

The Identity Factor in Chinese Relations with Europe

China and the Barbarian Civilization

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Chapter 2

Ontological Security with Chinese Characteristics?

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What Ontological Security Can Do for China

In this decade of increased great power competition, it has become commonplace to discuss the ‘return of history’ to international relations (IR). Whilst recent developments have often been interpreted in favour of rationalist theories of IR, one should not overlook how they are also indicative of the enduring role played by identity concerns in shaping international politics. Vladimir Putin’s imperial understanding of Russia’s sense of Self has carried distinct, and deadly, implications for Ukraine.¹ The role played by identity in foreign policy is a question explored by a number of theoretical approaches. Although identity tends to be absent in neo-liberal and neo-realist works on international relations, and by extension also of their analyses of China, identity as a factor to be considered alongside more ‘hard’ aspects such as geography and power capabilities is still present in numerous studies within the classical and neo-classical realist traditions, although mainly through the prism of nationalism or national strategic culture.² An increasing body of scholarship has furthermore pointed out how perceptions of threat are dependent upon interpretation of identities; your identity on the international arena thus matters for the security milieu that circumscribes your policies.³ Based on such implications, constructivists such as Wendt have named identity security one of a state’s four basic interests,⁴ whilst related scholarship in the liberal vein has utilized Nye’s concept of ‘soft power’ to further analyse the effects of identity as a means of power in world politics.⁵ In analysing identity as a factor in China-Europe relations, this book engages the issue through the framework of ontological security, an approach that focuses on the need for actors in the international system to obtain a stable sense of who they are as a polity. These sections briefly outline the argument for why the ontological security approach is a salient lens for Chinese Europe policies, and what the case of China-Europe relations can contribute to developing ontological security theory.

Plato famously likened politics to the weaver’s craft; a matter of ensuring cohesiveness of the polity.⁶ A fundamental task for any polity is thus the ability to provide its members with a sense of identity, namely, a

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meaningful co-existence as a part of that polity. Built on Giddens's sociological work on identity and modernity,⁷ the concept of ontological security was introduced into IR theory in the late 1990s.⁸ Over the last two decades it has been systematized and developed by authors such as Mitzen, Steele, Kinnvall, Zarakol, and others into a theoretical framework denoting the need for these imagined communities in the international system to obtain a stable sense of who they are.⁹ As summarized by Kinnvall and Mitzen, the ontological security literature is at its core a project that is "fundamentally focused on attempting to articulate the relationship between identity and security, and between identity and important political outcomes in world politics, with the premise that political subjectivity is socially constituted in ways that have reverberating effects at many levels."¹⁰ Ontological security seeking is thus defined as the need to "minimize hard uncertainty by imposing cognitive order on the environment."¹¹ Ontological security-seeking behaviour in order to affirm the state's sense of self-identity, may thus at times even lead to strategic choices incommensurate with rational interest seeking in a narrow sense.¹² As Steele persuasively argues through cases such as the Belgian decision to face almost certain physical defeat in order to save their self-identity, when deciding to fight Germany in 1914, this demonstrates how the conventional concept of survival in the sense of physical security fails to explain a range of foreign policy actions.¹³ As such, one of the main concepts utilized throughout this book will be that of *ontological security seeking*, as a signifier of the dynamic properties of the Chinese political entrepreneurs' efforts at addressing the ontological challenges encountered after the European encroachment added to the existing strains on the late Qing Dynasty.

There are two important contributions ontological security can make to the analysis of China-Europe relations: Firstly, it allows for the systematic analysis of the identity factor in Chinese foreign policy. Amongst the strengths of ontological security theory when engaging with the issue of identity processes, is not only the systematized linking between identity drivers and security interests, but also the antifoundational view of the Self. This allows for a deeper analysis of the formation of common identities whilst avoiding the pitfalls of reifying the state.¹⁴ To quote Zarakol: "The concept of ontological security may offer one of the rare bridges of commensurability for societies along temporal and spatial lines."¹⁵ Given that the Chinese polity has experienced a century of experimentation with very different types of political organization – from empire to republic to divergent flavours of authoritarianism – this is a particularly important factor in the case of China. This approach also allows for a more dynamic inclusion of the literature on Chinese identity and nationalism, as it provides a conceptual framework that allows for more easily bridging the scholarship focusing on respectively the state-led, and the society-led aspects of modern Chinese nationalism.¹⁶ Following from this point, I will argue that one of the main strengths of ontological security theory is in the approach's conceptual openness in analysing

through which societal structures and social processes ontological security is sought achieved.¹⁷ A similar set of concerns also underpins this investigation's utilization of the term 'polity' instead of more common concepts such as state or nation, when describing the processes of Chinese ontological security seeking over the last centuries. The broader purview of this term allows for a more precise analysis of differing modalities of identity, institutionalization, hierarchy, and authority across cases.¹⁸ In the Chinese case this conceptualization is also helpful in analysing the overlapping dynamics of state security and the regime security of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The second main point on which ontological security may contribute to the study of China more broadly, is the ability of the framework to incorporate locally relevant dynamics within the purview of its epistemological approach, making it a salient vehicle for bringing certain concepts found in the Chinese area studies literature more fully into IR theory. The main body of this chapter will, after a brief overview of the current state of the ontological security scholarship, be engaged with suggesting a number of such conceptual contributions.

Before going on to detail what ontological security with Chinese characteristics entails for the development of this strand of the identity literature, it is prudent to define this book's standpoint in some of the debates in the current scholarship on ontological security. The most relevant fault-lines are, first; the aggregation issue, namely, how and on what basis one may apply individual-level theories on the societal level; second, the degree to which the Self is sustained through self-reflexion or relational interaction; and third, the related debate regarding what types of Other matters for the sense of the Self. Regarding the debate over aggregation, Mitzen's conceptualization of state-level ontological security has been criticized for giving undue importance to the state level.¹⁹ Krolkowski, for example, uses Chinese foreign policy as a case to argue that Chinese ontological insecurity is something only found on the individual level.²⁰ This critique in my view underestimates the importance of a group-level Self in order to sustain a large-scale polity in the first place, and secondly, overestimates the level of homogeneity needed within a state for that entity still to be considered a salient analytical category.²¹ This book will thus be based on an approach to the aggregation question that relates to the states in question as a distinct kind of polity, whose identifications are politically co-constituted, fluid and multiple in nature, but still constituted ontologically through constructed distinctions defining and delineating the polity as an entity separate from others and with a politically salient *raison d'être*.

