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Bachelor's Thesis

Is the Middle Kingdom on a Path to Hegemony?

Realism Through a Liberal Façade

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Six years ago, I started studying Law and International Relations. I was convinced both my future and my heart were in Law. International Relations was just a whim, I never really had thought about studying International Relations. If it weren't for professors like Thomas Kruiper and Frederic Mertens, I would have never discovered that International Relations is where my heart lies and, I hope, my future is.

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"I don't care if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice"

- Deng Xiaoping

Abstract and Keywords

Abstract

The rise of China is often seen with caution from the West. This thesis examines the extent to which China is actively pursuing hegemonic status and analyzes the alignment between its actions and stated intentions. In addition, this thesis seeks to provide insights into the potential implications for the international order if China attains the status of Hegemon. By exploring China's engagement in international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, as well as the impact of initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the future shape of the international order under China's potential hegemony.

Keywords: Liberalism, Realism, Hegemony, China.

Resumen

El ascenso de China a menudo es visto desde Occidente con preocupación. Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado estudia hasta qué punto China está persiguiendo activamente el estatus de hegemón y analiza las posibles diferencias entre sus acciones y sus intenciones declaradas. Además, esta tesis busca brindar nuevas perspectivas sobre las posibles implicaciones para el orden internacional si China alcanza el estatus de hegemón. Al explorar el papel de China en organizaciones internacionales, como las Naciones Unidas y la Organización Mundial del Comercio, así como el impacto de proyectos como el de la Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta, la investigación tiene como objetivo contribuir al debate en curso sobre el nuevo orden internacional que podría crearse bajo la mirada del hegemón chino.

Palabras claves: Liberalismo, Realismo, Hegemonía, China.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CPEC	China - Pakistan Economic Corridor
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
GA	General Assembly
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IP	Intellectual Property
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IR	International Relations
OECD	Organization for Economic Development
PRC	People's Republic of China
TRIPS	Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
U.S	United States
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

WWII

World War II

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Introduction

Since the end of the World War II in 1945, the U.S hegemony has been widely acknowledged to be a 'Liberal Order'. Said liberal order was based in the principle of sovereignty; a permanently increasing multilateralism; the creation and imposition of liberal institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization; free trade; and a firm commitment to democracy at home and internationalism abroad. However, behind this façade, there were always realist motives. For example, the decolonization process that started in the aftermath of the WWII could be seen as an attempt of the emerging power at the time, the U.S to free former colonies from the grasp of their metropolis and to gain access to new markets that were previously captive. The mere existence of the Security Council, the only body with the capacity and power to issue and enforce binding resolutions in the United Nations, and the convenient veto power attributed to the U.S, and its allies at the time, is another safety and safeguard mechanism that will protect the interests of The West's¹ hegemon above everything else.

The West, through the U.S, who plays the role of its hegemon, has a history of leading the world according to a ruled-based system, supported by liberal institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization; multilateralism as the correct mechanism to address global issues and a very strict, at least in theory, policy of non-interference on domestic affairs of third countries. That is, at least, the narrative being told. However, it could be contended that in times of complexity, a realist mechanism invariably comes into play, tipping the scales in favor of the dominant power and ensuring the protection of its interests. Some real examples of this claim are the veto power in the security council that makes virtually impossible for those with said power to

¹ When referring to "The West," it typically encompasses societies that are culturally linked to Europe and North America. However, it is important to note that "The West" is not strictly a geographical concept. Therefore, countries like New Zealand and Australia, despite not being geographically connected to Europe or North America, are considered part of The West due to their cultural, historical, and political ties with these regions. The term "The West" is often used to describe shared values, political systems, economic models, and historical influences that are characteristic of these societies.

get affected by critical binding resolutions, a special authorization by said council to intervene where and when needed, and a history of American-orchestrated coup d'états throughout Latin America and around the world in order to overthrow governments that goes against U.S interests. We know this to be true for western hegemony, but with China in the rising there are questions that still need to be addressed.

China has a complex relationship with the international order, it is true that they had to play by the liberal order rules, but this was a system they saw as imposed by the west as they were not consulted on it. It is important to keep in mind that the U.S supported the Kuomintang faction in the Chinese Civil War (U.S State Department, n.d.). Mao's communist party came out of the war as the victors and engaged on a project of rebuilding China. During the Cold War, China stayed out of the existing international system and pursued its own socialist agenda. It was not until the 1970s, when China began to open to the world, that it became more integrated into the international system. In recent years, China has become more assertive in advancing its vision of international order and has challenged the key institutions and norms of the liberal order. For example, China has sought to expand its influence in international organizations and has advocated for a more multipolar world order. It has also sought to undermine the credibility of Western-style democracy by promoting its own model of governance, which emphasizes the importance of economic development and social stability over individual freedoms.

However, even as China became more involved in the international system, it remained critical of the basic tenets of the liberal international order, such as human rights and democracy. China's leadership has argued that these values are Western impositions that are not necessarily applicable to China's unique circumstances. Instead, China has promoted an alternative vision of international order that emphasizes sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs.

The liberal order was successful in promoting economic growth and stability, as well as reducing conflict and promoting cooperation among nations. However, it was

also marked by tensions and challenges, such as the Cold War and the rise of non-state actors such as terrorist organizations. The US-led liberal order faced criticism from some developing countries, who felt excluded from its benefits and resentful of its perceived imperialism. Despite these challenges, the liberal international order remained the dominant system until the 21st century, when the rise of China and other emerging powers began to challenge its dominance.

Now that China is on the rise, and the U.S feels their position as the world's hegemon is being threatened by China, they too are building a narrative of a benign hegemon. The Belt and Road Initiative is announced as the largest project of free trade and infrastructure investment of human history. The Covid-19 pandemic presented itself as an opportunity for Chinese policymakers to live up to the expectations of a new hegemon, China stepped up when the developing world needed it, and it started what has been known as "vaccine diplomacy", which consisted of helping and delivering vaccines, medical supplies and technical supports to countries who did not count with the knowledge nor the infra-structure to get them by themselves (Zhang & Jamali, 2022). China claims to do this out of a good heart, good intentions, and as proof to show the world that they should not be feared (Xiaohui, 2023). However, Professors Dechun Zhang and Ahmed Bud Jamali, from the Leiden University and Shanghai International Studies University respectively, have theorized that China has embarked itself on this adventure with the ultimate goal of "obtaining maximum diplomatic gains and soft power projection to intensify its international image, geopolitical power, and domestic politico legitimacy" (Zhang & Jamali, 2022). This would also reestablish the legitimacy of China as it will divert public's attention from Beijing's earlier inadequate handling of the outbreak.

We currently live in a world where, for the first time, we are able to see what is happening in distant parts of the world in real-time. We just need to turn on the TV or search in the web to be aware of the latest developments of the war in Ukraine. The media is, now more than ever, the classic fourth power, and non-state actors are reaching a level of power and influence that they could only dream of in the past. This being said,

it is important to note that regardless of the political system that rules on any specific country, not even dictators can act as they please without having to justify their actions to some of their highest-ranked officials, the narrative that is sold to the public, and the message they receive, is more important than the actual event itself, at least in terms of the public's perception and desirability of the act. This is especially true when talking about international affairs and interstate relations. For instance, let us use the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement as an example. After twenty years of negotiations between the European Union and Mercosur, the agreement was put on hold and has not been ratified. From this fact there are a multitude of possible narratives that could be drawn. The first one, and the most benevolent for the European actors, could be that France and Germany decided to block the agreement based on humanitarian and environmental concerns regarding the agriculture industrial in Brazil and the lack of protection of the Indigenous people. Plain and simple, Europe would not stand for a dehumanizing and below their expectations behavior of their new partner (Stender, 2022).

On the other hand, another interpretation of the fact could lead us to think that France deliberately boycotted the agreement as a result of the French agricultural movement against the FTA, they claim that if the agreement is ratified, almost 30.000 farmers will disappear, and France would lose close to 50.000 jobs (France 24, 2019). As you see, in this latter explanation of the facts, there is less concern about human rights of Indigenous people in Brazil, and more concern about domestic issues that may lead to a failure to achieve reelection. To set the agenda, construct a narrative and make you look as the good guy is known as framing.

China, regardless of being a one-party system, relies on the framing their actions as benevolent to avoid raising concerns on both their allies and their opponent. To expand its influence in the international sphere, China has been utilizing a range of tactics, including the strategic use of development aid and cooperation. By positioning itself as a cooperative partner that is focused on supporting economic growth and development in the countries it engages with, China has been able to establish itself as a major player on the global stage, while minimizing any potential backlash from those who may

view its actions with skepticism. Through its focus on development aid and cooperation, China has been able to leverage its economic and political power to build alliances and further its strategic interests, both regionally and internationally. When presenting to the world, China frames itself as a partner that cooperates instead that being a contender to be afraid of.

The engagement of China in a multilateral foreign policy does not imply that they are genuinely following liberal principles. Instead, it can be argued that China, like other major powers in history, is utilizing the favorable reputation of liberalism among the public and less influential states to advance its underlying realist agenda. Thus, liberalism serves as a mere façade for China's foreign policy.

In this thesis project, we are determined to uncover China's true intentions and assess the alignment between the narrative they are trying to establish and their actions. To do this, I will analyze the following aspects of China's foreign policy: China's role in international institution and China's development and infrastructure projects abroad, emphasizing the Belt and Road Initiative. The question of whether China will be a friendly hegemon, or a hostile power is still in the air. Xi Jinping has claimed, on multiple occasions, that China must not be feared as of their intentions are not to have an aggressive diplomacy nor interaction with the rest of the world. He has presented the Belt and Road initiative as the new proof that China is finally open to negotiate and trade with the rest of the world and to work as a bridge to unite dozens of countries. He has also claimed that, in a time where in the west exist an important tide of protectionism, isolationism, and lack of trust in international cooperation, China wants to become the new champion of free trade and global cooperation.

Two questions will be raised and should be answered by the end of this work.

