Council that had been held by the Republic of China (Taiwan). Among the 23 countries that sent the proposal for this change to the UN, 22 had received Chinese foreign aid in that period (Zhou, H., 2015: 215). Thereafter, China continues to use aid as an essential tool to isolate Taiwan from the international community. By the end of the 1970s, more than a hundred nations had established diplomatic relations with China.

In addition, China's aid policy also has another political concern – spreading its socialist power and influence. Although a newly founded country, Mao Zedong defined China as a major socialist power and in some ways an equal to the Soviet Union in Communist bloc affairs (Chen, S., 2017: 70; Copper, 1976: 19). Foreign aid was used by the Chinese government to help people in the oppressed countries to fight for their liberation. After China's victory in the revolution, Mao Zedong stated that,

> China will make every possible effort to assist nation and people in the oppressed Asian, African and Latin American countries in fighting for their independence and liberation…. China will further be involved in fostering brotherhood relations and cooperation with socialist countries and at the same time strengthen cooperation with other peace-loving countries (Mao, 1999: 115–116).

After the Bandung Conference, the Chinese government decided to expand the scale of aid from the socialist camp to non-socialist countries by providing goods and materials for producing and living, and even military aid to assist the battle for national independence in Asia and Africa (Chen, S., 2017: 62). Sino-Soviet competition, particularly within the Communist movement, was seen not only in Asia but also spreading to African countries, such as Mali, Guinea and Tanzania (Copper, 1976: 85–114; Scalapino, 1964). Regarding China's aid provision, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai further explained, "in fact, this was not merely a case of China giving aid to Asian and African countries; China gave aid to newly-independent countries to unite their powers, in turn weakening the force of imperialism, which was also of enormous aid to China" (Zhou, E., 1964; cited in Zhou, H. and Xiong, 2017: 2–3). China could benefit

considerably in politics through generously giving aid to other developing countries (Chen, S., 2017: 68). Foreign aid has been used as an important diplomatic instrument to accomplish China's political goals.

After the reform and opening-up policy in 1978 and the start of the second period in aid policy, economic interests quickly overtook political ones and became the main consideration of China's aid policy. From 2010 onwards, however, political concerns are back. In contrast to the first period, China's current political interests are not short-term and ideological ones (such as diplomatic recognition and spreading socialist ideology in the first period) but focus instead on a long-term and global view consideration – improving China's international image as a responsible power, and increasing China's voice and influence in global governance. In China, the term "being a responsible great power" is often mentioned in connection with foreign aid. As Luo writes, "foreign aid represents China's contribution to international society, shows 'big power responsibility' and helps to win the approval of international society for China's rise" (Luo, 2016; cited in Fuchs and Rudyak, 2019). Foreign aid has been used as a form of soft power to create a positive international image. For example, regular visits by leaders and China's foreign minister, the establishment of the Confucius Institute overseas, and providing scholarships and training programs for international students in China help to improve communication and exchanges of culture, language and people (Tremann, 2018). China's growing engagement in humanitarian assistance also reflects this approach to projecting an exemplary international image (He, 2014; He and Cao, 2013). In a recently published aid document in January 2021, China again introduces foreign aid as its duty to actively engage in development as a responsible member of the international community (The State Council, 2021).

The Chinese government also uses foreign aid as a lever to gain a stronger voice in global governance. Compared to providing aid mainly through bilateral channels, China is demonstrating a willingness to pilot multilateral aid and cooperation. The BRI that was proposed by Chairman Xi Jinping in 2013 is considered China's biggest initiative to explore multilateral aid cooperation since the reform and opening-up policy (Wang, L. and Li, 2018: 76). At the First Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in 2017, Xi Jinping expressed China's willingness to enhance multilateral cooperation and readiness to work with international organizations (XNA, 2017). Meanwhile, Xi Jinping also aims to contribute a new vision and norms to international relations and cooperation. Building a "community of common destiny" has become a main diplomatic thought for Xi Jinping's government (Zhang, D., 2018). This concept holds that humankind has become a community of common destiny, in that one country

is inseparable from another, with their interests being highly intermingled and interdependent (Xi, 2017b). Consequently, China's foreign aid has increasingly turned to focus on issues of shared interest, such as global health cooperation, climate change and humanitarian assistance (Su and Li, 2019).

5.2. Legitimizing the Goal of Pursuing Economic Interests

After the Reform and Opening Policy, economic interest is given great importance in China's foreign aid policy. With China's aid already having contributed to the political and diplomatic recognition, its foreign aid after 1978 is seen primarily as economic cooperation with other developing countries and as an integral part of the country's overall economic development strategy. Therefore, foreign aid played an important role in directly benefiting China's economic development agenda and interests (Fuchs and Rudyak, 2019). In the early 1990s, at the Working Meeting on China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, Minister Li Lanqing further strengthened this view by proposing that China should focus not only on aid but also on developing economic cooperation and trade relations with other developing countries. He further pointed out that the main task of Chinese aid was to encourage Chinese businesses to go abroad and cooperate with local businesses, which would ultimately promote the economic development of both China and the recipients (Song, 2019). To better encourage Chinese enterprises to "go abroad", China's Exim Bank was founded and it introduced a new lending strategy via the provision of medium and long-term concessional loans to recipients. The new lending arrangements would strengthen financial support for Chinese businesses to help them gain a competitive advantage overseas (Song, 2019). In this regard, China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and even private companies were encouraged to make an initial move to seek opportunities in other developing countries (Sato et al., 2011).

Besides, foreign aid is also incorporated into China's Grand Strategy of Economy and Trade, which uses aid to promote China's trade and investment interests. In 1992, China piloted foreign aid joint ventures that combined aid with trade and investment. In the mid-1990s, it formally introduced them as a model of economic cooperation, together with the above-mentioned concessional loan arrangements (Fuchs and Rudyak, 2019). The Chinese government integrated its aid agencies and commercial entities and encouraged them to work closely together, combining aid, direct investment, service contracts, labour cooperation, foreign trade and exports (Sun, 2014). In general, China's aid is always delivered as a part of a larger package, which often included a high-level visit, concessional loans, written-off loans

and promises to facilitate trade (Percival, 2007: 105–106). Thus, bilateral relations – particularly economic and trade relations between China and its aid recipients – underwent rapid development.

While the Chinese government is increasingly using aid to serve diplomatic and political purposes in the new century, economic interest remains an impetus. This is in particular obvious since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. But rather than simply increasing exports of Chinese products and labour or encouraging Chinese enterprises to go out in the past, through the BRI, China seeks to transform its aid and development strategy in accordance with long term economic considerations – to strengthen China's influence over the rules and standards in overseas infrastructure engagement (Song, 2019; Sun, 2017). For instance, the Mombasa–Nairobi railway was built with Chinese standards, which means the whole line was designed with Chinese speed criteria, and the equipment and technology were provided by China. China also provided training for the service and operation of the railway project. For convenient connections, future railway lines connecting to this railway will adopt the same technology and services, and train carriages and related equipment will also conform to Chinese standards. The Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway provides another example of China seeking to export its standards, equipment and technology. The project was China's first overseas high-speed railway construction contract, promoting its export to Indonesia of not only Chinese equipment and products, but also the entire production chain of the Chinese high-speed railway industry.