The modalities of Othering in creating a group identity is a key concept to the methodology underpinning both the historical and contemporary chapters of this book. A number of IR scholars have emphasized the relational aspect of ontological security, namely, the inter-subjective processes of creating a stable self-identity mainly through routinizing the polity's relationship with others.²² However, scholars such as Steele and Subotić differ on the extent

to which relationships with the Other is the main motivation in ontological security seeking. They point to how there also exists an internal drive for a polity to conform to the expectations it has of itself;²³ hence “the identities of states emerge from their own project of the self.”²⁴ In line with the standpoint argued by, for example, Kinnvall and Zarakol, I agree with both parties to an extent, and will argue for the complementarity of these two factors, as the constitution of a stable identity as a self-same entity throughout time, is a process in which both the Other and the Self play a part.²⁵ In particular this middle-ground perspective is all the more relevant for the analyses of cases such as the Chinese one. As Zarakol points out in her comments to Steele’s endogenous approach:

However, all his examples (e.g. the United States, Belgium) are Western states, which may be leading him to overgeneralize how such narratives about the ‘possible self’ are autonomously and endogenously generated. Since the nineteenth century, the ‘possible selves’ of many states around the world have been bracketed by comparisons to the West and fears about relative backwardness, and this preoccupation makes it very difficult to articulate aspirations about the state ‘self’ in a non-reactive manner.²⁶

Such external identity drivers are also acutely relevant for the Chinese experience from the late Qing Dynasty onwards.

The unpacking of the Other category is also a theoretically salient debate. This book concurs that it allows for analysis of a wide range of qualitatively different relations towards which one is defining oneself with, towards, or against other actors as a Radical Other, as is, for example, Campbell’s main focus,²⁷ to various degrees of non-radical otherness, friendship, and sameness.²⁸ As authors such as Rumelili, Berenskoetter, and Mattern have emphasized, friends and special relationships can be as fundamental to ontological security as enemies.²⁹ As Zarakol argues, drawing on the classic sociological study by Norbert Elias, finding one’s place as a group furthermore often entails engaging with a hierarchy of Others, some whom you Other as inferior, and some of which you may define as your superiors, and to which group you aspire to belong.³⁰ As the empirical sections of this book will demonstrate, the post–Opium War Chinese ontological security seeking was similarly an exercise of re-formulating a biographical narrative, a central co-constitutive feature of which was the definition of which of the various geographical and temporal Others should be defined as *which kind* of an Other. A theoretical move that serves to further transcend the dichotomy between in-group reflexivity and external Othering; one may also define a former iteration of oneself as the constitutive Other.³¹ I will argue that this ‘temporal Othering,’ in Gustafsson’s words,³² is a particularly relevant approach in the case of China, with its long historiographical tradition.

What China Can Do for Ontological Security

Whilst ontological security theory has proved valuable for exploring the case of China-Europe relations, this book argues that this case in return offers salient contributions to the field of ontological security theory. This book thus enters into a broader debate about ‘Global IR,’³³ as Chinese foreign policy has emerged as a pivotal case for the discussion of the degree of universality implied in Western-derived theoretical constructs.³⁴ As with IR theory in general, the extant literature on identity has proved to possess a fairly pronounced tendency of focusing on a relatively homogenous group of cases, namely, Western Westphalian nation-states.³⁵ Two of the most pronounced positions in this broader debate can in short be described as one school of thought contending that the historical and political particularities of China do not differ significantly from the general traits of states.³⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, a school of thought argues the case of China is too unique to be an applicable area for Western-derived generalized theories.³⁷ In essence, this book defines itself along the middle ground of this debate, but also strives to contribute to another dimension of this epistemological discussion of parochiality or universality, namely, by arguing that whilst universalized theories may be saliently applied to the Chinese case, Chinese cases may also be generalizable to non-Chinese contexts. However, in explaining the actions of the Chinese Communist Party, one should not overlook the fact that it is the *Chinese* Communist Party, with particular historical, cultural, and political residues distinguishing it from just *a* communist party, even though the latter is of course also a key analytical point.³⁸ It has already been pointed out by Krolikowski how the case of China seems to diverge from the expectations based on Mitzen’s conceptualization of ontological security.³⁹ Of course, however, it is important in order not to fall into inadvertent Orientalist essentialization.⁴⁰ As Zarakol summarizes the obvious, yet often disregarded point: “There has not been one eternal, unchanging ‘Chinese’ world view. Nobody would get away with claiming such a thing about Europe, so why should any other part of the world be any different?”⁴¹ Following from this axiom is the necessity to distinguish between what are the particular ontological security-seeking modalities of Chinese political entrepreneurs; what are rather general specifics of authoritarian one-party states; what are typical traits of states of the global South that modernized under conditions of empire and Western colonialization; and what are specifics of large, conglomerate ‘civilizational states.’⁴²

This book will argue that there are two main categories of contributions from bringing the case of China more thoroughly into the literature on ontological security. Firstly, it is a good case for exploring certain extant concepts within the ontological security literature that, although widespread, are still underexplored in the theoretical debate. This relates in particular to the concepts of ontological security seeking and narrative entrepreneurs, and to the further discussion of the role of the past and mnemonic structures in

identity narratives. Secondly, the case of China also demonstrates the salience of a number of conceptual expansions derived from the local context. In the Chinese scholarly community ontological security (本体安全/本体性安全) theory has yet to take hold within IR, most of the cited literature on the topic relates to psychology and sociology.⁴³ As such, the contributions to ontological security theory from this book's investigation of the China-Europe case, does not originate directly from the sparse Chinese literature on ontological security theory, but derives abductively from this book's analysis, and drawing upon a wider field of reading on Chinese philosophical and social science approaches. These new concepts not only serve to strengthen the explanatory power of ontological security theory in the Chinese case, but by expanding the selection of relevant concepts and ontological security modalities, they also broaden the horizons of the geographically rather narrow case universe of the current literature on ontological security, and introduce a set of new concepts that although derived from the Chinese context should be relevant also for a number of other cases. The following sub-sections will first discuss the two extant concepts of narrative entrepreneurs and modalities of modernity. The subsequent sections will then present three suggested contributions to the ontological security literature, namely: The extent to which materiality informs the ontological security status by engaging with economic functionality as one possible mode of ontological security seeking, the effects of universalism versus particularism as basis for foundational narratives, and the relevance of face and external recognition.