1. Is China ready to be the next hegemon?
2. Will the international order change and how will it be changed?

Before trying to address these questions, we first need to define what our methodology will be and what kind of sources we will use. Once this has been settled, we then need to establish a theoretical framework from which we can study and analyze China's behavior and actions. For this, we will define two of the largest and oldest schools of thought in international relations theory, Liberalism and Realism, and will also define and give precise definitions of concepts that are as widely used as power, polarity, and hegemony.

Once all the prerequisites have been addressed, we will initiate our research by doing an in-depth study of Chinese behavior in two of the largest international organizations, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization. We will focus primarily on the issues that denote greater self-benefit for China at the expense of the founding values of the organizations. Moreover, the Belt and Road Initiative will be study as it is a Chinese attempt to reshape and redefine the international order and world's trade. Finally, we will present the findings of our research and propose a series of research lines that might be worth to explore.

1. Methodology

This work is based on a theoretical analysis of international relations, with a focus on the rise of China through the lens of liberalism and realism. The study relies on a variety of sources, including books, scientific journals, specialized magazines, transcripts from speeches, news articles, and online repositories. The following steps were taken to collect and analyze the data:

1. Literature review: This work employs a qualitative research design, which is suitable for exploring complex issues in international relations. The research is based on an extensive literature review and the analysis of relevant case studies. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature on China's foreign policy, liberalism, and realism was conducted. This included primary sources such as academic books and journal articles, as well as secondary sources such as news articles and reports from reputable think tanks.

The theoretical framework used to analyze China's foreign policy and its implications for international institutions, development, and foreign aid is grounded in the theories of liberalism and realism. These theories are the ones that better explain and grasp the ideas the author wanted to express in this work. Therefore, his analysis involved identifying patterns and trends in China's foreign policy, as well as examining the extent to which liberalism is a façade for realist motives.

2. Case Study: This research employs a case study approach with a specific focus on China's behavior in the United Nations. By conducting an in-depth analysis of China's actions, positions, and influence within the UN, the case study serves as the foundational framework for this study. It enables a comprehensive examination of China's engagement and impact on global governance, providing valuable insights into its specific actions and behavior within the UN context. The information used for both, the list of draft vetoed by China in the United Nation Security Council and the comments made by their representatives, were obtained directly from the United Nations website; however, institutions as the World Bank

and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has also been proven to be useful. Regarding the Belt and Road section, comments and speeches given Chinese authorities are the base from which we establish the liberal narrative trying to be set.

3. **Scope and Limitations:** The scope of the study is delimited to the examination of the implications of Chinese foreign policy in international organizations, as well as its approach to development and cooperation. It has been decided that the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and the Belt and Road Initiatives are going to be the core features of Chinese foreign policy to study, as they are representative enough of the wide influence China has been acquiring in the past years. They encompass not only security and peace, but also trade, development, and cooperation. This would give us the opportunity to study survival/life-or-death issues but also issues that are not strictly related to the survival of the state. The present work is limited to these specific areas of inquiry and does not encompass an analysis of the Chinese military capacity or territorial disputes, such as those pertaining to Taiwan or the South China Sea, as they are beyond the purview of the study.

Regarding its limitations, the study is limited by the availability of data and the reliability of sources. I could only access data available in either Spanish or English. Therefore, sources in Chinese that did not have a Spanish or English version could not be consulted. While efforts have been made to use reliable and diverse sources, it is acknowledged that some perspectives may be underrepresented.

4. **Conclusion:** The conclusions drawn in this essay are based on the data collected and analyzed, within the scope of the research design and theoretical framework outlined above. This thesis suggests avenues for further research.

Overall, this methodology aims to provide a clear and transparent account of the methods used in this work. By drawing on a wide range of sources and using a theoretical framework, the study seeks to shed light on the complex relationship of a rising China and the established international order.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will set the theoretical foundation through which this thesis will study China's behavior. For this, it is imperative to clearly define and set the boundaries of concepts as broad as Hegemony, Polarity and Power. To narrow down what we understand for realism and liberalism, and how each one frames the international system within their own paradigm. The latter two theories will work as frameworks to analyze China's behavior and pretensions.

Realism and Liberalism are the two theories that I have chosen to focus my research on. I did so, mainly, because of three reasons. First, they are the two largest and most influential conceptual frameworks in the International Relations academia. It is widely accepted that liberalism has influenced world politics the most in two opportunities; after World War I when the process of decolonization started by the League of Nation, which was the first attempt to create a global intergovernmental organization, and at the aftermath of the Cold War with the end of the security dilemma and the rise of multilateral forums (Glaser, 2019). On the other hand, there are records of realism being the primary theory of analysis to understand states actions that go as far back as Thucydides recognizing that it was Sparta's fear of the rising Athens that triggered the Peloponnesian war (Allison, 2018). Secondly, these two theories are directly opposed to each other. The motives that they claim push states to act are not only distinct, but in almost every case, they are incompatible. Finally, it must be noted that this debate has already taken place in academia. Realism vs Liberalism was the first "Great debate" in IR academia; however, I would like to revisit it to apply it specifically to the case of China.

2.1 Power

Few words are as widely used while their meaning is as contested as power. Max Weber defined power as the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the same action (Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946). If we were to adapt this definition to IR, Max Weber would define power in IR as the chance that a state in the international arena can achieve its own will even against the resistance of others. However, this definition is not universally accepted and there are a variety of definitions to power.

For instance, according to Merriam-Webster online dictionary power have three different meanings when used as a noun:

1. Ability to act or produce an effect.
2. Possession of control, authority, or influence over others.
3. Physical might.

The first definition is simple. To have the ability to act, bear in mind that for this case the key feature is the ability, not the capacity nor opportunity. So, this definition would lead us to think that every single state has power, and even though this might be true, this will not work for our analysis as the goal of defining power is to narrow our scope, not to make it as wide as possible.

The second and third definitions are more useful for us. They state an important observation that thinkers have already elaborated on in the IR literature. To have power is to influence others, and in many ways, this influence could be enforced through physical might (in the case of states we would be referring to military power or economic sanctions). Therefore, influence and power are, to some, extent interchangeable concepts.

Nevertheless, Joseph Nye claims that there is a difference between these concepts, and before proceeding to give a definition of his own he states that policymakers tend to think of power as a resource (Nye, 2011). Resources are tangible and quantifiable.

ble; therefore, the power of a state is the sum of its population, territory, natural resources, economic strength, military force, and social stability (Seth & Treverton, 2005). However, Nye also points out the shortsighted scope of this definition. If we are to assimilate power to the sum of these factors, then power would be a useless concept because of the fact that a state is powerful would not necessarily translate on said state achieving victory over others (Nye, 2011). The Vietnam War and the Winter War (First Soviet-Finnish War) are two examples of great powers not being able to impose their will onto smaller and less powerful states.

Nye claims that what really matters are outcomes, not influence. Therefore, Power is the capacity to predict and achieve the outcome we want from others, not necessarily the capacity to influence onto them. (Nye, 2011)

Depending on who's definition of power we use, Weber or Nye, we would have a different interpretation of how much power do Vietnam and Finland had on their respective war against the hegemon at the time.

Other authors, such as Robert Dahl, have also theorize about power in international relations. He, back in 1957, defined power as "the difference in the probability of an event, given certain action by A, and the probability of the event given no such action by A" (Dahl, 1957). So, power would not be just something you can hold, but something you that forces you to act in order to have it.

In order to make it as clear as possible, when talking about power I will be referring to Nye's claim on the importance of outcome, and when referring to soft power we would be referring to the influence a state might have onto another.

2.2 Hegemony

Hegemony is generally defined as the dominance or leadership of one state or group of states over others. This concept was firstly introduced by the Italian political scientist Antonio Gramsci, who used it to describe the cultural and ideological domination of one class or group over others in a society.

From a realist perspective, hegemony is often used to describe the dominance of one state or group of states over others in terms of economic, military, and political power. Therefore, hegemony is seen from a materialistic stance, therefore, in order to be a hegemon a state must have "larger material resources or power capabilities" (Joseph, 2008).

A liberal would say that what truly defines a hegemon is the capacity it holds to set the rules and shape the order of the world system by itself. Not without opposition and resistances from other states, but without a real contestant that could challenge their vision and propose an alternative of their own (Barbé, 2007).

A great visual representation for what a hegemon is would be the United States in the aftermath of the Cold War. With the Soviet Union defeated there was no other state that could challenge the U.S primacy in the world's stage. However, this did not mean that the U.S was safe and did not face any pushback from other states. It just meant that there was no one strong enough to resist America's clout. Another prominent thinker who has contributed to the understanding of hegemony in international relations is the American political scientist Robert Keohane, who has developed the concept of "complex interdependence" to explain how states interact in a world of multiple actors and non-state actors.

2.3 Polarity

Neorealists argue that "the distribution of power among the leading states provides the most powerful explanation for patterns of a variety of global outcomes (Mansfield, 1993). Building upon this, Glaser states that the fact that states can recognize the structure of the international system and their place within it helps them to self-regulate and to avoid their competitive nature in order to prevent conflicts (Glaser, 2019). To the question of which state should count as a pole, there exists controversy in the IR academia, however, Waltz has stated that "the question of which nations are polar powers is an empirical one, and common sense can answer it (Mansfield, 1993). Based on power distribution, the international system is often categorized as follows:

1. Unipolar: Only one states holds most of the power and it is counter-intuitive for the rest of the states to balance against them.
2. Bipolar: Two states are roughly equal in power.
3. Multipolar: There are more than two actors who hold great power.

2.4 Realism

Realism is a school of thought that “has historically held pessimistic views about the prospects of peace among the great powers” (Mearsheimer, 2014). As a critic to what realist believes, it is often said that realist argue that global politics is nothing but power politics (Nye, 2011). If we were to summarize the oldest, and possibly largest, school of thought into five key points that we need to have internalized in order to grasp the idea of what it proposes as a framework of analysis, we would do it as follows:

There is no ruler nor central authority in the international system. This means that states have no one to look up to when issues arise. States are on their own, and there is no such thing as an international authority with the moral, legal nor effective authority to enforce and make sure states comply with international agreements. Unlike Hobbes’ Leviathan, there is no one with the *autocritas* to place itself naturally above the rest, so only that who has the *potestas* or the power to impose their will onto others might survive.

