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重振天夏：中國在習近平領導下對外交政策的民族主義
論述

**Reviving Tianxia : China's nationalist narrative on
foreign policy under Xi Jinping's leadership**

Hortense PAGNARD

指導教授：劉秋婉 博士

Advisor: Dr Chiu-Wan LIU, Associate professor

National Taiwan University

Co-advisor : Anthony AMICELLE, Associate professor

Sciences Po Bordeaux

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復興天下：

席近平領導下的中國外交政策民族主義敘事

Reviving Tianxia:

China's Nationalist Narrative on Foreign Policy under
Xi Jinping's Leadership

本論文係 HORTENSE PAGNARD (R12322037) 在國立臺灣大學政治學系完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 113 年 9 月 26 日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明。

The undersigned, appointed by the Department of Political Science on September 26, 2024 have examined a Master's Thesis entitled above presented by HORTENSE PAGNARD (R12322037) candidate and hereby certify that it is worthy of acceptance.

口試委員 Committee members：

Chiu-Wan Liu

指導教授 Advisor

Yue-Chin Philip Hsu

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ABSTRACT – KEYWORDS

Abstract :

Among the academic discussion surrounding Xi Jinping's leadership of the People's Republic of China, the topic of the rejuvenation of Tianxia has been the witness of growing attention in recent years. This thesis starts from the observation that Chinese traditional values have undergone a revival in Chinese public discourse and questions China's possible promoting of Tianxia as a political system. The research seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of Xi's vision of the Chinese nation and its political project. The research is centered around three key notions which form an three-dimensional conceptual framework : nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. Through a discourse analysis of documents issued by various bodies of the Chinese government and associated agencies, the research tackles three operationalized sub-questions in order to draw conclusions on Xi Jinping's relation to the Tianxia concept as an alternative system of international relations. Engagement with the data provides an extensive comprehension of China's project : the vision Xi Jinping entertains of the Chinese nation and its ideological project, Chinese foreign policy motives and finally the relation between Xi Jinping's ideology and the official understanding of Tianxia.

Keywords :

China ; Xi Jinping ; Nationalism ; Foreign Policy ; Tianxia.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

In an editorial published by the Taiwanese newspaper Taiwan News on October 14th, 2023, contributing writer Kenneth Fan called out the readers on China's political ambitions, by formulating a link between the tensions on the Taiwan situation and Xi Jinping's general ideology. Along his article, Fan remembers his interaction with some Chinese people who, after a few hours of discussion on travels around Asia, then didn't acknowledge their trips as "international". Indeed, the author then explains how the people he met considered traveling to Japan, South Korea or Taiwan as domestic tourism, saying "*I didn't leave China ! All those places are domestic !*"¹. Fan then goes on to tell the tale of his thoughts surrounding China's considerations of its neighbors, and how he noticed, over the years, the emergence of the Tianxia² concept in Xi Jinping's ideology. From there, Fan draws the link between the latter concept and Xi Jinping's general vision of the world; he is convinced that China's project of territorial expansion goes way beyond simply recovering sovereign power over Taiwan, but may in reality shift towards a world authority. Indeed, Fan considers that China's general discourse is not undisclosed by China but rather expressed through China's discourse and acts but underestimated by Western powers, which may be of great danger to the existing world order :

*"The implications of Xi's Tianxia vision are incredibly far-reaching and could have devastating consequences for the world. It is essential that the international community is aware of the potential threat posed by this ambition and takes steps to ensure that it is not realized."*³

To understand the extent of Fan's alarming call to Western powers, one must first review the concept of Tianxia. Tianxia (天下) is a traditional political concept used in the time of imperial China, which literally translates to "all under heaven". China's relation to the Tianxia concept traces back to the premises of Chinese history, with some Chinese scholars pinpointing Tianxia's origin as early as 3000 years ago⁴. It is understood as a political system which

¹ Fan, K. (2023, October 14). Letter to Editor: It's not about Taiwan, stupid. It's about Tianxia | Taiwan News | Oct. 14, 2023 10:55.

² Xi Jinping is not the first Chinese leader to make references to concepts close to Tianxia, the first connection made can be identified in Hu Jintao's discourse on a "harmonious socialist society" (shehuizhuyi hexie shehui) at the 16th Central Committee Congress of the PCC in November 2006. Nonetheless, this thesis considers that Tianxia has evolved into a political concept under Xi Jinping's leadership, which is why this thesis chooses to focus on Xi Jinping's era to consider the ideological motives linked with Tianxia.

³ Ibid.

⁴ According to Zhao Tingyang. Mosna-Savoye, G., & Chassort, M. (2018, April 9). Qu'est-ce que le concept chinois de « Tianxia » ? *France Culture*.

advocates for uniting “the entire world that one can conceive”⁵ under a singular political entity. Therefore, Fan’s alarm is explained by the fact that such a concept would undermine the already existing world order, which is based on the Westphalian treaties, in which countries coexist with one another as equals. Nonetheless, this editorial is far from being the only one which tackles the topic of Tianxia and links it to Xi Jinping’s ideological project. Indeed, the growing discussion in media surrounding China’s potential quest to reintroduce Tianxia in political settings, notably through Xi’s administration and foreign policy, is the phenomenon which triggered this research. Numerous news and academic articles mention the Tianxia concept and discuss the possibility of China trying to infuse the latter into its foreign policy⁶. Such a phenomenon is notably explained by the recent popularity of the Chinese scholar Zhao Tingyang’s advocacy for Tianxia as a replacement system to the existing United Nations system, in a 2016 publication which received great reception in China⁷. Presenting Tianxia as a competing system against the Westphalian system and the popularity of Zhao’s work unveiled debates among academics surrounding China’s true intentions for international relations. Indeed, as “*Tianxia doesn’t only speak to a lack of borders but places China as the heartbeat of global cultural, political and economic values*”⁸, promoting such a system would impede on the existing world order as it would impose China’s supremacy as a political power and erase all existing borders to follow the single authority of the leading China. Hence, this thesis chooses to tackle the topic of Tianxia in order to measure the room left for Tianxia in Chinese political discourse under Xi Jinping’s leadership. Indeed, although Zhao’s work was extremely popular, the Chinese Communist Party has not officially endorsed the concept of Tianxia.

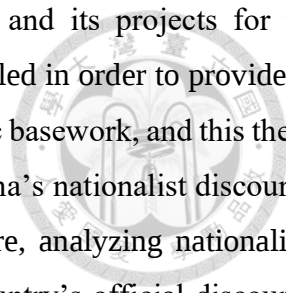
Nonetheless, the growing academic debate surrounding China’s intentions for the world order and the actual possibility of establishing a Tianxia system that draws from those lead one to question Beijing’s relation to the Tianxia concept. This thesis therefore chooses to focus on China’s official discourse in order to understand the official school of thought advocated by Xi Jinping. Indeed, as Fan expresses concern regarding China’s intentions, he argues that China is not hiding its intentions, but rather Western powers are blind to it. This thesis therefore questions this argument by directly examining Xi Jinping’s ideology through his official

⁵ Fan, K. (2023, October 14). Letter to Editor: It’s not about Taiwan, stupid. It’s about Tianxia | Taiwan News | Oct. 14, 2023 10:55.

⁶ Kuo, M. A. (2023, November 21). *The political aims of ‘Xi Jinping Thought.’* The Diplomat. Surcos. (2023, June 30). Tianxia: A Chinese concept for global governance. Pressenza ; Tobin, D. (2024). How Xi Jinping’s “New era” should have ended U.S. debate on Beijing’s ambitions ; Gobena, L. (2008). The implications of “Tianxia” as a new world system | US-China Institute.

⁷ Zhao, T. (2016). All Under Heaven : the Tianxia System for a Possible World Order.

⁸ Guaschi, E. (2024, June 11). *Know thy enemy: Understanding China’s worldview.* Modern Diplomacy.



discourse. This thesis is structured around three main concepts which allow the study to gain a deeper and all-around comprehension of China's vision of itself and its projects for the international relations order. First, the concept of nationalism is tackled in order to provide an overview of China's vision of itself. Such a process requires academic basework, and this thesis chooses Richard Lebow's cognitive frames as a base to analyze China's nationalist discourse, and how it shapes China's national identity and interests. Therefore, analyzing nationalism allows a founding work from which this thesis may analyze the country's official discourse. The second key concept of this research is foreign policy : as Tianxia is a concept that inherently requires expanding sovereignty onto other countries, the key to understanding China's goals is to shift the focus on China's external relations. By discussing China's foreign policy motives, one may therefore provide an overview of China's general foreign policy discourse. Finally, the last concept on which this thesis revolves is Tianxia. As the study's main goal is to question China's intentions with the concept of Tianxia, examining first China's nationalist discourse provides background work on China's national interests; then, tackling China's foreign policy motives may help the research pick up on some aspects relating to expansion. Exploring those two concepts first is the key to ensure better grasp of what may interfere with reference to the Tianxia system. Hence, the last part of this thesis' structure is oriented towards Tianxia directly, by questioning the link between China's official discourse on national rejuvenation and Tianxia. Dividing this thesis into an analysis of all three concepts ensures a deeper perception of China's general project under the leadership of Xi Jinping's, and his ideology surrounding the concept of Tianxia. By analyzing those three concepts throughout China's official discourse, this thesis will provide an answer to its overarching research question : **To what extent does Tianxia shape Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse on foreign policy ?**

This research is centered on three key concepts and therefore structured around those. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the topic, formulates the overarching research question, and provides a summary of the thesis' structure. Then Chapter 2 is dedicated to review the key intellectual insights on the phenomenon of Tianxia discussion in academic debate. From there, the thesis builds its own conceptual framework based on the three dimensions of the overarching research question, namely nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. Then, Chapter 3 overviews the research section of the thesis, by presenting the dataset, the methods used to analyze China's discourse as well as formulate this research's analytical limits. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are dedicated to the analytical answer to each of this thesis' operationalized sub-questions regarding respectively nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a summary of the key findings of the research and the implications for further work on the topic.

Chapter Outline of the Thesis

As this thesis centers around three main concepts, the research is first focused on exploring the existing literature on those. Nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia therefore form the center of Chapter 2, the thesis reviews already established conclusions on the topic of China's relation to the Tianxia by first questioning China's nationalist discourse, then its foreign policy motives and finally trying to form links between the official discourse issued by the Chinese government and the political understanding of Tianxia. Chapter 2 first tackles the topic of nationalism by providing an overview of the academic debate on the definition of nationalism. Indeed, there is no common understanding on what defines nationalism, however there is a consensus surrounding the idea that nationalism participates to a certain extent in shaping a country's national identity. Therefore, the literature review's aim is first to choose a definition of nationalism to follow. The thesis then provides an association of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" and Bourdieu's definition of national identity to follow throughout the research. Then, the literature review finds that understanding nationalism in the context of Chinese studies requires going beyond the scope of the Westphalian nation-state. In order to take into account the peculiarities of Chinese nationalism, the thesis questions the discourse around "Chinese characteristics" and how China differentiates itself from the rest of the world. After reviewing the literature, this thesis chooses to rely on Whiting's work in order to build the first dimension of the conceptual framework. Hence, nationalism is tackled by a first operationalized sub-question : **how does Xi Jinping's rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism in the sense of Whiting's typology ?** Then, the literature review tackles China's foreign policy first by defining China's core interests and therefore its goals in foreign policy. This section presents the constructivist and realist approach to determine China's national interests. However, the thesis keeps a large scope of the definition of national interest given the obligation to remain beyond the scope of Westphalian definitions. A review of China's foreign policy discourse since Mao serves as a reminder of the evolution of China's foreign policy motives from Mao's trying to rise from the ashes, then Deng's strategy of "hide and bide your time", up to Xi Jinping's discourse on rejuvenation and openness. Among the key concepts explored in Chapter 2, the idea of national humiliation and the roots of Chinese foreign policy in its past help the thesis guide its research notably regarding China's relation to the US and the rest of the international community. From the literature review, it is established that China's goals include providing a contribution to international relations but also improving its image, and this allows the thesis to draw from Callahan and Zhang's work to build the second dimension of the conceptual framework. Therefore, Callahan's four definitions of Greater China : nativism,

conversion, conquest or diaspora⁹ may provide tools to analyse China's foreign policy discourse according to the definition China has of itself. Another work fit into the three-dimensional conceptual framework is Zhang's three cognitive frames on "national rejuvenation", "global community" and "Chinese contribution"¹⁰. The latter would contribute to this research by helping understanding the goals of China's foreign policy discourse. After establishing the conceptual framework on foreign policy, this section formulates the second operationalized sub-question : **What are motives of Chinese foreign policy decision-making in Xi's administration ?** Finally, Chapter 2 reviews the existing works on the concept of Tianxia. After a historical background on Tianxia, the latter is defined as a political concept used in imperial China and historically performed during the Qin-Han era. In recent history, Tianxia has been rejuvenated in popular discourse notably by Zhao Tingyang's work, which applies Tianxia to modern China and its contribution to world relations. Therefore, Tianxia is put under consideration as an alternative model of International Relations. In order to question China's intent to promote Tianxia along with Xi Jinping's ideological project, this thesis reviews three authors' work to enlighten the research's interaction with the data. Indeed, by providing background work on the possible links between Tianxia-related concepts and China's discourse, this research forms its third dimension of conceptual framework around Grydehøj and Su's 2021 work¹¹, linking Tianxia to the idea of harmony; then Puranen's 2019 works¹² allows this thesis to draw connections based on vocabulary typically associated with the Tianxia, in contrast to the Chinese discourse on the Western-based world order. Finally, Babones' 2017 work¹³ induce the idea that Tianxia is closely associated with an idea of hierarchy, which may serve when observing China's discourse on the relations among countries. After forming the last dimension of the conceptual framework, this section formulates the third operationalized sub-question : **How does the rejuvenation discourse correlate with the official understanding of Tianxia in Xi's terms?**

After reviewing the existing literature on the three components of this thesis and building a three-dimensional conceptual framework, Chapter 3 is dedicated to the presentation

⁹ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

¹⁰ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

¹¹ Grydehøj, A., & Su, P. (2021). China and the Pursuit of Harmony in World Politics: Understanding Chinese International Relations Theory (1st ed.). Routledge.

¹² Puranen, M. (2019). "All under heaven as one family" : Tianxiaist ideology and the emerging Chinese great power identity. *Journal of China and International Relations*, 7(1), 44-61.

¹³ Babones, S. (2017). Taking China seriously: Relationality, Tianxia , and the "Chinese School" of International Relations. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

of the analysis. First, the data is defined as a set of around 105 documents issued by the Chinese government or some of its closely-related agencies such as Xinhua News. Those documents are typically speeches or political communiques delivered in the setting of China's foreign policy or in national settings, such as New Year addresses by Xi Jinping and diplomatic guiding lines formulated by key actors of the CCP. Then, the research methods are presented by this chapter. The analytical work is formulated around the work of Mason's 2002 "Qualitative Researching" which the study uses to build an analytical framework using categorical indexing and informed reading of the data. The analysis is structured around a process of four steps : initial review, coding, categorization and interpretation. Finally, Chapter 3 tackles the limits of this thesis' research. The primary limitations of the research are identified as language, timeframe, exhaustivity, and methodological constraints.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are dedicated to presenting the analytical findings from the researching process over the dataset. Each analytical chapter seeks to answer one of our three operationalized sub-questions. Chapter 4 presents the findings from our research on the dataset regarding the matter of nationalism in China. To answer the first sub-question : **how does Xi Jinping's rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism in the sense of Whiting's typology** ? This thesis therefore seeks to apply the typology established by Allen Whiting to China's current state of nationalism under the leadership of Xi Jinping. By applying this framework, the research questions the evolution of nationalism in modern China, specifically whether some change can be observed since the era of Whiting's original work on China. Indeed, as examined in the literature review, Whiting's 1995 work « Chinese nationalism and foreign policy after Deng » analyzes the influence of nationalist discourse on China's foreign policy after the era of Deng Xiaoping leadership. From this work may be retained several ideas regarding the evolution of nationalism in China. To sum up the conclusions of Whiting's 1995 work, it is first established that nationalism has been a growing element shaping China's foreign policy, arguably becoming increasingly important after Deng's era. Then Chinese nationalism in the post-Deng era can be associated with assertive nationalism and is used mostly as a political tool to unify the people without the strong appeal of communism. Whiting's findings conclude that nationalism could have the potential to evolve into a more aggressive pattern in China in the next era, therefore this idea is what the first sub-question is based on. As the study draws from Whiting's typology, the research questions the evolution of nationalism in China from an assertive standpoint to a potentially aggressive behavior coming from the Chinese government under Xi Jinping's leadership. To answer this chapter's main problematic, all three types of nationalism according to Whiting are examined in the dataset, conclusions are built from what is observed. This section therefore tackles affirmative nationalism, then assertive and finally aggressive nationalism found in official Chinese discourse. To associate each element with a

certain type of nationalism, Chapter 4 is organized in categories to observe, and relies on representative quotes from the documents. This process ensures that the analysis is illustrated by various examples found in the dataset. From there, analytical points with reference to our analytical literature are presented. For example, the conceptual framework associates the idea of the « US represented as a danger » with patterns of aggressive nationalism. Finally, the data is associated with the relevant literature in link with what is analyzed, and hence provide some elements to conduct additional research on.

Chapter 5 forms the analytical chapter on the second dimension of the conceptual framework, namely the questioning of China's foreign policy decision-making under Xi Jinping's authority. First, this chapter review China's foreign policy discourse with a reminder of the conceptual framework used. Regarding foreign policy, this chapter uses the works of Zhang and Callahan to provide literary base work and help this research orient its findings. Callahan's definitions of Greater China¹⁴ as a civilization allow the research to draw notably from the concept of conversion to describe China's foreign policy discourse. Then, Zhang's three cognitive frames put China's foreign policy into perspective, by helping the analysis define the goals of Xi Jinping's administration through the analysis of his official discourse on foreign policy. The key frames of "global community" and "Chinese contribution"¹⁵ are mobilized by the conceptual framework to put China's foreign policy motives under consideration. Overall, this chapter then reviews key aspects of China's foreign policy motives. First, the ideas of cooperation and good-neighboring policy are identified as the most recurring theme of Chinese interests in its external relations; then regionalism is also showcased as one of China's core interests, as well as Beijing's strong support to multilateralism. However, the research also finds that some aspects of Chinese foreign policy showcase some contradiction within China's official discourse. Indeed, as the concept of "major country diplomacy" and the advocacy for a "new model of international relations" are put forward by Xi's administration, this observation forces the research to question China's true motives of foreign policy. Therefore, Chapter 5 evaluates China's foreign policy and finds some contradiction in the goals advocated by Beijing.

Finally, Chapter 6 tackles the third dimension of the conceptual framework and reviews the links between the official understanding of Tianxia and Xi Jinping's discourse on national rejuvenation. The links between the latter concept and Tianxia are first presented by the analysis of Chinese official discourse, then this chapter draws on the third dimension of the conceptual

¹⁴ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

¹⁵ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

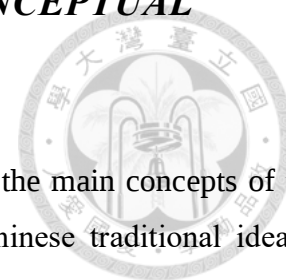
framework to review Tianxia-related concepts in Chinese official discourse. Hence, concepts like harmony, peace and stability are picked up and analyzed by keeping in perspective the works of previous literature on which the conceptual framework is based, namely Grydehøj and Su¹⁶, Puranen¹⁷ and Babones¹⁸. Furthermore, Chapter 6 also finds new material to examine and draw new conclusions on Xi Jinping's relation to the Tianxia concept. Indeed, the identification of the recurring theme of universal ideas such as "humanity" and notably the "community with a shared future for mankind" showcase this research's questioning of China's intentions regarding the existing world order. Therefore, Chapter 6 provides links between the existing connections made by academics on Tianxia and China's official discourse, but also seeks to comprehend more deeply China's universal discourse and tries to find new elements to draw answers from.

¹⁶ Grydehøj, A., & Su, P. (2021). *China and the Pursuit of Harmony in World Politics: Understanding Chinese International Relations Theory* (1st ed.). Routledge.

¹⁷ Puranen, M. (2019). "All under heaven as one family" : Tianxiaist ideology and the emerging Chinese great power identity. *Journal of China and International Relations*, 7(1), 44-61.

¹⁸ Babones, S. (2017). *Taking China seriously: Relationality, Tianxia , and the "Chinese School" of International Relations*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



This chapter centers on reviewing the existing literature on the main concepts of this research, namely China's nationalism, foreign policy, and the Chinese traditional idea of Tianxia. After providing an overview of the previous scholar work on each concept, this section then proceeds to present the conceptual framework for this research by evaluating each concept in light of existing literary tools.

Section 1 : Literature Review

1. Chinese nationalism

This thesis seeks to provide a renewed perspective of China's foreign policy and the decision-making processes of Xi Jinping with reference to both Xi's ideology and his evaluation of China's role and duties in international relations. Several key concepts are essential to this research and one may first look at the existing literature on those, in order to provide background and perspective on this study's analysis. Three concepts in particular are fundamental to this research : Chinese nationalism, foreign policy and the Chinese traditional idea of "Tianxia". First, as we aim to evaluate decision-making processes of foreign policy in China, looking to nationalist discourse is primordial to set up the design in which China's foreign policy is elaborated. Historically, the CCP has been heavily reliant on nationalist tools to legitimize its policy and maintain its power¹⁹, hence making nationalism a key component in our analysis rather than a side activity embedded in the authoritarian aspect of the regime is relevant. Chinese nationalism is crucial to this research in two ways which refer to its definition. First nationalism as itself is a regular component of foreign policy making, and this research seeks to examine the extent to which China's foreign policy is shaped by the nationalist discourses highlighted and propagated during Xi's terms (from 2012 to present-day China). To this regard, this research first needs to provide a definition of the term in order to set up its usage in Chinese politics. But another aspect in which this concept is necessary lies within the

¹⁹ Zhu, T. (2001). Nationalism and Chinese foreign policy. In *The China Review* (Vols. 1–1, Issue 1, pp. 1–27). Australian National University ; Bondaz, A. (2021). Chine. Des valeurs au service du Parti. *Inflexions*, 48, 19-26 ; Cabestan, J. (2005). The many facets of Chinese nationalism. *China Perspectives*, 2005(3) ; Smith, Stephen N. « China's "Major Country Diplomacy": Legitimation and Foreign Policy Change ». *Foreign Policy Analysis* 17, n° 2 (16 february 2021).