Ontological Security Seeking and Narrative Entrepreneurs

This book argues that China's post-Opium War ontological rupture and its aftermaths form an important venue for addressing the critique raised against ontological security theory for being too preoccupied by stasis and stability over change and ontological 'self-help.'⁴⁴ All the more so, as China, as a non-Western polity with a long tradition of centralized government, forced into the modern world of nation-states through a fundamental ontological security crisis, in effect sought to address this through a wide range of attempted new forms of political organization. As such, this relates to a core tenet of the ontological security literature's assumptions that states seek socially stable relationships with other state actors in order to secure their own sense of self. This book argues that an underexplored field of ontological security studies is the issue of states seeking quite the opposite; namely, to fundamentally *change* their regularized relationships with other actors, and *adapt* the foundational narratives of the polity.⁴⁵ Steele builds on McSweeney and Laing in approaching the aggregation dilemma of the ontological security approach through focusing on the political leaders that operate as the representatives of the state.⁴⁶ I find this to be a salient approach to the cases Steele treats in his books, that is to say relatively established Western nation-states seeking to harmonize their

foreign policy to the national identity narrative. In the case of China, however, much of the modern era was spent seeking to formulate and implement various versions of such an identity narrative in the first place. Thus, the focus should be widened to include the role of political head figures not only as leaders, but also as national *narrative entrepreneurs* seeking to construct a foundational narrative for the polity that can garner sufficient internal and external legitimacy to allow for an ontologically stable state to emerge and consolidate.⁴⁷

The definition of a narrative utilized follows established practice, by regarding it as a form of discourse constituted through four main features; the constellation of relationality, embedded in time and space, through a process of selection constituted by causal emplotment.⁴⁸ One of Steele's most important contributions to ontological security theory is how he included, systematized, and operationalized this narrative aspect of identity, and applied it also to the level of states.⁴⁹ Berenskoetter summarizes it as: "The political potency of a national biography lies in its function to provide a community with a basic discourse, or master narrative, which guides and legitimizes courses of action and provides ontological security."⁵⁰ As such, in shaping the identity of the Self, and thereby the distinction to the Other and the outlook on the wider world, then, the shaping of the self's history stands pivotal.⁵¹ As any student of modern Chinese politics is acutely aware of, an integral part of the CCP's current political project is the process of selective remembrance and forgetting.⁵² State-building is therefore also an exercise in narrative-building, and something in which actors can engage in strategically.⁵³ As Subotić elegantly summarizes the process in her investigation of Serbian politicians' handling of the territorial loss of Kosovo through a readjustment of the national narrative:

State narratives are constructed through an active and elaborate process that involves multiple political and cultural agents. Over time and with infinite iteration by narrative 'entrepreneurs'—political leaders, elite intellectuals, education establishment, popular culture, the media—and everyday social practice, a particular state narrative template (of past events, or of the general place of the state in the international system) fixes the meaning of the past and limits the opportunity for further political contestation. A constructed narrative reaches a tipping point threshold when a critical mass of social actors accepts and buys into it as a social fact.⁵⁴

Thus, underlying ontological security challenges can potentially be addressed through a number of narrative strategies, as will be demonstrated through the historical analysis of various Chinese political entrepreneurs through the last one and a half century.⁵⁵

Modalities of Modernity and the Importance of the Past

The other opportunity the case of China offers to further explore on an existing conceptual discussion within ontological security theory, relates to how it contributes to a small, but growing, body of scholarship on the particularities of ontological insecurity in those traditional major centres of non-Western civilizations with a traumatic entrance into the Westphalian state system.⁵⁶ The argument is that the experience of being relegated to an excluded periphery of the new international system tends to shape the narratives of those polities in particular ways.⁵⁷ It would seem that China shares some of the traits of these other non-Western empire with memories of colonial trauma,⁵⁸ in that they are more concerned with their identity narratives being inter-subjectively acknowledged by foreign actors, as described in the cases of Japan and Turkey: “Both countries joined European international society in the nineteenth century as stigmatized outsiders. The insecurities created by that inter-national environment have been built into the national identities of both states.”⁵⁹ This book finds that in China’s case as well as in the cases of Turkey, Japan, and Russia, not only did the ontological security crisis challenge the extant foundational narrative of the current ruling dynasty, it coincided with the rise of modernity that would challenge the foundational narrative structure of the agrarian empire’s Mandate of Heaven. As well summarized by Zhang, “Imperial China was thus confronted by a dual challenge at the turn of the twentieth century. One was how to build down the empire into a state. And the other was how to build up China (from its largely local and provincial basis) into a nation and a state as conceptualized by the invading Europeans so as to prevent China from becoming ‘a mere geographic expression.’”⁶⁰

As Neumann points out, one is not given a *tabula rasa* in crafting national narratives – in order for it to be able to provide group cohesion and identity it needs to resonate with the cultural context within which it is situated.⁶¹ The historical traumas around China’s forced inclusion into the Western-dominated international system are thus relevant for Chinese ontological security seeking even today, as these historical experiences are key to understanding the development of the foundational narratives underpinning ontological security. The co-constitutive ties between a polity’s ontological security, historiography, and narrative take on added importance in the case of China, where the mnemonic literature is informed by a historiographic tradition stretching back to 841 BCE.⁶² I thus concur with Berenskoetter’s critique of much of the extant literature on national narratives as too often overlooking the temporal arc of a narrative linking past and future, in favour of the narrative as an event rooted in the here and now.⁶³ Without shared stories of the past, anything but fleeting group identities would thus be very difficultly attainable.⁶⁴ These historical narratives provide the stories necessary to connect the individual to the collective and the collective to the past.⁶⁵ The Chinese case is then, again, a salient one to explore these theoretical

implications further, not the least as the historical experience of modernity was fundamentally different in the case of the Chinese polities, compared to the Western ones.

