

Constructivism analysis of china's rise



China has been rising rapidly since the implementation of "reform and open-door" policy in 1978. During the thirty years, China became the second largest economic power with \$8.3 trillion GDP and growth rate of 7.8% in 2013. The income per capita is 6000\$. On the political side, China has been taking actions on reform domestically and taking part in the international activities. Military, cultural as well as technology have been developed. Most important of this fact is that China consistently adopting the "peaceful rise" strategy which seeks a new regional structure of mutual trust, cooperation and mutual beneficial.

This essay will explain China's rise process in Constructivism approach.

Realism, liberalism and Constructivism are the three important theories of international relations. Under Realism, there is a game of super power states to survive. The rise of China is reasonable seen as a threat regarding its growing political, economic and military capabilities. Neighbour states should be cautious about the "unsatisfied China" ($\frac{1}{2}$) to transform the regional system. Liberalism argues that the increase of economic interdependence will decrease the likelihood of political conflicts (21111). Due to the high opportunity cost, violence could be avoided to maintain each country's material interests. These two theories focus on visible facts in the international relations; while there is invisible factors should be highlighted.

Social Constructivism is an important approach in explain international relation with "a starting point of human behaviour" and unconsciously follows cultural and historical norms; meanwhile, compared with other "

materialistic theories" who regard countries as " unitary actors" to maximise their power, constructivists see countries as " social actors" that may follow both material power comparison and international rules.(32) Wendt thinks that the international structure would influences both national behaviour and identity, interest. Two important spheres should be highlighted in the ongoing international structures----the national identity and structural change for a certain region.(å†_è;¥å.....i¼%o

National Identity of China

In the international society (rather than international system (b1, 193)), national identity is an important role for the regional security,(45) Wdent, one of the most prominent constructivists, defines identity is " a property of international actors that generates motivational and behavioural dispositions"(wdent 1999, 224 cited in36) and is a " relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self"(Wdent, 1999, 21 cited in 36). National identity is crucial in the international relations that matters foreign policy making as well as the interaction between Self and Other. (b1, 197)

Under the constructivism view, East Asia is a society of states with various national images among which China is quite unique since it has been è;Æèµ° in so called " Chinese Model" for about forty years. A better understanding of China's national identity is based on the application of Wendt's four identities categories (b2, 224-233).

First, " corporate identity" of China argues the " essential properties" that rarely changes. Domestically, no matter which kind of political regime is

applied, government policies are deeply influenced by thousands-year Confucian morality which values "harmony and prosperity"(Culture Revolution from 1966 to 1976 is an exception and an extreme case in very special situation). The huge population of 1.3 billion from 56 ethnic groups and large geographic territory helps China to achieve a successful domestic market but regard domestic stability of first importance.

Second, "type identity" is corresponding to "regime type" which reflects "self-organising and social quality"(b2, 226). Stated in 1982 Constitution, <http://english.people.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html> "The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants." Even though the word "democratic" is always ignored by foreign scholars, the tight central control does not mean an arbitrary all the time, nor does it possible in the globalising process. "Marxism with Chinese characters" is the main doctrine (47), as a result, the so called "arbitrary governance" is actually a Chinese style governance based on social reality rather than the compelling aspiration from a single party, it is the lesson learned from massive history from 1959 to 1976. On economic aspect, China now is applying a two-track system of "socialist plus market economy with Chinese characteristics"(once again)", which has led to huge achievements in last two decades. Chinese develop process has constructed the "Beijing Consensus" that draws many attention from the world.

Third, the following two national identity categories--"role" and "collective identity" are more important in this article because they are closely related to interactions with foreign countries

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and contribute to structural change in a long-term. China's rise is a continuing process, so collective identity would be discussed in the next section. Wendt (2002, 227-228) argues that role identity cannot be realised by oneself, but "carry Others around with us in our heads". In the international society, role identity is based on the "degree of interdependence...of Self and Others".

Corresponding to the rising China, is the increasing cultural, political and economic interactions with East Asia countries. This raises the question to many countries that whether China is a status quo power. Though status quo and revisionist power are two concepts under realism's power transition theory, they are vital in constructivism by showing that how would neighbour countries identify China and to interpret their further foreign policies in the region. For this question, Chinese foreign policies such as neighbour friendly and peace-loving would make sense if there is a positive answer. However, "China Threat" idea, which indicates an unsatisfied and revisionist China, is also widespread and seems quite convinced. Numbers of literatures have been discussing about the problem and Johnston(2009) summarised that China for now is generally a status quo power while seeking a more favourable international system in a moderate method, a revisionist situation would occur when territory dispute and Taiwan dilemma are heavily intensified. Back to the theme of the article, a status quo power is more aligned with China's peace rise strategy.