‘Chinese-ness’ of nationalism. In this case, nationalism applied to China seems to cover a deeper definition than other literature on the topic. Indeed, when one examines China’s official discourse, mostly but not limited to foreign policy, the mention of “Chinese characteristics” is highly recurrent whether in official speeches, Chinese media and policy documents. This peculiar idea that policy measures and other components of China’s interactions with the international community are tainted with Chinese characteristics uncovers several questions. First, regarding the nature of these characteristics, but also how they set China apart from the rest of the world. Nationalism with Chinese characteristics therefore constitutes in itself a broad object of research on which numerous scholars have elaborated studies. As this thesis seeks to further understand Chinese nationalism, one may approach the topic from the framework of nationalism and then question its Chinese characteristics. Indeed, nationalism itself remains a broad and contested concept on which no school of thought agree on one final definition. In our case, this thesis relies on the existing literature to provide a framework on nationalism as it is considered most fit to examine the case of China. In regard to public opinion, nationalism is a tool to both shape and legitimize foreign policy. Here the research draws on Richard Ned Lebow’s work “Constructing Cause in International Relations” to provide grounds for the study of Chinese nationalism as a key component of foreign policy²⁰. Indeed, Lebow examines cognitive frames in order for an actor to determine its view of itself, as well as its place in outside relations and its goals. To this regard, nationalism is a cognitive frame on which China builds a self-narrative to determine its foreign policy. Xi’s doctrine specifically answers to this definition as put into perspective by Zhang’s 2019 publication on “The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations”. Defining nationalism as a cognitive frame will be the object of further discussion into this conceptual framework, but the goal here is to establish nationalism as a core component of foreign policy.

Chinese nationalism often suffers from a panel of theoretical problems which make its study less approachable. Although lots of scholars have taken on the study of nationalism itself and its application in China, results of the studies often tend to overlap with one another while showcasing different results. This thesis identifies two main problems of the study of Chinese nationalism which limit the scholar ability to draw significant results from research; but examining these two aspects reveal other theoretical challenges which this research will try to overcome by adopting a somewhat broader approach to the analysis of Chinese nationalism. First, understanding nationalist discourses in China presents an obstacle as the topic suffers

²⁰ Lebow, Richard Ned (2014). *Constructing Cause in International Relations*. Cambridge University Press.

from a diversity of frameworks presented throughout the existence of the PRC by scholars. Such frameworks tend to fit solely the conception of nationalism as performed by only one leader, hence lack the continuity to study nationalism as a regular tool for the Chinese government to gain public support. Second, nationalism in China is too often studied as is, and presents the specific characteristic of a lack of comparison approach to its analysis. While European studies provide ground for comparative analysis in terms of nation, state and policy, China tends to be studied from a ‘unique’ point of view, which limit the scope of comparison and therefore the reliability of research studies. Specifically, the scholar discourse of a ‘rise’ of nationalism in China has been an ongoing trend since the 1980s, but such a quantitative change lacks comparative work to be recognized as such. Effectively, along with the lack of transparency attributed to China’s decision-making process, the use of nationalism and therefore its potential increase or decrease over time represents a hole in the theory of Chinese nationalism. Some authors have tackled the topic nonetheless, but as suggested, the heterogeneity of the concept and its multifaceted aspect remains a challenge, which is rendered more difficult to analyze without sufficient country comparison²¹. Chinese nationalism is treated as an exception which creates a theoretical challenge, but this idea is also supported by the inherent differences that Chinese nationalism presents compared to other forms and study cases of nationalism. Indeed, the defining traits of Chinese nationalism set it aside by its relation to the concepts of civilization and the definition of the Chinese identity itself. This section of ‘Literature Review’ primarily reviews the relevant literature to identify the research gap. Therefore it aims at developing a theoretical framework which may provide groundwork to overcome both the challenge of the multitude of frameworks, by adopting a broader approach which would fit both the history of Chinese nationalism and its application in our research, under Xi Jinping’s era; but also to justify the idea of Chinese nationalism as different from other nationalisms. Indeed, the definition of Chinese national identity here plays a crucial role in defining how nationalism is used notably in China’s foreign policy, which will be the object of further research. Nonetheless, while these two challenges will be justified and this thesis will try to overcome them through the establishment of a specific framework, theoretical holes remains in the analysis and must be tackled before creating a conceptual framework. Among those, the first concept to present limits is the definition of nationalism itself, which suffers from a lack of scholarly consensus; then, we may look at differentiating concepts of nationalism and patriotism and finally, establish the study of Chinese nationalism peculiarities.

²¹ Xiaolin, D. (2017) « Unanswered Questions: Why We May Be Wrong about Chinese Nationalism and Its Foreign Policy Implications », *Journal of Contemporary China*.

a. Literary debate on the definition of nation

Among the main challenges that exploring Chinese nationalism poses, one recurring aspect across existing literature is the lack of consensus on the definition of nationalism itself. To provide an adaptative framework, one must come back first on the definition of nation itself, which is subject to academic discussions. Exploring China's nationalism, the research aims at finding a definition of the nation concept which provides grounds to explain both the peculiar civilizational aspect inherent to China's concept of identity, while also providing material to start a discussion on the link between nationalism and foreign policy in China. Nationalism therefore draws its own definition from the concept of nation, and one may choose one specific definition of the latter to draw further analysis perspective. As no academic consensus exists on the definition, this thesis may shift on one school of international relations to explore the concept in the way that it fits our analysis the most. In the case of Chinese nationalism and its relation to China's foreign policy, a constructivist approach fits the framework best. Indeed, as opposed to realism which limits the concept of nationalism and therefore nation to the state-level, exploring the details of Chinese nationalism and its ambiguities calls for a further understanding of what this nationalism is based on. Therefore, a constructivist approach allows the framework to envision both the concept of nation while providing this research with tools to deeper analyze the characteristics of Chinese nationalism. As specific as Chinese nationalism is because it relies on a peculiar cultural aspect being broader than its Western definition, nation must be understood as a somewhat large concept which encompasses many aspects. Therefore this thesis draws here from Benedict Anderson's concept of « imagined communities » to frame the concept of nation as applied to China. Nation is defined as rather a spiritual feeling, it is a concept inherent to every member of the community. The existence of a nation lies in the existence of a feeling shared by members of a community, which is characterized as a national identity and is understood as what sets this set of people apart from others. As members of a nation do not know one another « *but in everyone's mind lives the image of their communion* »²², they share a common feeling of belonging to one nation which characterizes their national identity. The concept of nation is inherently linked to the definition of national identity because this sentiment shared by members of the « imagined community » becomes the link between these people in the midst of interactions with other people. As this sentiment is « *specific, incomparable to others* »²³, it becomes the sole creating characteristic of a nation,

²² Phillips, Tim (2012). "Imagined Communities and Self-Identity: An Exploratory Quantitative Analysis." *Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 597–617.

²³ Thiesse, Anne-Marie, et al. (2007) . *La nation, une construction politique et culturelle*. *Savoir/Agir*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 11-20.

which may then be fulfilled by the creation of a delimited territory for this nation to live together as one nation-state. Nation as national identity remains an inherently personal characteristic, from which is drawn a communal quality serving as the basis for the creation of a nation, and therefore the establishment of a people as united when in contact with other such communities. The concept of nation is the founding characteristic for a nation-state to evolve in international relations because it is what differentiates one people from another one, not as territorial delimitations, but as a human feeling proper to each individual. In this sense, the concept of nation resonates with Bourdieu's analysis of the national identity concept. The latter appears as a component of the social capital of each individual. In this sense, is part of a nation a member who perceives themselves as socially constructed by specific characteristics; these characteristics and the sentiment that builds from them are what creates the difference between « us » and « them »²⁴. Hence, defining nationalism from a constructivist point of view allows us to build a framework based on the identity aspect of the nation, and therefore provide ground for deeper analysis of the civilizational aspect of Chinese nationalism. Indeed, Chinese nationalist discourse often makes use of the national identity concept to enhance public support, but using this definition helps in finding specific characteristics proper to China's nationalism and therefore better comprehend how the latter is used in defining foreign policy by appealing to each individual's sense of community, differentiating the Chinese people from the rest of the world.

b. Differentiating patriotism and nationalism

As early as Mao's era, nationalism became an inherent part of the ideology imposed onto the Chinese population. However, it took diverse forms and evolved over time and leaders to fulfill changing political goals. When studying nationalism, one must first ensure the theoretical definition of the latter starting with the distinction between the concepts of patriotism and nationalism. The most common way to distinguish patriotism and nationalism is to use the argument of external relations. Where both concepts correspond to a sentiment of pride towards one's nation-state, it is in regard to foreign policy that nationalism plays a stronger role. As China has historically carried a nationalist discourse, the latter was referred to as patriotism at least in the early years of the PRC. While the CCP carried a nationalist tone in its public speeches, the term patriotism was preferred as justified by Zhou Enlai : « *'socialist patriotism is not a narrow nationalism, but a patriotism aimed to strengthen national pride under the*

²⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre, (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (pp. 241–258), New York: Greenwood.

guidance of internationalism”²⁵. This manipulation of the terms of patriotism and nationalism aimed to conciliate both the nationalistic aspect of the PRC to the communist ideology of internationalism. Therefore, when Mao wrote about patriotism as early as 1938, saying that « *Chinese Communists must combine patriotism with internationalism* »²⁶, the aim to create a discourse that would fit both goals of nationalism and communism was already established. In the case of analyzing China, Johnston reminds the typical approach to create clear distinction between patriotism and nationalism. Although both concepts rely on emotional and cognitive aspects, patriotism tends to focus on a pride and support expressed towards one’s nation-state, but doesn’t seek to challenge the status quo. On the other hand, nationalism is also a feeling of pride, but related to a certain commitment to political, social and economic status of the nation-state. The most important aspect for this research is the idea that nationalism includes a perception of outer relations as negative : in this sense, nationalism in its extreme forms leads to a form of blind support to the state, and the denigration of ‘others’²⁷. Having made that distinction, nationalist discourse can be easily identified throughout Chinese leaders’ speeches despite the public claim of patriotism emanating from them²⁸. Nonetheless, identifying nationalism in the Chinese official discourse demands a redefinition of the idea of nationalism itself. Indeed, as defined by the existing literature, the concept of nationalism relates to the relation between the nation and the state. In this sense, one problem emerges when focusing on China, given as a multitude of secondary terms are typically associated with the idea. Defining nationalism in China requires particular attention to the situation of this nation-state, which brings out a problem of categorization when studying the topic. Literature provides this research with a multitude of concepts linked to the idea of nationalism such as statism, culturalism and confucianism which render its study more difficult²⁹. However, the existence of such a diversity of concepts reveals the difficulty to explore Chinese nationalism like any other nation-state. Indeed, one must first question the matter of China as a nation-state itself when perceived by its own population. As stated by Liang Qichao, « *the reason Chinese do not know patriotism is*

²⁵ Zhou Enlai, ‘Women de waijiao fangzhen he renwu’ [‘Our diplomatic guidelines and tasks, 1952’], in Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan [Selected Articles on Diplomacy by Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1990), p. 55. In : Zhimin, C. (2005). Nationalism, internationalism and Chinese foreign policy. Journal of Contemporary China, 14(42), 35–53.

²⁶ Mao Zedong, ‘Zhongguo Gongchandang zai minzu zhanzheng zhong de diwei’ [‘The role of the Chinese communist party in the national war, 1938’], in Mao Zedong Xuanji, Vol. II, pp. 520–521. In Zhimin, C. (2005). Nationalism, internationalism and Chinese foreign policy. Journal of Contemporary China, 14(42), 35–53.

²⁷ Johnston, A. I. (2017). Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing. International Security, 41(3), 7–43.

²⁸ Zhimin, C. (2005). Nationalism, internationalism and Chinese foreign policy. Journal of Contemporary China, 14(42), 35–53.

²⁹ Hughes, C. R. (2005). Interpreting Nationalist Texts: a post-structuralist approach. Journal of Contemporary China, 14(43), 247–267.

because they do not know that China is a state'. Rather, Chinese people tended to regard China as the universe »³⁰. Nationalism may take different forms, but the difficulty to analyze it lies in the conception of China itself as an entity superior to a nation-state. China's civilization, or 'Tianxia' ('all under the sky') therefore represents a crucial variable in understanding China's perception of itself. This definition of China which goes beyond the Westphalian consensus displays the structure of Chinese nationalism as inherently different from other forms of nationalism. In this sense, China's perception of itself has always been linked to a differential between the people of China and the outsiders. Similarly, this provides an explanation to China's peculiar nationalism, as « *nationalist historical beliefs are integral to the structure of Chinese national identity* »³¹ and call for a deeper understanding of China's vision of itself as a civilization rather than a nation-state.

c. Chinese nationalism peculiarities

Nationalism in the Beijing discourse has been consistent overtime in order to rally public support, whether it took the form of associating patriotism with internationalism to create consistency between the Chinese nationalist discourse and the communist ideology, or more recently to justify China's opening up during the reform era. To this regard, scholars consider that the 1990s saw the authorities' reemphasis on promoting the nationalist discourses after the Tian'anman crackdown and the changing direction of China's political economy, from a socialist-communist regime to an open capitalistic economy. The post-Mao era witnessed the weakening of the ideological foundations of the CCP regime, and policies such as the 'patriotic education campaign' were launched to revive the nationalistic sentiment. Such initiatives relied heavily on the « *political use of history* »³² to make China a victim against Western powers and domination, and therefore call for a rejuvenation of the country. This period is what many scholars characterize as the 'rise of nationalism' in China : nationalism became a tool with the primary goal of legitimizing the CCP discourse in the midst of massive policy change in the country. While this idea doesn't fall far from the original use of nationalism in China, some scholars argue that this era and specifically the manipulation of historical and cultural heritage applied to the nationalist discourse rendered a fake sentiment on the population. Antoine

³⁰ Liang Qichao, 'Aiguo lun' ['On patriotism'], in Yinbingshi heji [Yinbingshi Collected Works] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), Vol. III, p. 66. In : Zhimin, C. (2005). Nationalism, internationalism and Chinese foreign policy. Journal of Contemporary China, 14(42), 35–53.

³¹ Gries, Peter Hays, Qingmin Zhang, H. Michael Crowson, et Huajian Cai. (2011) « Patriotism, Nationalism and China's US Policy: Structures and Consequences of Chinese National Identity ». The China Quarterly 205: 1-17.

³² Xiaolin, Duan (2017) « Unanswered Questions: Why We May Be Wrong about Chinese Nationalism and Its Foreign Policy Implications », Journal of Contemporary China.

Bondaz's qualification of the 1990s' nationalism as a « *substitute nationalism* »³³ showcases the need for the CCP to utilize traditional aspects of the Chinese culture into justifying public policy, specifically letting go of the Marxist narrative to focus rather on legitimizing the CCP's power after Mao. One primary aspect of this initiative was the regain of attention attributed to Confucian values and narratives, which were broadly criticized and almost abandoned during the Mao era, but used to the CCP's advantage in the 1990s to bring out 'Chinese characteristics' into China's external relations, in order mainly to limit the infiltration of Western ideas values into the popular culture. While qualifying Bondaz's vision of nationalism presents a certain limit to the extent that it considers a dichotomy between 'true' and 'fake' nationalism; this perspective enables this research to delve deeper into the narratives of Chinese nationalism in order to decipher the components which make it particular and separates it from typical Western nationalist narratives.

2. Foreign Policy

a. Defining foreign policy

Foreign policy is the result of a large process of decision-making within a state. Questioning the evolution of China's foreign policy requires to formally state the characteristics which make up the majority of it. By definition, foreign policy is what shapes the relations of international actors; however there are numerous scholar debates on the components of foreign policy which define it. International relations are inherently based on the definition of foreign policy, and this thesis may come back on what school of thought might be more suited to consider in the case of Chinese foreign policy. According to the paradigm one chooses, analyzing foreign policy has varied causes and consequences, but it generally relies on two aspects which shape the actor's behavior : national interest and objectives. Hence one may look to define China's national interests and objectives in order to explain its foreign policy outcome. Indeed, the first and most general approach to foreign policy is the realist school of thought, which places states as the main actors of international relations. Because this thesis choose to analyze China, realism remains the main theoretical background for this research; however analyzing Chinese foreign policy discourse may correspond to other schools of thought, therefore one other theory is key to draw in our conceptual framework. The second most widespread school of International Relations is the liberal thought, which places economic interest as the main paradigm to define one's foreign policy. Finally, the constructivist approach is the latter of the

³³ Bondaz, A. (2021). Chine. Des valeurs au service du Parti. *Inflexions*, 48, 19-26.

three main schools of International Relations and seeks to consider actors through their own national identity as shaped by norms and ideas. To this regard, constructivism is the most suitable approach to this research, as it views norms and ideas as the core interest of China's foreign policy. By analyzing the nationalist foreign policy discourse and the emphasis made on China's contributions to the international community, this study seeks to determine how China views itself and its relations to foreign countries. Indeed, the main specificity of the study of China's foreign policy lies within its own definition of national interest. As mentioned before, China's emphasis on 'Chinese-ness' and "Chinese characteristics" in its role within the international community uncovers the paradigm that China views itself from a different viewpoint than other states. Moreover, one core aspect of this research is China's own accent on offering a renewed view of international relations. To this regard, scholars find that China actually finds itself in a paradigm going beyond the traditional scope of Westphalian states, of which "Tianxia" is an example among others of the alternative viewpoint of international relations it seeks to bring to the debate. Understanding this matter is crucial to further add to the research on Chinese foreign policy. Indeed, most of recent literature on the topic studies the rise of China as a major power in the international community. Tracing back on China's main leaders over the past 70 years, China's foreign policy has been tainted with the major thoughts of Mao, Deng and today we seek to examine Xi's doctrine in international relations. While all three leaders aimed at re-establishing China as a great power, each had a different doctrine in implementing such strategy. Mao's foreign policy first leaned heavily towards global communism and rejecting imperialism, and drew on these concepts to foment a "*standing-up stage*"³⁴ of China whereas Deng's famous 'hide your strength, bide your time' sought to focus on domestic development by opening up the economy to world markets. As Xi claims for China to "*make new, major contributions to world peace and development*"³⁵, scholars find his approach closer to Mao in his reliance on ideological aspects. However all three leaders maintain common characteristics among which a certain sino-centrism to their foreign policy approach and the public discourse on national humiliation, both rooted in Chinese historical tradition and identity. Considering China's foreign therefore calls for understanding the aspects of it which relate rather to China's history, but also within the existing conditions of the international community. For example, the scholar debate on China's rise in international relations is almost exclusively analyzed in relation to the US superpower. Finally, foreign policy is determined by the goals put forward by each leaders : in this study, Chinese discourse claims to bring the country's contribution to world relations. Examining such contribution is

³⁴ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

³⁵ Ibid.

necessarily linked to the nationalist discourse carried and spread by Chinese leaders. Hence, analyzing China's foreign policy, and its national interests, requires to dive into China's nationalism and therefore provide beforehand a theoretical framework to do so.

b. Conceptualizing linkages between nationalism and foreign policy

Before diving into the definition of nationalism which we will adopt in this research, one may need first to look at the theoretical relation we aim to establish between the concept of nationalism and foreign policy. Indeed, as nationalism can generally be understood as a way to define and enhance the feeling of national identity drawn from our definition of nation, this research may then frame the relation it has with foreign policy. As this research looks to examine nationalism as a legitimizing tool for China's foreign policy, nationalism therefore serves as an instrument to stir up national support in the midst of China's external relations. However, given the definition of nation which is closely associated with the concept of identity, this research examines how the Chinese identity discourse of nationalism shapes China's foreign policy. Such a framework calls for a theoretical stand back as to fill the gap between nationalism and foreign policy. Indeed, this study's approach aims to create a bridge between concepts originating from constructivist theories while also drawing on realist aspects of international relations, therefore one may expand on this matter in order to provide groundwork for this research. National identity is a key component of the Chinese nationalist discourse and its use in foreign policy calls for a redefinition of the relation between the two concepts. Drawing from Callahan's work on the interplay between foreign policy and nationalism provides incentive to link national identity to the concepts of national security and territory. Indeed, such concepts typically associated to realist scholars find an interesting approach when coupled to the Chinese case of national identity. The nativist approach to civilization he depicts from Chinese texts corresponds to a realist definition of national identity, therefore one may explore this concept in order to link constructivist and realist approaches in the making of our conceptual framework. Qualified as « *International Relations with Chinese characteristics* »³⁶, this framework allows drawing from the nation-state concept to define the Chinese civilization and therefore justify territorial expansion. In this sense, it provides a theoretical link between constructivist and realist concepts, hence this thesis' reliance on this author's theory in our framework, which will be detailed furthermore. Nativism is not exclusive to Callahan's thought, as it is a recurring aspect of realist theory; in the case of China, nativism is closely associated with other concepts to qualify China's nationalist landscape over time. Understanding three

³⁶ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

dimensions of the nationalism typology, Zhao brings forward the three approaches used to 'revive' China in nationalist discourse. Among those, nationalism therefore takes the form of either nativism, anti-traditionalism or pragmatism, and serves the purpose of justifying certain policies to the public opinion through the lens of an ideological approach to Chinese identity³⁷. By all means, this approach of nativism creates a causal bond between nationalism and international aggression. In this sense the link between nationalism and foreign policy can be drawn from a close association of constructivist and realist concepts, which will be further elaborated in the making of our research framework. Finally, one must also take into account the first problem announced in the making of this framework which is the existing multitude of concepts associated with Chinese nationalism. We find that such diversity, while it allows us to draw from desired authors in order to create our own framework, often boils down to a variety of ideas referring to common definitions. Indeed, the discourse of identity is shared by many scholars to explain nationalism in the Chinese sense, which provide this research with sufficient background to rely on this concept; however such research calls for a choice on concepts to use.