Ti/Yong, Minben, and Functionality

Having presented two extant ontological security concepts the case of China is particularly well suited for exploring further, these sections detail three conceptual expansions derived from the local Chinese context, contending that these new concepts allow for a more salient analysis of ontological security seeking, with relevance also beyond the Chinese case. The first such conceptual expansion, that has till date been given little attention in ontological security theory, namely, the role of material success, economic performance, and perceived competence.⁶⁶ From the very outset, the ontological security crisis of imperial China was to a substantial degree driven by the fact that the supreme civilizational authority of the Celestial Court was challenged by an outsider that was materially and technologically superior.⁶⁷ As detailed in the following chapters, one of the main responses to this ontological security crisis was to bifurcate the idea of supremacy into two separate categories, claiming that the Qing Dynasty could, and should, use (*yong*用) the barbarian technology, whilst still asserting the supremacy of the imperial social and political values, regarded as the civilizational essence (*ti* 体). In other words, the idea was summarized as taking “Chinese studies as essence, and Western studies as function (中学为体西学为用).”⁶⁸ This was an “attempt by Qing Dynasty officials to mobilize the population by making tradition capable of harnessing the forces of nationalism as they entered China in the late nineteenth century.”⁶⁹ However, after a number of humiliating military defeats, the new Westernizing reform movements argued increasingly persistently that the only way of achieving progress in the *yong* dimension was to also alter the *ti*-dimension.⁷⁰ Economic and organizational efficiency thus from the beginning became a key fulcrum in Chinese national ontological security seeking. This idea about performance, in material terms, is something that is not generally covered in the identity literature. The closest conceptualization of this factor may be in Nye’s work on soft power, of which performance is considered a source.⁷¹ Max Weber’s work on what bestows legitimacy on a polity’s ruling class did not include performance as one of his three ideal types either.⁷² However, as pointed out in the literature on Communist regimes, these three ideal types leave out one important source of legitimacy of particular importance for the CCP, namely, that of socioeconomic performance.⁷³ In China, furthermore, there is a long tradition of the ruling class’s ability to deliver wealth and welfare to be closely connected to the “Mandate of Heaven” from which authority the emperors’ legitimacy was derived.⁷⁴ The inclusion of this aspect, and the striving to seem successful in material terms as an added element of ontological security, could be a useful addition to analysing non-Western cases, in particular. This also reflects how

the fundamentally changed condition of modernity took on a very particular ontological meaning for China and other countries of the global South, given the way it was brought to the countries courtesy of imperialism.

Economic success can thus be regarded as a potent identity marker, particularly as countries in general increasingly find a niche in asserting superiority though commercial rather than military means. This is seen, for example, in the case of Japan, where the post-Second World War Japanese state “delivered ontological security by allowing the Japanese people to hold onto their hierarchical worldview and their view of Japan’s right to a high stature without utilizing military strategies.”⁷⁵ I will argue Chinese ontological security seeking is also closely tied up with economic and technological performance, and as such a brief look at also the concept of *yong* is necessitated. Material and technological progress became intimately connected with the ontological security of the Chinese state, as indeed one of the main impetuses behind Deng Xiaoping’s reform programme was him witnessing the higher living standards amongst Chinese living in Hong Kong and Singapore.⁷⁶ In Zhang Weiwei’s influential polemic on the CCP’s political system’s edge over Western democracies, one of the core lessons he summarizes as essential to the long-standing Chinese tradition of tying the Mandate of Heaven to the welfare of the populace. “Historically, the concept of the mandate of heaven was essentially about *minben*, or to what extent, the government could meet the pressing needs of the people. If the government failed to do so, then the foundation of the state would be shaken, and the emperor would lose his mandate of heaven.”⁷⁷ The strive to ‘catch up’ with the West technologically and economically, and struggling with the degree of political and value changes that may or may not entail, is indeed a running thread of Chinese modern history, from the foundries of the Self-Strengthening Movement, to Sun Yat-sen’s political program of reforming the Chinese polity, to the backyard furnaces of Mao’s catastrophic Great Leap Forward.⁷⁸ Xi Jinping, in his symbolically important first official sojourn as party leader, visited the Chinese National Museum’s grand exhibition on the Road to Rejuvenation together with the rest of the Politburo’s Standing Committee. This exhibit showcases a clear narrative, very much focused on legitimization based on economic performance, that ends on a triumphant note by displaying cases full of space equipment, and mobile phones stacked to demonstrate wealth increase amongst the population. As such, one cannot avoid noting the centrality of economic performance in one of the CCP’s main showpiece of their foundational narrative.

Guanxi, Relationality, and Universality

The Chinese concept of *guanxi* has been treated in a number of literatures beyond IR, from sociology to business studies.⁷⁹ The overlap between China’s entry as a great power on the world stage and the ‘relational turn’ in IR theory pioneered by Jackson and Nexon in 1999⁸⁰ has given rise to an increasing number of treatises on the issue, including from a number of Chinese authors who

regard this approach as a key starting point for implementing traditional Chinese concepts into the IR canon.⁸¹ However, scholarship linking the Chinese *guanxi* concept with ontological security studies is still wanting. This book argues that it is a useful perspective with regard to the mode of how relationships and recognition are brought to bear on Chinese ontological security. *Guanxi* (关系), has been described as a “fundamental web of interpersonal relations permeating Chinese societies.”⁸² The term literally translates into ‘relations’ or ‘relationships’; however, the rationale for implementing the concept as a separate analytical category reflects the extent to which the term denotes in its narrow sense, the consciously maintained ‘particularistic ties’ based on ritualistic cultivation of reciprocal, hierarchically organized obligation.⁸³ This sets the phenomenon apart from other forms of social network concepts such as Bourdieu’s social capital.⁸⁴

In terms of potential expansions to ontological security theory drawn from this concept, is that of the difference between polities whose ontological security is founded with a more pronounced focus on seeking recognition based on a universalist view of the polity’s fundamental values, versus a polity that seeks ontological status recognition more based on a particularistic relationality. This book argues that modern China is a case of the latter type. This is a highly relevant feature given that, as argued in the chapters on contemporary Europe-China relations, the key instances of identity-driven conflict between Europe and China in the last decades have been situations in which European countries have applied their *universal* understandings, most notably of human rights, to their *particular* bilateral relationship with China. In other words, the empirical material suggests that the Chinese diplomatic tradition is focused extensively on the importance of *coupling* as the modus operandi of relations, compartmentalizing relations into separate dyads.⁸⁵ This analysis concurs with the patterns detailed in the works of, for example, Chih-yu Shih:

By contrast, we will argue that Chineseness depends on social recognition. (...) US foreign policy concerns about relationship are assessed and manoeuvred to suit the purpose of certain general principles embedded either in liberalism or hegemonic stability. (...) For example, the approach of Chinese strategists in handling border disputes with India, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, Myanmar, and North Korea without subscribing to any particular standard is notable.⁸⁶

Of course, all polities will to an extent base their conception of ontological security on a combination of universalist and relationship-specific principles, but this investigation is corroborating the idea that Chinese ontological security to a larger extent is based on recognition of particular roles in bilateral relationships, a trait that is closely related to the dynamics of *guanxi*, and its diversified relationality. As argued by Qin Yaqin; “The Confucian worldview differs from that of Western societies in that it sees the world as one of relations rather than atomistic and discrete entities.