5.3. A Rhetoric to Alleviate the Domestic Critics

It is also important to add that claiming mutual benefit can be seen as an expedient measure for China's domestic governance. Put differently, the contemporary reality and social public opinion environment do not allow the Chinese government to abandon this principle. Although China became the second-largest economy in the world in 2010 with annual GDP growth of around 7%, its per capita GDP fell further behind, ranking 54 in 2020. While the Chinese government announced that China has completely eradicated extreme poverty, claiming to have met its poverty alleviation target under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule (NCR, 2021), the country still faces significant challenges such as increasing income inequality, urban-rural disparity, unemployment and ageing issues (Sonali Jain et al., 2018). Therefore, adhering to the policy of mutual benefit could alleviate domestic criticism and opposition to the government: China still has a lot of poverty inside so why does it provide aid to other countries, some of whom are richer than China itself (Lancaster, 2009)? Massive

criticisms typically appear on social media and from intellectuals whenever China releases the amount and details of foreign aid given to others. Foreign aid has been labelled as a sensitive issue for a long time, and the amount of aid was kept secret by the Chinese government. Thus, stressing the principle of mutual benefit could be an implicit way to explain why the Chinese government gives aid to other developing countries and to avoid further criticisms.

6. Conclusion

Explicitly stating that it is pursuing mutual benefit when giving aid is the quintessential characteristic of China's aid policy. Central documents on aid from all three periods incorporate the concept of mutual benefit and state it as a basic principle of China's foreign aid. While repeatedly present in official aid documents and publicity, the term "mutual benefit" can be somewhat difficult to understand due to the complex and changing aid policies and practices in China. It first needs to be understood from a policy dynamic perspective showing that the interpretation of mutual benefit has seen continuous changes.

Mutual benefit was put forward as a basic principle during Mao Zedong's period. The first of the Eight Principles in this period explicitly referred to mutual benefit. However, with basically all other principles stressing not mutual but beneficiary benefits, the importance of this principle can be questioned. This changed significantly after the Reform and Opening policy in 1978 when the mutual benefit statement moved to the centre of China's aid agenda. Following the turn of the century, particularly after 2011, China's aid policy statement experienced yet another adjustment. Although mutual benefit was still part of this period's principles, its importance dwindled again. Prioritizing the recipient's interest again became a more important guideline in China's foreign aid policy. In effect, this policy analysis shows that the foundation of China's aid policy has frequently shifted. Consequently, it is too simplistic to argue that China's aid is recipient-centred, focused on mutual benefit, or only pursuing self-interest. In reality, that foundation has always been mixed and that also means that there has always been an element of self-interest.

That mutual benefit has been used flexibly is an important reason for its durability as a principle in China's aid policy. Besides, as already stated, there has always been an element of self-interest in China's foreign aid giving. For example, during the early period of aid giving, China's aid was primarily focused on political interests. Chief among these was the goal of developing foreign relations and the "one-China policy." In the reform and opening-up

period, foreign aid played a vital role in advancing China's economic interests by, for example, encouraging Chinese businesses to "go out" and promote trade and investment relations with other countries. In the new century, particularly under Xi Jinping administration, economic interest remains an impetus, but foreign aid in China has been lifted to a more strategic and global view consideration – to project a good international image and seek more influence in global governance and affairs. Moreover, stressing the principle of mutual benefit could be an implicit way to avoid domestic criticism of the Chinese government. Mutual benefit, thus, is strategically used as rhetoric for justifying China's pursuing of these self-interests. Admittedly, it is not difficult to observe the "tool" nature of China's foreign aid, in the sense that foreign aid has always been a powerful diplomatic tool. China has strategically adjusted its interpretations of policy to satisfy its diplomatic objectives and serve the country's economic and political interests.

More recently, China seems to be softening its stance on its mutual benefit statement. In the latest official document, which was published by CIDCA in January 2021, mutual benefit is introduced as one of the distinctive approaches instead of the basic principle of China's foreign aid (The State Council, 2021). In the new document, the term "foreign aid" has been replaced by "development cooperation," and the remaining principles are strongly recipient-centred, such as "respecting each other as equal," "doing China's best to help," and "focusing on development and improving people's lives" (ibid.). Given that this document is brand new, it is too early to say whether it indicates the start of a new phase in China's aid. Also, although the policy discourse has seen changes, the mutual benefit concern will continue surviving as long as China labels itself as one of the developing countries and within the framework of South-South Cooperation. Pressure and critics from the domestic society also require that the Chinese government does not abandon this mutual benefit concern. Mutual benefit will still have a practical implication on China's foreign aid, if not as a basic principle in the policy statements.

It is a pity that being one of the most prominent donors of the Global South and having been practising the principle for many decades, China yet does not have a clear conceptual framework for its mutual benefit principle. On the contrary, China's position on this principle is getting more ambiguous. On one hand, it softens the stance on mutual benefit in the aid policy, but on the other hand in practice, China does not and will not abandon this approach. If the ambiguity remains, it will create more criticism of China's aid strategic opacity and poor aid practices. Therefore, rather than adjusting the government's policy statement frequently, a clear vision and realistic conceptual framework for mutual benefit are needed for China.

Appendix 1

China's Eight Principles for Foreign Economic and Technical Assistance in 1964 (Eight Principles)

1) China always bases its provision of aid to other nations on the principle of equality and mutual benefit.
2) China strictly respects the sovereignty of the recipient countries, and never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges.
3) China provides economic aid in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans and extends the time limit for the repayment when necessary to lighten the burden of recipient countries as much as possible.
4) China does not make the recipient countries dependent on China but helps them gradually achieve self-reliance and independent development.
5) China tries its best to help the recipient countries build projects which require less investment while yielding quicker results, so that the recipient government may increase its income and accumulate capital.
6) China provides the best-quality equipment and materials of its own manufacture at international market prices.
7) In providing technical assistance, the Chinese government will ensure that the personnel of the recipient country fully master the necessary techniques.
8) The experts dispatched by China to help in recipient countries will have the same standard of living as the experts of the local. The Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities.

中国对外经济技术援助八项原则（1964）

第一， 中国政府一贯根据平等互利的原则对外提供援助，从来不把这种援助看作是单方面的赐予，而认为援助是相互的。

第二， 中国政府在对外提供援助的时候，严格尊重受援国的主权，绝不附带任何条件，绝不要求任何特权。

第三， 中国政府以无息或者低息贷款的方式提供经济援助，在需要的时候延长还款期限，以尽量减少受援国的负担。

第四， 中国政府对外提供援助的目的，不是造成受援国对中国的依赖，而是帮助受援国逐步走上自力更生、经济上独立发展的道路。

第五， 中国政府帮助受援国建设的项目，力求投资少，收效快，使受援国政府能够增加收入，积累资金。

第六， 中国政府提供自己所能生产的、质量最好的设备和物资，并且根据国际市场的价格议价。如果中国政府所提供的设备和物资不合乎商定的规格和质量，中国政府保证退换。

第七， 中国政府对外提供任何一种技术援助的时候，保证做到使受援国的人员充分掌握这种技术。
第八， 中国政府派到受援国帮助进行建设的专家，同受援国自己的专家享受同样的物质待遇，不容许有任何特殊要求和享受。

Appendix 2

Four Principles of Sino-African Economic and Technological Cooperation' in 1983 (Four Principles)

1) Follow the principle of unity, friendship, equality and mutual benefit. Respect each other's sovereignty, and do not interfere in each other's internal affairs. No political conditions are attached, and no privilege is required. Experts and technicians are sent by China, and no special treatment is required.
2) Care about the actual needs of both sides and within China's abilities. Exert both their strengths and potential, and strive to invest less, have short construction periods, quick results, and good economic results.
3) Provide aid in varied forms, including technical services, training techniques and technology exchange, contract projects, cooperative productions, and joint ventures, and so on. China is committed to the cooperative project and is responsible for guaranteeing quality, making small profits, and focusing on justice.
4) The purpose of this cooperation is to learn from each other's strengths, and help each other to enhance mutual self-reliance and to develop their respective national economies.