When exploring the link between nationalism and foreign policy, several approaches offer themselves. This section looks into a few to understand the aim of each approach in analyzing nationalism as a deciding factor in foreign policy. From there one may draw conclusions to decide what theories to use in our own framework when analyzing China's nationalism. Here this thesis presents three possible theories of nationalism to use in order to measure the extent of nationalist discourse in the making of Chinese foreign policy. First, « instrumentalism » is understood as one of the various approaches of nationalism. Instrumentalism makes nationalism its main tool to manipulate public opinion in a certain direction. Indeed, this theory puts the state as the controlling institution and nationalism as its main tool to shape public opinion by playing on cultural aspects. In this sense, instrumentalism focuses on nationalism as a « *political use of history* »³⁸. Nationalism in this case no longer emanates from both the people as an expression of support toward the nation, but rather as a popular feeling instigated by the state to shape public opinion into accepting the power's policy needs. Instrumentalism is an aspect of nationalism crucial to the case of Chinese nationalism, as it is also closely linked with cultural ties. As it serves a state-supporting role, instrumentalist tradition in nationalism seeks to « strengthen the state with the exclusive aim of enabling it better to resist both domination and

³⁷ Zhao, S. (2000). Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations. *Political Science Quarterly*, 115(1), 1–33.

³⁸ Bergère, M. (2005). Zhao Suisheng, A Nation-State by Construction. *Dynamics of modern Chinese nationalism. China Perspectives*, 2005(5).

ideas from outside »³⁹. Therefore, using an instrumentalist approach appears ideal to understand the impact of the state on Chinese nationalism, however this tradition presents some limits to our approach. As it takes a solely state-led nationalism perspective, this theory finds itself limited to a top-down approach of nationalism. Instrumentalism is a popular theory to explain the rise of nationalism in China in the past decades, however this study finds that constraining nationalism to a state's action poses two problems. First, it renders a larger spectrum of responsibility to the state than what can be observed in reality. By the same token, it considers that the state is capable of largely shaping national identity in accordance to its needs, however statesmen are in essence constrained by the « cultural parameters of the traditions of the people »⁴⁰ and limited to already existing cultural aspects we may need to take into consideration. Then, approaching nationalism from an instrumentalist perspective has empirically performed mixed results, where some studies such as Zhou and Wang's 2014 survey results of Beijing university students showcased a mistake in interpreting nationalism as a solely state power, given the state's discouragement for anti-Japanese demonstrations, and the popular participation in those⁴¹. Instrumentalism therefore performs at a restricted scope of analysis which may fit this analysis when looking at Xi Jinping's speeches as a performance from the state towards the population, but may avoid popular or cultural aspects which would limit the effectiveness of our research. Then, another interpretation of the relation between nationalism and foreign policy might be found in Simon Shen's work. The author identifies four arguments in which nationalism may influence foreign policy⁴². First, nationalism may be motivated by the state's trial for 'interest maximization'. In the sense of Morgenthau's research, nationalism would be the way for China to improve its international status and establish itself as a hegemonic power. The statist argument then perceives nationalism as a tool in foreign policy to divert population from ongoing internal problems.

In this sense, nationalism would solely serve a true aim of gaining control over the population by shifting the focus from domestic politics to foreign policy. The statist argument presents nationalism as a last-resort tool for the state to gain legitimacy, which would make in our case the CCP 'stir-up' some nationalism in order to divert the population from domestic problems by exposing external potential threats. Then, the rise of nationalism in China is also argued through a social movement argument. In contrast to the previous two arguments, this

³⁹ Cabestan, J. (2005). The many facets of Chinese nationalism. *China Perspectives*, 2005(3).

⁴⁰ Smith, A. (2001) *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. Malden, MA : Polity Press, p. 119.

⁴¹ Zhou, M., & Wang, H. (2016). Participation in Anti-Japanese Demonstrations in China : Evidence from a survey on three elite Universities in Beijing. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 16(3), 391–413.

⁴² Shen, S. (2004). Nationalism or Nationalist Foreign Policy? *Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and its Role in Shaping Chinese Foreign Policy in Response to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing*. *Politics*, 24(2), 122-130.

approach corresponds to a grassroots approach of nationalism, where the Chinese people are « subtly using the nationalist identity to reject the authoritative state »⁴³. A fourth argument in explains the rise of nationalism in contemporary China is the power struggle argument, where more ‘radical’ leaders would perform nationalism as a way to gain power over a more moderate part of the Chinese leading class. This argument makes leaders more eager to dominate the political field in China by ‘playing the nationalist card’. Some of these arguments may come useful to our research as they provide hypotheses in explaining an increase in nationalist discourse as performed by Beijing. By the same token as the statist argument, the diversionary war theory also draws from the country’s domestic instability to increase nationalism by shifting the focus on external politics. Chinese leaders would therefore be more inclined to manipulate the public opinion by making use of a nationalist discourse in order to mobilize population on foreign matters rather than China’s own domestic politics. This approach provides interesting behavioral approach, as it explains the public rally to gain public support to a certain extent, however, such a shift presents limits. As nationalism can be explained by many factors, limiting it to domestic problems requires a sharp distinction between domestic and foreign matters, which limits the scope in which we intend to make research and blinds the relation between the two. On the other hand, empirical evidence has proven that explaining rising nationalism solely through the diversionary war theory doesn’t justify the extent of aggressiveness advocated in the resulting foreign policy. Indeed, a recent example of this limit is found in the CCP’s Fourteenth Five-Year plan and China’s overall behavior after COVID-19, which greatly focuses on internal matters rather than shifting national discourse from domestic to foreign matters⁴⁴. Consequently, this theory lacks empirical evidence to provide sufficient groundwork for this research, however the concepts displayed by Shen such as the Morgenthau argument may come useful as to bridge the focus from a constructivist approach to a realist understanding of Chinese nationalist discourse and its impact on foreign policy.

3. Tianxia

a. Historical background on the concept

After reviewing the existing work on Chinese nationalism and foreign policy, this sections then turns to the last key concept of this thesis. “Tianxia” (天下), “all-under-heaven” is a

⁴³ Shen, S. (2004). Nationalism or Nationalist Foreign Policy? Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and its Role in Shaping Chinese Foreign Policy in Response to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing. *Politics*, 24(2), 122-130.

⁴⁴ Dudley, L. (2021). China’s quest for Self-Reliance in the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan. Council on Foreign Relations.

Chinese historical concept which can be traced back to the birth of the Chinese empire, and has remained a regular component of Chinese leader discourse all throughout China's history. This study focuses on Tianxia because as a longstanding concept, Tianxia offers an insight on understanding the cultural aspects of Chinese history which may impact its overall politics. Tianxia is peculiar specifically because it differs from existing Western concepts, and it requires theoretical background as well as a broader framework to be fully utilized. Therefore, Tianxia falls well under the definition of 'Chinese characteristics' mentioned beforehand, as it is described as a quintessentially Chinese concept, and cannot be approached from a Western standpoint in order to understand its impact on China's worldview. The main reason for incorporating the concept of Tianxia into the analytical framework of this research despite the variety of concepts already on hand, is the notion of rejuvenation of Chinese civilization highlighted by the CCP recently. While Tianxia has a longstanding history with Chinese culture, it stands as a conception of sovereignty which was mostly abandoned throughout China's history, notably in favor of a Westphalian conception of sovereignty in order for China to fit into the international system of nation-states. However, one must first lay ground for the study of Tianxia by understanding the historical definition of the term and the Chinese periods of leadership which corresponded to the latter. Since restoring Tianxia has become more often discussed among scholars when analyzing China's national interests, one may first look at the history of the concept. Tianxia can be defined as a political system in which sovereignty covers a broader scope than the Westphalian definition of nation-states. According to the etymology of the word, Tianxia simply views "all-under-heaven" as one entity, making the entire world one singular sovereignty. This conception draws from China's imperial political order, specifically the Qin-Han period of the Chinese empire. This period in Chinese history is considered the first and only true application of the Tianxia system. As Tianxia refers to the whole known world on the East Asian continent, the accomplishment of "Tianxia Yitong" (天下一統), "all united under heaven"⁴⁵ represented the first success in making China united. Although some mentions of unification existed in Chinese poems before the Qin era⁴⁶, the concept remained an ideal conception of a political system. 'Tianxia yitong' views the world as united under heaven, and following the only power of the son of heaven, the emperor and ultimate arbiter of laws and morals. One ruler therefore has authority over one indivisible

⁴⁵ Wang, FL. (2015). From Tianxia to Westphalia: The Evolving Chinese Conception of Sovereignty and World Order. In: Ikenberry, G.J., Jisi, W., Feng, Z. (eds) *America, China, and the Struggle for World Order*. Asia Today. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

⁴⁶ « all land under the heaven belongs to the king, all people on the land are king's subjects » Wang, FL. (2015). From Tianxia to Westphalia: The Evolving Chinese Conception of Sovereignty and World Order. In: Ikenberry, G.J., Jisi, W., Feng, Z. (eds) *America, China, and the Struggle for World Order*. Asia Today. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

political entity over which he provides stability and legitimacy. This ideal conception was nonetheless managed during the Qin kingdom from 221 BCE and lasted up to 220 CE, namely the Qin-Han period of the Chinese empire. Emperor Qin Shi Huang is considered the first “son of Heaven” who managed to unify territories and peoples under one authority after a period of Warring states. Tianxia system therefore established itself as a pyramidal structure of government : one emperor holding ultimate authority and a central and provincial government. To this regard, Tianxia draws from Confucianism in its rule of hierarchy, as the emperor is the sole holder of “Tian Ming” (天命), the Mandate of Heaven. This concept developed well before the Qin era, tracing back to the Xi-Zhou era (750 BCE), is the foundation of Tianxia as it considers “the whole universe is dominated by an impersonal but omnipotent Heaven”⁴⁷; which provides the emperor with the legitimacy to rule over all people. Although the Qin empire only lasted thirteen years, Tianxia was consolidated as a historical ideal and remained a political argument throughout China’s history because of the longevity of the Han empire. Along with Confucian values, Tianxia is a staple concept in Chinese values used to legitimize one singular sovereignty over China. It allows the self-recognition of Chinese rulers and subjects as the only existing civilization, making other people barbarous. However, here lies the peculiarity of Tianxia when compared to the Westphalian conception of international relations. Whereas the Westphalian sense calls for some equality among nation-states, Tianxia provides its people with an “awareness of the greatness of Chinese civilization, together with an appreciation of the distinctiveness of Chinese-ness”⁴⁸. One may view Tianxia as paradoxical because it does not truly embody the entire population of the world into one sovereignty, but this can be explained because it “combines the seemingly contradictory discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism”⁴⁹. Tianxia blurs the boundaries of international politics simply by creating a blend of universal values shared by the entire human race, while also putting Chinese identity as the only existing civilization. Therefore Tianxia is an opportunity for a world institution, but its definition requires a closer examination and this will be elaborated throughout the discussion later. Chinese history considers the Qin-Han empire period the only true application of the Tianxia system, as it was the first unification of the Chinese peoples under one centralized authority. However, the collapse of the Chinese empire in 1912 necessitated a shift in the Chinese conception of Tianxia and its use for policy. Linked with the longevity of the empire, Tianxia is historically associated with long periods of world peace, except for two periods of

⁴⁷ Ravagnoli, V., (2007). The Chinese View of World Order : The Evolving Conceptualization of Tianxia (All under Heaven), Georgia Institute of Technology.

⁴⁸ Pye, L. W. (1992). The spirit of Chinese politics. Harvard University Press, p. 50-53.

⁴⁹ Callahan, W. A. (2007). Tianxia, Empire and the world: Soft Power and China’s foreign policy discourse in the 21st century. In BICC WORKING PAPER SERIES: Vol. No. 1.

time. First, the Song dynasty (960 BCE), although it had a similar structure to the Qin-Han empire, was not fully united as one sovereign state. Then, the nineteenth century of the fall of the Chinese empire due to the challenges from Western colonial powers is considered as the second failure of the Tianxia system, therefore the concept has been gradually left aside, and China has since tried to assimilate the Westphalian system. However, one may now focus on the rejuvenation of the Tianxia concept in the modern era in order to examine what events shaped the renewed incorporation of Tianxia in Chinese political discourse.

b. Application in most recent Chinese history and scholar reviews : the Chinese rejuvenation discourse

Although Tianxia was ignored most of the 20th century because of its historical association with imperial China, it has been gradually integrated into Chinese politics and therefore more and more studies themed on this topic have emerged over the past two decades, and one may seek to address the question as to the extent to which Tianxia is utilized in modern China. The division of Chinese politics into the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China lead to different trajectories regarding Tianxia. The ROC, although it is considered a "Han nation-state", absorbed foreign ideas in order to gain recognition among the international community, which eventually made it give up the Tianxia worldview in order to join the UN Security Council as one of the "Big Five"⁵⁰. On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, Mao's "New China" first tried to reimplement the Tianxia concept along with the communist ideology, creating a "son-of-heaven plus meritocratic bureaucracy" narrative. However, the weakened power of China next to the Soviet Union and Western powers quickly shifted the priorities of the PRC towards building resources and "*catching up with the West*"⁵¹ through state-steered mass mobilization movements such as the Great Leap Forward Movement. After decades of political campaigns and vain attempts at launching China as a great world power, Deng's leadership prioritized pragmatic goals such as reducing poverty and developing economies over promoting socialist ideologies and revolutionary ideas. At the same time, Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy approach focused on "taoguang yanghui" (韬光養晦) « laying low hiding and biding for time » and incorporating China into the post-Cold War liberal trade order. Three decades of economic reforms and integration into the world economy have made China rise above most of the

⁵⁰ Wang, FL. (2015). From Tianxia to Westphalia: The Evolving Chinese Conception of Sovereignty and World Order. In: Ikenberry, G.J., Jisi, W., Feng, Z. (eds) America, China, and the Struggle for World Order. Asia Today. Palgrave Macmillan, New York

⁵¹ Wang, FL. (2015). From Tianxia to Westphalia: The Evolving Chinese Conception of Sovereignty and World Order. In: Ikenberry, G.J., Jisi, W., Feng, Z. (eds) America, China, and the Struggle for World Order. Asia Today. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

international community in terms of economic power, and the country has regained confidence on its role within the existing world order. Scholars have long observed the shift in Chinese nationalist discourse since the Deng era and all the more so since the 2008 financial crisis, which proved the deficiencies of the laissez-faire approach towards the capital market of the Western countries. China has become more assertive, maintaining a lay-low strategy but praising its own peaceful rise among great powers. Although China is not challenging the existing world order loud and clear, it now seeks to bring its concepts to the discussion notably through the arc of Chinese rejuvenation discourse. Hence, Xi's accession to power and his public display of praising nationalism has been often interpreted as a potential revisionist stance on the international system. Among those potential debates surrounding Xi's vision of international relations rose the revitalization of the Tianxia concept as part of the 'Chinese characteristics' narrative. No conclusion can be drawn so far from a few observations on Xi's policy, besides his promotion of a "common destiny for humankind"⁵², but it has once again opened the debate of Tianxia among scholars. A representative work on the rejuvenation of the Tianxia concept in Chinese politics is Zhao Tingyang's "*The Tianxia System: A Philosophy for the World Institution*"(2005). Whereas most talk of Tianxia was limited to viewing Tianxia as an ideal political system, Zhao's theory aims at making the Tianxia system an alternative to the Westphalian conception of International Relations. In this sense, Zhao's theory aimed to provide scholars with a Chinese solution to world problems, diving into the Chinese contribution discourse in International Relations. This narrative gain popularity among the Chinese population because it relied on Chinese historical values and Confucian values, but Zhao actually puts those face-to-face with the Western conceptions of foreign relations as an attempt to criticize the latter and argue in favor of Chinese contribution to world relations. By the same token, Tianxia therefore represents peace and harmony because it blurs the boundaries of domestic and international politics by looking at the world through a global perspective, whereas the Western vision leans into a friends and enemies narrative. Tianxia is a method of viewing the world as one entity, which makes it the highest organization of the world, a "world institution" for order and governance, emphasizing the "oneness, all-inclusiveness, unity, centrality and totality of the whole world"⁵³. Although Zhao's vision is considered an extreme in scholars view, leaning towards Huntington's theory in terms of modeling the state of international relations, the success of his thought leads one to question the actual rejuvenation

⁵² Elborzi, A. (2023, June 22). Tianxia under Xi Jinping: Is China a revisionist or reformist power of the Liberal International Order? - SOAS China Institute. SOAS China Institute.

⁵³ Wang, FL. (2015). From Tianxia to Westphalia: The Evolving Chinese Conception of Sovereignty and World Order. In: Ikenberry, G.J., Jisi, W., Feng, Z. (eds) *America, China, and the Struggle for World Order*. Asia Today. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.p 43-68.

of the Tianxia system in Chinese politics. Indeed, recent Chinese leaders have not made Tianxia a core aspect of foreign policy, however the ideas carried along with the Tianxia system have become more often mentioned. Hu Jintao's offer of a "new harmonious world" is directly linked to the concept of Tianxia as well as the Confucian values of it, and Xi's "common destiny for humankind" reflect the possibility for Tianxia to be linked to Chinese foreign policy. This question occupies the core of this thesis's question, as the research seeks to determine the room allowed for Tianxia concepts within China's nationalist discourse and foreign policy. Nonetheless, such research is essential also because of the implications it presents. As a foreign policy concept, Zhao's theory of Tianxia not only seeks to increase China's role in international relations, but questions the existing world order. Indeed, Zhao is highly critical of the Westphalian conception of international relations, and his approach makes Tianxia a substitute system to the realist perception of states as the highest actor. The narrative of Tianxia is popular because it goes along the PRC's policy of peaceful rise, but by re-evaluating China's role in international relations, debate has risen on whether Tianxia might be a way for China to challenge the existing world order⁵⁴.

Section 2 : Research Gap and the Overarching Research Question of this Thesis

After reviewing the existing literature on the three main concepts of this thesis, this section now turns to the overarching research question addressed. From what has been established, one may not yet draw conclusions from the concepts evoked, but simply gather the existing information to form this work's conceptual framework. To this regard, the three main concepts, nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia, relate to the case of China in specific matters. First, nationalism in the field of international relations remains a contested topic because there is no agreed definition of it, therefore we may further deepen its conceptualization according to our line of work. Nationalism is a political tool, which usually draws from historical and cultural aspects of one nation-state in order to feed and legitimize a certain thought. In the case of China, nationalism is a way to enhance the CCP legitimacy while justifying its policies and stimulating the sense of Chinese national identity. Not only does nationalism work as a political tool for domestic matters, but it also plays a crucial role in shaping the behavior of a state when interacting with other actors. Nationalism influences both the way one state views itself and therefore its actions in regard to external relations. In the case of China, however, this thesis

⁵⁴ Callahan, W. A. (2007). Tianxia, Empire and the world: Soft Power and China's foreign policy discourse in the 21st century. In BICC WORKING PAPER SERIES: Vol. No. 1.

finds that nationalism is tightly linked with the discourse of “Chinese characteristics”. The latter is a concept more and more frequently observed within Chinese official discourse, and often related to international matters. Examining the nationalist discourse may therefore contribute to understanding China’s discourse on bringing its own contribution to the world community. Then, foreign policy is defined by the core interests of one state. Foreign policy is typically a distinct aspect proper to each leader, and reflects the strategy of the state to attain its goals among other actors. China’s foreign policy can be summed up in three main currents since the birth of the PRC, reflective of China’s power and capacity of action. From Mao’s failed attempts to rise as a great communist power to Deng’s strategy of “hiding and biding”, China has now entered a period of assertiveness under Xi’s leadership, which is carried by the concept of “Chinese rejuvenation”. Each of these main lines of foreign policy echoed the context of international relations in which China evolved, and its goals to pursue, characterized as its national interest. In order to fuel the legitimacy of its foreign policy, China relies on interests linked to its history, such as the century of humiliation and cultural aspects like its national identity. From there, national interest showcases the goals of China and how it impacts its foreign policy, which over the past decade has shifted toward China rising again and becoming a great power. This aspect has notably lead scholars to question China’s new role in international relations and its relation to the US superpower. Finally, Tianxia is the aspect of Chinese political culture and history this study chooses as the main axis for this research. After a review of the birth of the concept, this thesis gathered that Tianxia is a historical concept embedded in Confucian values. It relies on harmony and serves as an ideal political system in which China is united “all-under-heaven” and one single authority which is the emperor. Tianxia’s popularity in Chinese culture is linked to the common belief that the Tianxia system is the most accomplished political system, as proven by the longevity of the Qin-Han empire in which Tianxia was first applied. Although many critiques have emerged regarding the feasibility of Tianxia and the actual system in which Tianxia is first considered to have been successful, namely the Qin-Han period of Chinese history; Tianxia has since the 20th century been first abandoned and then revived in Chinese politics. Indeed, several attempts were made to either bring up Tianxia during the Mao era, or else detach from it completely in order to blend into the Westphalian system; but the concept has recently gained popularity among Chinese scholars, notably through Zhao Tingyang’s work. The latter aims at offering Tianxia as a substitute system to the Westphalian one in international relations, and therefore creates a dichotomy of the two systems, questioning the ability for one to exist along with the other. In light of the context of rising China and the limited findings to date in Chinese nationalism studies, this thesis views this revival of Chinese traditional values in political discourse as a clue to analyze China’s intentions. The research focuses on Xi Jinping’s era of leadership to try

and draw conclusions, or at least some ideas for consideration regarding Xi's vision of Chinese national interest. In this framework, Tianxia acts as the lens taken to draw political explanations from Chinese historical and cultural aspects of nationalism. By analyzing Xi's relation to the Tianxia concept, notably through his discourse on foreign policy, the intent is to find out the level to which Tianxia weighs in Xi's idea of foreign policy, and what are the potential consequences of such as ideological choice. Therefore, this thesis will address this overarching research question as follows :

- **To what extent has the Tianxia concept shaped Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse on foreign policy ?**

In order to answer this question, this research will draw from the three key concepts reviewed in the latter section to further conceptualize a framework. By dividing the research process, one may draw conclusions from three different points of analysis. Hence, addressing the overarching question of this research requires breaking it down according to those three concepts. The next section is therefore dedicated to framing each concept of nationalism, foreign policy and 'Tianxia'. From there the thesis may establish three operationalized research sub-questions to answer. The following chapter will analyze key documents of Chinese foreign policy, and evaluate China's foreign policy through a discourse analysis. The research will therefore examine Xi's Party Congress speeches throughout his leadership in order to draw from his line of foreign policy and expect any evolution since 2012.