(...) As rationality is the most characteristic concept of Western societies, relationality provides the foundation of the Chinese social world.”⁸⁷

It is, however, striking to note that in most debates about diversified relationality as an argued key cultural Chinese trait, from both the postcolonial Western and Chinese academic circles, the literature exists in almost complete isolation from the well-established body of works on how this form of particularistic ties is a defining trait of empire.⁸⁸ As such, this modality may rather be a reflection of long imperial traditions, followed by authoritarian rule with only a very short democratic intermezzo. However, this investigation argues that whether particularistic sociological traits or universal imperialist heritage is the main background, the modus operandi is particular enough to deserve special attention. This relational dyadic approach, as Rozman’s constructivist analysis terms it,⁸⁹ is arguably reflected in a number of Chinese foreign policy practices.⁹⁰ China’s behaviour in multilateral fora tends to focus on non-interference and sovereignty issues, rather than seeking any broad universal application for what the CCP defines as Chinese values. This is typically exemplified by China traditionally being the Security Council’s top abstention country.⁹¹ Even the high-profile Chinese-led multilateral organizations, such as the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China’s Belt and Road Initiative, or the 14+1 forum with East and Central European countries, diverge from the US-created Bretton–Woods institutions by being mainly platforms for bilateral relations between China and the relevant member countries, rather than a multilateral architecture.⁹² As the case of Norway’s Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, treated in a later chapter, demonstrates, China’s protests were overwhelmingly related to the bilateral relationship between China and Norway, whereas Chinese protests in cases where the Peace Prize was awarded to political dissidents of countries other than China have been absent.

Mianzi, Recognition, and Status

Finally, a concept that relates strongly to this preference for bilateral particularist relationality, is the Chinese concept of face (*mianzi* 面子).⁹³ A staple of business books and vernacular psychology, this concept is nevertheless one that, as Buzan argues, deserves to be subject of serious theoretical attention: “The E[nglish] S[chool] has not thought about ‘face.’ Yet, ‘face’ might count as a primary institution of international society in East Asia. And in a world in which China is one of the most powerful states, ‘face’ will almost certainly be an important aspect of diplomacy more generally.”⁹⁴ Sociologist David Yau-fai Ho defines face as:

The respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct (...) In terms of two interacting parties, face is the reciprocated compliance, respect, and/or deference that each party expects from, and extends to, the other party.⁹⁵

As Ho was keen to emphasize, this idea of face is, when defined at a high level of generality, a universally human concept.⁹⁶ However, he goes on to argue that in Chinese society it takes on a more dominant role that is meaningfully different from the concept's role in the Western world, by the particular emphasis given to the relational reciprocity rather than the focus on the individual that dominates in Western societies.⁹⁷ "Chinese face is tightly linked with vertical relationships and close others. Its operation follows a compelling principle of reciprocity. In contrast, Western face emphasizes the separateness of an individual."⁹⁸ This concept also impacts Chinese foreign policy behaviour.⁹⁹ As illustrated empirically in Shih's pioneering work on the topic, a key motivating factor behind Chinese diplomacy is "to maintain the integrity of the national face in front of the world, the internal citizenry, and statesmen themselves."¹⁰⁰

The utilization of the key Chinese term of face here, then, is that it denotes a particular kind of ontological security seeking, based on a particular set of social structures that differs meaningfully from the Western honour concept.¹⁰¹ As such, it deserves recognition and analytical attention in its own right.¹⁰² As observed empirically in the analysis of contemporary Europe-China relations, there are two distinct features of Chinese foreign policy for which the utilization of face as an analytical concept is particularly salient. Firstly, the dominant presence of apology diplomacy as an onus of Chinese foreign relations, and, secondly, the role of ritualized recognition. The presence of apologies as a mainstay in Chinese foreign relations can hardly have been left unnoticed by any China-hand, as long-winded negotiations over the precise wording of apologetic declarations have taken centre stage in a number of high-profile foreign policy crises.¹⁰³ "Policies for the sake of national face can be costly actions that can hardly be explained by conventional materialist theories. The acceptance of material expense and the compromise of tangible interests aims to compel the other to stabilize the reciprocal and harmonious relationship with China."¹⁰⁴ The face concept entails a different approach to hierarchical relationality that results in political disputes surrounding these issues take on a particular dynamic. As summarized by Gries, "the form an apology takes depends critically upon the relative status of the parties involved. The kind of apology necessary to rectify an offense an inferior commits against a superior is greater than that required of an offense committed between equals."¹⁰⁵ This interlinking of diplomatic apologies with bilateralist particularist relationality thus opens for a dynamic that instead of emphasizing universal remorse towards individualized principles, puts the onus on the respective bilateral relationship. As such, an apology is in effect also a statement on the relevant relational hierarchy between China and the state in question, an issue that seems to have exacerbated tensions at multiple points over the later years, as will be detailed in the contemporary chapters.