State must seek to increase their survival possibilities by increasing their power (Waltz, 1979). As no central authority exists that could work as the police in the international system, states must survive on their own. This would lead states relations to one another to be some sort of *primus inter pares* in the legal sense, but a *de facto* power-centered hierarchy. The more power a state has, the less likely it is for that state to suffer from an attack from their rivals.

Relations among states are a zero-sum game (Glaser, 2019). As the international system is in an ever-lasting competition, states are directly opposed to each other. If we were to measure power, every unit of power that State A does not have, is a unit of

power that State B possesses or can possess if they set as their goal to achieve it. At the end of the day, the gist of it comes down to who can enforce their will onto others. Win-Win situations on the same issue are scarce, as every state has their own interest and competitors' interests are rarely aligned.

States are key actors of international relations. Realists believe states to be unitary actors. They do not ignore the fact that states are made up by different institutions and people, but they recognize that when trying to analyze states behavior's it is better to do so as unitary actors. Moreover, as economic, and military strength are important concepts in realist theory, and states are more likely to have them both than international organizations, companies, or individuals; they consider states are the most important actors in international relations.

States act as rational actors. States make decisions to try to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. There is always a rational explanation for a state action. Ideology, regime type, internal issues and values are not to be considered by political leaders when leading their country in the international arena. They must ask themselves: "What should we do in order to improve our country's position in the world? "

Mearsheimer states that the ultimate goal for great powers is to become the Hegemon. That is, to be the only great power in the system. However, he also recognizes that hegemony has its limitations and, even though every hegemon thinks of himself as the last hegemon, there cannot be a global hegemon. There will always be an area of the world in which their reign is contested to a greater or lesser extent.

In a few words, realists see survival as their goal in an anarchic and competitive system and the increase of their power as the means by which to achieve said goal.

2.5 Liberalism

Where realists saw an international order full of competition and zero-sum games, liberals saw an opportunity to cooperate and to establish a rule-based system of cooperation. They are not naïve to believe that every state will magically cooperate with

others out of their good will, but they recognized that states' self-interest to thrive in the international arena will generate interdependence among states and such relation will make war uncommon.

Kant theorized of a principle-led liberal peace in his theory of Perpetual Peace in which he claims that there is no such thing as real peace unless war ceases to exist forever; otherwise, the state of events could only be described as a temporary cease-fire, not true ever-lasting peace. Some of the prerequisites that Kant states are peace inducers are, among others, the abolishment of secret diplomacy, the abolition of standing armies and the avoidance of national debt in connection with external affairs (Kant, 1795).

Thomas Friedman proposed a capitalist-led peace theory when he portrayed his thoughts of "The Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention" and the "Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention" by establishing the principle that free trade, through globalization, will cause war to disappear between states that either, both have a McDonald's store in their countries (Friedman, 1999), or both take part of the same major global supply chain (Friedman, 2005).

Francis Fukuyama, in his famous essay "The End of History? ", states that after the undiscussed victory of the allies in WWII and as a result of the fall of the USSR, human society had no other alternative to western liberal democracy. This fact would definitely lead to a universalization of western democracies, and the homogeneity of human societies around the world would cause that the pull of the Chinese middle class, spiritually polluted by American consumerism, would bring the Chinese society, and its government, closer to that of the liberal west than to its Maoist inspired communist regime (Fukuyama, 1989).

Liberals seek a ruled-based system in which international organizations, through consensus, work as that ruler who watches over the international system and enforce those rules that were agreed upon.

They also consider states as central actors of international affairs, but they do acknowledge the importance that international organizations, Intergovernmental organizations, sub-state actors, and individuals play in this arena. For instance, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, or the United Nations are international organizations that, even though they are made up of states they have the power and the capacity to establish both rules and conditions that have to be followed by sovereign states.

Values are important to liberals; therefore, human rights, democracy, and factors such as ideology, regime type, or religion are important aspects to consider when analyzing and studying states behavior. Some of the key ideas' liberals defend are freedom for both the people and the market, right of self-determination, equality, and sovereignty.

This causes liberals to be more optimistic about the state of international affairs and make them prone to the possibility of positive outcomes. Unlike realists, liberals do believe that the internal affairs of a state have a profound impact on the behavior of said states in the international arena. This will lead to the belief that there are better stances than others. Therefore, a democracy would behave in a friendlier manner to a fellow democracy while autocracies are more prone to behave deceitfully to others.

2.5.1 Liberal Institutionalism

Liberalism is a broad term for a multitude of theories that share the aforementioned core beliefs; however, America's president Woodrow Wilson articulated a vision known as liberal internationalism that states that "an international system that would rest on a moral consensus upheld by a concert of powers that would operate from a shared set of ideas about legitimate sovereignty" (Russel, 2021).

Robert Keohane states that within Institutional theory they have conceptualized institutions both as independent and dependent variables: "institutions change as a result of human action, and the changes in expectations and process that result can exert profound effects on state behavior." Institutional theory has a coherent account of both the creation of institutions and their effects: institutions are created by states because of

their anticipated effects on patterns of behavior. They change the incentives for states to cheat; they also reduce transaction costs, link issues, and provide focal points for cooperation (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

3. China in International Institutions

Henry Kissinger stated that the fundamental pragmatism of the Chinese was clearly demonstrated in their response to conquering forces. When foreign dynasties emerged victorious in battle, the Chinese bureaucratic elite offered their services and approached their conquerors on the basis that a vast and unique land such as China could only be governed using Chinese methods, with the Chinese language and existing bureaucracy. Over generations, the conquerors began to feel more integrated into the order they had sought to alter. Eventually, their own territories, the points from which they had launched invasions, became part of China. Unwittingly, they found themselves fighting for China's longstanding national interests, having effectively abandoned their conquest projects (Kissinger, 2017).

Could it be possible to apply this argument to the relationship between China and international organizations? Instead of the Chinese bureaucracy directing and gradually Sinicizing the conquerors, it is now the Chinese economy and influence that are de-Westernizing the major international institutions founded on Western values and ideas, reducing them to mere ideology-free entities.

When did fighting for human rights become fighting for human rights only when and where China allows it? When did a country's level of development, and consequently, its ability to impose tariffs, become subjective and disconnected from levels of industrial production?

China, having moved from the periphery to the center, has not needed to alter the international order. Rather, it has been able to benefit from existing institutions, not necessarily through deliberate action but through a lack of assertive action on the part of these institutions. In other words, China does not need to create new international organizations in its own image, with the consequent political and economic costs. It has instead been able to utilize existing institutions for its own benefit. As a result, these international organizations have ceased to serve the interests of the Western hegemon

and have instead begun to serve China's interests, effectively changing their fundamental nature.

An international organization is, in simple words, an institution made up of a multitude of actors, such as states, which works at a supranational level. That is, beyond the territory of a single state, but at an international level. International organizations come in different forms, ranging from intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations to regional organizations like the European Union. They have different mandates, structures, and methods of operation, but all aim to promote cooperation and collaboration among their members. These organizations have played a critical role in global governance. They contribute to the maintenance of peace, security, and stability, promoting economic development, and protecting human rights.

International organizations have been established as key players in the world's political and economic landscape. These organizations are created to provide a forum for countries to cooperate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, ranging from security and trade to environmental and human rights concerns. They have become crucial actors in shaping international norms and policies, serving as platforms for international diplomacy, and facilitating international cooperation and collaboration.

The idea of creating international organizations emerged in the aftermath of the devastating First World War, which left Europe in ruins and caused an unprecedented loss of life. The League of Nations, established in 1920, was the first international organization aimed at promoting peace and cooperation among nations. The League's creation marked a turning point in international relations, as it recognized that countries could not act in isolation and that collective action was needed to address global challenges. Despite its limited success, the League laid the foundation for the creation of future international organizations that have become critical in shaping international relations.

Regardless of the wide range of international organizations that currently exists, it seems evident that there should be a valid and objective filter on how to narrow the

more than one hundred international organizations down to a number that could be studied in an essay of this scope, and that is, at the same time, sufficiently representative of Chinese foreign policy to draw to a conclusion sufficiently sound.

As a result of this, and because of China's increasing weight in international trade, the UN and the WTO have been chosen as our international organizations to focus our research on. The UN encompasses a wide range of issues and fields, and our study will specifically concentrate on the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the World Health Organization. In the case of the WTO, our analysis will center on topics such as tariffs and intellectual property. It is worth noting that the WTO once carried the responsibility of advocating for a more democratic China, representing the academic perspectives of the Western world; however, this political dimension of the WTO will not be addressed.

3.1 United Nations

Upon careful consideration, the United Nations has been identified as the ideal international organization to meet the established criteria. As the largest and most diverse international organization in the world, it encompasses 193 member states and acts through a range of specialized agencies and programs. With its extensive mandate spanning peace, security, development, and human rights, the UN operates across a wide spectrum of issues. By examining China's engagement within the UN, we can delve into its conduct within three pivotal bodies and gain insights into its influence on global governance.

The UN is the primary forum for multilateral diplomacy and decision-making, making it a key player in shaping global policies and norms. Through its General Assembly, Security Council, and specialized agencies, the UN provides a platform for member states to engage in dialogue and negotiate solutions to complex global challenges.

The UN has a unique history and legacy, having played a critical role in shaping the post-WWII international system. The UN's founding principles of collective security,

human rights, and international cooperation continue to be relevant today, as the world faces new and emerging challenges.

Leonard Woolf argued that an international organization with the authority to make and enforce laws among nations could prevent war and promote peaceful resolution of disputes (Woolf, 1916), and seventy-nine years ago, in the aftermath of the deadliest war in history, 50 countries came together to establish the largest and most ambitious international organization ever created (United Nations, 2023). After the failed attempt by the League of nations to implement a collective security system and trying to avoid the same mistakes made by its predecessors, the UN was founded. According to its founding charter, the scope and aim of the UN are:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international dispute or situation which might lead to a breach of the peace;
2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and;
4. To be centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends. (United Nations, 1945)

Overall, it could be said that the UN seeks to achieve these aims by bringing together member states to work towards common goals, facilitating international dialogue

and cooperation, providing technical assistance and expertise, and mobilizing international resources to address global challenges. Ultimately, the UN's overarching goal is to create a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world for all. Due to the wide range of issues that the UN works on, there are numerous bodies and agencies created under its auspices that are in charge of managing different areas.