Section 3 : Conceptual Framework of the Thesis

1. Conceptualizing nationalism

a. Whiting's approach : a broad but useful background

After defining the concept of nationalism and approaching it from a role perspective, this thesis may begin to build an analytical framework to explore Chinese nationalism and its impact on foreign policy. There is an existing trend of qualifying Chinese nationalism as 'rising' since the 1990s, and as established, such conclusions are drawn from the increase of nationalistic discourse from a top-down approach since the Mao era, with the aim of legitimizing the CCP power. This trend is not limited to the People's Republic of China, as overseas Chinese scholars pointed out that « *there is increasing evidence that post-communist societies and regimes are turning to nationalism as a substitute ideology* »⁵⁵. This observation works by the same token as Bondaz's claim that Chinese nationalism no longer feeds off grassroots sentiments, but acts

⁵⁵ Chang, M.H. (2001). *Return Of The Dragon: China's Wounded Nationalism* (1st ed.). Routledge.

as a strictly top-down tool for the Chinese government to define and justify its renewed foreign policy⁵⁶. This vision of Chinese nationalism hence doesn't take into consideration the impact of grassroots nationalism and their effects on foreign policy. However, empirical evidence provided by Weiss' work has shown effective link between the two concepts⁵⁷, which may pose an obstacle to this research. Excluding one aspect of nationalism may limit the results of this research, however it is an analytical choice motivated mainly by the lack of existing literature on grassroots nationalism. Indeed, as acknowledged by Weiss herself, grassroots nationalism is difficult to measure as it relies on limited information. The main limit to Weiss and Dafoe's own survey on netizens in 2015-2016 is the unreliability of the information accessible given the modes of surveying used (online representation can hardly be considered a reliable source when addressing China's case)⁵⁸. Examining Xi Jinping's speech therefore comes to limit the scope of analysis to top-down nationalism; a choice justified by this difficulty to gain sustainable information from research on grassroots nationalism in China. Moreover, focusing on top-down approaches of Chinese nationalism constitutes a way to create a continuum with the existing literature on previous Chinese leaders. Chinese nationalism is often studied in a chronological manner, creating eras of nationalism : notably the Mao era, the post-Mao era and the Xi era. To this regard, this research focuses on the latter period of time and aims to fully understand the pre-existing aspects of Chinese nationalism in order to better understand the conditions under which Xi's era of nationalism is applied. We take a decisively broad approach to examine nationalist discourse in order to overcome the two main problems of existing literature on nationalism and foreign policy. Indeed, adopting such a standpoint would first dismiss the theoretical holes of definition this thesis has encountered, as no distinction between the state and the people is made. Allen Whiting points out this ability to overcome the academic controversy of nationalism by reminding that Chinese discourse historically encapsulates the state and the people as one unique entity by referring to the 'Chinese people and motherland' as one unique entity⁵⁹. On the theoretical link between nationalism and foreign policy, using a broader approach will also help this study avoid the lack of theoretical grounds linking the two concepts as the aim remains to find clues on whether there has been some change over time. As this research aims to measure the direction in which nationalist discourse influences foreign policy, and specifically how Xi's term has been the theater to such dynamics, a broader scope

⁵⁶ He, B. (2000). *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China* (1st ed.). Routledge.

⁵⁷ Weiss, J. C. (2019). How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public? Another Look at "Rising Nationalism" and Chinese Foreign Policy. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(119), 679–695.

⁵⁸ Weiss, J. C. (2019). How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public? Another Look at "Rising Nationalism" and Chinese Foreign Policy. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(119), 679–695.

⁵⁹ Whiting, Allen S. "Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng." *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 295–316.

of approach such as Whiting's typology of nationalism is essential to provide a broad perspective.

Following Whiting's model is mainly motivated by the nature of the approach put forward, as it provides groundwork to further evaluate Chinese nationalism. This model offers a typology of nationalism into three categories which qualify the nature and expected behavior of the target of performed nationalism. The first type is affirmative nationalism, which centers exclusively on the people of the nation-state, and enhances the pride of one's nation. Assertive nationalism is the second category and corresponds to a dichotomy created between 'us' and 'them'. Assertive nationalism somewhat adds to the affirmative form of nationalism by visualizing the external relations of one's nation-state. Finally, aggressive nationalism is characterized by the identification of one specific foreign enemy, « *a serious threat that requires action to defend vital interests* »⁶⁰. Based on the pre-established history of nationalism in China and on the research to conduct, this thesis therefore aims at linking Xi's performance of nationalism in relation to foreign policy to one type of nationalism as presented by Whiting. However, while this pattern of analysis appears useful to determine the nature of China's nationalism, one may question the level of precision such a model allows. Two main limits may be found in Whiting's model for analyzing nationalism : obsolescence and broadness. The former refers to the typology itself when applied to the case of China. Whiting's work goes back to the post- Cold war era, and may be applicable to China in this context, but one may question the applicability of such a lens to today's China. Indeed, Whiting's model served to qualify China's nationalism from affirmative to assertive during this period, but so far there is a lack of existing scholar work on China potentially entering aggressive behavior. Although it is undetermined whether China's nationalism has changed to an aggressive state, one cannot ignore the shift in China's foreign policy since Xi's accession to power, therefore this thesis may use this framework to either determine such a change or find the limits of Whiting's work. Secondly, Whiting's model provides an interesting typology to qualify nationalism, however it may be too broad. Limiting nationalism to three categories might cause the analysis to lack detail in understanding the characteristics of Chinese nationalism. For example, matters of cultural identity may be related to an aggressive type of nationalism while others might be more affirmative. Therefore, while this research uses this model to act as a part of the three-dimensional conceptual framework in this research, one must remain critical of the limits it poses in the scope of its analysis. Whiting's framework shall serve to lay the groundwork on Xi's approach to foreign policy. One

⁶⁰ Whiting, Allen S. "Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng." *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 295–316.

aspect which may further be discussed in this regard in the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ claimed throughout Xi’s speeches, which would determine the potential assertiveness or aggressiveness of nationalist China. By examining Xi’s speeches, this thesis looks for a trend in discourse of framing notably the US as a potential threat to China, which would result in aggressive nationalism from Xi’s discourse. Therefore, Whiting’s typology is a broad tool which serves in the first dimension of this thesis’ three-dimensional conceptual framework, relating to the nationalism aspect of the research.

b. Brittingham’s reactive model of nationalism

Existing literature tends to apply a certain analytical bias when exploring Chinese nationalism which we identified earlier in this research as a lack of comparative analyses with other cases of nationalism. However, diving into the definition of nationalism itself has showed that Chinese nationalism results from a specific understanding of the concept of nation, which in this thesis’ case relies heavily on the identity discourse. Therefore, researching about Chinese nationalism calls for a redefinition of the concept which fits the approach to the topic. To this regard, Brittingham’s work puts forward an alternative perspective of nationalism this study may look into. This approach is motivated by the intention to overcome two major problems of the existing literature on the topic of Chinese nationalism. First, the lack of theoretical relations between the concepts of nationalism and international relations which this section tackled earlier, and second the resulting lack of theoretical inputs from both theories into analyzing nationalism and foreign policy⁶¹. To this regard, Brittingham aims to links both theories in providing sufficient literary work to understand how nationalism motivates aggressiveness in foreign policy. First, the concept of identity, inherent to work with theories of nationalism, is defined as a set of boundaries. Identity is for each individual « the state of being similar to some actors and different from others in a particular circumstance »⁶². Whether material or immaterial, identity is, as previously examined, what creates the gap between the concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Drawing from this definition, nationalism is redefined as a role which is both self-defined and imposed from the outside. Distinguishing two aspects of the ‘role’, one may establish a definition of nationalism which emanates from the idea of identity. The first aspect

⁶¹ Brittingham, Michael. (2007). The “Role” of Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy: A Reactive Model of Nationalism & Conflict. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*. 12.

⁶² Glenn Chafetz, Benjamin Frankel, and Michael Spirtas, (1999)—Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy, I in *The Origins of National Interests*, ed. Glenn Shafetz, Michael Spirtas, and Benjamin Frankel (London: Frank Cass), viii, In Brittingham, Michael. (2007). The “Role” of Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy: A Reactive Model of Nationalism & Conflict. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*. 12.

of the role is a conception one, and the second is a perception one. The former create expectations on how actors view themselves based on the power in their disposition, and the latter corresponds to external factors which may influence their decisions in external relations. Such a conception of nationalism as a 'role' therefore appears befitting to our research, as it allows fulfilling our intention of bridging the literary gap between nationalism and international relations theories while also taking into account the identity-focused aspect of Chinese nationalism. Brittingham's framework to analyze nationalism from the perspective of role presents the opportunity to look at nationalism and foreign policy through the lens of national identity. In the reactive model of nationalism, national identity is mobilized in response to outside threats and therefore allows one to create link between nationalist discourse and foreign policy. This model is mostly practical because it allows this thesis to determine temporal boundaries within the framework, but also because it questions the existence of role conflict itself. By analyzing state behavior in reaction to interaction with other actors, the research seeks to determine what the other's role is and what role it seeks to impose onto others. Simply put, reactive model of nationalism aims at measuring the influence of countries over one another and the effects on the behavior of subject states by analyzing the nationalist reaction. If the reaction is more prone to conflict, the model is rendered satisfactory. However, one great critique is evoked in this model, regarding the empirical events on which it was applied. Indeed, while Brittingham's framework appears a useful tool to determine the role of nationalist discourse in foreign policy, the model actually failed when analyzing China's behavior in the 1990s. Strictly following the reactive model of nationalism, this would have expected China to engage in a role conflict following the growing tensions with the United States, notably with the Belgrade embassy incident. However, not only was no conflict started following this event, but China eventually became an ally to the US to the extent of the war on terrorism. Therefore, this model doesn't explain how likely China is to get into a conflict solely based on its national identity. The limits presented by Brittingham's reactive model of nationalism justifies the decision to exclude such a model from this thesis' conceptual framework. Nonetheless, as mentioned in the literature review, Richard Ned Lebow's use of cognitive frames to determine causalism in international relations provides information to analyze the view one state has of itself and of the actors it interacts with. To this regard, nationalism is considered one cognitive frame which combines the concepts of territoriality and the expectations put on the state which eventually affect its behavior. This conception allows this thesis to overcome the limits of Brittingham's framework with the argument of nationalism as the defining feature of foreign policy, and therefore rely on cognitive frames to analyze Chinese nationalism, as this thesis seeks to depict the portray China makes of itself. As cognitive frames influence beliefs and behavior, Lebow determines three levels where frames act. First, a deeper level provides the

frames “responsible for the meta-understandings we use to make sense of the world”⁶³; which corresponds to what concepts appear very likely while other are inconceivable according to one’s national identity. Then, the frames of reference make some actions more or less likely, and finally the last level of frame correspond rather to conscious inventions used to justify policies. Those three frames put together determine the behavior of one country according to its national identity, history and culture. Lebow adds one level to his frames model, which is the mission of the CCP, considered a rather surface-level frame but which is essential to our analysis of Xi’s foreign policy discourse. Using Lebow’s contribution to analyze Chinese nationalism may help overcome the limits of the former model in order to link nationalism to foreign policy, as may be tackled more in detail while conceptualizing foreign policy.

Operationalized research sub-question 1: how does Xi Jinping's rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism in the sense of Whiting’s typology ?

2. Conceptualizing foreign policy

a. Foreign policy : the result of nationalist discourse on IR

Having established the review of literature and a global vision of China’s nationalism, the main observation which can be drawn from existing scholar work is the tendency to study China as a unique case, and therefore difficult to draw comparison from. While this may come as a theoretical problem to fill long debates such as the definition of nationalism, one must also understand why China is studied as such instead of one case among others. Indeed, it is because China presents some peculiarities which render its analysis hardly comparable to other studies. These lie in China’s singular history and culture, which evidently influences its political landscape and the way it considers itself. Here this study chooses to dive deeper into the reasons behind such an exception in international relations by studying the core aspects of China’s nationalism. The study of Tianxia is a way in which this thesis uses Chinese concepts to provide groundwork on the study of Chinese foreign policy. But first, one shall build a framework to take those peculiarities into account, and Callahan’s work on China is a foundation of this research. To understand how China views itself, one must go beyond the scope of nation-state; China doesn’t historically function according to a Westphalian conception of international actors, despite its recent integration into such a system. The concept of Tianxia is proof itself

⁶³ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

that culture influences the definition of territoriality and national identity. Although there is a controversial debate on whether Tianxia is formally a substitute conception of the Westphalian system, one must measure the extent to which it differs from Western perspectives. By loosening the definition of ‘Chinese-ness’, Callahan offers a method to understanding the concept of civilization and identity in a transnational approach, therefore avoiding the conceptual limits of nation-state. To interpret China’s foreign policy, this thesis can therefore first define what China corresponds to, and Callahan’s review puts forward four visions of “Greater China” found in historical Chinese writings. Greater China is a narrative used to define the limits of civilization and barbarism according to Chinese culture. Therefore, it goes above the reduced concept of national identity and uses heterotopia to distinguish four currents found in Chinese texts, which describe China’s relation to other actors. First, nativism which was mentioned when conceptualizing links between nationalism and foreign policy, is closest to a realist definition of China as ‘Zhongguo’ (“中國”) : it is most often associated with the image of the Great Wall to define China’s interest as the safety and national security of its territory. Then, conquest considers China in a broader scope, ‘Da Zhongguo’ (大中國) “Great China”; while it is similar to nativism, it has an external-looking pattern, which makes the definition of Chinese civilization more aggressive. Conquest gives China the need to expand on adjacent territories in both matters of political and cultural ideas, it is again regaining back China’s power. To this extent, ‘conquest’ is the dimension in which this research may display Tianxia, as the latter seeks unification of a broader definition of China under one authority. Third, conversion views Chinese civilization as “Da Zhonghua” (“大中華”) « Great China », and applies a cultural, political and economic exchange aspect into expanding China’s civilization. Finally, the diaspora concept makes Chinese civilization a flexible idea, as it defines China in transnational settings. It provides a larger definition of Chinese-ness which can be extended to Thai people for example and finds itself existing in the concepts of Chinatown⁶⁴. These four conceptions of civilization will therefore provide us with a framework to evaluate Xi’s nationalist discourse and further analyze China’s foreign policy. In previous work, Callahan has identified certain aspects of Chinese foreign policy, including Tianxia, as related more to the ‘conversion’ scope of civilization⁶⁵. However, this study seeks to focus on Xi Jinping’s own vision of the concept and therefore expect different outcomes from such a research. As a method of linking nationalist discourse to foreign policy, one may therefore draw from Callahan’s work

⁶⁴ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

⁶⁵ Callahan, W. A. (2007). Tianxia, Empire and the world: Soft Power and China’s foreign policy discourse in the 21st century. In BICC WORKING PAPER SERIES: Vol. No. 1 [Report].

as well as Lebow's framework to design this thesis' conceptual framework. Indeed, Lebow's levels of frames provide space for the evaluation of Xi's doctrine in terms of foreign policy. Zhang Feng therefore draws from this framework to build a conception of Xi's thought, which this thesis may use to support the analysis. As first presented, Lebow's framework conceives three levels of cognitive frames relative to Chinese history, and one surface-level frame which acts as the legitimation of the CCP's mission. By applying Xi's thought to these frames, the thesis better designs the ideology behind Xi's foreign policy. Zhang distinguishes three concepts recurrent in the Chinese nationalist narrative which relate to each level of cognitive frame⁶⁶. National rejuvenation fits the deeper frame which draws from China's history of humiliation to feed into the "Chinese dream" narrative. Then, global community, although it seems exclusive to Xi's thought notably because of the partnerships and common prosperity ideas which have been very recurrent in his narrative, can be drawn from deeper historical aspects. Indeed, the idea of global community is most likely linked to the concept of "Tianxia", hence providing a way for this thesis to evaluate Xi's relation to Tianxia. Finally, the Chinese contribution is also an important component of Xi's foreign policy discourse, and raises the question of China's intentions in reshaping international relations. Therefore, these frames in association with Callahan's transnational framework ensure a broader definition of Chinese-ness as well as a framework to create theoretical linkages between Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse and its foreign policy outcomes, notably by relying on motives rooted in Chinese history and overcome the limits posed by realist conceptions of foreign policy.

b. Explaining the motives of decision-making in Xi Jinping's China

After establishing a framework to conceptualize foreign policy, this research seeks to answer its main question by the process of discourse analysis. This takes the form of comparison and evolution analysis of Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse at different occasions of political communication throughout Xi's leadership. This thesis seeks to draw conclusions on a overarching research question as well as three operationalized sub-questions on the topics of nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. The three-dimensional conceptual framework is therefore built in order to analyze documents provided by the Chinese government, whether from Xi Jinping speeches or other types of official communiques. In this framework, discourse analysis is the main topic of this research, from which this study aims to draw answers to each of the questions. Hence, after establishing the sub-question regarding nationalism and the literary work which may mobilized to answer it, the section on foreign policy shall follow

⁶⁶ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

another sub-question. From conceptualizing foreign policy, the concept of cognitive frames as presented by Richard Lebow and utilized in the context of studying China by Zhang is chosen as a part of this thesis three-dimensional conceptual framework.



Operationalized research sub-question 2: What are motives of foreign policy decision-making in Xi's administration?

3. Conceptualizing Tianxia

a. The Chinese rejuvenation discourse

Reviving traditional values of the Chinese culture is a method observed in nationalist discourses to legitimize and justify some aspects of policy. In the case of authoritarian systems, nationalism becomes the main tool to enhance public opinion around specific ideas rather than relying on rational-legal legitimacy. Tianxia as a political concept has become over the history of China an ideal model to aim for, with the example of the Qin-Han period considered as the first and greatest application of the model. Tianxia seeks to unify all people under the authority of one unique being, the sole owner of the Mandate of Heaven (“天命”, Tian Ming). While this model remains both by definition and in popular discussion an ideal model to refer to, the context of modern China rising among great powers after the Cold War has seen scholars mobilize this concept once again after the fall of the Chinese empire. Indeed, Tianxia has been revived by Chinese academics such as Zhao Tingyang, wishing to promote the Tianxia system as China's contribution to world relations. After suffering a century of humiliation and slowly gaining back its power, China is now more affirmative towards its own power and influence, therefore its role among other countries. The most eloquent proof of this shift in China's confidence lies in Xi Jinping's 'Chinese dream' project, which uncovers itself a diversity of other renewed ideas, both rooted in Chinese history and identity, and aiming to stimulate public opinion in favor of a Great China. The Chinese rejuvenation narrative is a crucial aspect of China's nationalism, as it is supported by the country's longevity and history to enhance national identity and therefore, legitimize political decisions. Despite the PRC system in place claiming a communist agenda, and therefore being at odds with China's historical imperialism, Chinese political elites find in traditional concepts the means to enhance nationalist feelings. Therefore, this thesis questions the place made for Tianxia in this context of renewed associations with Chinese historical values.

b. Tianxia and the alternative model of IR

As traditional values are being put at the front of China's public discourse over recent years, they are often used to supply the narrative of China's contribution to the world. Whereas the 20th century saw the Maoist failure of Chinese greatness, the Deng era was the act for China to shift its focus from an ideology-heavy policy to priority on development. Hence, China and the CCP at its lead reduced its emphasis on the communist project and transformed it into a narrative able to fit both China's socialist claims as well as implement a capitalist economy into its system. China's "socialist market" system therefore allowed China to open its economy to the rest of the world and by doing so, lifted its emphasis on political aspects. Deng's strategy was clear : reserve your strength until China is strong and powerful. Until then, China made numerous efforts to integrate itself into the Western system, first in the economic field, but also by adopting a non-threatening behavior. The example of the Belgrade incident of 1999 is often relayed as a proof of such efforts : whereas the popular response against the US was strong, the Chinese government remained prudent and limited the outburst of public demonstrations⁶⁷. By conforming to international standards and making itself discreet, China ensured its focus on internal development. Having achieved such economic success after three decades, the political narrative has shifted along China's leaders, and Xi's thought displays little common aspects with Deng's. Indeed, Xi Jinping's discourse draws rather from Mao's style of thought, as China has entered a state of affirmativeness. As a rising power, Xi's doctrine views China as a great and incomparable power, destined to bring its own contributions to world relations. It is the latter aspect one may examine in relation to China's foreign policy. As the Chinese rejuvenation narrative rises, Chinese scholars and politicians seek to support the project of China as a world leader by bringing some new concepts to the debate. Nonetheless, most of these concepts which represent China's characteristics are often reached from China's history, which creates this seemingly contradicting coexistence of the Chinese socialist agenda with traditional Chinese values. We consider Tianxia as the main object of this research and the tool used by Chinese intellectuals to secure China's role as a major power under Xi Jinping's role. To this regard, Tianxia has re-emerged in Chinese scholar discussions and is advertised as China's contribution to the field of International Relations. Zhao Tingyang's work being the main component of this claim, this strategy seeks to make Tianxia, a notably Chinese concept, an element of the Chinese solution to world problems. Indeed, the Tianxia narrative provides a new vision of international relations which is presented as going beyond the scope of nation-states, therefore eluding the

⁶⁷ Shen, S. (2004). Nationalism or Nationalist Foreign Policy? Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and its Role in Shaping Chinese Foreign Policy in Response to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing. *Politics*, 24(2), 122-130.

mistakes made by the Westphalian system. Tianxia as a political system in its most advanced form, would provide a singular organization to contemplate world relations. Here, Zhao actually criticizes the United Nations system which could easily be understood as such an organization; the emphasis is drawn on the vision Tianxia provides, in which it makes no difference among states, but rather views the world as one single entity, emphasizing the harmonious state of such a system⁶⁸. Although Zhao's work is considered a theoretical extreme, voluntarily creating polemic to provoke responses, the popularity of his work bears witness to the influence it may have on the Chinese population and consequently, political power. Tianxia and close concepts have become more recurrent in Chinese politics, therefore one may question the extent to which Tianxia may become a staple of Xi Jinping's foreign policy. Measuring such a relation is essential because despite Xi's official discourse of peaceful development, his assertiveness to impose China as a major power discloses hardly predictable intentions. Therefore, if Xi is to mobilize Tianxia into his nationalist discourse and therefore his foreign policy, one must be able to apprehend the extent of the matter. Indeed, while the concept of Tianxia is not inherently opposed to other definitions of international relations, Zhao's work actually uses Tianxia as an opportunity to criticize Western systems⁶⁹. Tianxia is notably employed to provide a Chinese response to the problems relating to the Westphalian system. However, this thesis does not seek to answer the extent to which Tianxia may provide an alternative system of international relations. Such a problematic would require further work into Chinese foreign policy decision, and this thesis is restricted in the sense that the research is focused on China's official discourse. Therefore, the goal of this research is to interact and draw from the documents examined some conclusions on how Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse may promote the Tianxia system.

c. Examining the use of Tianxia in foreign policy discourse

Tianxia as an ancient concept in Chinese history carries a broad definition from which this thesis has tried to establish some aspects by looking into the existing literature surrounding it, as well as the historical events linked to it. Analyzing Tianxia as a tool in China's nationalist discourse therefore calls for a method in which Tianxia must be considered. As this thesis seeks to define and measure the aspects of Tianxia mobilized in Chinese politics, one may create linkages between its definitions and recurring themes and ideas in Xi Jinping's speeches. The project is to create a framework in which Tianxia can be easily identified through the references made to certain concepts close to it. This study therefore looks for references in concepts

⁶⁸ Elborzi, A. (2023). Tianxia under Xi Jinping: Is China a revisionist or reformist power of the Liberal International Order? - SOAS China Institute. SOAS China Institute.