The role of apology diplomacy as entwined with issues of status hierarchy and face thus ties directly to the interrelated issue of ritualized recognition

as a salient factor in analysing Chinese foreign policy. As summarized by Callahan:

Representations of the 2001 U.S. spy-plane collision over the South China Sea are a case in point. To Beijing, it was much more than simple violation of Chinese sovereignty: It was seen as a moral problem, another in a long line of humiliations that China has suffered since the Opium War. Resolving this problem did not involve military retaliation or economic reparation so much as symbolic recognition: China demanded a public apology from the United States.¹⁰⁶

Drawing upon Ringmar's account of the importance of public recognition in the process of continuously producing relational identities, this approach utilizes the insight that, much like persons, polities also "ask our audiences to *recognize us* as the kind of persons that our stories identify."¹⁰⁷ In line with Zarakol's argument presented earlier, China's case, like that of Turkey and Japan, thus also demonstrates a particular need for exogenous recognition.¹⁰⁸ The history of the modern Chinese polity has been deeply enmeshed with recognition-seeking efforts, both with regard to achieving the formal-legal recognition as a state in the first place, and later through seeking recognition for its various socio-political modalities amongst a foreign public.¹⁰⁹ It could be argued that in the case of China, this request for recognition is even more politically salient, based on the cultural traditions of face, not the least in how this cultural trait works in tandem with the particular Chinese identity narrative of redressing the past wrongs that imperial China suffered through. As Wang Zheng has summarized it in his treatise on Chinese nationalism and China-US relations: "The Chinese political elites are responsible for maintaining China's national *mianzi* (face) in its dealings with other nations. Because the CCP has built its legitimacy on a reputation as the righter of past wrongs, it cannot afford to allow the country to be humiliated again."¹¹⁰

Directly related to this question of external recognition, is the growing literature on status concerns in Chinese foreign policy,¹¹¹ that ties into a broader focus on status concerns in IR.¹¹² One key insight derived from the developments in this literature, with particular application in the Chinese case, is Freedman's argument that status insecurity is not only found with regard to one's social peer group, but may just as potently be derived from temporal forms of self-evaluation.¹¹³ Pye does in his work on the topic even claim that "The Chinese sense of greatness is of a different order and magnitude from that of all other cultural traditions."¹¹⁴ This tenuous sense of status, or as Coker phrases it "the juxtaposition of pride and patriotism on one hand, and the Party's deep insecurities on the other,"¹¹⁵ remains a key driver in the identity issues of modern Chinese politics. It has also proved susceptible to developing into grievance-nationalism, on the basis of a state-led historiography dwelling on resentment.¹¹⁶ This arguably results in a strong drive for seeking ontological security through being given face by being recognized according

to their perceived status, with regard to the rituals of Western-derived, diplomatic protocol. This is visible, for example, in Chinese diplomatic discourse putting particular emphasis on the date of a country's formal recognition of the PRC, and other established practices through which status recognition is being communicated in the international society.¹¹⁷ This is also a modality of ontological security seeking that echoes deep traditions of ritualized Chinese diplomacy. These practices shape China's policies today, and have shaped Chinese encounters with Europe also from their earliest contacts across the Eurasian continent.

Notes

- 1 Reid 2022; Putin 2023; Neumann 2023.
- 2 For leading thinkers within this literature, see, for example, Mearsheimer 2018; Walt 2019; Kissinger 2011; Morgenthau 1955; Johnston 1998; Feng 2007; Wiarda 2013.
- 3 Campbell 1992; Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth 2014.
- 4 Wendt 1994.
- 5 Nye 2009; Ding 2010.
- 6 Plato 1995, 34–37; Neumann 2018, 167–68.
- 7 Giddens 1991. The concept of ontological security was originally developed in the field of psychology, in the works of Laing 1998; Erikson 1994.
- 8 The notable 'first-movers' in this respect are the works of Huysmans 1998; and McSweeney 1999. These works tie into the general theoretical movement towards identity in those years, as spearheaded by, for example, Wendt 1994. For an overview of the use of the ontological security concept within other social sciences, see Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 17.
- 9 For a succinct overview of the field see, for example, Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; or the concise literature overview in Ejodus 2018, 884–90. Amongst the main texts defining and developing ontological security theory over the last decades are Mitzen 2006b; Kinnvall 2004; Steele 2005; Kinnvall 2007; Steele 2008; Zarakol 2010; Zarakol 2011; Guzzini 2012; Gustafsson 2014; Rumelili 2014; Subotić 2016; Zarakol 2016; Kinnvall 2018; Innes and Steele 2013; Lupovici 2012; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017; He 2014; Kay 2012.
- 10 Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 5.
- 11 Mitzen 2006b, 346; Steele 2024.
- 12 Steele 2005.
- 13 Steele 2008, 110–11.
- 14 Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018, 254–55.
- 15 Zarakol 2016, 49–50.
- 16 Scholarship on Chinese nationalism have evolved into a considerably body of knowledge, following the flourishing of nationalist discourses in post-Cold War China. For one of the earliest and best surveys of the literature, see Zhao 2004; A useful way of subdividing the literature is by distinguishing between scholarship focusing on the state-led aspects of the proclaimed new wave of nationalism, focusing on the instrumentalist use of patriotism by the CCP, in particular after 1989. Key works here include Deng 2008; Gries 2004; Wang 2008; Zhao 2013; Hughes 2006; Chen 2005; Carlson 2009; Tønnesson 2016; Other scholars have been focusing mainly on the 'bottom-up' dynamics of popular nationalism, and the interplay between these dynamics and the state-level actions, such as, for example, Hughes 2011a; Callahan 2006; Callahan 2009; Chen 2005; Beukel 2011;