中非经济技术合作四项原则（1983）

第一， 遵循团结友好、平等互利的原则，尊重对方的主权，不干涉对方的内政，不附带任何政治条件，不要求任何特权。
第二， 从双方的实际需要和可能条件出发，发挥各自的长处和潜力，力求投资少，工期短，收效快，能取得良好的经济效益。
第三， 方式可以多种多样，因地制宜，包括提供技术服务、培训技术和管理人员、进行科学技术交流、承建工程、合作生产、合资经营等等。中国方面对所承担的合作项目负责守约、保质、薄利、重义。中国方面派出的专家和技术人员，不要求特殊待遇。
第四， 上述合作之目的在于取长补短，互相帮助，以利于增强双方自力更生能力和促进各自民族经济的发展。

Appendix 3

China's Foreign Aid White Paper (2011)

1) Unremittingly help recipient countries build up their self-development capacity. In providing foreign aid, China does its best to help recipient countries to foster local personnel and technical forces, build infrastructure, and develop and use domestic resources.
2) Impose no political conditions. China never uses foreign aid as a means to interfere in recipient countries' internal affairs or seek political privileges for itself.
3) Adhere to equality, mutual benefit, and common development. Foreign aid is mutual help between developing countries, focuses on practical effects, accommodates recipient countries' interests, and strives to promote friendly bilateral relations and mutual benefit through economic and technical cooperation with other developing countries.
4) Aid should remain realistic while striving for the best. China provides foreign aid within the reach of its abilities in accordance with its national conditions. Giving full play to its comparative advantages, China does its utmost to tailor its aid to the actual needs of recipient countries.
5) Keep pace with the times, and pay attention to reform and innovation. China adapts its foreign aid to the development of both domestic and international situations, pays attention to summarizing experiences, makes innovations in the field of foreign aid, and promptly adjusts and reforms the management mechanism, so as to constantly improve its foreign aid work.

中国对外援助政策（2011）

第一， 坚持帮助受援国提高自主发展能力。实践证明，一国的发展主要依靠自身的力　量。中国在提供对外援助时，尽力为受援国培养本土人才和技术力量，帮助受援国建设基础设施，开发利用本国资源，打好发展基础，逐步走上自力更生、独立发展的道路。

第二， 坚持不附带任何政治条件。中国坚持和平共处五项原则，尊重各受援国自主选择发展道路和模式的权利，相信各国能够探索出适合本国国情的发展道路，绝不把提供援助作为干涉他国内政、谋求政治特权的手段。

第三， 坚持平等互利、共同发展。中国坚持把对外援助视为发展中国家之间的相互帮助，注意实际效果，照顾对方利益，通过开展与其他发展中国家的经济技术合作，着力促进双边友好关系和互利共赢。

第四， 坚持量力而行、尽力而为。在援助规模和方式上，中国从自身国情出发，依据国力提供力所能及的援助。注重充分发挥比较优势，最大限度地结合受援国的实际需要。

第五， 坚持与时俱进、改革创新。中国对外援助顺应国内外形势发展变化，注重总结经验，创新对外援助方式，及时调整改革管理机制，不断提高对外援助工作水平。

Notes

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Historiographic Analysis on Two Major American Journals on the Cultural Revolution in China, 1960-1979

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the mainstream academic has produced a heap of analysis to explain how the momentous historical event started. This article presents the findings of how the Cultural Revolution started from the historiographical viewpoint of two American journals, *China Quarterly* and *Monthly Review*. The Monthly Review is a socialist journal whose authors have sympathized and even supported Mao's action, and some writers published in the *China Quarterly* have also argued for the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. The sympathetic stance is rarely seen in the academic field after the 1970s. This study serves as a review to provide the alternative view from the *China Quarterly* and the *Monthly Review* on the Cultural Revolution, one of the most important events in the history of contemporary China. Thus, this research critically reviews the purpose, reasoning, and theoretical approaches of these American authors to present the readers how and why these authors had come to their conclusions on the Cultural Revolution.

Keywords: *Cultural Revolution, Monthly Review, China Quarterly, Maoism*

1. Introduction

The Chinese Cultural Revolution, spanning from 1966 to 1976, is a significant event in the history of contemporary China that shaped the future politics of the Chinese Communist Party. It signifies the death of Mao's "politics in command" strategy to rule China with ideological causes which hailed egalitarianism to the extreme. Since then, egalitarianism faded in China's political stage, while modernization has become the priority of Chinese politics to accelerate development of Chinese society. The current Communist Party as well as China's scholars have a negative response to the Cultural

Revolution. This article seeks to provide the viewpoints of authors from the *China Quarterly* and the *Monthly Review* to reckon a fuller picture of the Cultural Revolution.

With the increasingly availableness of the details of the Cultural Revolution, China studies have shifted their attention to the complexities of the events. Some have directed the fanatic violence to the structural weakness of the state power, others have claimed that collective action under the circumstances was not possible with game theory to comply to what the leader had wished for to happen (Walder and Lu, 2017: 1154-1155). For example, Andrew Walder has shed important lights on how the students formulated their collective choices under Mao's political mobilization tactics (Walder, 2019). The China researchers has moved from interpreting how the leaders initiated the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, to focusing on how the motives of the students and workers are shaped.

This article deals with the original question: Why did Mao Zedong start the Cultural Revolution? While Mao's intention could not explain directly on what happened during the Cultural Revolution, the questions raised interest recently since many scholars have compared current Chinese president Xi Jinping with Mao. Articles have frequently addressed similarities regarding the ruling ideologies and styles of the two leaders, and Xi himself has mentioned the importance of Mao in his speeches and his works (Xi, 2014; Perry, 2021). However, from the perspectives of the earlier generations of China scholars, their interpretation of Mao drastically differs that of China's current political stance led by Xi. This article attempts to analyze and present the perspectives of the Cultural Revolution from the American scholars who published their articles in the 1960s and 1970s from two journals – the *Monthly Review* and the *China Quarterly*. From their critical view on the Cultural Revolution, the article presents the differences between Mao's ideology and the ideology of the current Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

2. Literature Review

One of the reasons for the negative, and sometimes prejudiced view of Mao and the Cultural Revolution, is argued to be a result of both the political sphere of the United States and China after the 1980s, where the political sphere of both countries had been opposing Maoism. Kang (1997) suggested that the current academics from the left were silent to avoid trouble from *realpolitik*, implying that revolutionary ideas from Mao were unacceptable in the mainstream academics. The political sphere of neoliberalism in the United States has shaped the discourses of both Western and Chinese interpretation of the Cultural Revolution, and this phenomenon has been reinforced by the constant supply of documents and personal experiences of

the Chinese intelligentsia about their dreadful treatment under the tyranny of the Red Guards, guided by their hatred to Mao. Mao has been interpreted as a nationalistic leader to modernize China but also a tyrant reminiscent to a feudal China emperor. The Cultural Revolution was perceived to be his sole grand scheme to destroy his comrades and return himself to absolute power (Gao, 2008: 32).

William Hinton had provided a critique on a China study performed by Western Chinese specialists to show an example of the prejudice of China scholars.[1] In his memoir, *Through a Glass Darkly: U.S. Views of the Chinese Revolution*, Hinton recounted that he had been targeted by his American peers when he voiced his support with Mao's China (Hinton, 2006: 22). He attributed the cause to a manifestation of American exceptionalism, with one American China scholar going as far as to claim that it was a "first-class disaster" to let China into the hands of the Communist (ibid.: 23).

Hinton also critically reviewed the influential book on Mao's China *Chinese Village, Socialist State* written by three China specialists, in his work. The three biggest criticisms laid by Hinton on *Chinese Village, Socialist State* were twists and misinterpretation of objective events. Firstly, with regard to the policy of land reform, the three authors only interviewed the opinion of a Kuomintang boss, a large landowner, and a liberal university professor (Hinton, 2006: 39) that often-overlooked exploitation towards the peasants and ignored class structure within feudal China.