⁶⁹ Ravagnoli, V., (2007). The Chinese View of World Order : The Evolving Conceptualization of Tianxia (All under Heaven), Georgia Institute of Technology.

displayed throughout Xi's doctrine, using concepts like national rejuvenation to assist the research. Indeed, while Tianxia remains abstract in many of its aspects, drawing associations from new narrative presented in Chinese discourse may enhance the link between nationalism and Chinese history this thesis seeks to establish. To ensure that the three-dimensional conceptual framework is most fitting to analyzing Tianxia, this thesis relies on the existing literature regarding the concept of Tianxia in Chinese official discourse. Building the third dimension of this research's conceptual framework, the goal of conceptualization is to establish linkages between concepts that may appear in the Chinese Communist Party's official discourse and the political concept of Tianxia. In order to support the document analysis, this study draws on three authors' work on Tianxia and China's foreign policy discourse to create a framework. First, Grydehøj and Su's 2021 work on China's International Relations Theory is divided into three major theoretical strands : Tianxia, relationality and complex interdependence. The authors consider three concepts which shape the core of China's foreign policy : harmony in relationships, mutual benefit and stability in global politics⁷⁰. Here, the first concept is what this study uses mostly as a part of the three-dimensional conceptual framework. The concept of harmony is highly recurrent in Chinese traditional discourse, therefore one looks for clues that associate China's foreign policy and its general position in the international community with the concept of harmony. Such associations found throughout the dataset will therefore refer to the concept of Tianxia and be analyzed as a possible hint towards promoting Tianxia in Chinese official discourse. Hence, this thesis may draw from these authors' work to support the idea that Tianxia is essentially linked with the concept of harmony, which is also deeply rooted in Chinese traditional culture. Other work on which this thesis bases its reasoning relates to the general narrative of Tianxia. Puranen's 2019 work provides a summary of the existing academic work on the Tianxia narrative. As it acknowledges that "*Chinese official foreign policy rhetoric on the subject offers only vaguely described slogans and concepts*"⁷¹, this research explores the aspects of Chinese official discourse that allow interpretation in link with the concept of Tianxia. For example, by depicting the oppositions between the Tianxia system and the Westphalian conception of international relations, the author sums up the opposing aspects of both narratives into a table that is most useful to this thesis' research :

⁷⁰ Grydehøj, A., & Su, P. (2021). *China and the Pursuit of Harmony in World Politics: Understanding Chinese International Relations Theory* (1st ed.). Routledge.

⁷¹ Puranen, M. (2019). "All under heaven as one family" : Tianxiaist ideology and the emerging Chinese great power identity. *Journal of China and International Relations*, 7(1), 44-61.

Table 1.

China / Tianxia	The West
Stability / Order	Chaos
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Harmony	Competition
Acceptance of difference	Confrontational thinking
‘No outside’	Strict division between units
World	State
Family	Individual

Source: Author’s own work

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Indeed, showcasing the radically opposed aspects of both systems, this research may associate China’s discourse regarding such concepts to the idea of Tianxia. Using this work as a part of the three-dimensional framework ensures that despite no mention of Tianxia being explicit, the analytical process is still able to draw connections from Xi Jinping’s ideological discourse as the promotion of the Tianxia system. Therefore, this thesis may on one hand draw on the concepts associated with “chaos” and “confrontational thinking” to provide arguments on China’s opposing views with the Western system. On the other hand, mentions of key concepts like “harmony” or “hierarchy” tend to highlight China’s emphasis towards the promotion of a Tianxia system. Finally, another author which is mobilized in the three-dimensional framework regarding the analyzing of Tianxia in Chinese official discourse is Babones’ 2017 work on “Taking China Seriously : Relationality, Tianxia and the “Chinese School” of International Relations”. From this work, this study seconds the argument that promoting Tianxia is closely associated with the idea of hierarchy. Furthermore, this thesis follows the idea that the Chinese school of IR would promote a Tianxia system as “*most stable, most prosperous, most peaceful*”⁷³; hence, the conceptual framework shall also draw from mentions like those to create elements of analysis regarding the promotion of Tianxia in China’s discourse. While this research draws on the existing literature to provide background in the analysis of the dataset, it does not seek to limit itself to such concepts. Therefore, picking up on other terms evoked throughout Xi Jinping’s foreign policy speeches is allowed by the three-dimensional framework in order to ensure finding new elements and building bridges across this study’s themes. Indeed, a fitting example would be the concept of “major country diplomacy” proposed throughout Xi’s

⁷² Puranen, M. (2019). “All under heaven as one family” : Tianxiaist ideology and the emerging Chinese great power identity. *Journal of China and International Relations*, 7(1), 44-61.

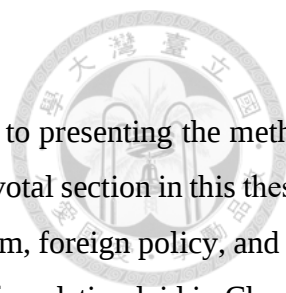
⁷³ Babones, S. (2017). *Taking China seriously: Relationality, Tianxia , and the “Chinese School” of International Relations*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

discourse : this concept relates to a new vision of international relations, which this thesis may mobilize to question the link to Tianxia by checking the roots in which such a narrative is supported. Moreover, the theme of “Chinese characteristics”, specifically applied in the setting of international relations, represents the opportunity to measure Xi’s ambition in relation to the political aspect of Tianxia, therefore whether Xi seeks to replace the existing system with a Tianxia system or else simply contribute to world relations by providing a renewed scope of analysis. Finally, looking for key concepts in Xi’s doctrine is also a strategy for this research to measure what aspects of Tianxia he may seek to implement throughout China’s foreign policy. The reason for this interrogation is found in Tianxia’s historical definition, which was originally built from the “Tianxia yitong” (“天下一統”), “all united under heaven”. This longer term is avoided by Zhao’s work on Tianxia⁷⁴ which signals the intention not to include this aspect of Tianxia into the narrative of a renewed conception of international relations. However, the latter must be examined as well, as the historical reference to ‘tianxia yitong’ implies the act of unification through conquest. Such a conception of Tianxia would bring another dimension to analyzing China’s intentions in world relations, and must therefore be taken into account when reviewing Xi’s discourse. If Tianxia is originally fomented as a conquest project, this study may rely on Callahan’s framework of Chinese civilization to support the analysis. Depending on the applied definition of Tianxia and the relation to nationalist discourse, this thesis may therefore provide a more detailed understanding of Xi Jinping’s project and the role of Tianxia in China’s foreign policy discourse.

Operationalized research sub-question 3: How does the rejuvenation discourse correlate with the official understanding of Tianxia in Xi’s terms?

⁷⁴ Callahan, W. A. (2007). Tianxia, Empire and the world: Soft Power and China’s foreign policy discourse in the 21st century. In BICC WORKING PAPER SERIES: Vol. No. 1 [Report].

CHAPTER 3 : DATA AND ANALYSIS



Before reporting this study's findings, Chapter 3 is dedicated to presenting the method and analytical framework applied to the data. Chapter 3 serves as a pivotal section in this thesis' exploration of the interplay between Xi Jinping's ideology, nationalism, foreign policy, and the traditional Chinese concept of Tianxia. This section builds upon the foundation laid in Chapter 2, where this research conducted a thorough literature review and identified significant gaps in the existing research. These gaps directed the focus of this thesis towards understanding how Xi Jinping's ideological framework interacts with the concept of Tianxia, an ancient Chinese worldview that has resurfaced in contemporary political discourse. Essentially, this thesis seeks to understand how Tianxia along with tools of nationalism and processes of foreign policy, is strategically employed by the Chinese Communist Party to bolster its policies and narratives. The literature review finds that while Tianxia has become gradually more involved in both popular and political spheres of China over the recent years, the gap we seek to fill in terms of research relates to Xi's own relation to the concept of Tianxia. The overarching research question then emerged: **to what extent does Tianxia shape Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse on foreign policy?** To address this, the research uses a three-dimensional conceptual framework that allows for an in-depth analysis of each key concept—nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia—in relation to Xi Jinping's public statements and policy actions.

After establishing the framework for each of our key concepts and formulating three operationalized sub-questions linked to nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia through a review of the existing literature and a design of both an existing gap in the research and analysis to conduct, this next chapter is dedicated to presenting the data this research will be based on as well as the building of the analytical model followed by this thesis. Chapter 3 marks a crucial point in our study, transitioning from theoretical frameworks to the practical application of research methods and data analysis. Here, this section outlines the methodologies employed, presents the data analysis processes, and discusses the inherent limitations of this study's approach. This chapter is divided into three main sections: research methods, data analysis, and research limitations.

The first section of this next chapter is dedicated to presenting the method of research that this thesis applies in order to address the operationalized sub-questions and thoroughly examine Xi Jinping's ideology through the lenses of nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia. After taking into account the means available for this research, as well as the imparted time provided to pursue this analysis and provide substantial answers to our overarching research question, this thesis chose to use a qualitative research methodology. Instead of relying on

numeral data, or having of process of qualitative interviews with scholars or people related to our topic of research, this thesis opts for a document analysis to explore the three chosen key concepts, draw links between those and provide answers to our sub-questions, therefore inherently deepening the existing work on Xi Jinping's ideology through a thorough evaluation of document delivered by his own administration. This approach allows for a detailed and nuanced exploration of complex concepts and their interplay in Xi Jinping's discourse and policies. Indeed, further explanation will be provided on the precise nature of each document analyzed, but the process of data selection is motivated by both the means available and the conclusions this research is able to draw from those. Regarding the selection of data, this thesis selected a series of documents ranging directly from Xi Jinping's speeches, official CCP documents, policy papers and communiques, to other relevant publications from state-controlled media. These sources were valued as closest possible to direct Xi Jinping authority, therefore reflecting as precisely as intended the application of Xi's ideology into decision-making and throughout the use of nationalist tools. These sources provide insight into the official narratives and ideological constructs promoted by the CCP under Xi's leadership. The criteria for selecting these documents were hence based on their relevance to the three key concepts and their representation of Xi Jinping's official stance on nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia. Nonetheless, the process of data selection also included trying to fit in various types of target audiences, from the Chinese population to African leaders, in order to provide a broader framework of how Chinese foreign policy evolves both addressing its own people and among the international community. Then, the analytical framework is built upon qualitative content analysis, which enables the research to systematically categorize and interpret textual data. This method is suited to explore the thematic elements of Xi Jinping's speeches and policy documents, as it allows one to identify patterns and recurring themes that align with the research sub-questions. The main framework of analysis is structured along the three operationalized sub-questions established by the chapter of literature reviewing and conceptual framing relating to nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia.

The document analysis method involves a systematic review and coding of textual data. This process is conducted in several steps:

1. **Initial Review:** All selected documents are read thoroughly to gain an overall understanding of the content.
2. **Coding:** Key concepts and themes are first identified then coded according to the analytical framework. For example, references to 'national rejuvenation' and the 'Chinese Dream' are coded under nationalism, while discussions on major-power diplomacy are coded under foreign policy.

3. **Categorization:** Coded data is categorized into broader thematic groups that correspond to this research's sub-questions according to a certain type of reading this data. Here the thesis draws from Mason's work on qualitative researching to build the framework of categorical indexing.
4. **Interpretation:** The categorized data is then interpreted to draw connections between Xi Jinping's ideology and the concept of Tianxia, examining how these themes manifest in official discourse and policy.

This thesis' analysis considers the evolution of Xi Jinping's rhetoric and policies over time. As the process restricts the data selection to documents delivered by Chinese official channels within a limited time frame, this thesis seeks to allow both the possibility of delving deep into Xi's own ideology, but also finding room for evolution within the imparted time. To this regard, the selection of data from before the COVID-19 pandemic represents an example reasoning of how such events may have affected China's nationalist speech or foreign policy, given the following changes in empirical events. This longitudinal approach helps the research understand how some themes have developed and whether there is a consistent effort to integrate Tianxia into the CCP's official ideology. The study pays particular attention to major speeches, such as those delivered at the National Congress of the CCP, and policy documents released during key political events. By examining these sources over time, one can track shifts in emphasis and identify any strategic adjustments in the CCP's narrative. The final step in the data analysis is to transform the coded and categorized data into analytical writing. This involves synthesizing the findings then presenting them in a coherent narrative that addresses the three research sub-questions. For instance, in discussing nationalism, this thesis highlights how Xi Jinping's references to historical grievances and national pride fit within Whiting's assertive definition of nationalism. In the context of foreign policy, the study analyzes how Xi's major speeches align with different cognitive frames, revealing the deeper ideological underpinnings of his international strategies. Finally, regarding Tianxia, the research explores how traditional Chinese values are invoked in official discourse and assess their potential impact on global relations, in order to further determine whether China may be trying to a certain extent to change the shape of the existing world order to its own advantage.

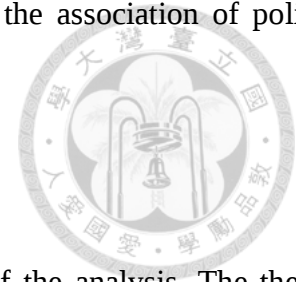
While the chosen approach provides a comprehensive analysis of Xi Jinping's ideology and its relationship with Tianxia, several limitations must be acknowledged: first, one significant limitation is the availability and selection of documents. The analysis is based on publicly available sources, which may not fully capture the internal deliberations and strategic intentions of the CCP. Additionally, there is an inherent selection bias in choosing which documents to analyze, by potentially overlooking less prominent yet significant sources. Then,

qualitative content analysis involves subjective interpretation, which may introduce some bias. Despite this research's efforts to apply a systematic coding process, personal and cultural biases may influence the engagement and interpretation of the data. To mitigate this, this thesis employed multiple rounds of coding and will supplement findings with reviews of peer literature to ensure the reliability of our analysis. Furthermore, the scope of the analysis is limited to the textual content of selected documents, which may not fully represent the complexity of Xi Jinping's ideology and its practical implications. Furthermore, this thesis' focus on three key concepts—nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia—may exclude other relevant factors influencing Xi's policies. Finally, ideological constructs are dynamic and can evolve over time in response to changing domestic and international contexts. This analysis provides a snapshot based on available data, but future developments may alter the relevance and interpretation of our findings. Continuous monitoring and analysis of new data are essential to maintain an up-to-date understanding of Xi Jinping's ideology. This third chapter outlines the research methods, details the process of data analysis, and discusses the limitations of our approach. By employing a qualitative content analysis framework, this thesis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse and foreign policy are related to the traditional concept of Tianxia. Despite the limitations, this study's analysis offers valuable insights into the ideological foundations of Xi Jinping's leadership and its implications for China's role in the global order. As the thesis moves forward, the findings from this chapter will inform the broader examination of Xi Jinping's strategic objectives and the potential reshaping of international relations under his leadership. This chapter serves as a bridge connecting conceptual frameworks with empirical data, and sets the base work for a comprehensive analysis of China's evolving political landscape.

Section 1 : Research Methods

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the personal research conducted throughout this thesis. Here this section explains the methodology followed throughout this thesis to answer the overarching research question and the three operationalized sub-questions in relation to Xi Jinping's ideology and China's official discourse on foreign policy in relation to Tianxia. In order to draw substantial elements of answers to those questions, one may first present the process of data selection, why this thesis chose document analysis as an overarch to this research. Then, the thesis details the process of data section through the definition of characteristics essential to choosing a policy document. Indeed, this study determines what documents one may use according either to the agency they are delivered by, the leader a speech

may pronounce and the context in which those documents exist. Hence, this section first details the process of data selection and the criteria followed to choose the association of policy documents analyzed afterwards.



1. Data Selection

The selection of data is crucial to the validity and depth of the analysis. The thesis focused on three main types of documents: speeches, communiqués, and foreign policy announcements. These documents, approximately totaling 105, were all issued by Chinese governmental agencies and were either translated into or originally released in English. This ensures that the analysis is based on authoritative sources that accurately represent the CCP's official stance. By the same token, documents which are delivered by sources closer to Xi Jinping directly are generally considered closest to his direct vision of Chinese national identity and his understanding of the country's foreign policy goals. Regarding speeches, these are primarily delivered by Xi Jinping himself. Xi's speeches provide direct insight into his personal vision and ideological standpoint. They are crucial for understanding the themes and narratives that he consistently promotes. Then, communiqués issued by various governmental bodies, mostly the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these documents offer a broad view of policy directions and official statements made by the CCP. They often reflect the collective standpoint of the Party, and they are essential in understanding how Xi Jinping's ideology is disseminated and implemented across different levels of government. Finally, foreign policy announcements are primarily issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other key figures like Wang Yi, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs from March 2013 to December 2022 and since July 2023. These documents are necessary for analyzing how Xi Jinping's domestic ideological frameworks are translated into international actions and statements. While communiques may follow a stricter structure as the result of Chinese bureaucracy, they inform the study of repetitive elements of Chinese official discourse and therefore provide the analytical framework with groundwork to draw significant aspects relevant to this research as they are often mentioned within association to one another. In addition, speeches or press interviews are more likely to have ideological biases, which one may detect through a scrutiny, as will be detailed in the methodology section of this chapter. Generally, this thesis considers that documents chosen directly reflect China's official position and illustrates Xi's ideology. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in concepts proper to Xi Jinping's line of policy since arriving in power and frequently mobilized in official speeches and communiqués like the concept of « community of shared future for mankind ». Such elements are typically what the analytical framework codes as data within each document in order to later index it and categorize into

answering one of the three sub-questions relating to either nationalism, foreign policy or Tianxia concepts⁷⁵. Therefore, those elements helps the study draw linkages between Xi's ideology and the mobilization of Chinese concepts to improve legitimacy to serve either a nationalist discourse or provide justification for foreign policy decision-making.

Regarding the sources from where the data was collected, the aim was to remain as close as possible to Xi Jinping's direct line of authority in order to provide insight into his ideology. The main criteria to collect data was to ensure the delivery of documents as officially approved by the CCP, therefore reflecting as much as possible the direction taken by Beijing in its official communications. Another required element was the access to documents either delivered or translated into English, as the latter would be the language used throughout the data analysis. Hence, the thesis chose to collect data from official agencies of the CCP government directly or from government-run agencies. Finally, the matter of availability of policy documents was solved by two arguments. First, it may have been restrictive to limit our research to easily accessible documents, such as documents found on English versions of official Beijing government websites. Second, the research finds that remaining in accessible channels of communications make the data all the more valuable. Indeed, as a researcher, one may try to explore less accessible data; however it is found that it is within this study's interest in regard to the theme of this research to remain within generally available data. As the thesis limits the data to speeches and communiques delivered in the public sphere, there is therefore a choice to base the analysis on China's official public discourse. In this case, the thesis seeks to explore and find elements of answer from public sources, therefore one is not trying to access restricted documents. The aim is to gather information from easily accessible data in order to render Xi's ideology as close as possible to how it is presented by Beijing to the rest of the international community.

Overall, data was collected from three main sources, either directly or indirectly linked to Xi's administration. First, the majority of documents were catalogued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and available on the Ministry's official English website. On this website, the study found policy documents and speeches dating back to Xi's first days in power, however as the thesis limits this research chronologically, the research process selected data delivered between 2019 and 2024. The official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as a comprehensive repository for policy documents, speeches, and official statements related to China's foreign policy. This source is crucial for directly obtaining authentic and unfiltered information from the Beijing government. Using such websites is also a mean for this thesis to

⁷⁵ Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, London.

remain as close as possible to the original texts of those documents, despite the changing language. Indeed, as an official government website, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs exclusively provides reviewed and structurally translated documents, therefore allowing this study to remain as accurate as possible to any meaning that would in other cases be translated differently from the original Mandarin-delivered documents. Then, data was also collected from other government-related agencies, notably the official Chinese news agency Xinhua News and official Chinese TV channels such as China Central Television (CCTV). As the official state-run press agency of the People's Republic of China, Xinhua provides extensive coverage of a large amount of official announcements, speeches, and policy updates. This source helps the analytical by cross-verifying the data obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and provides additional context to the collected data. Finally, channels like China Central Television (CCTV) often broadcast important speeches and announcements live. These broadcasts are subsequently archived and are valuable for obtaining accurate transcripts and understanding the delivery and reception of these statements. For example, Xi Jinping's New Year addresses to the Chinese people were collected through the official website of the CCTV Video Agency, or on other platforms such as Youtube, but posted by the official CCTV Video News Agency to ensure this study with increased proximity in terms of official translation.