- Sinkkonen 2013 For a succinct overview of other key debates within the literature on Chinese nationalism, including the broader discussion on primordial or instrumentalist views on the roots of Chinese nationalist sentiments, the degree to which imperial China could be seen as harbouring nationalist or merely culturalist ideology, and the contemporary debates on more assertive and virulent strands of Chinese nationalism, see; Carlson et al. 2016.
- 17 See Neumann 2014; Neumann and Wigen 2018.
- 18 For an extended argument on this concept, defined by the authors as denoting a social entity that “has a distinct identity; a capacity to mobilise persons and their resources for political purposes, that is, for value satisfaction; and a degree of institutionalization and hierarchy (leaders and constituents),” see Ferguson and Mansbach 1996; Ferguson and Mansbach 2008, 371. For a further argument in favour of this concept’s utility in IR, see, for example, Jackson 2004.
- 19 Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 33–34; Mälksoo 2015; Roe 2008.
- 20 Krolkowski 2008.
- 21 Steele 2008, 79; Wilhelmsen 2013, 33.
- 22 See, in particular, Mitzen 2006b; Mitzen 2006a; Rumelili 2015; Katzenstein 1996; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; Yennie Lindgren and Lindgren 2017.
- 23 Steele 2008b; Subotić 2016; Delehanty and Steele 2009.
- 24 Steele 2008b, 49; This view has garnered some support in the psychological field based on research of small-group dynamics, that points to in-group identification being prior to out-group identification. See Allport 1979; Lebow 2012, 85–88.
- 25 Zarakol 2010; Kinnvall 2004.
- 26 Zarakol 2010, 20.
- 27 Campbell 1992.
- 28 For a discussion on the degrees of sameness, and the overlooked role of friendship in IR, see Berenskoetter 2007, 149; Wæver 1995; Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Ringmar 2002; Browning 2002; Nordin and Smith 2018. For discussions about defining the Other as an ideal for which one strives to be similar, see the relevant chapters in Neumann 2016; and Wigen 2018.
- 29 Rumelili 2007; Mattern 2005; Berenskoetter 2007; Haugevik 2018; Ejodus 2018.
- 30 Zarakol 2011; Elias and Scotson 1994.
- 31 Gustafsson 2019; Bachleitner 2021.
- 32 Gustafsson 2019.
- 33 For a good and comprehensive discussion of the non-Western centric theory development through the last 20 years, see, for example, Acharya and Buzan 2007 as well as their follow-up article taking stock of the literature 10 years later; Acharya and Buzan 2017. The debate surrounding the universality of Western-derived political theory frameworks, is arguably closely related to the broader IR debate related to the role of actor contextualization, see the framework presented by Jackson and Nexon 2013, 553–58.
- 34 See Song 2001; Yan 2013; Hughes 1997; Noesselt 2015; Wæver 1998; Pan and Kavalski 2018; Hiim 2015, 209–10.
- 35 Traditional ‘mainstream’ theories on international relations have long been criticized for being a scholarly practice ‘on, by and for’ Western cases, as treated in key works such as Acharya 2014; Acharya and Buzan 2017, 347; Bilgin 2008; Buzan and Lawson 2014; Tickner 2012. It is, however, important to note that even within the constructivist school, the body of works deals predominantly with cases from the North Atlantic region. As detailed in the excellent quantitative overview by Bertucci, Hayes, and James 2018 of the body of articles sampled, 45% of the cases researched the North Atlantic region, with Asia a very distant second with 13,1%, and the other regions receiving even less scholarly attention still.
- 36 See good overviews of this literature in, for example, Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; Wang 2010; and Pan and Kavalski 2018. And for an overview of some

- key works of novel theoretical development along this end of the spectre, see, for example, Wang 2010; Tang 2013; Nathan and Scobell 2015.
- 37 For an overview of the status of the debate, see the following: Callahan 2008; Callahan and Barabantseva 2011; Wang 2017. For more detailed introduction to some of the key theoretical concepts employed, see the writings by scholars such as Qin 2005; Zhao 2005; Zhao 2019; Ren 2009; and Yan 2013.
- 38 Neumann 2011, 469–70.
- 39 Krolkowski 2008, 131.
- 40 Kang 2003, 59; Barnett and Zarakol 2023, 429–30; Callahan 2020, 52–57. For the classic treatise on Orientalism, see Said 2014.
- 41 Zarakol 2022, 9.
- 42 Zarakol 2011, 149.
- 43 Some scholars have sought to argue for its salience as a research tool, most notably He 2014 and Li 2010. Those very few Chinese works utilizing ontological security as an analytical lens, have been limited to introducing the concept, applying it to Beijing’s neighbourhood relations. See Wang 2016 and Kong and Bao 2015. One contribution worthy of further attention is, however, the conceptual expansion to focus more on the temporal aspect and the role of goal-directed futures, in He 2015.
- 44 Ejodus 2018.
- 45 See, for example, discussion in Browning and Joenniemi 2017 as well as similar argumentation motivating; Ejodus 2018; Subotić 2016; Zarakol 2011 and Eberle and Handl 2018.
- 46 Steele 2008, 33–34.
- 47 Hagström and Gustafsson 2015; Neumann 1996; and Suzuki 2007.
- 48 Somers 1994, 616. See also a more extensive definition in Patterson and Monroe 1998 as well as more in-depth discussions on the structure of narratives in; Barthes 1975; Genette 1983; Ricoeur 1990; White 2009; Somers and Gibson 1993; Jameson 1981; Bal 2009; Roberts 2001; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997a; Yennie Lindgren 2021b; Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2014; and Yennie Lindgren 2021a, 68–72.
- 49 Steele 2008, 73.
- 50 Berenskoetter 2014, 279.
- 51 Campbell 1998, 34–36; Hagström 2021, 333–34.
- 52 See, for example, Callahan 2012; Mitter 2003; Wang 2008; Duara 1996; Chong 2014; Wang 2005; Economy 2017; Sverdrup-Thygeson 2017; Moore 2010.
- 53 Lebow 2016, 131–32; Lerner 2020, 5; Homolar and Turner 2024.
- 54 Subotić 2016, 615.
- 55 In this, the book parts way with such arguments as the idea that the ontological insecurities created by the CCP’s massive state-lead transformation of Chinese social life, could only be addressed through similar massive CCP-lead actions, as contended by Krolkowski 2018, 913–14. For further counterarguments to this point, see, for example, the argument by Marlow 2002 about society’s ability to seek to address identity ruptures in the absence of state action; For another example of how two very different narratives has been employed to deal with the same underlying ontological security issues, illustrating the dynamic nature of addressing ontological crises; see Çapan and Zarakol 2019.
- 56 See Vieira 2018; Zarakol 2010; Çapan 2016; Cash and Kinnvall 2017; Bayly 2015; Zarakol 2011; Neumann 2011; Akchurina and Della Sala 2018. For post-colonial approaches to similar identity dynamics, see, for example, Kinnvall 2016; Çapan 2017; Fanon 1986.
- 57 Neumann 2011, 464.
- 58 Meissner 2006, 3–4; Miller 2013.
- 59 Zarakol 2011, 4.