Secondly, with Hinton's exceptional experience and understanding of agrarian statistics and land reclamation techniques, he discovered the miscalculations and thus erroneous conclusions in the book (Hinton 2006: 40), and even if the data were presented correctly in other parts the authors seldom regarded the difficult situation in undeveloped China, such as unreasonably comparing the living standard of third world China to an advance capitalist country. The authors also unjustifiably accuse the CCP, by blaming all social and economic problems to Mao's regime.

Hinton did not shy away from acknowledging the mistakes performed by the party and Mao, but from the example he presented, he claimed that many China scholars tended to link any societal problems to the party with exaggeration, such as claiming unborn people as actual deaths occurred in famine. Hinton claimed that this approach by the three American scholars have become the way many other authors approach Mao's China and the Cultural Revolution.

The huge economic success in China in Deng Xiaoping's era, as well as the new empirical data and new interests of researchers have changed the narrative on the Cultural Revolution study. From the objective success of the new ruling elites, many commentators portray the Cultural Revolution as an obstacle for China's development. The origin of the Cultural Revolution was

understood to be a power struggle with Mao simply wanting to seize power (MacFarquhar, 2006: 599).

To provide an alternative view than the current mainstream China studies, this article revisited some of the earlier arguments of the reasonings behind Mao's Cultural Revolution, where few research has been conducted until recently. This article puts more emphasis on the *Monthly Review*, since mainstream scholars seldom interact with the *Monthly Review* due to its radical stance and thus the *Monthly Review* is less well-known. The purpose of the article, therefore, is to recover the lost insight from the two journals, with a critical comparison between the respective findings of the two journals.

3. Research Methodology

This study is constructed as a historiography to examine critically how American scholars recorded, described and explained the events of the Cultural Revolution published in two journals, the *China Quarterly* and the *Monthly Review*, while some of the publications from the *Monthly Review Press* will also be included in the discussion. This study involves data collection and data analysis, specifically on the articles from both journals to illustrate the questions and objectives. As the complexity of the Cultural Revolution can not be explained within one discipline, so did the scholars employ different lenses and methods to understand the Cultural Revolution, especially in the fields of economics, political science, history and sociology. The resulting phenomenon of this variety of research provided an opportunity for the interception between different theories and analytical tools.

The Cultural Revolution, and to some extent the history of contemporary China, became the focus of American authors of the 1960s and 1970s to search for the answer on modernity. A series of social changes and phenomena occurred during the modernization of a country – division of labour for more efficiency, functional differentiation of institutions, the specialization of social systems, and enhancing individualism, etc. Many of the scholars perceived the Cultural Revolution as a solution to what all developing and developed countries were facing. Since the main purpose of the research is to present how these authors theorize the Cultural Revolution, a qualitative research methodology is adopted to understand how the researchers approach the matter. By looking at the research interests, it can answer the question of how the Cultural Revolution was seen in their era.

4. Short Introduction to the Cultural Revolution

Following the failure of the Great Leap Forward in 1961, resulting in extreme natural calamities but no less attributed to human error shouldered by party and government members, China decided a period of economic recovery

was necessary to consolidate and readjust the excessive tendencies of the Great Leap Forward that occurred in the rural area. In January 1961, the Ninth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee declared a retreat from the Great Leap Forward to rescue the devastated agricultural sector ravaged continuously for three years. Mao Zedong has personally admitted his mistakes during the Great Leap Forward and resigned to the "second-line", leaving most of the reconstructing responsibilities to premier Liu Shaoqi.[2]

New economic policies which required centralization, strict control over other systems in the society, and the management bureaucracy that was criticized and had been dropped in the Leap were resurrected to conform with the central planning. Capitalist production methods that were suppressed and condemned as anti-socialist and rightist before appeared again after 1961 in the form of large portions of private owning plots to restore incentives (Brugger, 1994: 112). From the perspective of the new leadership led by Liu, their task was to increase the productivity and regulation over the economic sector with a hierarchical organizational structure. Mao, on the other hand, was increasingly frustrated by Liu's faction on how they employed commandism in the industries, a term he used for describing the strict control of management over workers.[3]

Power struggle among the Communist Party played a necessary role in the orchestration of the Cultural Revolution, but the imminent question is why Mao chose the Cultural Revolution as the stage to realize the power struggle. Power politics fall short to explain Mao's action, since it failed to explain why Mao allowed the total devastation of the party state and governmental structure within months after the event started. The authors in the later section will demonstrate that it was instead ideological differences with the new policies that the Cultural Revolution became the means for Mao to regain his power.

Based on different contexts, the definition of Maoism can change, but the concepts of mass line and self-reliance, which arguably are the central doctrines of Maoism, are particularly important in the discussion.[4] Mass line can be interpreted as a form of populist ideology which presupposes the role of the Party to be subordinated to the will of the people, with the primary mission to assist its people to construct socialism. The state should not "command" the people to construct socialism, but the people, in Mao's opinion, should rely on themselves to reach socialism. The following *Monthly Review* and *China Quarterly* sections will mainly discuss how Maoism can be realized during the Cultural Revolution, and the risk and cost for the realization.

5. Result Findings: *Monthly Review*

The *Monthly Review* is the longest American socialist journal that published critical analysis of world issues with Marxian analytic framework since 1949.

The *Monthly Review* has since attracted important figures like Albert Einstein and Fidel Castro to publish in their journal. The longest serving editor of the *Monthly Review*, Paul Sweezy, co-published a highly influential Marxian work *Monopoly Capital*, a book that provided a critique to modern US capitalism. This work became a famous and representative Marxian economics for writers and the journal, and the term "Monthly Review School" appeared to describe the ground-breaking analysis on a generation of monopoly capitalism that replaced competitive capitalism.

The *Monthly Review* has since become one of the most authoritative sources of Marxist and socialist scholastic journal in the United States. Besides Sweezy, this article also explicates the works of Charles Bettelheim and William Hinton. Hinton's over a decade life experience in the early period of relatively closed Communist China has allowed him to produced one of the most authoritative first hand descriptions of Chinese societies. During the Cultural Revolution, Charles Bettelheim, another *Monthly Review* author and a prominent French Marxist, was offered a valuable chance to document the working culture in a Shanghai industry in 1972. The works of the editors, as well as Hinton and Bettelheim would be used as primary materials of this section.[5]

Monthly Review editors argued that industries in the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc were working under capitalist production methods (Sweezy and Huberman, 1964: 580). Harry Braverman (1974: 3), who acted as the president and director of the *Monthly Review*, criticized how the Taylor system[6] readily adopted since Lenin to exploit the workers as rigorously as scientifically positioned by the inhumane time and motion studies it recklessly employed to labour. The extreme division of labour separated what Marx characterized as central to human – the integration of the planning and execution part in production.[7] Such a production method where management was responsible for the former and workers for the latter had resulted in a production process being dull, repetitive, and uninspiring for the daily workers. Braverman referred this production style as commandism – the will of the worker must be totally subordinated to its superior for the sake of efficiency. A new exploitation was formed where workers were stripped away their power over the production process.

The Chinese Communist Party was facing the same problem as their Soviet counterpart. Since state ownership does not automatically guarantee that the party will cultivate socialist values in the future as demonstrated in the Soviet Union, many *Monthly Review* writers argue that a true socialist state must rely on its relationship with the mass that entrusted their power to itself (Bettelheim, 1971: 73). The function of the party must remain subordinate to the will of its people and assist their struggle against the exploiting class of the society. The task of the party was to educate and assist the workers to

abandon the capitalist thinking, an exploitative ideology that surrenders the workers' control and knowledge and opinion to the management or the ruling stratum (Bettelheim, 1971: 74).