3.1.1 General Assembly

The United Nations General Assembly stands as the largest deliberative body within the UN, consisting of all 193 member states. Serving as a crucial forum for international discussion and decision-making, the General Assembly plays a pivotal role in addressing a wide array of global issues. As a platform for open dialogue, it offers each member state an opportunity to express their perspectives, concerns, and priorities on matters of global significance. Through the General Assembly, countries engage in constructive exchanges, seek common ground, and forge consensus on pressing global challenges.

One of the primary functions of the General Assembly is to vote on resolutions that reflect the collective will and policy positions of its member states. Resolutions can cover a diverse range of topics, including peace and security, human rights, sustainable development, international law, disarmament, and global cooperation. These resolutions are crucial instruments for setting international norms, guiding the actions of member states, and shaping the UN's agenda. Through the voting process, member states express their support, dissent, or abstention, reflecting their individual perspectives, national interests, and priorities. The General Assembly's voting outcomes can carry significant weight and influence, serving as a barometer of international consensus and shaping global policy (United Nations, 1945).

In addition to voting on resolutions, the General Assembly also undertakes other important tasks. It oversees the UN's budget, ensuring the organization's financial resources are allocated appropriately and transparently. The General Assembly also elects members to various UN bodies, such as the Security Council, the Economic and

Social Council, and the Human Rights Council. These elections play a vital role in determining the composition and functioning of these important bodies. Furthermore, the General Assembly provides a platform for member states to address the international community, including through the annual General Debate, where world leaders and diplomats gather to discuss pressing global issues. Through its diverse membership and comprehensive mandate, the General Assembly strives to foster multilateralism, promote understanding among nations, and facilitate collective action in addressing the complex challenges of our time (United Nations, 1945).

While every state theoretically possesses the freedom to cast its vote without external influence, an interesting correlation emerges between the voting patterns of African nations and the distribution of development aid from China. This correlation suggests a potential link between the way African states vote and the availability of Chinese development assistance. It hints at the possibility that the allocation of aid may subtly influence the voting behavior of African countries.

According to an article on *The Economist*, "if African countries voted with China an extra 10% of the time, they would get an 86 bump in official aid on average" (*The Economist*, 2016). This would mean that, China is not only capable of tilting the foreign policy of countries with money and infrastructure, but the mere possibility of investing money is more than enough to make a poor country to "sell" their vote.

Evidence has been found that investments from the BRI project not only ensure the votes of the countries once the money has been invested, but it also affects the voting behavior of future recipients of investments up to three years prior to it (Williams, 2022).

3.1.2 Security Council

The Security Council is the closest body of the UN to what Woolf enunciated back in the first half of the 20th century. It is the only UN body whose decisions are considered legally binding by international law. The United Nation Security Council consists of fifteen members, five of which are permanent and ten are non-permanent. The five

permanent members, also known as the P5, are the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom. The ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, with five seats allocated to African and Asian states, two to Eastern European states, two to Latin American and Caribbean states, and one to a Western European or other state. The presidency of the UNSC rotates among its members on a monthly basis. The UNSC operates on a one-country, one-vote system, with decisions requiring at least nine affirmative votes, including the concurring votes of all five permanent members, to pass. It is important to note that until 1971 China's seat was being held by the government of the Republic of China instead of the government of the People's Republic of China. This was achieved by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 2758, that responded to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1668 that required for a two third majority of the votes in the UN General Assembly in order to make any change to the representation of China in the UN.

On top of that, the P5 countries holds a singular instrument that allows each member to block the adoption of a resolution, even if it has the support of all other members of the council. This power is often referred to as the "right to veto", and it is based on article 27.3 of the UN charter. In said article it says that " Decisions of the Security Council on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members" (United Nations, 1945). Veto power is a significant tool for the P5 countries to protect their national interests and influence the decision-making process of the UNSC. It has been used by each member at different points in history to block resolutions that they perceive as contrary to their interests.

In this way, it could be said that in the same sense that the UN represents the embodiment of liberal values, the Security Council represents a realist mechanism to safeguard states interest when dealing with core issues to their agenda. In other words, multilateralism, cooperation, and values take the passenger seat when most urgent matters come to play.

All P5 states pay lip service to the idea of global cooperation, equality and sovereignty when addressing the world regarding the UN and the UNSC, but at the end of the day, they know what their interests are, and they will use every stratagem to prevent their enemies or rivals to acquire a better position in the international arena.

The Chinese permanent representative to the United Nations, Zhang Jun, while serving as the pro tempore of the Security Council stated in August that,

The world is facing “one crisis after another”, spotlighting political turmoil, military conflict, terrorist threats, climate change and the food and oil crises. In this complex situation, the international community desires a greater role for the United Nations. During its presidency, China will adopt a responsible, constructive approach to uphold true multilateralism and strengthen communication among all Council members and Member States so that joint efforts can address global challenges “
(Jun, 2022)

There is a strong sentiment of integration, unity, and cooperation coming from the head representative of China; however, let's see if Chinese actions speak in the same direction.

Despite being a permanent member of the Security Council and ostensibly committed to multilateralism, China has used its power and influence in the Council to advance its own realist agenda, often at the expense of other countries and the principles of the UN.

China's increasing influence on the world stage has been accompanied by its growing role in the UNSC. As one of the five permanent members of the council, China has the power to veto any resolution, making it a key player in shaping international security and diplomacy. However, this power has also enabled China to advance its own agenda, which is often based on realist principles that prioritize national interests over global cooperation.

In recent years, China has been accused of using its position in the Security Council to further its own goals at the expense of the international community. Some experts argue that China's veto power has allowed it to shield authoritarian regimes from international condemnation, such as in the case of Syria (Council on foreign Relations, 2023). Others point to China's increasing assertiveness in the Taiwan issue, where it has been shown that Chinese votes are tightly aligned with the One China Principle.

Below you will find the list of drafts that has been vetoed by China in the UNSC, and the topic that was being addressed by the resolution.

Chinese Vetoes in the UNSC	
Draft	Topic
S/1999/201	Extension of the United Nations Peacekeeping mission in Macedonia
S/1997/18	Send military observers to the peace agreement ceremony in Guatemala.
S/10771	Admission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the UN
S/2022/431	Non-Proliferation // Democratic People's Republic of Korea
S/2020/667	Humanitarian access to Syria
S/2020/654	Humanitarian access to Syria
S/2019/961	Humanitarian access to Syria
S/2019/186	The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
S/2019/756	The situation in the Middle East
S/2017/172	The situation in the Middle East
S/2016/1026	The situation in the Middle East
S/2014/348	The situation in the Middle East
S/2012/538	The situation in the Middle East
S/2012/77	The situation in the Middle East
S/2011/612	The situation in the Middle East
S/2008/447	Peace and Security - Africa (Zimbabwe)
S/2007/14	Myanmar

Source: Data recovered from the UN website; table was created by the author.

In 1999, China vetoed the extension of the United Nations Peacekeeping mission in Macedonia (S/PV.3982). China was the only one of the P5 that decided to veto this resolution, and they stated that they did so because the situation had already stabilized and according to S/1999/161, the secretary-General, had clearly indicated the goal of

implementing this peacekeeping operation had already been fulfilled, they considered not to be necessary to extend further this operation (United Nation Security Council, 1999). However, it is important to notice that prior to that veto Macedonia had just recognized the Republic of China as the legitimate China; and the One China principle², is held as a core belief for both the People's Republic of China and the Chinese communist Party.

An analogous situation was that that occurred with S/1997/18, where China refused to approve the Resolution and stated that China will not enable Guatemala's behavior when they had just decided to invite Taiwan's representative to the very same ceremony. China refused to cooperate with the signing of the peace agreement if the Guatemalans' government insist on having Taiwanese representatives at the same place.

Regarding Bangladesh accession to the United Nation, China saw it as an intent from Russia and India to weaken Pakistan's position in the southeast Asian continent; and as Pakistan is a close ally to China, they could not allow it to happen.

For the ten drafts that were vetoed by China regarding Syria and the Situation in the middle East, the argument is the same. Officially China refuses to take part in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, therefore, is not that they do not agree with the approach being taken by the Security Council, but they directly refuse to "do something" about the state of affair at all. Disguised between a facade of principles and non-interventionism, the truth is that China recurs to this justification in order to aid a regime that has been proved to favor Chinese interest in the region. Same case applies to Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Venezuela's and DPRK drafts vetoed by China.

Out of the seventeen times that China has used its veto power, only twice has been used as a tool to reinforce its position on the Taiwan issue, and to signal others

² The One China Principle states that there is only one sovereign state under the name of China and that the PRC serves as the legitimate ruler for all Mainland China and Taiwan.

that they will use the power they hold in the Security council to retaliate against those who defy their position in the worlds; and the other fifteen times it was used to protect ally regimes from sanctions and from western initiatives that would have left China in a weaker position with regards to their allies.

3.1.3 World Health Organization

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is responsible for international public health. It was established in 1948 with the aim of ensuring that all people have access to the highest possible level of health. Today, WHO plays a vital role in the global health landscape, providing leadership and coordination in the fight against a wide range of health challenges, including infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and emergencies. With its global reach, technical expertise, and partnerships with governments and other organizations, WHO is an essential player in promoting health, preventing disease, and improving the well-being of people around the world (International Health Conference, 1946).

One of the most significant roles of WHO is to provide leadership and coordination in responding to global health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola outbreaks, and natural disasters. During these crises, WHO works with governments, public health agencies, and other partners to provide technical expertise, support, and guidance to countries in need.