- 60 Zhang 2001, 61.
- 61 Lévi-Strauss 1966, 257; Neumann 2011, 471–72; Mink 2001, 219.
- 62 Wei-ming Tu 1991, 147.
- 63 Berenskoetter 2014; Berenskoetter 2011.
- 64 Ringmar 1996, 76–77.
- 65 Hinchman and Hinchman 1997b, 14–18; Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Gustafsson 2011, 42.
- 66 The term ‘performance’ is utilized here in its politico-economic sense of a metric of organizational capacity and material output, not in the sense denoting gender identity performativity, as in the works of Butler 2011, 188–94.
- 67 Suzuki 2009, 89–113.
- 68 Hughes 2011b; Ding and Chen 1995.
- 69 Hughes 2011b, 119.
- 70 Hughes 2011b, 127–28.
- 71 Nye 2023, 189; Nye 2009.
- 72 Weber 1919; Beetham 1991.
- 73 See White 1985, 463–64; Zhong 1996, 204–7; Rigby 1982; Dittmer and Kim 1993, 29; Zhang 2012, 145–56.
- 74 Zhao 2009.
- 75 Zarakol 2011, 194.
- 76 Deng 2014, 144–46; Mühlhahn 2019, 499–506; Wong 1998.
- 77 Zhang 2016, 144; Sun 1927.
- 78 Vogel 2011, 10; Zhu 2011.
- 79 For a review of the literature within these fields, see, for example, Barbalet 2017; See also Jacobs 1979 and Wellman, Chen, and Dong 2002.
- 80 Jackson and Nexon 1999.
- 81 Amongst the key proponents of the idea that the relational turn lays bare a deficiency in relation-based analysis of international relations that cannot be fully addressed without taking into account Confucian relational traditions, is the scholar Qin Yaqing, arguing for a ‘relational theory of IR’ based on relational governance and non-exclusive dialectics rooted in traditional Chinese culture: Qin 2007; Qin 2016; Qin 2018; and Qin 2009. See also Weiming Tu 1985, 113–14. A similar line of argument, although going not as far in describing Chinese relationality as a uniquely Chinese cultural trait is Zhang 2015. Analysing relational logic through empirical case studies is Shih and Wang 2019. Building on the idea of a Chinese ontology of relations, Zhao has sought to fold it into the traditional Chinese concept of “All under Heaven”; Zhao, 2006. Amongst other key proposals for introducing Chinese-derived relational concepts to IR, is the introduction of friendship relations, as eloquently presented by Nordin and Smith 2018 and Nordin and Smith 2019. For an excellent snapshot of the current state of the theoretical debate, see Kavalski 2018.
- 82 Wellman, Chen, and Dong 2002, 222.
- 83 Jacobs 1979, 238–39; Gold, Guthrie, and Wank 2002, 6–9; Hwang 1987.
- 84 Bourdieu 1986. For an excellent review of the contending schools of thought on whether *guanxi* is uniquely Chinese, see Gold, Guthrie, and Wank 2002, 8–19; Hwang and Han 2010. Ledeneva’s treatise on similar social dynamics in the case of Russia is particularly interesting in this regard, given the country’s Judeo-Christian philosophical tradition, and the shared communist experience with the PRC; Ledeneva 1998. In utilizing the concept of *guanxi* for this book’s analyses’ it is also implied that this text disagrees with Ong’s argument that *guanxi* is a term externally imposed on Chinese culture by Western academics, see Ong 2003, 180–81. There is a range of literature suggesting there is a tendency for Chinese to in general follow relational thinking, as opposed to American generic-based modes of thinking about issue-linkages. See Pan 2016; Womack 2008; Nisbett 2011.

- 85 Ruggie 2002, 110.
- 86 Shih and Huang 2015, 6–7.
- 87 Qin 2018, 149–50.
- 88 See Nexon and Wright 2007, 257–59; Tilly 2018, 3; Cooley 2005, 8–10.
- 89 Rozman 2013, 176.
- 90 See Putten and Shulong 2012; Bang 2017; Kavalski 2018; Shih and Huang 2015; Coker 2019.
- 91 Wuthnow 2013, 11–29; Ferdinand 2014.
- 92 Jakóbowski 2018; Contessi 2009; Carrozza 2019.
- 93 Hwang and Han 2010, 481. The complexity of the concept of face does also extend to the Chinese vocabulary designating it, as summarized by Hu 1944, 45–49 the concept translated as ‘face’ springs from two Chinese words, namely ‘mianzi’ and ‘lian,’ annotating slightly different, but overlapping, conceptual meanings, with mian and lian being described as reminiscent of the relationship between ‘personality’ and ‘title,’ respectively. Thus for the purpose of this investigation the main concept analysed is that of ‘mianzi,’ which is the most utilized with regards to such social status positionality most relevant for international relations. For details, see; Ho 1976, 867–69; Hwang and Han 2010, 481–82; Ho 2015; and Hwang 1987.
- 94 Buzan 2018, 468.
- 95 Ho 1976, 883.
- 96 Ho 1976, 881. For a key treatise analysing Western ‘face work,’ see Goffman 2005, 5–32. For reflections on face dynamics amongst Native Americans, read Mauss 2002, 50.
- 97 Ho 1976, 882. For an overview of the literature dealing with face as a particularized cross-cultural dynamic, see, for example, the review in Kim and Nam 1998, 522–24 or the review of the relevant literature within the psychological field in Hwang and Han 2010, 480–91. See also the body of works summarized in Bond 1991.
- 98 Hwang and Han 2010, 481.
- 99 Shih 1990; Xue 2021.
- 100 Shih 1990, vii.
- 101 Steele 2008, 98.
- 102 Ho 1976, 877–78.
- 103 Khong 2019, 136.
- 104 Xue 2021, 14.
- 105 Gries 2004, 89.
- 106 Callahan 2004, 202.
- 107 Ringmar 1996, 81.
- 108 Zarakol 2011.
- 109 Holm and Sending 2018.
- 110 Wang 2012, 189–90.
- 111 For two of the most erudite treatises on the issue, see Deng 2008; Yan 2006.
- 112 Røren and Beaumont 2018; Larson and Shevchenko 2010; Wilson 2019; Ward 2017; Larson 2015; Khong 2019; O’Neill 2001; Renshon 2017; Deng 2004; and Beaumont 2024.
- 113 Freedman 2016.
- 114 Pye 1992, 52.
- 115 Coker 2015, 129.
- 116 Coker 2015, 128–29; Callahan 2009; Deng 2008; Wang 2008; and Wolf 2017.
- 117 Ringmar 2002. For one example of how a face-giving state visit became the key point in US-Chinese diplomacy in the buildup to the First Gulf War, see the details as relayed in the memoirs of Bush and Scowcroft 2011, 412–14; Lampton 2014, 214; and Ho 2015, 311.

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