6. Cultural Revolution and Socialist Construction

In management professor Barry Richman's account, who had an exclusive opportunity to observe the Chinese industry during the Cultural Revolution at first-hand, he argued that the visited industry was a place not only for production but also for "political indoctrination" which included teaching illiterate workers to read and write, and workers were getting more in touch with the production process that were exclusive to the management in capitalist factories (Sweezy and Huberman, 1967: 10). Other "peculiar" events that Richman discovered was a lack of bonuses awarded to the management level, while awards were given for those workers who helped their co-workers. Different strata of people, unlike the Western counterparts, had similar living style in the way of dressing, travelling methods and dining. Richman was most surprised when one manager was cooking dumplings one day for his co-workers (Sweezy and Huberman, 1967: 14).

The editors in turn argued that these were the features that should exactly be situated in the correct path of socialist construction, and a humane way of how industry should be running. Richman pointed out that the production level in China were much lower than their counterparts in the United States and the Soviet Union, and he expected that this egalitarian production method could not last long; for one it gave up the rationality that was so intrinsic to modernization and the division of labour that promotes it, on the other hand his belief in the natural selfishness, the economic man, was inherently incompatible with the Chinese production relation that was solely sustained by political consciousness (Sweezy and Huberman, 1967: 14-15). The management and specialist would not be satisfied to share the same status as his/her subordinates in a normal capitalist relation.

The editors reject Richman's two arguments. Their analysis on the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia concluded that it was primary for the workers to control the production process and there should not be a social division of labour between mental and manual. Worker's control should not remained at the legal level of dictatorship of the proletarian, but they should both obtain the knowledge of the mental part of production and participate in the management process. As Richman observed, the increased active participation of workers in the production process enhanced the workers responsibility, identification, commitment, and loyalty to the firm became the primary advantage in the socialist organization of management (Sweezy and Huberman, 1967: 16). Their argument also fundamentally challenged the economic man that

Richman derived from the logic of capitalism. As Marxists, the editors believed that the central human life should be to fulfil their ability, both physical and manual, in the production process.

In another article, Sweezy again points out the difference between the capitalist mode of thinking and the socialist ideals he championed. In Chinese urban areas, industries are organized at state level and represents ownership of all people. During the Cultural Revolution surplus value from Chinese enterprise directly flows to the state, bonuses and profit related piece rates are removed. Where in capitalist society profit is the sole motivation for businesses, this bottom-line thinking, the editors said, was absent in China since the goal of the production was not to generate profit but to produce for the sake of the welfare and development of the society. More often many industries lost money by lowering the output price and supporting the other industries, and since profit making was no long a criterion for judging the success of the enterprise, welfare to workers is provided as well as decent salaries with no correlation to profit making or results (Sweezy et al., 1975: 2-15). The profit motivation was removed and instead the party sent down revolutionary committees to enforce political motivation.

Bettelheim's visit to China in 1971 had reported on the results of Chinese attempts to fundamentally alter the management and organizational practice. The theories and the slogan to combat the capitalist mode of production were long in existence since the Great Leap Forward, but Bettelheim argued that the actual practice was never accomplished due to the active interference by Liu Shaoqi's faction (Bettelheim, 1974: 8-10). Bettelheim claimed that the bourgeois line headed by Liu refused to remove capitalist elements such as forcing the submission of workers to the management, and the introduction of profit motives. After the downfall of Liu's faction, the active material incentives were eliminated during the Cultural Revolution. This was not accomplished by a direct top-down decision commanded to every industry by the central party committee. Instead, conforming to the mass line tactics, different institutions such as the Red Guards, worker's management team and the Revolutionary Committee were guided by the Central Committee to conduct political work to convey the thought of Mao Zedong to the workers.

One of the major purposes of the new institutions was to propagate the thought of Mao Zedong. The thought of Mao Zedong, which later was codified and transformed into Maoism, had always been present since the beginning of the Communist rule. However, few workers understood the essence of the theory as they never received the chance to practise it before the Cultural Revolution. The old party committee, who was supposed to help the workers and supervise the management to prevent capitalist elements, portrayed the mass as the guardian of Marxist-Leninist thought who stood

above the mass who often refuse to accomplish political works and help the people understand Maoism (Bettelheim, 1974: 24).

In Maoism, self-reliance did not entail the concept that one should not seek help from others, but the key idea was to draw out the creativity of the workers, giving them the confidence to speak up for his opinion. Workers were encouraged to solve the daily production problems by their own experience, thereby overcoming the rigid rules and guidelines written by the experts and professionals that were often alienated from the manual workers (Bettelheim, 1974: 37). Due to the social division of labour inherited from capitalism, the scientists and technicians often interfered with the innovations of the workers since they were deprived of the opportunity of practical experience of manual work, just as how the workers were deprived from mental work (Bettelheim 1974: 81). A three-in-one team consisting of cadres, technicians and workers acted as the medium to remove the social division of labour by gathering opinions from the experience of all parties, often through rigorous discussion of details on the production process.

The mass line concept advocates that industrial process must involve everyone to engage in the political struggle against the limited vision of the specialists and managers, so that true democracy can be achieved in the workplace, where workers can decide on a more humanistic working environment and serve their community better. One example Bettelheim showed was that demand for coal in the area he investigated exceeded the production rate of the factory. While the factory manager was conservative with changes that might jeopardize the profit rate in the past, the workers investigate themselves the needs of coal in the community under the guidance of the revolutionary committee, workers' management team and the three-in-one teams (Bettelheim, 1974: 69). In the experience that Bettelheim observed, the management and workers had transcended the economic goals that strictly followed the quantity of production and profits, to produce what the people really need in their daily life under political motivations (Bettelheim, 1974: 67).

The central thesis of Bettelheim in this book is to demonstrate the correct way of transition to socialism. The transformation of industrial management should not be viewed as narrow management technique, but it stressed the importance of production relation to achieve the elimination of class and division of labour. Both Sweezy and Bettelheim had responded that the nationalization of private property in legal form and a comprehensive economic plan could only provide the necessary condition for socialist construction (Bettelheim, 1974: 98). Moreover, he argued that the fundamental purpose of socialism is to break the chains of the workers from economic exploitation. The goal of the communist party, under the influence of the Cultural Revolution, was reshaped to enforce politics in command over

pure economic development so that enterprises could transcend the profit motive and indeed serve the interest of the whole population (Bettelheim, 1974: 99-101).

Besides political reasons, the stratification of education, culture and particularly production process were inherited from feudal society, where the people have been taught to submit to authority in Confucianism. Before the Cultural Revolution, Hinton documented that any ideas from the workers had to pass through multiple bottlenecks and judged strictly by cost efficiency, while the incentive system that focused on the individual level often pitched the workers against each other (Hinton, 1973: 32-33). During the Cultural Revolution, the strawman like management system was removed and instead the team leaders worked with the workers side by side to augment the morale (Hinton, 1973: 35). Everyone was encouraged to study and discuss the issues they found, and the production rate was also enhanced when the workers also took up the responsibility that the specialist and manager previously dictated (Hinton, 1973: 36-37).