Wendt also find the constructive approach to describe the undergoing situation of China in East Asia. He(1999) promotes three kinds cultures-- Hobbesian culture, Lockean culture, Kantian Culture with dominant roles of "

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enemy, rival, and friend" respectively to illustrate the tendency of an anarchic system. Since Hobbesian is naturally related to the realism theory of a "hard" world (b2, 259) and the high level coherence in Kantian culture (there is no need for any discussion if China and other East Asian countries are already morally good friends), Kantian Culture is applicable in East Asia, furthermore, Wendt himself also agree the "status quo" is implicit in such culture(279). It is a shared idea for every East Asian country recognise others' "sovereignty, life and liberty"(279), even for small countries like those ASEAN members, sovereignty and rights are recognised by others, however, there is no guarantee in East Asia that violence will disappear, especially concerning the territory disputes between China-Japan on Diaoyu Island and South China Sea Dispute. Rivalry also admits the uncertainty of Others but denied the realist approach to "prepare for the worst" because they are not enemies. The reactions of China and neighbour countries just reflect Wendt's policy implication of Lockean culture. The avoidance of hot conflict with Japan and "dispute suspend, development" policy with ASEAN members are examples for "behave in a status quo toward each other's sovereignty" and "High-risk aversion"(282). On the other hand, military power is still important, this is could be seen from China's "deep-blue" navy development and more frequent Japan, Philippine's joint military exercise with the United States since 2010. As Wendt notes, rivals limit rather than delete violence.

Projecting China's new identity and Changing East Asian's Structure

The section above has defined China as a big developing power with unique Chinese characteristics and a status quo country in the region. This kind of

image would more or less provide confidence for East Asian's future, as Wendt argues, even though it is too difficult to reach Kantian Culture, the situation will not go backward. In fact, China and its East Asian neighbours do put effort for a better regional system. To be specific, the constructivism task is to close the "identity gap" and then promote a collective identity.

"Shared knowledge, material resources and practices" are the three components of a social structure (34), this norm reflects the society is composed of both objective and subjective knowledge and more importantly, it is a dynamic process of change. Mearsheimer gave one site on the change logic how social structure effect actions by "constituting actors with certain identities and interests" and Wendt add another site of interaction and reproduction of structures. Wendt thinks that there is much "slack" in the international structure which encourages policymakers work toward peaceful change.

To sum up, Identity and structural change is a matter of micro and macro level. New identity of one country would cause the collective identity change in that region, usually by way of foreign policy and interaction. This kind of "common in-group identity" and "we-feeling" would ultimately create a new regional structure.

China has been projecting a new national identity since the came out of "reform and open-up" grand policy in 1978 when "jieji douzheng" is replaced by "reform and development", it is corresponding to the national political and economic development. In general , more actions

are made from the 1990s when Overseas Propaganda Department under the Party Central Committee and a new Information Office under the State Council were established, there are many white papers with subjects of human rights, environment protection published, for example " 1992 Tibet — Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation", " 1996 Environmental Protection in China" and " 1999 National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China.(40)

The change from avoidance or ignoring such issues to engagement indicates that China is beginning to think about the soft power development. Cultural and media communication event is another method to promote Chinese new image and the hiring of a American firm in the 2008 Olympic Game is a case in this point. A research by Hongying Wang (王红莹) shows that " China's self-conception in international affairs" consist with " These four national images — a peace-loving nation, victim of foreign aggression, anti-hegemonic force and developing country". Though there is still difference from other's perception, this project does makes China a " peace-loving nation, victim of foreign aggression, anti-hegemonic force and developing country", in foreign affairs.(40)

" Good neighbour policy"(41) is the core theme for East Asia. In the 1950s, though Chairman Mao had adopted " leaning to one side" as grand foreign policy, " Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" was proposed as the main doctrine in Asian affairs especial with third world countries. During the 1990s to 2010s, the main period of China's rise, China adopted " Deng Xiaoping's" *Tao guang yang hui, you suo zuo wei* " to " active defence of China's interests... and not try to be either a hegemon or challenger to one" as well as to be a " participant or co-builder" that " contribute to the construction of a New International Order".(41) After established the diplomatic relations

with neighbour countries like Indonesian, Singapore and South Korea, China gradually find the importance on multilateral means for the common interests. From the late 1990s, China has been promoting " the democratisation of international relations" in the New international Order. Accord with Wendt's emphasise of verbal communication, terms like " shelve difference", " common grounds", " peaceful", " multi-polar" are frequently seen from Chinese foreign policy papers.