In addition to its emergency response efforts, WHO is also responsible for setting global health standards and guidelines, promoting research and development, and advocating for policies that improve health outcomes. For example, WHO leads efforts to combat diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS and works to prevent non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Another critical role of WHO is to promote health equity and social justice. The organization works to ensure that all people have access to the same level of health and health care, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, race, or geography. To achieve this goal, WHO supports the development of health systems, trains health

workers, and advocates for policies that improve access to essential health services and reduce health inequalities (International Health Conference, 1946).

China has been a member of the WHO since 1949 and has been an important partner in promoting global health. The relationship between China and WHO has been shaped by collaboration on a range of health issues, including the prevention and control of infectious diseases, such as SARS, H1N1, and COVID-19 (Bouey, 2020).

China has also been a key partner in WHO's efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which include targets related to improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities (Huaxia, 2022). China has made noteworthy progress in achieving these goals, including reducing infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, and improving access to essential health services.

However, the relationship between China and WHO has not been without controversy. The COVID-19 pandemic has raised questions about China's transparency and the accuracy of its reporting of the outbreak in the initial stages. Some critics have accused WHO of being too deferential to China in its response to the pandemic (Naylor, 2020).

Despite these challenges, the WHO-China relationship remains an important one for global health. China's size, economic power, and scientific expertise make it a critical partner in addressing many of the world's health challenges, including emerging infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases. WHO's ongoing engagement with China is therefore essential to achieving its mandate of promoting health, preventing disease, and improving the well-being of people around the world.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was elected as the Director-General of the World Health Organization in May 2017. Having previously served as Ethiopia's Minister of Health and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tedros has been criticized as to be too close to China and failing to fulfil his role as an objective leader for public health in the world (Feldwisch-Drenturp, 2022).

When looking at China's role in the WHO, there are two key features that are needed to be looked at. First, the WHO response to the Covid-19 and the role of the WHO assembly with regard to the Taiwanese issue.

Dr. Tedros was the first African director of the WHO, and his candidature was supported by a large bloc of African and Asian countries, China itself included. In early 2020 Taiwan's authorities urged the WHO not to be "kidnapped" by China, as they were recommending a travel ban for both China and Taiwan under the data provided by Chinese authorities. Taiwan had just reported twenty-two cases of Covid 19 while continental China had suffered over 72.400 cases (Reuters, 2020).

Taiwan has also stated their "dissatisfaction" and "regret" as a result of the WHO refusal to allow Taiwan to attend to the World Health Assembly as an observer, failing to play as an independent and neutral arbitrator among countries but following the One China principle established by the Chinese government (Reuters, 2022).

On top of that, Dr. Lo Yi-Chun, deputy director-general of Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control, maintains that the WHO purposely ignored an early warning posed by Taiwan regarding the Covid-19 outbreak that was sent on December 31st, 2019. However, WHO spokesperson decided to echo Chinese official statements claiming that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission, when Taiwan has already reported evidence of it (Watt, 2020). This claim was then followed by the U.S state department when they stated that "the WHO was too late in sounding the alarm over COVID-19, showed too much deference to China and questioned why it did not pursue a lead from Taiwan" (Agence France-Presse, 2020).

In conclusion, China has been using its growing influence in the WHO to advance its reunification policy, by inducing the WHO to ignore both Taiwan's right to be represented in the World Health Assembly and to be heard in the sphere of public health in detriment of the world's interest.

3.2 World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization is a global international organization that governs trade between nations. Established in 1995, the WTO succeeded the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was created in the aftermath of World War II. The primary goal of the WTO is to promote and facilitate international trade by reducing barriers such as tariffs and quotas, and by providing a framework for the resolution of trade disputes. The WTO has a broad scope that covers goods, services, and intellectual property rights. It also provides a platform for negotiations among member countries to create new trade rules and agreements.

The founding of the WTO can be traced back to the desire for a multilateral system of trade governance after the devastation of World War II. The GATT, which preceded the WTO, was established in 1947 as a provisional agreement to promote international trade and prevent another global economic crisis. Over time, the GATT evolved and expanded, leading to the establishment of the WTO in 1995 as a permanent organization to regulate global trade. The WTO was founded with the goal of creating a rules-based international trading system that promotes transparency, predictability, and fairness in global trade relations.

The scope of the WTO is comprehensive, covering a wide range of trade-related issues. It includes the regulation of tariffs, quotas, and other barriers to trade in goods, services, and intellectual property. The WTO also provides a framework for addressing non-tariff barriers such as technical standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and intellectual property rights. Additionally, the WTO oversees the settlement of trade disputes through its Dispute Settlement Mechanism, which provides a forum for member countries to resolve trade disputes in a fair and impartial manner.

In actuality, the WTO plays a crucial role in shaping global trade policies and practices. It serves as a platform for negotiations among member countries to create new trade agreements, such as the recent negotiations on the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property

Rights. The WTO also conducts regular trade policy reviews of its members, monitors trade practices, and provides technical assistance to developing countries to help them integrate into the global trading system.

3.2.1 Tariffs

Under the WTO rules, member countries are allowed to establish tariffs on imports, which are taxes levied on goods and services that cross national borders. However, these tariffs are expected to be applied in a manner that is consistent with the WTO's principles, such as most-favored-nation treatment, which prohibits discriminatory treatment of different trading partners, and national treatment, which requires treating foreign goods and services no less favorably than domestic goods and services once they have entered the domestic market.

The WTO also sets limits on the levels of tariffs that member countries can impose. These limits are established through tariff commitments made by member countries during negotiations, which are recorded in their schedules of concessions and commitments. These schedules specify the maximum tariffs that a country can apply to specific goods and services. However, developing countries often have more flexibility in applying tariffs due to special provisions aimed at supporting their economic development.

Even though the WTO has a different approach to topping tariffs depending on the status of the economy of each country, it does not classify its member in any categories. The WTO uses a system of self-declared status, where each member country can declare its own level of development. China joined the WTO in December 2001, and, during its accession negotiations, it declared itself as a developing country. As a developing country, China has been eligible for certain flexibilities and special treatment under WTO agreements, including longer transition periods for implementing certain commitments and exemptions from certain obligations. However, China's status as a developing country has been a topic of debate and discussion within the WTO and among its member countries. Some countries have raised concerns that China's rapid

economic growth and industrialization have changed its status and that it should be subject to more stringent obligations and commitments as a major global economic power.

As per data published by the World Bank, China holds the position of the second largest economy in the world in terms of Gross Domestic Product. Notably, China's economy surpasses that of the third-ranked economy by a substantial factor of 3.6 times, indicating its significant economic magnitude. Furthermore, China exhibited robust economic growth, with a remarkable 8.1% increase in its GDP during the year 2021. In contrast, the United States and Japan experienced growth of 5.9% and 1.7% respectively, denoting China's comparatively superior economic performance in terms of GDP expansion (World Bank, 2023).

Despite compelling economic data that suggests China's economy may no longer fit the typical profile of a developing nation, the World Trade Organization (WTO) continues to provide China with benefits and opportunities that could potentially confer advantages over other countries. This has sparked debates and discussions within the WTO and among member countries regarding China's status and treatment within the organization.

The designation of China and other developing countries within the WTO framework is intended to provide special treatment and flexibilities to safeguard their economies, particularly those with weak and small industries, from potential negative impacts of international trade. This includes allowing longer transition times to implement WTO agreements and providing access to technical assistance. The underlying rationale is to protect domestic production in these countries from being overwhelmed by cheaper and better foreign products, which could potentially harm local industries and livelihoods. According to a IMF blog post, "Chinese producers of goods competing in domestic markets with imports affected by tariffs are potential winners" when talking about the effects of tariffs on producers (Cerutti, Gopinath, & Mohommad, 2019). According to the U.S Department of Commerce, China is the world's largest vehicle market, both by annual sales and manufacturing output (International Trade Administration, 2023). By imposing

tariffs on automotives, China has managed to reduce, in 4 years, by 200.000 the imports of vehicles while at the same time China is expecting to increase revenue in up to \$30 billion per year (See graph 2). This approach was aimed at supporting the development and growth of domestic industries in developing countries, allowing them to compete on a more level playing field with developed countries in the global trade arena. The question that should be raised is "Does China really needs this type of help?"

Despite the arguments in favor of providing special treatment to developing countries, in the case of China, some may argue that these arguments are rendered ineffective due to China's significant role in global manufacturing. Chinese factories are responsible for approximately 28% of the world's manufacturing output, which is comparable to the combined manufacturing output of the U.S, Japan, and Germany (The Economist, 2021). China has emerged as a major global manufacturing powerhouse, with a highly developed industrial base and competitive production capabilities. This economic reality has led to debates and discussions about whether China's classification as a developing country within the WTO framework is still appropriate, given its economic clout and ever-expanding global influence. The changing dynamics of global trade and economic landscape have led to differing perspectives on China's status and the need for special treatment within the WTO system (See graph 1).

As a conclusion, the case of China raises questions about the effectiveness and appropriateness of the rules-based system created by the WTO to provide special treatment to developing countries. China's significant role in global manufacturing and economic prowess challenges the notion of it being a developing country within the WTO framework. Some argue that China may be utilizing the advantages afforded to developing countries to gain an unfair advantage over competitors in the global market. This raises concerns about the integrity of the system and the need for ongoing discussions and adjustments to ensure fairness and balance among member countries. Striking the right balance between supporting economic development of developing countries and maintaining fair competition in international trade remains a complex challenge for the WTO and its members as they navigate the evolving dynamics of the global

economy. This is a good example of liberalism being used to obtain a realist advantage. China has managed to bend the rules in their favor and, it is now, using a system created to level the playing field for all nations to soften those very same rules in their gain.

3.2.2 Intellectual Property

One of the WTO's main goal is to promote and protect intellectual property rights around the world. The organization aims to establish rules and regulations that encourage the fair and equitable treatment of IPR, while also providing legal mechanisms to enforce those rules. However, in recent years, there has been growing concern among Western countries over China's perceived lack of action in addressing intellectual property theft. The issue has become a significant point of contention between China and the United States, as well as other Western nations, with allegations of Chinese companies stealing valuable technology and trade secrets from foreign firms (Certain measures concerning the protection of Intellectual Property rights, 2018).