For Hinton, the approach of Mao was a very practical method to socialist construction. In the beginning, the radical faction pushed unreasonable egalitarian ideals and led to complete chaos. The conservatives, without commitment with the situation of the mass argued only for the sake of production and efficiency and demand obedience and subordination of the mass. Both factions undermined the potential for the workers and peasants for cooperation and realize their own ability through participation in socialist construction, including not only manual production but also learning, planning, investigating and discussing the concrete reality that was rooted in collective activity of the mass (Hinton, 1994: 8-9). Hinton provided the following quote from Mao to elucidate what the correct party line should be:

> … only an instrument involved in, but not dominating, the dialectical process of continuous revolution…. The party does not stand outside the revolutionary process with foreknowledge of its laws. "For people to know the laws they must go through a process. The vanguard is no exception." Only through practice can knowledge develop; only by immersing itself among the masses can the Party lead the revolution (Mao, 1997: 20 quoted in Hinton, 1994: 14).

7. Result Findings of *China Quarterly*

The *China Quarterly* was established to match with the increasing interest in China after the Sino-Soviet Split after Stalin's death.[8] The *China Quarterly* is a specialised journal on China issues and is widely perceived as one of the top journals for China issues for over 50 years with contributions by prominent China scholars such as Franz Schurmann, Ezra Vogel, Benjamin

Schwartz and Andrew Walder. Schwartz, in a collection of *China Quarterly* articles, describes several schools of thought that attempted to perceive the goal of the communist party: a totalitarian view to explain the main goal of the party was to obtain and maximize power, to stretch the reach of the party apparatus to the civil society and institutions from universities to basic rural organization; a nationalistic view to seek for national unity through party guidance to strengthen the Chinese identity that were long lost after the wars and invasion in the last decades (Schwartz, 1965: 4). These theoretical approaches, however, cannot differentiate Mao's China with other socialist states. Instead, Schwartz (1965: 14-15) presented that interpretating with respect of modernization and the Maoist vision were critical to explain party actions.

Modernization, Schwartz explained, drawing from classical sociologist Max Weber, was a process to rationalize the social action in forms of education, legal system, politics, economy, etc. The function of rationalization is the specialization of various areas of competence, so that norms and practices could be developed autonomously to hire talents and establish its own institution. By having separate entities that specialize in their own field, judgement and operation broke from the traditional method to facilitate a modern state that encompasses industrialization, professional bureaucrats, and a new legal system that fosters social and economic development. However, Schwartz also pointed out that modernization sometimes might be sought as an end but not a means to it, which led to the unquestionable priority of modernization over other qualities of a society such as equality and moral values. What he implied was that the drawbacks of modernization were sometimes overlooked by developing countries like China, or the pursuit of modernization might only benefit a small group of people, leading to social and economic stratification. Maoism tried to counter the negatives of modernization. Modernization stressed functional differentiation for evolution of the system such as the Taylor system for better efficiency,

This point is picked up by multiple American China specialists to explain why Mao brought down the party apparatus that was built alongside modernization. Certainly, there were discontent between Mao and his comrades and the power struggle had been an important factor that led to the Cultural Revolution, but a better reason was required to understand the steps that Mao took to destroy the party and government that he created and preserved his power. Schurmann argued for Mao when he saw the detrimental effect of excessive organizational controls. Drawing the examples of the ever-growing state power in both the United States and the Soviet Union because of centralized decisions, the United States faced its consequence of losing the value of democracy that always clashed with the power state, including radical movements and apathy of the mass to politics (Schurmann, 1973: 521).

Ezra Vogel's survey on the cadres after the revolutionary period also expounded the fundamental difference between the Maoist's vision of a perfect cadre and the reality. As the Communist came into power, many new and more complex tasks required a different type of cadres than those in the Yan'an period that operated less in touch with the mass but more with fellow officials. New cadres were slowly turned into administrative bureaucrats to cope with national problems. The new organization absorbed a lot of non-revolutionaries to handle the massive daily tasks, while old revolutionary cadres were often incapable to perform the bureaucratic tasks. Both aspects reduced the revolutionary characteristics in the Party. The term cadre was slowly devoid of any revolutionary implication and began to simply mean a state employee of a particular rank (Vogel, 1967: 50). The new wage system offset the revolutionary ideals and values and into a system that rewards money according to the work done, but not the sentiment that developed from the praise of the mass. The new school systems that trained and recruited new cadres adopted a traditional educational system that stressed the results and school performances recorded by their teacher that fostered more routinization (Vogel, 1967: 57-58).

The fundamental contradiction of Mao's vision of the revolutionary society and the standardized bureaucratic organisation led by Liu was resolved by means of the Cultural Revolution. Max Weber was correct to theorize the tendency of bureaucratization in any modernizing society (Vogel, 1967: 59). Nonetheless, the undying spirit of Maoist vision was prevalent in the working process. Before the Cultural Revolution, the Maoist spirit injected energy into the routinized administrative process to prevent rigidification of the cadre, even though the organizational structure consistently demands risk averse and disciplined decision making (Vogel, 1967: 60). It was until the Cultural Revolution that both forces came into direct conflict. For Schurmann, the Cultural Revolution ultimately boils down to the wrestling of the correct behaviour of the people, by the Maoist and the modernists (Schurmann, 1973: 506).

Despite the criticisms given to the modernization process, Mao, Schurmann claimed, was idealistic since the leader imagined the peasants would easily give up the material incentive into moral and collective incentives without the coercion of party organization (Schurmann 1973: 540-542). Mao's view on the corrupted nature of organization was influenced by the experience of the Soviet Union. However, his trust on the self-reliant and mass initiation of the peasantry, without the party mechanism as the practical ideology that served to realize the goal of the Maoist, remained to be a vision (Schurmann, 1973: 509). For Schurmann, as radical as the pure ideology had become it could not be realized without at least some form of organization.

8. Some Success in the Education Institution

The institution that had been in the vortex since the eve of the Cultural Revolution was within the levels of education. The event that sparked the Cultural Revolution happened in the universities, where stories of students who came from poor peasants and revolutionary soldiers families were forced to leave school due to their unsatisfactory academic performance. More importantly, students showed their grievance against the party organization when those who belonged to poor backgrounds were reallocated to villages under the *hsiafang* campaign implemented by the Party organizations (Schurmann, 1973: 588).[9] Not only did the incident instigated sharp contradictions between the Party and the unprivileged students, but the educational institution also had a life changing impact on the ideology of their subsequent career which made controlling this instrument of ideology inculcation more critical for Mao (Schurmann, 1973: 582).

Criticism of the educational institution prior to the Cultural Revolution was elucidated by Marianne Bastid. The poor peasants and the students who were offered the chance to attend school because of socialist policies were often overwhelmed by the rules of the schools, usually due to their lower educational and cultural background. The tuition fees were heavy for many families who could not afford repeating a class and poor students usually had low performances, while most peasant families were desperate for their children to earn income for the family (Bastid, 1970: 18). The heavy curriculum was stressful for students which was said to be bookish, but the most crucial aspect was that it served few practical usages for the life of the peasants. Even if the curriculum produced "successful" elites, they were virtually alienated to the peasants' life; either the knowledge the elite possessed were unhelpful to the peasants to solve their daily problems, or the elites had its selfish political and economic motives that could not serve the interests of the mass (Bastid, 1970: 20-21).

Robert McCormick documented how the new revolutionary committee was sent down to reform the education system in the Fudan University (McCormick, 1974). Previously, even though the admission system allowed students from different social strata to receive education, the students with higher cultural background performed significantly better with the harsh education system set up one-sidedly by the teachers. The revolutionary committee tackled this in two ways. Firstly, they organized make-up class and special coaching to aid the students facing difficulties (McCormick, 1974: 135). Secondly, examinations were replaced by collective group work and written examinations. After the students displayed their basic knowledge on the subject in written examinations, the students were formed into groups led by the teacher. Each student had to answer questions given by the teacher

in front of their classmates and teacher, then they collectively discussed and criticized the answer repeatedly (McCormick, 1974: 139). This examination method had successfully placed more significant on the collective process than the traditional individualistic competition style. Besides changes in assessment, the curriculum for the students frequently involved manual labour in the industries and rural communes as political education to include physical labour to resolve the division of labour problem expounded by Braverman.