Furthermore, regarding the timeframe within which to select our data, the analytical process chose to limit the research to a five-year window. This decision is motivated by several reasons one may detail. First, the abundance of documents available made the limitation to a certain timespan almost mandatory in order to ensure proper and relevant analysis. As the thesis seeks to provide insight on Xi's direct view of Chinese identity, national interests and therefore foreign policy decisions, one finds that expanding the data to a larger scope in time may have altered the relevance of the analysis, either by finding too little connections between documents due to the evolution of context, or made it more difficult for the research to select data among the large number catalogued by Chinese official channels. Hence, relevance and recency were priorities in the building process of the analytical dataset. Focusing on recent documents ensures that the analysis is relevant to current geopolitical dynamics and the latest developments in Xi Jinping's policies. Then, by setting a time limit of five years from first to last document within the analyzed dataset, this thesis nonetheless ensures the possibility of observing an evolution of discourse. By examining document from 2019 to 2024, one can observe the evolution of Xi Jinping and his administration's rhetoric and policy focus. This is particularly important for identifying shifts in strategy and ideology. Indeed, the last reason for setting a five-year timeframe follows from this same reasoning, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has most certainly impact Xi's decision-making process, and most likely his public discourse to the international community. By taking into consideration documents from both before, during and

after the important waves of COVID-19 impacts, the research seeks to observe both China's stance before the pandemic, evaluate Beijing's behavior while dealing with this issue and finally how it may have overall shifted China's line of foreign policy and nationalist discourse overtime, now looking back more than three years after the most impactful events of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly significantly influenced global politics and China's foreign policy. Including documents from before, during, and after the pandemic allows the thesis to analyze how this major event has affected Xi Jinping's discourse and strategies.

2. Applying a thematic analysis on the data through categorical indexing

After selecting the data throughout various sources and ensuring a total of 105 documents to review within the analytical framework, this section then moves on to the conception of the methodology followed. The creation of an analytical framework ensures a structured and coherent analysis of the data related to Xi Jinping's ideology and its articulation through the key notions of nationalism, foreign policy, and the Tianxia concept. To achieve this, this study employs a qualitative research methodology, heavily inspired by Mason's 2002 work on qualitative researching. By reviewing the possibilities of analytic methodology provided, this research ensures creating a framework most suitable to fit this thesis and better provide answer to the overarching research question. Mason offers three approaches to qualitative data analysis: cross-sectional and categorical indexing, non-cross-sectional data organization, and the use of diagrams and charts⁷⁶. For this study, the research prioritizes a consistent system throughout the data, understanding that the framework might need to evolve through a process of trial and error. Therefore, one first reviews each methodology to understand the pros and cons of each approach and better utilize the one which will be chosen to apply to the dataset. The first step established by Mason to choose among methods is, taking into account the central and sub-questions this thesis wishes to answer, what type of links need to be built throughout the data. Indeed, one may question whether the main links must be established through a chronological setting or a thematic setting. In our case, despite taking documents from a five-year span in order to provide some kind of evolution throughout the analysis, the main answers this thesis seeks lie within thematic responses. Given the diversity of the data sources, which range over five years and cover various international and domestic contexts, the analysis focuses predominantly on thematic connections. However, the

⁷⁶ Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, London.

chronological aspect is also considered to assess any evolution in discourse over time. By combining both thematic and chronological analyses, one can better understand how Xi Jinping's ideological narratives have developed and adapted in response to changing circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the main structure of this research's analytical framework requires the ability to easily draw thematic links, but also keep the possibilities open to observe and draw conclusions from evolutions that may appear overtime.

After establishing the need to make thematic links throughout the data, one may look at Mason's different approaches to qualitative researching. First, cross-sectional and categorical indexing involves coding data into categories that can be analyzed across different sections of the data set. This method is suited for this study because it allows for thematic analysis across various contexts and timeframes. By categorizing data into specific themes, one can track the consistency and evolution of Xi Jinping's ideological narrative. Then, non-cross-sectional data organization does not rely on predefined categories but instead organizes data in a more narrative or chronological form. This approach can be useful for understanding the flow and progression of ideas over time but may lack the rigor and systemacy needed for thematic comparison across different contexts. Hence non-cross-sectional data organization may be useful to some research focused on the evolution of Xi Jinping's ideology and nationalist discourse since arriving in power in 2013 for example, but because this research is set in a more limited timeframe and chronological analysis is not the priority to answer the three research questions, this thesis decides not to follow this methodology. Finally, the use of diagrams and charts is instrumental in visualizing data relationships and trends. This approach aids in the interpretive process, making it easier to identify patterns and connections that might not be immediately apparent in textual data alone. This last method may be useful to this study's research, as it would allow the drawing of links and creation of patterns among the various documents analyzed. However, because a larger sum of the research is reliant on interpretation and reflexive reading of the data, one seeks to remain within easily modifiable categories. Indeed, building diagrams and charts may be coherent to categorize Xi Jinping's speech into lexical fields for example, but it limits these analyses to textual data. As the research involves some form of biased interpretation, fitting data into diagrams may be a less accessible and reliable methodology. For this study, the priority is the use of a single, consistent system throughout the analysis. This choice stems from the necessity to ensure coherence and comparability across the diverse range of the documents analyzed, which include speeches, communiqués, and foreign policy announcements spanning from 2019 to 2024. This consistency allows this thesis to track thematic evolutions over time and across different contexts. Therefore, after reviewing the types of approaches offered by Mason's work, this research chooses to build the analytical framework around a cross-sectional and categorical

indexing method. Categorical indexing is the chosen method for this study because it best fits the nature of the selected data. This approach allows the research to categorize themes both literally and reflexively, providing room for interpretation while treating official speeches as ideological documents. Despite their structured nature, these documents can reveal much about Xi Jinping's ideological leanings. Categorical indexing enables the study to apply a consistent set of categories across various documents, regardless of their context or topic. For instance, a speech addressing the United Nations, a communiqué to the Chinese populace, or a foreign policy announcement at a G20 summit may cover different subjects but can be analyzed using the same thematic categories. This consistency allows one to identify overarching themes and patterns in Xi Jinping's ideology. According to Mason, data can include expressions, behaviors, actions, and discourses⁷⁷. In this study's case, the data is primarily composed of specific expressions within speeches and communiqués. As such, most of the categories of analysis fall under "lexical field" or "reference to." This focus on language allows one to dissect how Xi Jinping's choice of words and phrases reflects broader ideological constructs. For example, frequent references to "community of shared future for mankind" or "Chinese Dream" can be categorized and analyzed to understand their significance within Xi Jinping's ideological framework. Similarly, terms related to nationalism, such as "national rejuvenation" and "great power diplomacy," can be systematically examined across different documents. Finally, Mason's methodology also accommodates the use of unfinished resources, which provides flexibility in the analysis. This approach allows the inclusion of data that might not fit neatly into predefined categories but still holds significant interpretive value. Such data can be considered as part of reflexive interpretation, acknowledging the researcher's active role in constructing meaning, notably in relation to the third key concept of Tianxia. Because Tianxia represents in common understanding, and as presented by Zhao's popular work, an alternative model of international relations and therefore the possibility for China to disturb the existing world order, the study's interpretation of what may or may not relate to Tianxia within the dataset is highly reliant on personal interpretation based on the links established from the engagement with the data. Although the thesis acknowledges the possibility of being wrong in the framework of highly interpretive analysis, this study deliberately chooses to associate certain patterns identified in the data with the concept of Tianxia. On the other hand, a statement by Xi Jinping that does not directly align with existing categories but suggests a new ideological direction may be included as an unfinished resource. This flexibility ensures that the analysis remains dynamic and responsive to the complexity of the data.

⁷⁷ Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, London, p.150.

Therefore, one may sum up the benefits and challenges presented by the chosen methodology of categorical indexing as followed. First, categorical indexing provides a structured approach to analyzing complex data, ensuring consistency and comparability through a systematic method. Then, it allows flexibility as it ensures both literal and interpretive readings, therefore accommodating a range of data types and themes. Finally, the third main benefit of categorical indexing lies in the coverage it offers : by applying the same categories across different contexts, the research framework can identify overarching patterns and themes in Xi Jinping's ideology and provide comprehensive understanding of his view of China's interests and therefore decision-making. Conversely, categorical indexing presents three main challenges. The first and most obvious obstacle to a systematic analysis of the dataset is the potential for bias. As the thesis deliberately decide to use interpretive approaches, one may introduce bias, particularly in reflexive readings. Therefore, the research seeks to remain vigilant and reflective in order to mitigate the potential errors this method might lead the thesis to produce. Second, the structured nature of official speeches and communiqués can sometimes obscure deeper ideological meanings. A thorough and nuanced approach is required to uncover the complexity of the data. Finally, the framework must be flexible enough to evolve as new data and themes emerge. This requires ongoing assessment and adjustment, hence the study chooses to review every document of the dataset several times in order to make adjustments in the categories and methodology along the analytical process.

Regarding the direct reading of the data, Mason suggests three types of data reading that the thesis applies to the analytical framework: literal, interpretive, and reflexive⁷⁸. Literal reading involves analyzing the actual words, language, form, and structure of the text. This initial reading is crucial for understanding the explicit content and identifying key phrases and terms that are frequently used in Xi Jinping's speeches and documents. It is the easiest approach to understanding concepts related to our sub-questions, as it is essentially categorized into literary forms quite repetitive along the dataset : key terms such as « cooperation » or « harmony » may fall under the scope of literal reading in a setting of lexical field categorization. However, literal reading alone is insufficient as it does not capture the deeper meanings and implications of the text. Interpretive reading goes beyond the literal content to construct a version of what the data means or represents. This type of reading involves identifying implicit norms and themes, reading through or beyond the text to uncover underlying ideologies and motivations. For instance, references to the “Chinese Dream” or “national rejuvenation” are not just literal terms but carry significant ideological weight that reflects broader nationalistic and geopolitical strategies. Finally, reflexive reading considers the

⁷⁸ Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, London.

researcher's role and perspective in the interpretation of the data. It involves reflecting on how the author of the analysis may have their own biases, background, and positions which might influence the analysis. In this study, reflexive reading is particularly important because it helps the study acknowledge the potential biases in the interpretation of the data and strive for a more balanced and objective analysis. In establishing our analytical framework, the thesis heavily draws on Mason's qualitative research methodologies, specifically focusing on cross-sectional and categorical indexing. This approach allows the study to systematically analyze Xi Jinping's speeches, communiqués, and foreign policy announcements, identifying key themes and tracking their evolution over time. By employing literal, interpretive, and reflexive readings, one ensures a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the data. Despite the challenges and potential biases inherent in qualitative research, this structured approach provides a robust framework for understanding the ideological foundations of Xi Jinping's leadership and its implications for China's role in the global order in regard to the three key concepts of nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. As this section moves forward, this framework will guide a detailed analysis, enabling the research to answer the three operationalized sub-questions and contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese political ideology and strategy.

3. Process of analysis

The process of analyzing the collected data involves a systematic review of each document according to predefined categories. This structured approach ensures that the analysis is coherent, thorough, and aligned with this research's objectives. The main steps in this process include categorizing the data, refining the categories through iterative reviews, and ensuring that the categories align with the three operationalized sub-questions. Indeed, one may establish some categories prior to starting the document review, but those are highly susceptible of being modified along the analytical process. The main component which remains strictly categorized throughout the analysis is the division of data coding into three main categories, each related to one of the research sub-questions about nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. As the analytical framework engages with each document, the first aim is to be able to fit elements into those main categories. From there, the thesis may draw other categories along the process which may be more eager to target specific aspects of the research. The first step involves reading through each document and categorizing the content according to the research sub-questions: nationalism, foreign policy, and the concept of Tianxia. Each document, whether it is a speech, communiqué, or policy announcement, is analyzed to identify key themes and phrases that fit within these broad categories. For example: phrases and themes related to

national pride, Chinese identity, and the « Chinese Dream » fit into the categorization of nationalism, as they may provide elements of answer to the first sub-question regarding our ability to fit Xi Jinping's nationalism into one of Whiting's three nationalisms. Regarding foreign policies, references to diplomatic strategies, international relations and China's role on the global stage fit into the scope of foreign policy analysis; enlightening this thesis on the general motives that shape Xi's foreign policy decision-making. Finally, concepts related to global governance, a community of shared future and traditional Chinese cultural values, such as harmony and stability are coded as data linked to the concept of Tianxia, based on the literature review this thesis has established and the characteristics that Xi's speeches and the concept of Tianxia share. Given the complexity and diversity of the documents, the initial categorization is then followed by several iterative reviews. This process involves going back to the documents multiple times to refine the categories, ensuring they are as precise as possible and therefore more meaningful. Each review helps in correcting general categories first. Broad categories might need adjustments to better capture the nuances in the data. For instance, what initially falls under « nationalism » might need sub-categorization into themes like « historical references » or « national rejuvenation. ». Then, several reviews also ensure this study's ability to add detail; by making some data more visible through the addition of some details to the categories. This process involves breaking down larger themes into more specific sub-themes, which can reveal more about the underlying ideology. As an example, a speech which is initially categorized under the general theme of foreign policy may present upon further review specific references to the Belt and Road Initiative or « South-South cooperation ». Those details emerging allow the study to create more detailed sub-categories in order to ensure more specified review of those documents by adding context and taking into account the sphere in which a speech or communiqué is delivered.

Despite the potential efficiency of AI tools in data analysis, this thesis chooses not to employ them for several reasons. First, the analysis requires a highly interpretive and reflexive reading of the data, which AI tools are currently too limited to handle effectively. The nuanced and opinionated nature of political speeches and communiqués demands human insight. Then, with only around 100 documents, which are relatively short, the study considers that there is sufficient time to review each document multiple times manually. This allows for a more nuanced and thorough analysis than what AI might offer. Finally, much of the analysis relies on interpretive and reflexive reading, where understanding the implicit meanings, norms, and ideological underpinnings is crucial. Human analysts are better suited to perform interpretive reading, which ensures the construction of meanings from the text, notably by identifying implicit norms, and understanding the broader context in which the speech was made. Through reflexive reading, recognizing and accounting for the analyst's own biases and perspectives in

the interpretation process allows the research process to take a step back on the documents reviewed by positioning the researcher within the analytical context. Throughout the process, it is essential to continuously evaluate whether the categories and the data within them align with the three operationalized sub-questions: how does Xi Jinping's rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism? what are the motives behind Xi Jinping's foreign policy decisions? And how does the rejuvenation discourse correlate with the official understanding of Tianxia in Xi's terms? By constantly checking the alignment of the emerging categories with these questions, the research ensures that the analysis remains focused and relevant. If a new theme emerges that seems significant but does not clearly fit into one of the sub-questions, it might indicate the need to refine the created categories or even adjust the overall framework slightly. The process of analysis is a meticulous and iterative effort to categorize, refine, and interpret the data, ensuring a robust understanding of Xi Jinping's ideological narratives. By manually reviewing each document multiple times and refining the categories through iterative reviews, this thesis seeks to capture the full complexity and depth of the data. Excluding AI tools and focusing on human interpretive and reflexive analysis ensures that the nuances and implicit meanings in the texts are appropriately understood and contextualized. This careful and thorough approach allows one to draw meaningful connections and insights that are essential to answering the operationalized sub-questions on nationalism, foreign policy, and the Tianxia concept.

Section 2 : Data Analysis

The process of data analysis can be divided into two main mechanisms this thesis systematically applies while evaluating the dataset. First the research follows a coherent and consistent method of document analysis, while remaining flexible to changes, and then the research may fit the analyzed data into a larger scope for analytical writing. Through drawing conclusions from what has been observed and linking the elements to the created categories, one creates consistent linkages between the ensemble of documents examined in order to fit them into the overarching analytical framework. From there, a secondary work is about turning the analyzed data into analytical writing, and further establishing possible conclusions, therefore answers to the overarching research question and sub-questions in line with Xi Jinping's ideology analysis. This section may first discuss the method of document analysis, then detail the process of turning data analysis into analytical writing.

1. Method of document analysis

The method of document analysis in this research is a meticulous and iterative process, designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding and accurate categorization of the data.

Given the manageable number of documents (around 100) and their relatively short length, it is feasible to review each document twice, eliminating the need for AI or CAQDAS tools. This manual approach allows for a nuanced and detailed analysis aligned with this research's objectives, notably the ability to perform more specific interpretive and reflexive readings over each document by taking into account external aspects, such as context and spatio-temporal framework. Each document is reviewed with the aim of fitting its content into this thesis' predefined research sub-questions. To facilitate this, a table is created to systematically categorize each document according to its relevance to the sub-questions on nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia. This structured approach ensures that the analytical process remains focused and coherent. During the initial review, all selected documents are read thoroughly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. This step involves literal reading, where the focus is on the explicit words and phrases used. Key themes and concepts are identified and coded according to this study's analytical framework. The next step is categorization, where the coded data is grouped into broader thematic categories corresponding to this research's sub-questions. This categorization process ensures for the analysis to remain focused on the key concepts of nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia. Each document is analyzed with an active reading approach, keeping in mind the previous research and existing knowledge of each concept. Interpretation follows, where the categorized data is analyzed to draw connections between Xi Jinping's ideology and the concept of Tianxia. This involves interpretive reading, where the implicit meanings and underlying ideologies are uncovered, and reflexive reading, where the researcher reflects on their own bias and personal perspectives in the interpretation process. Given the iterative nature of the process, several reviews of each document are conducted to ensure precision in categorization. What qualifies as data in the initial review might be re-evaluated in subsequent reviews to ensure it fits within the broader scope of this thesis' analysis. This iterative process helps refine the categories and ensures that the analysis remains accurate and relevant. Questioning what qualifies for each research sub-question is an essential part of this process. This is solely based on the established previous conceptual framework, which helps in associating certain concepts with specific sub-questions. For example, the concept of "stability" is associated with the sub-question relating to Tianxia. In traditional Chinese values, Tianxia offers a model of harmony and stability, making it relevant to this category. Hence, the overall step-by-step process can be summed up into initial review, where all selected documents read thoroughly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. Then, coding is a process of identifying key concepts and themes and coding those according to this thesis' analytical framework. For instance, « cooperation » and « good-neighboring policy » are key phrases typically coded under the lexical field of cooperation within a foreign policy context. Third, categorization is putting coded data into broader thematic

groups corresponding to this research's operationalized sub-questions. Finally, interpretation consists in drawing connections from the categorized data between this thesis' three key concepts and Xi Jinping's depicted ideology, and examining how these themes manifest in official discourse and policy. By following this method, the research ensures a thorough and nuanced analysis of Xi Jinping's speeches, communiqués, and policy announcements. The manual review process, combined with an iterative approach, allows one to capture the complexity and depth of the data, providing a robust framework for understanding Xi Jinping's ideological narratives and their implications for nationalism, foreign policy, and the concept of Tianxia.

2. Turning data into analytical writing

After going through the process of data analysis on the extent of this thesis' documents, the next step of the analytical process consists in turning the collected data into analytical writing. Therefore, the research seeks to create linkages between what can be observed from the analyzed documents and the sub-questions the thesis has established, in order to provide elements of answer to the central questions. After reviewing all the documents according to the process detailed in the previous section, the research is now left with categorized data linked to each sub-question. From there, the process consists of several steps. The analytical process for this research involves two primary rounds: drafting a detailed outline of the analytical chapters and refining the headings of each section. This approach ensures a structured, coherent analysis of the data, aligning with the pre-established research objectives and operationalized sub-questions. Indeed, as this research is sectioned into three main sub-questions utilized to provide a more general answer to the overarching research question being : « to what extent does the concept of Tianxia shape Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse on foreign policy ? »; the data we have analyzed will be utilized to build three analytical chapters according to the thesis' three sub-questions. The first round is dedicated to drafting a detailed outline of the analytical chapters. In this process, one first seeks to set the headings of each section. Headings are flexible at first, and aim at dividing the analytical chapter into several ways this research may answer its guiding questions. Those headings provide the base structure for the analysis, and ensure that this research follows the three questions regarding Xi Jinping's relation to nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. For instance, in the section examining how Xi Jinping's speeches reflect Chinese nationalism, headings might include “National Rejuvenation,” “Historical References,” and “Cultural Identity.”. The section focused on foreign policy could have headings such as « Multilateralism », « Belt and Road Initiative » and « Major-Country Diplomacy ». Finally, the section dedicated to Tianxia would present headings like

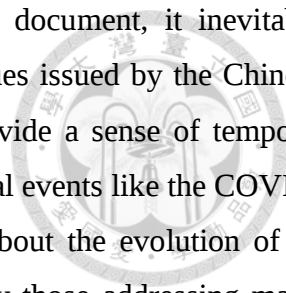
« Community of a shared future » and « traditional values in modern policy ». Under each heading, one may then start listing the relevant speeches into those sections. This ensures that each section is grounded in specific examples from Xi Jinping's discourse. For instance, a speech addressing the United Nations might be listed under both "Multilateralism" and "Global Leadership" if it contains relevant content for both themes. More generally, some elements may fit several sub-questions : as it is relevant to this study's analysis, one considers this case of events even more fitting to the research, as it brings complex material to the study's understanding of Xi Jinping's ideology. For example, some nationalist speech may fall under the first category of indexing and the analytical chapter dedicated to Nationalism, but it may also mention aspects of major-country diplomacy and therefore fit into China's foreign policy discourse as well. This way, nationalist speech also offers insight on how national pride and international cooperation are balanced in China's foreign policy. In the second round of the process, the research further refines the headings of each section. This involves revisiting the initial outline and making adjustments based on the data collected. The goal is to ensure that each heading accurately reflects the content and themes found in Xi Jinping's speeches and documents. For example, if multiple speeches under the "national rejuvenation" heading also heavily emphasize economic development, a sub-heading like "economic nationalism" might be introduced to capture this nuance.

After sectioning the data into the three operationalized research questions, the next step is to interpret the data in light of the existing research and analytical literature. This involves linking the content of the speeches to broader theoretical frameworks and existing studies on nationalism, foreign policy, and Tianxia. From there, one may first provide further insight based on the literature review established in Chapter 2, but the research may also dive deeper into some aspects of the data collected according to what is considered more fitting. Indeed, some concepts may be relevant to the category of nationalist speech, but limited to pure rhetoric aiming at galvanizing crowds; on the other hand, some concepts may gradually appear more in Xi Jinping's policy according to the topic, the institution the speech is aimed at. This second type of data may invite the research to dig deeper into some data for further research surrounding some concepts utilized by Xi Jinping. This process also ensures that some data which may have been overlooked during the literature review is taken into account in a new manner by the process of this thesis' research. Interpreting the sectioned data requires taking into account what the research has already established, and trying to find how this study can answer each sub-question and the overarching research question with the data found. Here the section provide examples of how some data may be interpreted in this manner. First, regarding the analytical chapter dedicated to nationalism, one might find data which allows the thesis to interpret Xi's discourse on national rejuvenation as a pattern related to Whiting's typology on

nationalism. Indeed, China and its people undergoing a process of rejuvenation falls under the category of assertive nationalism, ensuring China's own trust in its people, in regard to nationalist speeches. Similar data may be found according to Callahan's approach in the chapter dedicated to foreign policy for instance. Therefore, each section of the analysis incorporates references to analytical literature to frame the research's findings within established theoretical contexts. This not only validates the scope of this thesis' interpretations but also situates the research within the broader academic discourse. After undergoing this process, the thesis may then be able to draw conclusions from the data observed, as well as provide ground for further research on the topic.