The WTO's main instrument to guarantee the safeguard of property rights is the TRIPS which is an agreement that sets out the minimum standards for intellectual property regulation in international trade. It was negotiated during the Uruguay Round of the GATT and entered into force on January 1, 1995.

The TRIPS agreement covers several types of IP, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets. It requires member countries to provide adequate and effective protection and enforcement of IP rights, including the availability of civil and criminal remedies for IP infringement.

The agreement also establishes rules for the use of compulsory licensing of patents in cases of national emergencies or other circumstances of extreme urgency. Additionally, it provides for the protection of traditional knowledge and genetic resources, as well as for the prevention of anti-competitive practices in the field of IP.

According to the document "Egregious Cases of Chinese Theft of American Intellectual Property" (Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S, 2022), the issue of Chinese intellectual property theft is a topic that has received significant attention in the media in

recent years, and for good reason. The evidence of this behavior is abundant, with countless examples of companies falling victim to Chinese IP theft. This trend has been especially prevalent in cases involving American technology companies, such as Tesla (Pham, 2019), Motorola (Yap, Strumpf, Volz, O’Keeffe, & Viswanatha, 2019), and Micron (Mozur, 2018). In these cases, China's government has been accused of not only condoning but even actively encouraging its citizens to engage in IP theft. This has resulted in a significant loss of revenue and competitive advantage for American companies, as well as a general erosion of trust in the global market. The magnitude of this problem cannot be overstated, and it is crucial that steps are taken to address it.

The European Union currently has two disputes pending against China. The first one started on June 1st, 2018, when the EU requested a consultation with China concerning certain measures imposed by China pertaining to the transfer of foreign technology into China (Secretariat of the World Trade Organization, n.d.); and the second one, started on the 31st of January, 2019, was directly related to the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights (Secretariat of the World Trade Center, n.d.). In both cases, China is accused of violating or acting directly against its obligation under the TRIPS agreement and China’s own Accession Protocol³. These two cases are over four years-old and there seems to be no settlement in the near future, however, China keeps on engaging on mischievous behavior that would favor their industry over the rest of the world.

While the theft of intellectual property in itself is concerning, a more alarming pattern emerges upon closer examination. China has been using its own anti-trust agency as a coercive and bargaining tool against companies that have fallen victim to IP theft and wish to conduct business in China while also suing the Chinese company for IP infringement. In some cases, antitrust investigations have been launched against the claimants, and the Chinese authorities have used the threat of blocking business deals,

³ For further research on these cases, they are available on the WTO dispute settlement’s website under the name of DS549 and DS611 respectively.

such as the Motorola merger, until the lawsuits were dropped. This approach raises significant questions about China's commitment to protecting intellectual property and the rule of law and should be a major concern for all parties involved.

4. Hegemony of the Middle Kingdom

For centuries, China has viewed itself as the "Middle Kingdom," the center of the world and the source of civilization. Throughout Chinese history, the idea of centrality has played a significant role in shaping its foreign policy. This concept is based on the belief that China is the center from where cultures spread and wisdom spreads, and all other nations around it are subservient to China. This worldview holds that other countries should pay tribute and respect to the Chinese emperor, or whoever is at the top of the Chinese hierarchy, as a sign of their inferiority. This fundamental belief has been deeply rooted in Chinese culture and has had a lasting impact on China's relationships with other nations. This has been evident in China's relations with its neighbors, which have often been characterized by a sense of superiority and condescension.

China's historical perception of itself as the "Middle Kingdom" was based on its belief in the superiority of Chinese culture and civilization. Chinese philosophers and scholars saw their country as the center of the world, the most advanced and enlightened society, and the model that other nations should follow. This idea was reinforced by the emperor's role as the "Son of Heaven," a divine ruler who had the mandate to rule over all under Heaven, including other nations. This sense of cultural and political superiority has shaped China's interactions with its neighbors, often leading to tension and conflict.

From the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s China went through what is known as the "Century of Humiliation". These "Hundred Years of National Humiliation" comprises, among other events, the defeat suffered against western powers on the Opium Wars, the Sign of "Unequal Treaties", invasions from the Soviet Union and Japan in Chinese territories and the Sino-French War. China's economic rise in recent years has emboldened its leaders to take a more assertive stance on the international stage, challenging the existing order and asserting its own interests. Today, China's "Middle Kingdom" mindset continues to influence its foreign policy, as the country seeks to regain its position as a dominant global power. This has led to concerns among its neighbors, who

fear that China's growing power may come at their expense. As such, understanding China's historical perspective as the "Middle Kingdom" is essential to comprehending its current foreign policy and aspirations.

As Kissinger put it, while the idea of international order and Westphalian system are two highly European terms, were nation states worked as balancing actor against the power at the time, China was the center of its own international system. Hierarchically speaking, China was above all other nations around them, and they had the "higher call" of guiding them through Chinese culture and wisdom. In a sense, by letting the barbarians come to them and civilizing them, China would be fulfilling their role of guides to the rest of the world (Kissinger, 2014).

China, being a contender of world's hegemony, once again is trying to achieve a larger sphere of influence and a bigger said in world's affairs, not by example, as Confucian philosophy stated that China had to do, but by investing. Money has replaced culture as the Chinese go-to spearhead when trying to "civilize barbarians"; in other words, China is investing money abroad in order to bring them closer to Beijing's interest. Advancing China's geopolitical interest not through military might, but through economic incentives has proven to be the Chinese strategy for the realist game.

4.1 Belt and Road Initiative

Magellan and Elcano were the first to circumnavigate the planet, an astounding feat that required three years and took them across the Atlantic, through the treacherous Strait of Magellan, across the Pacific, and finally, around the Cape of Good Hope before returning to Spain. This remarkable achievement helped lay the foundation for modern global trade and travel, paving the way for future generations to explore the world in new ways. A couple of centuries earlier, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo embarked on an extraordinary journey and documented the intricate and expansive network of trade routes known as the Silk Road. This extensive trade network connected Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, enabling the exchange of silk, spices, and a myriad of precious metals and gems. Marco Polo's writings offered fascinating insights into

the vibrant trade and cultural interactions along the Silk Road, which served as a gateway to a world different from the one he had left behind. His accounts unveiled the captivating journey from Beijing to Constantinople, where merchants traversed vast distances, creating a highway of commerce that shaped the global trade landscape. Centuries later, echoes of this historical legacy resonate as China embarks on the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, aiming to forge new connections among countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa through an extensive network of trade routes and transformative infrastructure projects.

The BRI proposed by the Chinese government in 2013 is often compared to the voyages of Magellan and Elcano, as both events involve a significant transformation of global trade and commerce. The BRI aims to establish an interconnected network of infrastructure, including ports, railways, highways, and telecommunications facilities, across Eurasia and parts of Africa. This initiative is projected to cover more than sixty countries, with a total investment estimated at over one trillion dollars. The BRI has the potential to significantly impact global economic relations, and some analysts predict that it will transform the world economy in much the same way that the voyages of Magellan and Elcano did centuries ago.

On May 14, 2017, Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, China's former minister of foreign affairs stated to be intended to "build a more open and efficient international cooperation platform; a closer, stronger partnership network, and to push for a more just reasonable and a balanced international governance system" (Yi, 2017), in which he stated that BRI embodied the same spirit that the Silk Road once embedded once. A spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit (Jinping, 2017).

Despite Xi's efforts to promote the Belt and Road Initiative as a cooperation mechanism and infrastructure project, its true nature can be better understood by listening to perspectives such as that of Portugal's former Minister of Europe, Bruno Mações:

“More than a project or an initiative, the Belt and Road is a movement, representing the slow but ineluctable expansion of Chinese influence. Wherever it finds a vacuum or an area of little resistance, it moves it. Where it finds opposition, it stops, if only momentarily”
(Maçães, 2018)

According to Maçães, the belt and road comprises a total of nine different corridors: six of them are economic corridors on land and three of them are sea routes (Maçães, 2018). However, the OECD provides us with a map showing the six corridors on land plus only once maritime route called the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and it makes both a comparison with the original Silk Route and shows proposed routes to include on the new one (Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation, 2018). (See Figure 1)

Those six corridors provided by the OECD are:

1. China, Mongolia, Russia Economic Corridor: Including rail links and the steppe road which will be linked to the land bridge.
2. New Eurasia Land Bridge: Involving rail to Europe via Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Poland.
3. China, Central Asia, West Asia Economic Corridor: Linking Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Turkey.
4. China - Pakistan Economic Corridor: This is an especially important corridor as it directly connects the landlocked city of Kashgar⁴ with the deep-water port of Gwadar in Pakistan, a port used for both military and commercial purposes.
5. Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar Economic corridor: Affected by the current complex situation between India and China.

⁴ Located in the Xinjiang Province and being holder of the status of free economic zone.

6. China – Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor: Vietnam, Thailand, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Malaysia.

On the very same report from the OECD, they also provide a chart with every country involved in the BRI, up to 2018, and to what economic corridor would they be linked to (See Chart 1). However, according to an article posted by the Council on Foreign Relations, by February 2023, “147 countries, which represent two-thirds of the world’s population and 40% of global GDP, have signed on to projects or indicated an interest in doing so” (McBride, Berman, & Chtazky, 2023).

The BRI is an extensive initiative that aims to develop transportation infrastructure, including railways, highways, and ports, as well as energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, power plants, and transmission lines. It also involves the development of industrial and technological infrastructure, such as industrial parks and fiber-optic networks, and the promotion of trade and investment cooperation among participating countries. Full investment is expected to be of \$8 trillion dollars (McBride, Berman, & Chtazky, 2023).

However, the BRI is not just limited to physical infrastructure projects. It includes financial and economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and other types of communication and collaboration between participating countries. While the initiative is expected to boost economic growth and promote trade and investment among participating countries, it has also raised concerns about debt sustainability and geopolitical concern.

Attempting to cover all the geopolitical implications of the BRI initiative would be a herculean task; however, in this discussion, we will attempt to cover some of the most significant aspects of the BRI initiative.