McCormick concluded that the educational reform followed the thought of Mao Zedong where he placed confidence on the ability of each student to initiate and innovate the learning process by themselves (McCormick, 1974: 140). Peter J. Seybolt (1971) also agreed with McCormick by referring to the central thesis of Maoism that the socialist revolution must involve the great majority of the people who were also the intended beneficiaries. He argued that though the modernization of China had led to the emphasis on the importance to train elites, but those who were unprivileged were the ones desperate to be educated to change their lives (Seybolt, 1971: 666).

If the educational institutions were to fit the demand of most of the people, Seybolt argued that they must also reform themselves to adopt curriculums that were integrated with factories or communes so that the knowledge it produced could be employed, and not limited itself to the realm of theory as most contemporary schools did (Seybolt, 1971: 667). The integration with practice also served another function. By giving the correct methods and practical guidance to the students, it shook off the dogmatic view of the passivity of the student whose job was solely receiving knowledge from the teachers. The students, in the new education system, were encouraged to solve the problems creatively and effectively according to their own environment. Seybolt concluded that the implication of this style of learning was self-reliance, where the mass could confidently accomplish their task without relying on the professionals and specialists that led to class division but also alienation of the mental and physical labour (Seybolt, 1971: 668).

For Bastid, the struggle to control the educational institutions from the mass means that knowledge was no longer controlled by the elites, since,

> The struggle for production can be successful only in a real political society, where the majority of people are concerned and are able to understand and even share in decisions related to the collective life. The advent of such a political society requires the suppression of the elite which monopolized state power, giving the illusion of the existence of a political society but actually usurping the rights and also the duties of the people below. To eradicate the roots of any established elite, the youth must be trained to be versatile, responsive to concrete challenge and unconceited. That does not prevent society from having leaders, but one motto of the "leading group"

> will be dynamism: they must "dare" to innovate not content themselves with what is already established (Bastid, 1970: 45).

Seybolt and Bastid's perspective raised the question on whether the more egalitarian and balanced approach to provide education to the bottom stratum required political indoctrination. The contemporary view on the massive circulation of the writings of Mao Zedong was condemned as cultivating the worship of Mao and brainwashing, and solely served as the political tool for Mao's power struggle. However, if one accepts the premise of Schurmann that modernization would lead to political centralization and resources would be concentrated in one area, then political thoughts were necessary to counteract this natural tendency. Not only the thought of Mao Zedong provided practical application to the mass on their daily activity, but its political ideology helped the mass understand they too deserved the right, as the master of the country, education and economic opportunities that were once only limited to the privileged.

9. Linking the Cultural Revolution to Contemporary China

Already we saw a complete overturn in the education policy in China, where nowadays students were judged unanimously by the *Gaokao* (Chinese university entrance examination) system where one examination determines the future of the student's life. The overtly competitive and individualistic nature of the *Gaokao* had allowed the rich and urban children who could afford better education to succeed the social capital from their parents. Even with the top education fees and unaffordable for normal families, many parents still spent their fortune to ensure that their children could score good grades in the *Gaokao*. Even with the free education provided by the government, the existence of private institutions had made China as having one of the most commodified education systems in the world.

Seybolt and Bastid's perspective raised the question on whether the more egalitarian and balanced approach to provide education to the bottom stratum required political indoctrination. Moreover, resorting the assessment of the student to a singular examination method was already questioned and deemed to be redundant especially in European countries. In retrospect, the education method of the advance countries often resembled more of the Cultural Revolution style than the current Chinese method. They encourage students to learn more than books and examinations, conduct outdoor activities to establish dimensional advancement for the students' thinking that had great advantage to induce the learning speed and interest of teenagers. Schools in China tended to focus on "teaching" the skills to solve the questions in examinations. There were indeed advantages and disadvantages

in both realms. However, it was disappointing that contemporary China had disregarded every element that were progressive in the Cultural Revolution.

On the other hand, conformist and commandist working culture has proliferated in contemporary China. Industrial giant Foxconn has managed to not only have absolute control over the working process, but essentially every aspect of the worker's life from leisure to living places. Besides the absurd working time at around 12 hours per day, the company also has the right to raid worker's room, barred them from breaks over not meeting production targets (Ngai and Chan, 2012). Worse of all, this working hour system had been endorsed by mainstream media and companies as the "correct and respectable" working system for the people. The once richest Chinese man Jack Ma, who gained his international fame as the creator as Alibaba, had even commented on this system as a "huge blessing" for the workers (BBC, 2019). Often, the workers were submitted to "voluntary working without over-time payment", afraid of being sacked if they do not comply with the employers. While the harsh working hour system was illegal in the labour law, there have been minimal measures done by the state to improve worker conditions.

Due to the rapid development of the Internet, information flow was very difficult to control by the authority even though the government had employed massive surveillance technology to keep things under control. For example, another e-commerce platform Pinduoduo in China was criticized venomously by online users on social media back in January of this year. The incident was first marked by a sudden death of its staff on the road home, but soon escalated into national news when it was discovered that the staff had been forced to work for 30 hours nonstop by the manager which directly caused her death (NetEase, 2021). The response of Pinduouo sparked even more anger when the company claimed that it was the "rules" of society for the lower class to compete with their lives for a better life, while ignoring the death and subsequent suicidal cases in its company. It was not uncommon to see radical comments on the Internet regarding the nature of socialism in China, while some netizens even referred to the policy of Mao's era and compare it directly to the working conditions nowadays.

10. Conclusion

Writers from both journals were attracted by the disparities between China and the United States, particularly in the economic system, to write how socialism works in China. For the *Monthly Review* Marxist and socialist writers, they constantly sought to find solutions to transform their own capitalist society into socialism. This implicit urge drew the *Monthly Review* writers to look for the successful strategies in China that could be applied elsewhere, and hence their hopeful interpretation of the Cultural Revolution. Meanwhile,

scholars from *China Quarterly* like Schurmann were interested in the type of organization and practical ideology required to drive the society into obeying the socialist values and the rule of the CCP. Their approach, on surface, sought no more than to display their analysis of the Chinese society with their respective theoretical framework. Nonetheless, they often drew similarities and lessons that the Chinese experience may offer to the capitalist world.

Self-reliance and mass mobilization were the Maoist strategies to combat commandism and a mechanism to allow decisions to be made by the people directly. In the short period of time, some success had been made to revert the capitalist tendencies. Both Bettelheim and Hinton highlighted new policies including removal of piece rates and actively inviting the workers and peasants into collective decision making in the production process. *China Quarterly* writers such as Seybolt and Bastid examined how the new education system, with more egalitarian and open-minded approach, provided the knowledge the poor students needed to increase the living standards of their families. The educational direction in the Cultural Revolution frequently required the students to become active in their ideological thinking to realize that the socialist construction requires constant critical thinking on what type of education really benefits the people, not only those with power or knowledge.

In the end, the Maoist strategy was deemed to be unsustainable, and the destruction outweighed the possible achievements in the Cultural Revolution. The post-Maoist leadership, with the damaged reputation on Mao's failure, resorted to pragmaticism instead of ideological struggle. From Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping, the party and government has constantly suppressed critical re-examination of the past to foster the environment to modernize China. Modernization brings economic growth and high living standards, but often with the cost of people having less saying in their lives. From education to work and to the newly introduced social credit system, every Chinese is carefully monitored, routinized, and standardized in a commandist style. This article does not evaluate which system is a superior one, as the many *Monthly Review* scholars and the new editor have been reasonably supportive of China's economic growth and sympathize with China's social problems (Samir, 2013; Foster and McChesney, 2012). The direct comparison is not very useful due to drastic differences of the backgrounds of the two societies. The article reminds how and why the Cultural Revolution is crucial for contemporary Chinese history, and a reflection of capitalism and modernization.