Section 3 : Reflecting on research limits of this study

In conducting this research, several limitations must be acknowledged. These constraints affect the scope, depth, and interpretation of our analysis, shaping the conclusions the thesis can draw from the data. The primary limitations concern language, timeframe, exhaustivity, and methodological constraints, each of which is discussed below. The first significant limitation is the language of the documents analyzed. This research exclusively relies on documents produced or translated into English. While English translations of key speeches and communiques are available, nuances and specific cultural or contextual meanings may be lost in translation. The original Mandarin versions of these documents might contain subtleties that are critical to a fuller understanding of the discourse. As the research tried to remain as close as possible to the original meanings of each speech, notably by examining documents provided exclusively by official or semi-official instances of the CCP like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Xinhua News, a government-run media over which the CCP has direct control. Moreover, translation can sometimes inadvertently introduce biases, as translators might choose terms that do not fully capture the intended meaning in the original language. By relying on English documents, the research acknowledges that it misses out on potentially important rhetorical strategies and cultural references that are better understood in their native linguistic context. This limitation necessitates caution in interpreting certain phrases or concepts, as the translation might not fully convey the original intent. Nonetheless, as most documents are targeted towards non-Mandarin speaking contacts, this thesis considers this limitation reduced, as the analytical framework is presented with the same conception of each speech as leaders of the international community for example. Then, a second limitation to find within this research regards the timeframe chosen. The timeframe spans from 2019 to 2024, and this study has limited its analysis to approximately 100 documents. This constraint was chosen to ensure that



the volume of documents was manageable for thorough qualitative analysis by a single researcher. While this allows for a detailed examination of each document, it inevitably excludes a significant number of relevant speeches and communiques issued by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Choosing a five-year period aims to provide a sense of temporal progression and potential shifts in discourse, especially around critical events like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a broader timeframe could reveal more about the evolution of Xi Jinping's ideology and policy. The chosen documents are primarily those addressing major international forums such as the United Nations, reflecting high-level policy directions rather than detailed bilateral agreements, which might offer more specific insights into China's strategic relations with individual countries. The third main limit to this research is found in the exhaustivity of document selection. Given the impossibility of analyzing every speech and communique issued by the CCP, the selection criteria focused on the context and the agency issuing the documents. The research prioritizes documents from major international platforms and key figures within the CCP, such as Xi Jinping, Wang Yi, and Li Keqiang. This approach aims to capture the most authoritative and influential statements of Chinese policy. Nonetheless, there is a much larger totality of documents which had to be voluntarily excluded from this research in order to focus on certain topics. Indeed, this selective approach means that some documents relevant to this study's analysis might be excluded. Speeches or communiques from lower-ranking officials or those addressing less prominent forums could also provide valuable insights into the nuances of China's foreign policy and nationalist rhetoric. Additionally, internal party documents and less formal communications might reveal different aspects of the ideological framework guiding China's policies. Then, given the time constraints of this research, there was no opportunity to engage directly with Chinese scholars or conduct qualitative interviews within China. Such interactions could have provided deeper insights and contextual understanding, enhancing the analysis of Xi Jinping's speeches and policy documents. To counterbalance this limitation, an extensive review of existing literature on China's foreign policy was undertaken. This secondary research helps in contextualizing and supporting the analysis of the primary documents, by drawing on the expertise and findings of other scholars in the field. While secondary literature provides this thesis with valuable context and comparative perspectives, it cannot fully substitute for primary, qualitative interviews. Direct engagement with experts could have provided real-time interpretations and helped in clarifying ambiguities in the documents. This limitation highlights the need for future research to incorporate such qualitative methods, if circumstances allow. Another limit lies in the ideological biases one may find in the documentation. Analyzing official documents inherently involves dealing with ideological and cognitive bias. However, these documents are crafted to project a specific image and policy direction, often reflecting the strategic interests of the CCP

rather than an objective account of events or policies. To provide legitimacy to this research's approach, the study relies on Zheng and al.'s work of 2008 on « Applying Policy Network Theory to Policy-Making in China »⁷⁹. As noted in Zheng's work on policy frameworks, document analysis is crucial but comes with the challenge of discerning the underlying ideological biases. As this study's analysis relies heavily on interpreting the language and themes present in these documents, a process inherently subject to cognitive and analytical biases. The subjective nature of interpretation means that the findings of this research process are influenced by the perspectives and assumptions the researcher brings to the analysis. While the thesis strives for objectivity, it is essential to acknowledge that complete neutrality is unattainable. To mitigate these biases, the research incorporates multiple rounds of document review and categorization, and seeks to ensure that different interpretations are considered and integrated. This iterative process helps in refining the analysis and reduces the impact of individual biases, but it cannot eliminate them. Finally, to strengthen the validity of our findings, the research then compares them with existing academic literature on China's foreign policy and Xi Jinping's ideological narratives. This comparative approach provides a check against the research's interpretations, situating them within the broader academic discourse. It also allows the thesis to identify areas where the analytical findings align with or diverge from established theories and observations, offering a basis for further research. In conclusion, while this research is constrained by language, timeframe, document volume, methodological limitations, and the inherent biases of official documents, it employs a rigorous analytical process to mitigate these limitations. By situating the findings within the broader context of existing literature and adopting a systematic approach to document analysis, the thesis seeks to provide a robust and insightful exploration of Xi Jinping's ideology as it relates to nationalism, foreign policy, and the concept of Tianxia. However, future research with a broader document base, direct engagement with Chinese scholars, and extended qualitative methods would further enhance the depth and accuracy of the analysis.

⁷⁹ Zheng et al. 2008. « APPLYING POLICY NETWORK THEORY TO POLICY-MAKING IN CHINA: THE CASE OF URBAN HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM ».

CHAPTER 4 : THE CHINESE NATIONALIST DISCOURSE ACCORDING TO WHITING'S TYPOLOGY



Section 1 : Summary of the chapter

This thesis' research is based on a dataset of a hundred documents delivered by official instances of the People's Republic of China government such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xinhua News Agency or the official Chinese TV channel on Youtube. From those documents, the thesis has built an analytical framework and a methodology aiming to answers three operationalized research sub- questions. As detailed in the previous chapter, those documents have been observed under a set of research method followed by an analytical process in order to provide elements from which this thesis may be able to draw conclusions on China's official discourse. Indeed, in order to answer the central question of this thesis, three main aspects can be separately analyzed to provide better fitted elements of response. Therefore, by dividing this research into three sub-questions, this study ensures that more aspects of the general topic are covered and limit the scope of mistake we may make during the analytical process. Hence, chapter 4, chapter 5 and chapter 6 are dedicated to presenting the analytical findings from the researching process over the dataset. Each analytical chapter seeks to answer one of the three operationalized sub-questions. Chapter 4 seeks to answer the first sub-question : **how does Xi Jinping's rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism in the sense of Whiting's typology ?** The process followed by the three-dimensional conceptual framework is to analyze the dataset in light of the typology established by Whiting to China's current state of nationalism under Xi's administration. By applying this framework, this thesis questions the evolution of nationalism in modern China, specifically whether some change can be observed since the era of Whiting's original work on China. Indeed, as reviewed in Chapter 2, Whiting's 1995 work « Chinese nationalism and foreign policy after Deng » analyzes the impact of nationalist discourse on China's foreign policy after the era of Deng Xiaoping leadership and provides a three-conceptual typology of nationalisms to associate with China's behavior : affirmative, assertive or aggressive⁸⁰. Whiting considers that Chinese nationalism has potential to grow into an aggressive behavior after Deng's era. Therefore this study's first sub-research goes in line to his reasoning by questioning the evolution of nationalism in China from an assertive standpoint to a potentially aggressive behavior under Xi Jinping's leadership. To answer this chapter's main problematic, this research therefore examines all three types of nationalism according to

⁸⁰ Whiting, Allen S. "Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng." *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 295–316.

Whiting in the dataset, and tries to form conclusions from what the thesis has observed. This section will first tackle affirmative nationalism, then assertive and finally aggressive nationalism found in official Chinese discourse. This section is organized in categories to observe and relies on representative quotes from the documents. This process ensures that the analysis is illustrated directly by the dataset. From there, the research provides analytical points with reference to the existing literature. For example, this thesis associates the idea of the « US represented as a danger » with patterns of aggressive nationalism. Finally, the data will be associated with the relevant literature in link with what is analyzed, and provide some elements to conduct additional research on. This chapter will first tackle the question of affirmative nationalism by establishing links between elements of speech found in the dataset of documents and Whiting's first type of nationalism.

Section 2 : Affirmative nationalism

1. Nationalist speech

Affirmative nationalism is the first step in the process of nationalist discourse as established by Whiting's typology. It is the most easily identifiable, hence this section is dedicated to reviewing the documents and finding common elements that showcase affirmation in China's power. While it has been established as mentioned above that China after the Deng era entered a state of assertive nationalism, one must remind that the typology presented by Whiting does not apply as a strict model. Indeed, Whiting's 1983 work mentions that *"it is difficult to isolate a general characteristic from specific policy issues. Each situation contains its own action-reaction syndrome, often evolving over years of interaction"*⁸¹; hence this research draws from this statement that no case studied is limited to a unique type of nationalism. Instead, several types of nationalism can coexist within the same framework, hence this study's analysis of each according to Whiting. The motive behind this process is not to limit China's nationalist discourse to a strict category such as assertive nationalism, but to capture the general and broad trend. In this configuration, one should find elements of affirmative nationalism as well as assertive nationalism, and this research seeks to identify elements of aggressive nationalism to decipher an evolution in China's foreign policy. Affirmative nationalism is aimed mostly towards the Chinese people, hence this section looks here for nationalist elements of speech notably through references to the Chinese culture and values. The analytical process categorizes the identification of affirmative nationalism into three aspects. First and foremost, rhetoric is

⁸¹ Whiting, Allen S. "Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy." *Asian Survey* 23, no. 8 (1983): 913–33.

the foundation of nationalist speech, hence one may draw elements from our documents that reflect positive feelings towards the Chinese nation. Affirmative nationalism is also presented in the mention of an ideological project. In the case of China, references to Xi Jinping's ideology and emphasis on the success of China's modernization and economic history are clues of affirmative nationalism, showcasing the government's intention to draw support from the people based on China's economic performance. Finally, this research finds that references to Chinese cultural aspects such as relying on quotes from Chinese authors, or bringing forward Chinese sayings in official instances are elements of affirmative nationalism from the Chinese government, given as it uses China's ancient history to provide legitimacy to its public discourse both addressed to the Chinese people and towards external relations.

a. China as a world leader

Affirmative nationalism is aimed mostly towards the Chinese people, hence the study looks here for nationalist elements of speech that seek to enhance the public support towards the Chinese government. The first aspect in which those motives are identified throughout the dataset is with the description of China as a world leader. Official speeches and communiques often emphasize the role of China within the international community, a tendency which showcases China's vision of itself as one of the world's most prominent actors. At the China-Central Asia summit of May 2023, Xi Jinping started his keynote speech by mentioning the ancientness of China's relations with Central Asian countries : "*Over 2,100 years ago, Zhang Qian, a Han Dynasty envoy, made his journey to the West from Chang'an*"⁸². This reference to the start of the Silk Roads is a way for the Chinese leader to rely on China's long history to put forward the role of China in world relations and demonstrate legitimacy in favor of China's discourse. However, most of the references made to China's role in international relations are in relation to its current position. Indeed, this process seeks to showcase what China brings to the table of the international community and how it contributes to the progress of the world. China prides itself as a « *builder of world peace* »⁸³, and a country from which the contribution is always fruitful, not only for itself but also for the rest of the world, as in two communiques provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where bringing « *Chinese solutions to humanity's quest for a better social system* »⁸⁴ and China sharing its « *wisdom and solution* »⁸⁵ are mentioned. China's role in the world of international relations is also mentioned when dealing

⁸² Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit. (2021).

⁸³ Position Paper on China's Cooperation with the United Nations, 2021.

⁸⁴ When Brothers Are Of One Heart And One Mind, They Have The Strength To Break Metal, 2023.

⁸⁵ A New Journey Ahead After Fifty Extraordinary Years, 2023.

in bilateral or multilateral treaties : for instance, China prides itself in « *bringing major opportunities* »⁸⁶ through the development of the BRI, and « *inject[ing] strong impetus into economic recovery in the region* »⁸⁷. By the same token, when dealing with China-EU relations, the Chinese speech mentions China making « *far bigger contributions to the world than many other countries* »⁸⁸. Hence, China showcases pride in its own capacities throughout the diverse mentions of its achievements in the framework of the BRI or other international instances, as a way to enhance its self-confidence.

b. References to Xi Jinping's ideology and the success of China

In the same line of narrative, the nationalist discourse of China also makes references to Xi Jinping's ideology in parallel to China's modernization project and therefore economic and developmental success. Indeed, the Chinese president is not shy of showcasing China's achievements in international organizations, as several of his speeches at the United Nations make reference to China's success. At the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Xi states that « *China is the largest developing country in the world* »⁸⁹; and at the previous session, he took pride directly in the Chinese people who « *have forged ahead as one and scored great achievements* »⁹⁰, making a « *historic journey against all odds* »⁹¹. Finally, showcasing China's success not only relies on the Chinese people, when « *the over 1.4 billion Chinese people, filled with an even stronger sense of self-confidence and self-reliance, have unleashed a mighty force for building China into a modern socialist country* »⁹² is mentioned; but also because of the Party's achievements, as demonstrated by the quote « *the Party's major achievements and historical experience over the past century making still greater contributions* »⁹³. From these quotes, interpretive reading is useful to identify nationalist speech and the intention of galvanizing the Chinese people under the banner of the Chinese Communist Party. By making extensive references to what China may bring to the rest of the world, as well

⁸⁶ Outlook On China's Foreign Policy On Its Neighborhood In The New Era_Embassy Of The People's Republic Of China In The United States Of America, 2023.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Enhancing Mutual Trust And Cooperation To Embrace An Even Better Future Of China-EU Relations, 2019.

⁸⁹ Statement By H.E. Xi Jinping President Of The People's Republic Of China At The General Debate Of The 75th Session Of The United Nations General Assembly, 2020.

⁹⁰ Position Paper Of The People's Republic Of China For The 74th Session Of The United Nations General Assembly, 2019.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Striding Forward Holding High the Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, 2022.

⁹³ Striding Forward Holding High the Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, 2022.

as how China has so far been successful in its economic project, the Chinese government entices more public support from its own people and from the international community to a certain extent.



c. References to Chinese cultural aspects

Finally, the last main aspect of nationalist speech we may draw from the dataset of speeches and communiques from the Chinese government or its related agencies is in regard to Chinese cultural aspects. Indeed, numerous references are made to traditional aspects of the Chinese culture. As part of this research's analytical framework, this thesis interprets those references as the intention from the Chinese to supply their voice with ancientness, and therefore draw legitimacy from it. China seeks to supplant its public discourse with such quotes as a way to enhance its traditions. As observers, this mechanism is interpreted as the intention to further bring forward the Chinese thought and method into international instances. This mechanism takes the form for example of quoting ancient Chinese sayings, usually in speeches delivered by Xi or his ministers like Wang Yi : « *as a Chinese saying goes, « when everybody brings firewood, the flame will be higher »* »⁹⁴; "*As a Chinese saying goes, “Only when the granary is full will people learn etiquette; only when people are well-fed and clothed will they know honor and shame.”* »⁹⁵. By referencing old sayings, the Chinese discourse is impeded with the strength of its own history; showcasing the richness of its culture and how the longevity of those sayings provide for China's development. To the same extent, quoting directly Chinese authors or poets such as Su Shi⁹⁶ and Chinese philosophers : "*As an ancient Chinese philosopher observes, “Change is the nature of the universe.”* »⁹⁷ is understood by this research as a manner for the Chinese government to bring forward its own culture in the international framework and therefore better implement its qualities, by proving a showcase of its own success.

2. The Great Rejuvenation and Chinese Dream

After examining the elements of nationalist speech in Chinese official discourse, the dataset showcases a first line of affirmative nationalism through several elements : the motives

⁹⁴ Remarks By H.E. Wang Yi At The Press Conference Of The Third Belt And Road Forum For International Cooperation, 2023.

⁹⁵ Providing New Opportunities To The World Through Chinese Modernization, 2023

⁹⁶ "Here I want to quote Su Shi, a renowned Chinese poet, "Charge at the toughest and aim at the farthest."" in 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping, 2022.

⁹⁷ Enhancing Solidarity And Cooperation To Overcome Risks And Challenges And Jointly Build A Better World, 2023.

of showcasing China as a world leader, references to Xi Jinping's ideology and China's success as well as references to Chinese cultural aspects are all tools for this thesis to answer our sub-question. In showing emphasis on China's successes, the aim is to enhance public support for the Chinese government. By linking this idea to Xi Jinping's ideology and more generally the success of Chinese modernization, this thesis considers the goal to be establishing China as a major power in the minds of both the Chinese people and the rest of the world. Finally, by making references to China's traditional aspects, the nationalist discourse digs support in its own history, making its particularities more prominent instead of blending into the international community as one member among others. While those elements remain easy to identify as they are often read from a literal point of view, other elements may also refer to affirmative nationalism from an interpretive approach. In this case, the discourse of the 'Great Rejuvenation' and the Chinese dream are two elements that this research associates with nationalism from the documents examined. Indeed, the discourse of rejuvenation is not only a central aspect of Xi's ideology, but it is analyzed here first as an enhancing tool for nationalism, helping gather the masses under one common cause to support. As such, the « great rejuvenation » of the Chinese people is mentioned numerous times throughout the dataset, presented as one of the goals of the People's Republic of China. Xi Jinping's 2022 New Year Address hence clearly mentions the « *path toward the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation* »⁹⁸. When speaking to other countries as well, the Chinese discourse mentions how « *the Chinese people, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, are striving in unity to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation* »⁹⁹. From this quote, this research's analytical framework draws the idea that Chinese officials are pushing the rejuvenation narrative as a way to gather all Chinese people under one common cause, and showcase this project not only to the Chinese people but also to other countries. Rejuvenation is one goal of the CCP that is portrayed not only as an undeniable event, as demonstrated by the several mentions of it as an « *irreversible course* »¹⁰⁰, but also as the path towards greatness. Indeed, documents such as the « Implementing the Guiding Principles of the Central Conference On Work Relating to Foreign Affairs and Breaking New Ground In Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics » mention both the « *rejuvenation of the Chinese nation* »¹⁰¹ and the concepts of « *self-confidence and*

⁹⁸ Chinese President Xi Jinping's 2022 New Year Address, 2021.

⁹⁹ Forging Ahead To Open A New Chapter Of China-Russia Friendship, Cooperation And Common Development, 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Providing New Opportunities to the World Through Chinese Modernization, 2023.

¹⁰¹ Implementing The Guiding Principles Of The Central Conference On Work Relating To Foreign Affairs And Breaking New Ground In Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics, 2024.

self-reliance »¹⁰² in proximity. Chinese rejuvenation is portrayed as a way to unite the nation¹⁰³, move towards progress and along the way also as a positive element for the rest of the world : « *rejuvenation for the Chinese nation and common good for the world* »¹⁰⁴. Therefore, the building of a « *New China* »¹⁰⁵ as promoted by the official Chinese discourse, appears from an analytical approach as the path towards success for China, and enhances the feeling of affirmation for the Chinese people, as well as showcases China's confidence to the rest of the world. To this regard, the interpretation of national rejuvenation by the three-dimensional conceptual framework highly echoes Zhang's work on Xi's vision of China's international relations. Indeed, Zhang's analysis puts national rejuvenation as the frame of reference in China's cognitive frames for the "*mission of the Communist Party*"¹⁰⁶, and considers it the primary aspect in which China may recover from its past humiliations and grow into a major power. National rejuvenation by Zhang's understanding serves as a theme to fuel both domestic support but also "*to restore China's international status to an as yet unspecified rightful position*"¹⁰⁷. This thesis' examination of the national rejuvenation concept finds it more thoroughly linked to a quest for domestic support; nonetheless, the topic of national rejuvenation carries an external reach which may be tackled in the second and third analytical chapters on foreign policy and Tianxia.

3. Xi's ideology

Along the line of the rejuvenation discourse, Xi Jinping's own ideology is often made reference of as a tool for affirmative nationalism throughout this study's analysis. The rejuvenation discourse is proper to Xi's era, and therefore constitutes one of the core aspects of his own ideology. Affirmative nationalism is also identified throughout the mentioning of diverse elements along Xi Jinping's vision. The rejuvenation discourse therefore solely remains one of those aspects, but the dataset renders numerous references to the Chinese project as carried under Xi Jinping's leadership, which from an analytical standpoint showcases the

¹⁰² Implementing The Guiding Principles Of The Central Conference On Work Relating To Foreign Affairs And Breaking New Ground In Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics, 2024.