4.1.1 Geopolitical Implications of the BRI

4.1.1.1 China - Pakistan

To grasp the significance of Pakistan for China, it is essential to acknowledge the strained relationship between China and India. The two nations share a long-standing

territorial dispute, which has resulted in military conflicts, including a brief war in 1962. On top of that, India is expected to surpass China in population by mid-year 2023 (United Nations Population Funds, 2023). This acrimonious relationship has led China to seek alternative trade and energy routes, especially to bypass the Malacca Strait. The Strait, situated between Indonesia and Malaysia, is a narrow passage that serves as a vital chokepoint for Chinese trade and energy, back in 2016, about 80% of Chinese oil imports passed through the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait (Marshall, 2019). Any disruption or blockade of the Strait would have disastrous consequences for China's economy. Therefore, China has looked towards Pakistan to help establish a land route that circumvents the Strait and provides a direct link to the Arabian Sea.

The fact is that not only work as a bypass of the Malacca Strait and gives access to markets in both Africa and Europe, but it also provides a more than welcome ally that could counterbalance and keep India busy in the region. Pakistan is a regional power that developed nuclear power back in the 20th century; and as such is a legitimate ally that work as both a point of entry for oil imported from Saudi Arabia and Iraq and as a counterbalance for India.

In return to that, China has to offer one thing and one thing only: money. As the Chinese Consul general to the Pakistani city of Lahore have said "to date, CPEC has brought a total of \$25.4 billion in direct investments to Pakistan, \$17.55bn in revenue, \$2.12bn in taxes, and more than 192,000 direct jobs, helping Pakistan add 6,000MW of electricity, 510km of highways and 886km of national core transmission network" (Zhao, 2023). An estimate of how much will the CPEC cost says that \$62 Billion will be invested on the next 15 years.

4.1.1.2 China's use of debt or debt-trap diplomacy

Debt-trap diplomacy is a term that has been used to describe China's lending practices, particularly in the context of the BRI. Concerns have been raised that China's lending practices are designed to create a situation in which recipient countries become indebted to China and are, therefore, more susceptible to Chinese influence (Bradsher,

2023). This has led some to argue that China is using its financial power as a tool for geopolitical gain, which has fueled debate about the nature and implications of China's role in the global economy. These concerns go beyond abstract notions of geopolitical alignment and have tangible consequences. Back in December 2017, Sri Lanka had to hand over control of the Hambantota port to China in exchange for getting rid of the country's debt with China. Not only China control 70% of the stake in the port, but it also has a 99-year lease agreement to operate it (Marshal, 2019).

Li Ruogu, former chairman and president of the Export-Import Bank of China, publicly acknowledged that many countries along the route lacked the financial means to fund their involvement in the projects (Marshal, 2019). Djibouti public external debt has increased from 50% to 85% since 2015, and in 2019 both the U.S and France were worried about the possibility of falling into China's trap (Manek, 2019).

Countries as Zambia, Maldives and Malaysia have already expressed concern about their possibilities to repay their debt to China. More than 25% of Zambia's debt is owed exclusively to China (AfricaNews, 2023), and Maldives and Pakistan are already starting to note the pressure from Chinese loans (The Times of India, 2022).

Zambia and Sri Lanka are two cases in which countries could not comply with their financial obligations with China. In both cases they have gone into default, unable to make even interest payments (Condon, 2023). Zambia went into default in 2020, and to this day, they are still attempting to restructure their debt with China. However, China has refused to engage in multilateral negotiations and has instead opted for bilateral discussions with Zambia. By avoiding multilateral negotiations, China avoids shedding light on the conditions under which they initially negotiated the loans (Jones & Savage, 2023). However, as noted before, in Sri Lanka's case, China did take over control of a strategic port.

The IMF and the World Bank have call for China to forgive part of the debts of these struggling developing nations, however, China refuses to forgive any loans as

they should not carry the burden of these countries by themselves, instead, they have called for both institution to take such loses as well (Condon, 2023).

4.1.1.3 Funding the projects: Banks and funds

The Belt and Road Initiative has resulted in an increase in borrowing by countries in the region from both China and Chinese international development banks. China has pledged to provide significant funding for infrastructure projects in countries along the routes, but these projects are often large and expensive, making it difficult for many countries to finance them on their own. As a result, they have turned to Chinese financing, which has been criticized for leading to a debt trap.

Since 2010, China has gone from not lending a single dollar in emergency loans to becoming the largest lender of last resort loans (Bradsher, 2023). While the IMF remains the preeminent institution in terms of lending, China is narrowing the gap between them. In recent years China has provided \$24 billion of emergency financing, and in 2021 it provided a total of \$40.5 billion to distressed countries. In the same year, the IMF lent 68.6 billion (Bradsher, 2023).

In addition to borrowing directly from China, countries have also sought financing from Chinese international development banks, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank. Between those two banks, it was expected that \$150 billion were invested in developing countries in their first years (Hart & Elgin-Cossart, 2015). These banks were created as part of China's efforts to establish alternative institutions to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which are seen as biased towards the West and do not adequately represent the interests of developing countries. While these institutions offer alternative sources of financing, some have raised concerns that they are part of China's broader geopolitical agenda.

Western countries, particularly the United States, have expressed concerns about China's efforts to establish these alternative institutions, viewing it as a challenge to the existing international order and a potential threat to their own economic and geopolitical influence. China has been accused of engaging in "debt trap diplomacy" and

using these institutions as a means of gaining influence over other countries (Bradsher, 2023). However, China has maintained that these institutions are designed to promote development and cooperation, and that they are open to all countries regardless of political or ideological affiliations.

Unlike Western institutions, which often lend money with the condition of implementing certain structural reforms, China lends money without any ideological conditions. They lend money to other countries to invest in Chinese-favored projects with Chinese companies, creating a win-win-win situation except for the West (Sundquist, 2021). China has founded and funded the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank, and the Silk Road Fund, all of which have been established after the announcement of the BRI in 2013. These institutions aim to finance infrastructure and development projects in emerging economies, creating their own funding ecosystem to rival that of the West.

5. Conclusion

With China's ascent, the United States grappling to restore its international credibility after the challenges of the previous administration, and the West's diverted by the conflict in Ukraine; the question is not whether China will become a global hegemon, but rather what the world will look like once it assumes that role. After carefully examining the evidence and analyzing Chinese behavior through the lens of both liberalism and realism. We can conclude that China is, indeed, ready and has already taken steps in raising its international position with the goal of becoming a leader in global affairs. The study of initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative and China's engagement in international organizations has yielded an initially counterintuitive but ultimately coherent understanding, considering the unique characteristics of Chinese policy and approach.

China has adopted a distinctive approach to its engagement with International Organizations. When it comes to international organizations, China does not appear to have intentions of overthrowing the existing systems. Despite not being the creators of these organizations or their established rules, China has chosen not to pursue significant changes to the existing system. This is where the idea introduced by Kissinger of fundamental pragmatism should work as a guide to understanding the approach of China the West-created international organizations. Similar to how Chinese bureaucrats in the past influenced conquerors to govern in the interest of China rather than their own, China today is navigating the rules and shaping a narrative of compliance to ensure that international organizations serve its own goals. This strategic bending of the rules allows China to effectively use these institutions to further its interests.

In the GA, China has exerted influence over smaller and economically disadvantaged states, effectively leveraging their economic vulnerability to shape their voting behavior according to China's interests. By holding these countries hostage to their economic needs, China effectively compels them to vote in alignment with its own objectives. They did not have to change the rules of voting in the GA, they need not to

spend political capital by trying to achieve a weighted voting system in the UN, the only had to allocate their money properly in order to obtain "free votes" for their cause.

The UN SC gives China tranquility in two of their most key features. First, it gives them the assurance that they can protect their own interest by giving them the opportunity to veto any resolution that might contradict their interest regarding Taiwan and the South China Sea. On the other hand, China can protect their allies and the interest of them by serving as the designated vetoing power for countries like Syria or DPRK.

The WHO, despite its focus on public health, has worked to further ostracize Taiwan from the rest of the world. By refusing to acknowledge Taiwan as a legitimate actor, when it refused to accept it as an observer, the WHO not only jeopardize global health, but also acts as an essential collaborator in China's objective to delegitimize Taiwan as an independent state. On the other hand, by not standing up to China and asking for more transparency when the Covid-19 pandemic started, the WHO has failed to fulfill their task.

The WTO worked exactly in the opposite way that former U.S president Bill Clinton expected it to work when China first entered it. Clinton Claimed that by exporting economic freedom, Chinese society will demand greater liberalization in the Chinese system, even implying that democracy would follow the access of China into the WTO (Clinton, 2000). Ever since China entered the WTO it has not only managed to grow and rise to be the one of the largest trade partners of the world, but it has also acquired intellectual property under the insufficient surveillance of the World Trade Organization. Furthermore, the WTO has given China the legitimacy of imposing tariffs by allowing them to self-identify as a developing nation. Which has allowed China to play in an adulterated field in comparison with the rest of the industrialized world.

Regarding the Belt and Road Initiative, it has been proved that it does not work only as a booster of trade nor a connection between states that would be, otherwise, far away. The BRI is, in fact, the Chinese blueprints of their idea of new international order. It not only displaces the "center" of the international arena from an Atlantic-centered

view to a Sino-centered perspective, which would mean that China will go from being located in the periphery to be the center of the world; but it also works as way of obtaining larger quotes of influence in their neighborhood. This would cause the U.S pivot to Asia more difficult than expected and could even brake relations between longtime allies in the zone. In contrast to China's approach to international organizations, the BRI not only seeks to enhance trade and connectivity between nations but also aims to fundamentally reshape the prevailing international order by exerting Chinese influence and promoting a new set of norms and practices. It does represent a distinct endeavor to challenge and transform the existing global system.

Following the example of the BRI, and under its umbrella, China has decided to challenge the western financial system. It does not need to challenge the US dollar supremacy, but it has challenged the reform-centered approach that the WB and the IMF follows. These institutions, presided respectively by an American and a European citizen. By funding both infrastructure projects and countries that are in the brink of bankruptcy, China has positioned itself in a position to claim and acquire assets all over Asia and Africa.