Apart from foreign policies, China has been passion about participating in regional activities. For Southeast Asia, China formalised its interaction with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1991, and became a regular dialogue partner in 1996 which led to ASEAN plus Three (Japan, India and China) and ASEAN plus China. Joining in China-ASEAN Free Trade Area and ASEAN Regional Forum reflects increasing economic and political interaction. For Northeast, efforts put on both bilateral relationship with Japan and South Korea, as well multilateral relations on whole region, the Six-Party Talks and the " Track II" Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) strengthen its " involvement in Northeast Asian affairs"(41).

The effort and interaction would significantly influence the future of East Asia. Besides the huge economic gains and the general peaceful environment, on the constructivism aspect, the interactions would cause a collective identity of " We" in East Asia that has more confidence in dealing regional affairs peacefully.

Countries are more interdependent which could be seen from the data and interaction facts above. China's engagement in East Asia would also create

the common fate with its neighbours because it is impossible for China to escape from any international events, especially the for non-traditional security problems.

Nevertheless, there is also "fear of exploitation", just as skeptics judging China's peaceful rise is "buying time", however, in the long term, the worry can be overcome since the gain is reduced compared with a high level of interdependence and states has already internalised the collective identity at that time. (b2, 349).

In order to be more accepted by neighbour countries during communication, China has been working on eliminating the regime differences in proper areas. Under the principle of 1982 Constitution (socialist country led by Chinese Communist Party) and general domestic stability, more authority is distributed to local units as well as marketised several areas of economy aligned with the international market. These efforts are building the "homogeneity or likeness" to other countries that China is, the same as any else, a developing country needs a peaceful environment. Homogeneity would have a negative effect on military development which decrease the uncertainty for China's bullying action (even though China will never do that).

The trend of a Kantian Culture in East Asia also benefits for everyone, to say that if the cooperation now is coloured with much material interests in Realism, but would change in a long period. The impact of structure on the agent could be seen from the ASEAN involvement of China in the very early stage. (32) When China became the candidate of regional hegemony, ASEAN

posed a " wide range of diplomatic initiatives" contrary to realist way to intensify the dilemma that " welcome" China as a friend. Even though met many difficulties in the multilateral approach, significant achievement is undeniable.

The structure change in East Asia is not as simple as we thought and we should consider the following points.

First, the historical stereotype. For a big power, national identity is a " core identity" with its historical legacy.(45) Wendt (34) also notes " history matters". It is quite hard to breakdown old identity and emerge new identity (b2, 228) and (38) agrees it is a long-term proposal. In modern political society, the socialism China spent about forty years establish a national identity of exclusive (especially towards capitalism countries), assertiveness (both inside and outside). This situation began with Mao's " leaning to one side" to Soviet Union in the early Cold War and " radicalism" in the Culture Revolution. After reform and open-up, China has been confronting with double difficulties of " China Threat view in west world" as well as breaking the former identity. These encourage China be intelligent in its friendly foreign policy but enhance its material power simultaneously.

Second, regime differences. China as the biggest socialist country in the world, its political and economic regime is still " mysterious" to many countries. Though China tight center control is gradually understood and accepted based on China's achievements, so called " none-democratic society" is usually accused meeting sensitive cases, which makes it the biggest barrier for a homogeneity. On the contrary, Japan went through a

better situation for its political revolution in the U. S. occupied period (45). However, this does not deny Japan's other efforts of unmilitarisation, international assistance, etc. A westernised democratic regime helped it accepted easily psychologically.

Based on the content above, China should keep on its process of reform domestically and externally. Peaceful rise is the only way in so that new national identity could be internalised to every countries and a co-existence East Asia is built.

Conclusion

The understanding of China's rise is a combination of realism, liberalism and constructivism. In the 2008 financial crisis, China's soon recovery makes it stronger economic power and the assistance for neighbour countries also contribute to a country of responsibility and kindness. Constructivism also helps explained why East Asia is generally peaceful with numbers of disputes. Apart from the economic lose in liberalism view; the shared norm of mutual trust and peace-loving plays an important role.

China's peaceful rise strategy is the achievement made by both China itself and other countries in the region. Their transforming attitude toward China form hostility to acceptance is a core condition for China's proactive engagement.

Finally, in the East Asian society, the entire process of China's rise is a "Spiral Model" (b1, 198) that countries generate norms in the increasing interaction, and new norms and identities would result in a new regional

structure that encourage the formation of interdependence, common fate and homogeneity. Even though there are obstacles, East Asian countries are moving towards it.