Notes

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1. William Hinton possessed abundant experience of the Chinese countryside during Mao's period, where he stayed for over ten years and work closely with the Chinese peasants. Hinton's work Fanshen and later Shenfan had shed important light on life in the Long Bow village, while the latter work was especially important as it included the transformation during the Cultural Revolution.
2. Liu Shaoqi was originally the successor of Mao before the Cultural Revolution; he was referred to be the "organization man" by the first editor of the *China Quarterly*. The organization man signifies the preference of the premier to have overruled decision with bureaucracy, which was seen by Mao as conservatism. Please see MacFarquhar, R. (1997), *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, 1961-1966*, Vol. 3. p. 3.
3. The Liu faction here generally refers to the party members who weighted the importance of development and modernization over Maoist socialist values and agreed on Liu's strategy to incorporate state bureaucracy into the main drive of development, as opposed to the mass line tactics in Maoism. Most of the Liu faction members, such as Deng Xiaoping, was purged during the Cultural Revolution.
4. A part of Maoist thought has been based on an experimental success of the Anshan Constitution, which was a was a major attempt to implement Maoist strategy of mass mobilization in Chinese industries. The experience in the Anshan steel complex was taken as a prime example of how the experience of the management strata and the workers could coordinate so that the voice of the manual labour could influence the production process.
5. Again, the editors we referred to are the establisher of the *Monthly Review*, Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman. Sweezy was regarded as one of the most influential Marxian economists in the 20th century and his major works consist of critique of American capitalism. Leo Huberman also produces several important works in popular history with a socialist perspective.
6. Taylor system, also known as the scientific method of management, is a theory that analyzes the working process to achieve more efficiencies. Opponents of the theory, such as Braverman, argues that the Taylor system treats labourers as machines, micromanages them and ignores their human needs.
7. In essence, Braverman argues that the mental part of a labour process refers to the decision making, directing, and controlling how the production process should be executed. The manual part is the physical side of production. The separation of both became the major procedure for division of labour.
8. The *China Quarterly* journal was originally a branch of the Soviet Survey organized and published by the Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF). Most articles published in the journal contained the highest quality of China specialists during the time by mostly American scholars.
9. The *hsiafang* campaign allocates the intellectual and leadership elite into rural and industrial working place to exercise manual labour work with the peasants and workers. The intention was to both help educate the illiterate mass and to create experience of manual work for the privileged. This movement was very controversial and became one of the most criticized aspects of the Cultural Revolution.

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Book Review

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Book Review

Edmund Terence Gomez, Siew Yean Tham, Ran Li and Kee Cheok Cheong, *China in Malaysia: State-Business Relations and the New Order of Investment Flows*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 116 pages. ISBN 978-981-15-5332-5

This book poses a straightforward, yet rather hard to unravel, question: How has Chinese investment into Malaysia's industrial sector reshaped the state-business relations in the country, thereby opening up different forms of opportunities for Malaysian stakeholders? It seeks to answer this question by carefully interrogating various statistical databases and related sources, making sense of their development implications. The book is motivated by the increasingly prominent role that China is playing within the Malaysian investment landscape, especially since the 2013 announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This book builds on the latest scholarship covering China-Malaysia economic relations, a significant part of it contributed by the four authors, who rank as some of the top minds on the subject matter. It also taps into the knowledge and insights of other experts in the public and private sectors, in addition to academia (see Preface and Acknowledgements).

The book makes three key contributions. Firstly, much of the existing literature on Chinese capital exports – in Malaysia and Southeast Asia – has analyzed *infrastructure* development. Given the massive scale and capital expenditure involved, it is understandable that these projects capture the attention of both the media and research community (see, for example, Camba et al., 2021; Liu and Lim, 2019; Ngeow, 2019). However, this indirectly creates a scholarship gap on Chinese-financed projects in the *industrial* sector. Indeed, some of the most significant Chinese investment has gone towards the industrial sector. They include Zhejiang Geely Holding Group's 2017 acquisition of a 49.9% stake in Proton Holdings (Malaysia's iconic 'national' car company) and the 2014 establishment of the Alliance Steel plant in the state of Pahang by a consortium of Guangxi-based firms. These two investments, along with five others in the industrial sector, are discussed extensively (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Secondly, and related to the previous point, the book sheds light on the heterogeneity of the state-business relations created by Chinese investment flows entering Malaysia. As mentioned previously, much attention has gone towards Chinese-funded infrastructure undertakings; they in turn are mainly

carried out by Beijing's cohort of engineering and construction state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Although nominally subjected to state supervision, research thus far highlights that these SOEs are relatively autonomous in carrying out such projects. In other words, national interest has, on certain occasions, been compromised by the commercial goals of the SOEs. This results in different kinds of upgrading opportunities (and challenges) for aspiring economies eager to pursue a closer relationship with China. Adding to the mix is China's private firms, who have just as many (if not more) goals vis-à-vis their state-owned counterparts in their ventures abroad. These objectives range from a slowing down of the Chinese economy, genuine interest to explore new markets, intention to circumvent capital controls, et cetera. Shedding light on both private- and state-owned Chinese business groups as well as their interactions with various Malaysian coalition partners, the book offers us an avenue to scrutinize the variegated institutional architecture that shapes long-term structural transformation.

Thirdly, the book draws out the financial-industrial linkages that have resulted from major Chinese investment in the country. Going against the grain of existing studies that predominantly capture the *pre-entry dynamics* of such investment, it enriches our understanding by capturing and theorizing their *post-entry development* (both positive and negative). In so doing, the book also critiques the role of the Malaysian state, illustrating whether it has provided a helping hand, invisible hand, grabbing hand, or a combination of them in these deals. While it is difficult to challenge the book's contention that the Malaysian state does not have in place an explicit policy to properly embed spillover from the Chinese investors, one can point out that such a finding is not entirely surprising. Malaysia has long prided itself on its stature as one of the most liberal economies in the region. Indeed, during the Southeast Asian nation's high-growth era of the 1980s-1990s, it was a darling for foreign investors. With a few exceptions, Malaysia has generally maintained or even enhanced its openness since then to global investors. Unfortunately, this light-touch regulatory environment comes with some drawbacks, including the inability to more strongly extract technological know-how from global investors.

Despite the book's various merits, there is a relative lack of theorization on mainstream literature under the broad umbrella of 'state capitalism' (e.g., Alami and Dixon 2020; Bremmer 2008). Although the book correctly highlights the centrality of the state in the Chinese economy, there remains ample space to more comprehensively discuss its findings in Malaysia in relation to the 'state capitalism' scholarship. In particular, it would be useful to discuss Chinese 'state capitalism' when it crosses national borders. However, if the authors' main objective was to raise awareness and stimulate discussion on what is a very important topic to the Malaysian economy, then it

is understandable to get the book into the market as soon as possible. Another, albeit minor, issue with the book is its referencing – some of the works cited in-text do not appear in the bibliography.

In summary, this book provides an important contribution to the discipline of political economy, especially those literature centred on China-Malaysia and Southeast Asia economic affairs. It is a recommended source of information for both general and specialist readers interested in understanding how an emerging China is contributing to development within Malaysia (and by extension, Southeast Asia). Perhaps more importantly, the book also encourages future generations of scholars to 'up their game' in their search for solutions to better integrate the Global South with the increasingly heavy presence of Chinese capital exports in the international arena.

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