As China asserts itself as a new hegemonic power, we could expect China to actively challenge the prevailing status quo in the realm of financial institutions and the liberal international order. Simultaneously, China is likely to employ strategic measures to exert influence and shape existing institutions according to its own interests, rather than seeking to completely overthrow them. This dual approach exemplifies China's strategic intent to consolidate and expand its global influence within the existing frameworks of international governance.

Further research in this area could explore several avenues to deepen our understanding of China's evolving role in the international system. First, examining the implications of China's challenge to the prevailing financial institutions and liberal international order would shed light on the potential consequences for global economic governance and the dynamics of power in international financial systems. This research

could delve into the strategies employed by China to exert influence and reshape existing institutions, as well as the responses of other major powers and international actors. Second, investigating the extent to which China's dual approach of challenging and shaping institutions aligns with its long-term foreign policy objectives would provide valuable insights into the consistency and coherence of China's actions. This would involve examining China's rhetoric, policy pronouncements, and diplomatic engagements to discern the underlying motivations and goals driving its behavior. Lastly, exploring the impact of China's rise on regional dynamics, particularly in Asia, would enhance our understanding of the geopolitical consequences and potential shifts in alliances and relations among regional powers. This research could delve into the reactions of neighboring states, including their strategies for balancing against or accommodating China's growing influence. By undertaking these lines of research, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of China's ambitions, its strategies for engaging with the international system, and the implications for global governance and power dynamics.

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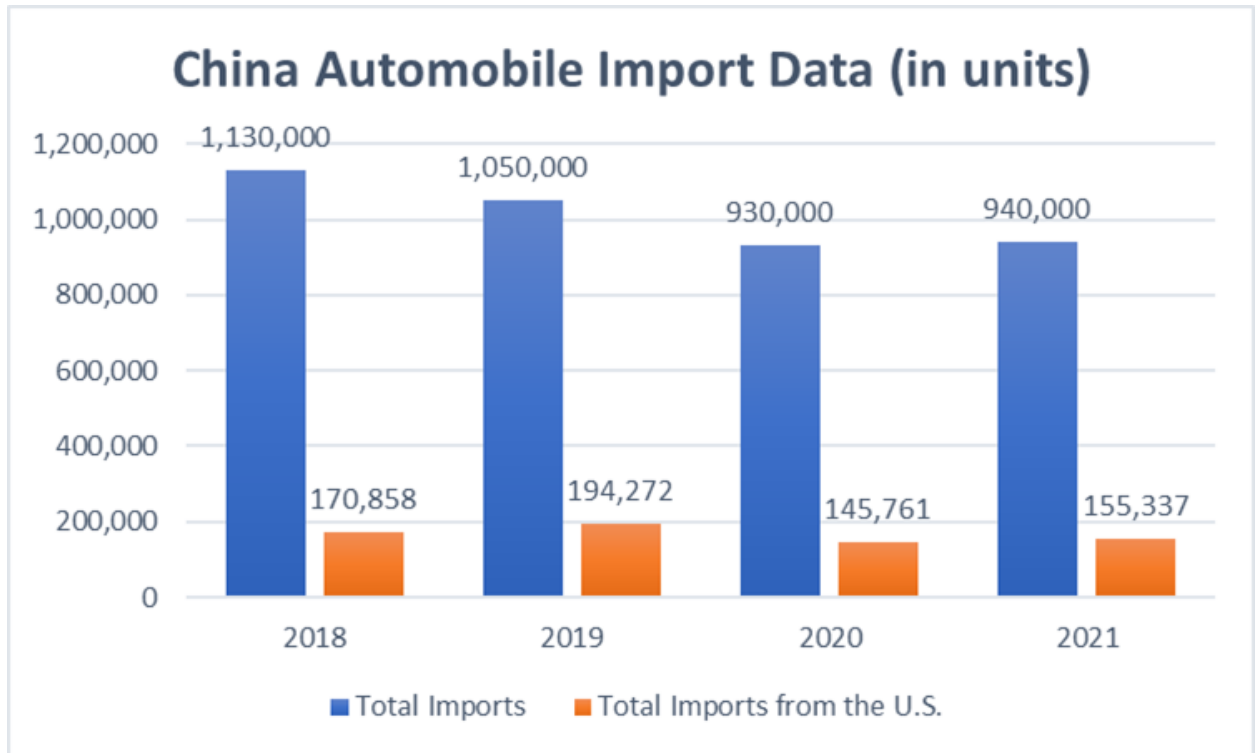
7. Annexes

7.1 Graph 1

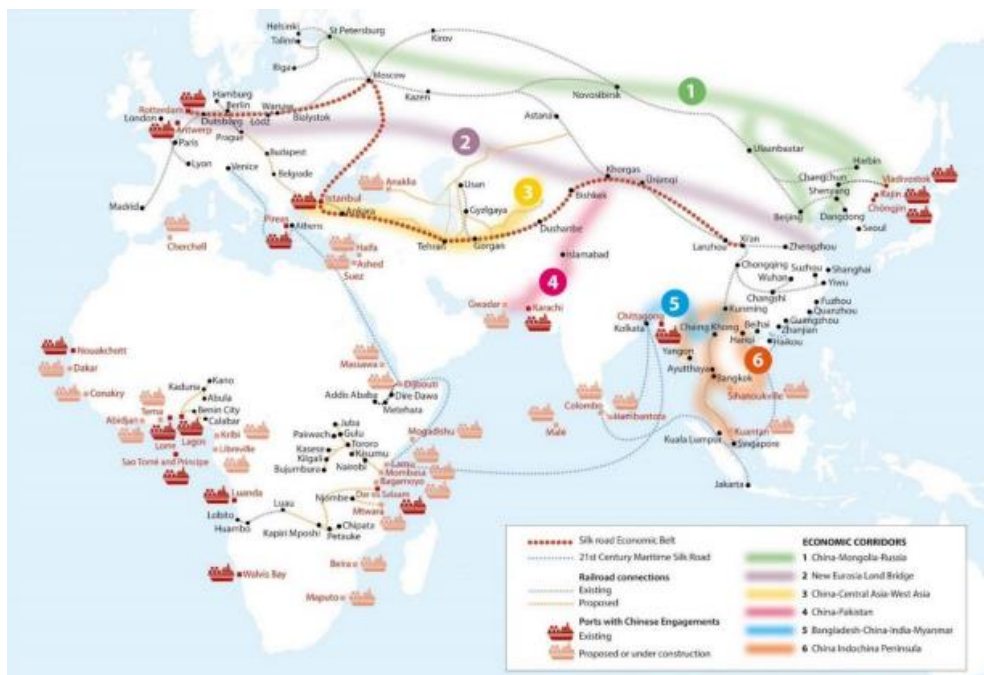


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7.2 Graph 2



7.3 Figure 1.



7.4 Table 1

BRI-participating economies and economic corridors		
#	Country	Economic corridor
1	People's Republic of China	-
2	Bangladesh	Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar
3	Bhutan	Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar
4	India	Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar
5	Myanmar	Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar
6	Nepal	Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar
7	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar
8	Albania	China - Central West Asia
9	Armenia	China - Central West Asia
10	Azerbaijan	China - Central West Asia
11	Bosnia and Herzegovina	China - Central West Asia
12	Bulgaria	China - Central West Asia
13	Croatia	China - Central West Asia
14	Georgia	China - Central West Asia
15	Islamic Republic of Iran	China - Central West Asia
16	Iraq	China - Central West Asia
17	Israel	China - Central West Asia
18	Jordam	China - Central West Asia
19	Kyrgyzstan	China - Central West Asia
20	Lebanon	China - Central West Asia
21	Republic of North Macedonia	China - Central West Asia
22	Republic of Moldova	China - Central West Asia
23	Montenegro	China - Central West Asia
24	Palestinian Authority or West Bank and Gaza Strip	China - Central West Asia
25	Romania	China - Central West Asia
26	Serbia	China - Central West Asia
27	Syran Araba Republic	China - Central West Asia
28	Tajikistan	China - Central West Asia
29	Turkey	China - Central West Asia
30	Turkmenistan	China - Central West Asia
31	Uzbekistan	China - Central West Asia

32	Brunei Darussalam	China - Indochina Peninsula
33	Cambodia	China - Indochina Peninsula
34	Lao People's Democratic Republic	China - Indochina Peninsula
35	Malaysia	China - Indochina Peninsula
36	Phillipines	China - Indochina Peninsula
37	Singapore	China - Indochina Peninsula
38	Thailand	China - Indochina Peninsula
39	Timor-Leste	China - Indochina Peninsula
40	Vietnam	China - Indochina Peninsula
41	Belarus	China - Mongolia- Russian Federation
42	Estonia	China - Mongolia- Russian Federation
43	Latvia	China - Mongolia- Russian Federation
44	Lithuania	China - Mongolia- Russian Federation
45	Mongolia	China - Mongolia- Russian Federation
46	Russian Federation	China - Mongolia- Russian Federation
47	Afghanistan	China - Pakistan
48	Pakistan	China - Pakistan
49	Bahrain	China – Pakistan*
50	Kuwait	China – Pakistan*
51	Oman	China – Pakistan*
52	Qatar	China – Pakistan*
53	Saudi Arabia	China – Pakistan*
54	United Arab Emirates	China – Pakistan*
55	Yemen	China – Pakistan*
56	Czech Republic	New Eurasian Land Bridge
57	Hungary	New Eurasian Land Bridge
58	Slovak Republic	New Eurasian Land Bridge
59	Slovenia	New Eurasian Land Bridge
60	Poland	New Eurasian Land Bridge
61	Kazakhstan	New Eurasian Land Bridge*
62	Ukraine	New Eurasian Land Bridge*
63	Egypt	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
64	Ethiopia	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
65	Indonesia	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
66	Kenya	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
67	Maldives	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
68	Morocco	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
69	New Zealand	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
70	Panama	21st Century Maritime Silk Road

71	Korea	21st Century Maritime Silk Road
72	South Africa	21st Century Maritime Silk Road

* These countries could also be counted as part of the China-Central West Asia Economic Corridor