¹⁰³ "all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation will join forces to create a brighter future for our nation", in 2022 New Year address by President Xi Jinping, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Pulling Together Through Adversity And Toward A Shared Future For All , 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Study And Implement Xi Jinping Thought On Diplomacy Conscientiously And Break New Ground In Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics, 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p.8.

intention for the Chinese government to gather the masses under the banner of Xi Jinping's ideology. Indeed, whereas the marxist and communist ideologies are often mentioned in official discourse, the main reference found in the dataset directly refers to Xi's take on guiding the Chinese people. Documents such as 'Keep Abreast of the Trend of the Times to Shape a Bright Future' explicitly state the need to follow the « *fundamental guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy* »¹⁰⁸. By the same token, this document also refers to Xi's ideology as « *the correct guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era* »¹⁰⁹. The emphasis on « correct guidance » pushes this thesis' interpretation of this element as a nationalist tool towards affirmation of the Chinese nation. Xi Jinping's thought is often presented as a tool to lead the Chinese nation : "*Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, being ever enriching and developing, offers a fundamental guidance for us to analyze and understand the current international situation, and provides a powerful intellectual inspiration for China's external work to forge ahead against all odds*"¹¹⁰; « *guided by Xi Jinping' Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era and Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy* »¹¹¹. Another clue drives the analysis of references to Xi's ideology towards categorizing those as affirmative nationalism. Indeed, there is a link established between Xi's ideological project and other elements typically associated with affirmative nationalism. As mentioned previously, references to traditional Chinese culture are fundamental in shaping China's nationalist discourse, as they provide grounds for legitimacy in the modern Chinese discourse. Hence, linking Xi's ideology to traditional ideas, whether through the mention of Chinese sayings or made explicit as in the communique from 2020 « Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Conscientiously and Break New Ground in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics » : « *Third, Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy carries forward and elevates the fine tradition of the Chinese culture* »¹¹². This method is therefore interpreted as a tool for affirmative nationalism, as it seeks to link Xi's project to the roots of Chinese culture, hence providing legitimacy to the discourse and galvanizing the Chinese people behind his leadership.

To sum up, the dataset examined generally fits the characteristics of affirmative nationalism. From references to China's historical contributions to ancient civilization to humanity through the Silk Roads, to enhancing achievements of modern China as a tool to

¹⁰⁸ Keep Abreast Of The Trend Of The Times To Shape A Bright Future ,2022.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Studying And Implementing Xi Jinping Thought On Diplomacy In A Deep-going Way And Opening Up New Horizons In China's External Work, 2022.

¹¹¹ Rise To The Challenges, Serve The Nation And Embark On A New Journey For Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics, 2021.

¹¹² Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Conscientiously and Break New Ground in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2020.

showcase China's growing role in the international community; the general aim of affirmative nationalism in this study's dataset is to build legitimacy around China's role as a leader in the world, and gather the Chinese people under a united banner, notably the rejuvenation project and Xi Jinping's general ideology. Two aspects can be retained from the dataset and drawn as conclusions for the first sub-question regarding the typology of Whiting as applied to Chinese nationalist discourse. First, elements of those documents showcase the intention to enhance China's self confidence. This is made by targeting the Chinese nation under the ideological project and making references to China's ancient history in order to trigger familiar elements of Chinese culture, linking those to the political project of the CCP under Xi's leadership. Then, another aspect of affirmative nationalism is the intention to showcase the international reach of the country, therefore proving the importance of China's role in the modern world. To this regard, affirmative nationalism heavily relies on Xi Jinping's ideological project. Motifs of great rejuvenation, mentions of the 'Chinese dream' are ways for Chinese officials to present China's success under the scope of Xi's vision. Moreover, making references to China's ancient history by relying on Chinese sayings is considered by the analytical framework as a way to enhance the ancientness of Chinese civilization and make it more legitimate in the context of international relations. Therefore, Chinese nationalist discourse showcases large amounts of affirmation in order to unite the population under the banner of Xi Jinping's ideology, hence it falls under the first category of Whiting's typology as mentioned by this thesis' first sub-question.

Section 3 : Assertive nationalism

1. Motifs of independence and territorial integrity : Defining China's core interests

Nationalism in Chinese official discourse is first identified in this research as motifs of affirmative nationalism. The latter seeks to galvanize the people it is addressed to and unite the Chinese people under the same banner in order to provide support to the political power of the CCP and specifically ensure Xi Jinping's acquired leadership. Hence, it makes use of elements of nationalist speech, as well as references to common projects for the Chinese nation while linking those to Xi Jinping's ideology, in order to enhance the people's conception of China's success as a result of the Chinese nationalist project. Affirmative nationalism is mainly targeted towards the people of the country, as it aims to build self-confidence and better the vision one country has of itself. The case of China easily demonstrates elements of affirmative nationalism,

but as this research leans towards Whiting's three case typology of nationalism, the study now looks for elements of assertive nationalism in Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse. Before evaluating the dataset in regard to assertive elements of nationalism, one may be reminded of Whiting's understanding of assertive nationalism. In his 1983 work, Whiting recalls that « *an assertive nationalism goes beyond this to introduce an emotional and hostile tone to relationships which are posited as historically and fundamentally antagonistic, the implications of which we can consider after reviewing the evidence* »¹¹³. The main aspect to retain from this appellation of assertive nationalism is the idea that it evolves in a context of international relations. Indeed, while affirmative nationalism is a tool to enhance domestic support, assertive nationalism is rather targeted toward external relations. Hence, assertive nationalism is identified as the creation of a dichotomy separating the concept of « us » and « them ». This research therefore chooses to look for elements of assertive nationalism in the demonstration of China as one entity, and the showcasing of a difference between the Chinese society and the rest of the world. Based on our analytical framework, there are three main aspects in which the thesis observes assertive elements of nationalism. First, motifs of independence and references to China's territorial integrity, such as references to mutual respect and differentiations among countries in the context of international organizations speeches, and then references to key concepts such as sovereignty and territorial integrity when tackling sensitive topics shall be identified as assertive nationalism.

2. References to mutual respect in contexts of international organizations : UN Speeches

In the context of international relations, China showcases elements of assertive nationalism first by drawing the line between China and the rest of the world. The explicit dichotomy expressed is what this thesis considers as a motif of assertive nationalism. Indeed, by recalling what separates China from other countries, China showcases its own independence and its willingness to safeguard its territorial integrity. This pattern is first found through the recurring mentions of « mutual respect » in Chinese official discourse. Specifically, the research looks here for speeches made in the context of the United Nations, or other international instances. As those events gather several countries, they provide China with the grounds to reassure its own power to the face of the international community. Indeed, the analytical framework identifies the concept of mutual respect first as a way for China to ensure

¹¹³ Whiting, Allen S. "Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy." *Asian Survey* 23, no. 8 (1983): 913–33.

good relations with other countries it has relations with. To this regard, China seeks to make itself well-known to other countries by often mentioning « *mutual respect and mutual benefit* »¹¹⁴ as two key associated concepts in its relations to other countries. Respect and benefit are often closely mentioned in Chinese discourse as a way to enhance the positive aspects for the international community to maintain relations with China. Nonetheless, mutual respect is also a tool for the Chinese government to remind its external relations of the difference between China and other countries. This means that mutual respect may be used to ensure positive relations, but it is first and foremost a reminder by the Chinese of Beijing's intentions to safeguard its integrity. Indeed, numerous mentions of key concepts such as sovereignty and territorial integrity are made in the context of international organizations such as the United Nations throughout this research's dataset. There are two main ways in which those references to sovereignty are identified throughout the documents examined, directly or indirectly in relation to China's core interests. Indeed, in the context of international organizations, China chooses to either publicly claim its interests for safeguarding its own sovereignty, but may also advocate the concept in more general settings. For instance, communiques such as « Making the World a Safer Place » and « Jointly Building the International Organization for Mediation to Establish a New Platform for Peaceful Resolution of International Disputes » are in line with the concept of mutual respect, by making reference to safeguarding the sovereignty of all countries : respectively, « *the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected* »¹¹⁵, « *interference in other countries' internal affairs, in whatever name, disregards and defies the basic norms of international relations* »¹¹⁶ and the reminder to « *respect the sovereignty, core interests* »¹¹⁷ of countries. By the same token, China publicly advocates for « *non-interference in internal affairs and opposes imposing one's will on others* »¹¹⁸, hence pushing the narrative of national sovereignty among the international community. However, those mentions remain quite vague when taken out of their context. To this regard, interpretive reading brings this research to view those mentions of sovereignty in relation to China's own domestic situation. Indeed, as it advocates for non-interference and the safeguarding of countries' territorial integrity, China first and foremost applies this rule to its own situation. By several times, speeches or position papers made to the United Nations refer explicitly to China's intentions of delimitating its relations with other

¹¹⁴ China Issues Position Paper On UN's 75th Anniversary, 2020.

¹¹⁵ Making The World A Safer Place, 2023.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Jointly Building The International Organization For Mediation To Establish A New Platform For Peaceful Resolution Of International Disputes, 2023.

¹¹⁸ China Serves As A Staunch Force For Stability In A Turbulent World, 2024.

countries : « *no interference in China's internal affairs will ever be allowed* »¹¹⁹; along the same line, Chinese officials ensure the continuity of this discourse in their own speeches : « *we will resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests* »¹²⁰. Therefore, the context of international organizations is the place for China to advocate for territorial integrity and mutual respect among countries, but this discourse reads from an analytical point of view as a way for China to remind the international community of its own desire to safeguard its national sovereignty, and limit relations with other countries that may be considered as intrusions. To this regard, assertive nationalism is observed in those documents, as China clearly draws a limit in its relations to other countries, therefore clearly showcasing a line between the « us » and « them » as explained by Whiting's work.

3. References to sovereignty and territorial integrity or core interests when meddling with 'sensitive topics'

Furthermore, the safeguarding of China's sovereignty is in official discourse explicitly associated with cases that China considers its core interests. Indeed, the discourse surrounding interference and China's will to protect its territorial integrity largely echoes back to matters of territorial disputes. Hence, China making mentions of its advocacy for mutual respect and territorial integrity no longer showcases the country's lines between domestic and external relations, but is also a way to assert its intentions to the rest of the international community. In the framework of this research, China's public discourse therefore must be interpreted in the context of the territorial disputes it is embedded into. This thesis identifies three main cases in which the discourse of sovereignty and the principles of non-interference are carried out by Chinese officials, with the aim to showcase the firmness of China's power to other countries. First, the topic of international disputes with the territory of Taiwan finds itself highly related to the mention of key concepts such as « *core interests* »¹²¹ and the lexical field of « *interference* »¹²². By the same token, documents in relation to Hong Kong matters showcase the same use of lexical field of interference, also mentioning « *violation* »¹²³. One must also take into consideration that those associations happen in the context of international actions : in this case, the documents this research chooses to quote were published in response to US diplomatic actions in relation to either Taiwan or Hong Kong. As China considers those actions

¹¹⁹ Position Paper Of The People's Republic Of China For The 74th Session Of The United Nations General Assembly, 2019.

¹²⁰ Foreign Minister Qin Gang Meets The Press, 2023.

¹²¹ Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019.

as interference in its domestic affairs, Beijing publicly states its intention to safeguard China's sovereignty, and hence sends a signal to the US and other countries of its intention to protect what it considers its core interests. Overall, recurring motifs of safeguarding China's interests and sovereignty, specifically when there are events regarding territorial disputes such as Hong Kong or Taiwan can be observed in official Chinese discourse. Those elements are associated within the framework as signs of assertive nationalism, as they showcase the country's will to create a dichotomy between China and the rest of the world, and they intervene as a warning from China to defend its core interests. Assertive nationalism is therefore identified in this section as the creation of a dichotomy between the Chinese country and the rest of the world, which may be explored in further detail when dealing with China's foreign policy motives in Chapter 5. As a conclusion, assertive nationalism in Chinese official discourse takes the form of motifs regarding several key concepts linked to the country's delimitations : sovereignty, core interests and interference. Mentioning those ideas and advocating for mutual respect is a way for China to publicly defend its intentions and its refusal to let other countries meddle in what it considers internal affairs.

Section 4 : Aggressive nationalism

1. References to the US as an antagonistic power : lexical field of division

After reviewing several indicators that relate either to affirmative or assertive nationalism, this research finds the same conclusion that Whiting did in his 1995 work about the state of Chinese official discourse. The Chinese government uses affirmative nationalism to gather domestic support, as well as assertive nationalism to secure its position and its intentions among other countries. This next section is therefore dedicated to questioning whether the Chinese discourse on nationalism may have evolved towards a more aggressive position since Whiting's work. According to the latter, aggressive nationalism is a political discourse in which is identified « *a serious threat that requires action to defend vital interests* »¹²⁴. In this section, the analytical framework is made to identify a certain threat that China would expose as a direct contender to its own power, and would produce threats of retaliation against. According to the set of documents this thesis is based on, such an actor is most easily identified as the United States of America. Although other actors and elements may refer to aggressive nationalism, the

¹²⁴ Whiting, Allen S. "Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng." *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 295–316.

research has established that the majority of elements relating to aggressive nationalism all target the US. Hence, this section first sums up the references to the US as an antagonist actor when compared to the People's Republic of China, showcasing the large differences between the two powers. Then, we may review how official Chinese discourse often pinpoints the US as a source of danger through rhetoric and verbal confrontation. To this regard, this section mentions the existence of several documents dedicated exclusively to directly answering actions from the US. Finally, aggressive nationalism will be questioned in this section through the review of China portraying itself as a victim in regard to the US power.

First, the Chinese discourse often revolves around the US in public instances, and most of those mentions display Washington as antagonistic. This pattern showcases how the US and China are fundamentally different from one another, notably through the use of lexical fields of division. For instance in a press communique, Foreign Minister Wang Yi explicitly questions the state of US-China relations, asking if they should be « *partners or rivals ? Should they engage in mutually beneficial cooperation or antagonism and confrontation ?* »¹²⁵. Figures of speech creating opposition when describing the relation of the two powers are often reviewed throughout the dataset, cementing the idea that China and US are two fundamentally opposed countries. This thesis picks up on the lexical field of rivalry as a way for China to showcase this idea : « *to continue with peaceful coexistence, or to veer into conflict and confrontation; to go on with openness and cooperation, or to turn back into seclusion and antagonism ?* »¹²⁶. Some documents also directly mention the rivalry between the two powers, such as « US Hegemony and its Perils » expressing « *division, rivalry and confrontation* »¹²⁷, or « China's comprehensive, systematic and elaborate response to Secretary Antony Blinken's China policy speech », which speaks of a « *systemic rivalry* »¹²⁸. Hence, the US is portrayed as China's largest antagonistic actor throughout China's official discourse through the use of lexical fields of rivalry and division when tackling issues surrounding the relation with the US.

2. Pinpointing the US as a threat : lying and danger

Furthermore, the US is also depicted by Beijing as a source of threat. Hence, not only is

¹²⁵ Wang Yi Speaks To The Press About The Summit Meeting Between Chinese And U.S. Presidents In San Francisco, 2023.

¹²⁶ Drawing Wisdom From History To Light Up The Road Ahead, 2022.

¹²⁷ US Hegemony And Its Perils, 2023.

¹²⁸ China's Comprehensive, Systematic And Elaborate Response To Secretary Antony Blinken's China Policy Speech_Embassy Of The People's Republic Of China In The United States Of America, 2022.

the US perceived by China as a fundamentally opposed country in all matters, it is also portrayed as a danger towards the Chinese nation and the rest of the world. This first aspect in which this phenomenon is showcased is through the use of lexical fields of lies and falsehoods. Indeed, China repeatedly associates the US with concepts such as a « *lie of the century* »¹²⁹, « *falsehoods* »¹³⁰, and accuses Washington of fabrication « *the false narrative of 'democracy vs authoritarianism'* »¹³¹. Then, Chinese discourse also calls out the US publicly on creating political instability and being a danger both to China and to the international community. « The Right Way for China and the United States to Get along in the New Era » is a document specifically determining the conditions of the relation between the US and China; nonetheless it mentions how « *the US has made repeated provocations* »¹³² and « *overstretched the concept of national security* »¹³³ therefore meddled into China's core interests and created instability among the two powers. Other documents directly mention the « *ill intentions of the US* »¹³⁴ and the risk of the two countries « *having a collision* »¹³⁵. In those cases, Beijing explicitly calls out the US for instigating political chaos by not only interfering creating tensions with China, but also by going « *against international law* »¹³⁶ and interfering into China's internal affairs, for example in regard to the Taiwan situation. Finally, the dataset shows the existence of certain documents dedicated exclusively to attacking the US, with the intention to portray the American superpower as a danger to the international community. « The American Genocide of the Indians — Historical Facts and Real Evidence » constitutes a clear example of China's perception of the US as a danger. Indeed, this document directly accuses the US of hegemony and imperialism through the example of the Indian community in the US. As Beijing uses terms like « *genocide* »¹³⁷, « *slaughtering* »¹³⁸, « *bloody massacres and atrocities* »¹³⁹ to describe the US action towards the Indian community, this pattern is interpreted through the study's analytical framework as a mean to frame the US as an imperialist country abusing its power, and therefore being a danger to the general community. Therefore, not only does the US appear

¹²⁹ China's Comprehensive, Systematic And Elaborate Response To Secretary Antony Blinken's China Policy Speech_Embassy Of The People's Republic Of China In The United States Of America, 2022.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ State Councilor And Foreign Minister Wang Yi Gives Interview To Xinhua News Agency And China Media Group On International Situation And China's Diplomacy In 2021.

¹³² The Right Way For China And The United States To Get Along In The New Era, 2022.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Foreign Ministry Statement, 2020.

¹³⁵ Galvanizing Our Peoples Into A Strong Force For The Cause Of China-U.S. Friendship, 2023.

¹³⁶ Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu on Pelosi's Visit to Taiwan, 2022.

¹³⁷ The American Genocide Of The Indians—Historical Facts And Real Evidence, 2022.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

as a threat to the peaceful coexistence with China, but in a larger scope they are depicted as a threat to the world order and stability.

3. Direct responses and reactions to the US in communiques



By the same token, the research shows how China goes to certain lengths to describe the US as profoundly antagonistic power, but also as a general threat to the world order. Indeed, by publishing several communiques in direct response or reaction to American diplomatic action, Beijing showcases its intention to negatively react to the US moves, notably regarding sensitive topics such as Hong Kong or Taiwan. Among those documents, many mention the turmoil brought to the world order by the US action, framing the latter as the sole instigator of instability : « *the US itself is the largest source of disruption to the actual world order* »¹⁴⁰, « *the US might as well be called the most belligerent country in the history of the world* »¹⁴¹, « *this crisis is unilaterally provoked by the US* »¹⁴² and calling out the « *perils of the US practices to world peace and stability* »¹⁴³. From this rhetoric used against the US, the Chinese government's intention is interpreted as framing the US as the main threat to international relations. Beijing specifically identifies Washington as the only actor disrupting the peace in international relations, which contributes to the narrative of aggressive nationalism, in the sense that US action jeopardizes China's core interests. Moreover, the lexical field of lying is also used in those documents : « *the US is the biggest source of disinformation* »¹⁴⁴ and calling out the « *malicious and hegemonic nature of US intentions* »¹⁴⁵, which further contributes to the narrative of the US as a source of political instability, notably regarding matters like Hong Kong.

4. China perceives itself as a victim

In contrast to the framing of the US as the biggest threat to China's national security and the existing international order, the dataset showcases the Chinese official discourse in a state of victimization. Indeed, this is interpreted from an analytical point of view as a way to create

¹⁴⁰ China's Comprehensive, Systematic And Elaborate Response To Secretary Antony Blinken's China Policy Speech_Embassy Of The People's Republic Of China In The United States Of America, 2022.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu on Pelosi's Visit to Taiwan, 2022.

¹⁴³ Foreign Ministry Statement, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ China's Comprehensive, Systematic And Elaborate Response To Secretary Antony Blinken's China Policy Speech_Embassy Of The People's Republic Of China In The United States Of America, 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019.

distance between the overwhelming danger of US action in international relations and China's peaceful position. To this regard, several documents recall how the US « *viciously attacks* »¹⁴⁶ and « *seeks to stigmatize* »¹⁴⁷ the Chinese position, notably regarding Uyghurs mistreatment, which Beijing considers a topic of internal affairs and therefore accuses the US of interference. Then, action from the US in regard to the Hong Kong situation is perceived as an attack towards Beijing, making the mention of « *those who are opposed to China* »¹⁴⁸. Finally, Beijing goes to the length of framing itself as the victim in international relations in order to legitimize the negative feeling towards US action, as it claims in response to Secretary Antony Blinker's China policy speech, that « *China is the top victim of disinformation [disseminated by the U.S.]* »¹⁴⁹. Those elements of rhetoric found in either speeches or communiques and addressed directly to the US or to larger scopes of the international community are all patterns of the Chinese intention to portray the US as aggressive towards China, and framing the US as a direct threat to China's national security, notably when it meddles into what China considers its internal affairs. Hence, aggressive nationalism can be observed to a certain extent in Chinese official discourse, as it identifies one country as the main source of opposition and portrays it as a danger to the country's core interests. However, because there is no evidence found in the dataset of China explicitly calling for retaliation against US action, it is difficult to consider that China has entered a period of aggressive nationalism.

Regarding China's portrayal of itself as a victim in contrast to the interfering power of the US echoes back to the humiliation narrative recurrent in China's official discourse. Indeed, China has been drawing from its own history of the 19th century such as European colonization, unequal treaties and Opium wars, to enhance the hardships it has had to overcome¹⁵⁰. Humiliation is therefore used for different purposes in the case of China's relations to Western powers. However, this thesis makes the distinction between China's victimization discourse in regard to what it considers US interference and the larger discourse on national humiliation, used rather to feed into the national rejuvenation narrative. Two documents report representative quotes regarding the latter argument : Xi Jinping's speech at the 100th

¹⁴⁶ Foreign Ministry Statement, 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Fact Sheet : U.S. Interference In Hong Kong Affairs And Support For Anti-China, Destabilizing Forces, 2021.

¹⁴⁹ China's Comprehensive, Systematic And Elaborate Response To Secretary Antony Blinken's China Policy Speech_Embassy Of The People's Republic Of China In The United States Of America, 2022.

¹⁵⁰ "The official line of the party-state is still to insist on these unequal treaties and on the humiliations suffered by China at the hands of Western powers, in a permanent effort to victimize and justify China's decline on both a regional and international scale by holding foreign powers accountable", in Courmont, B., Lemaire, V. (2023). L'Humiliation nationale au service d'un discours chinois décomplexé, ASIA FOCUS n°205.

anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party :

*"The Chinese nation is a great nation. With a history of more than 5,000 years, China has made indelible contributions to the progress of human civilization. After the Opium War of 1840, however, China was gradually reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society and suffered greater ravages than ever before. The country endured intense humiliation, the people were subjected to great pain, and the Chinese civilization was plunged into darkness. Since that time, national rejuvenation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation."*¹⁵¹

and his speech at the first session of the 14th National People's Congress :

*"With the advent of modern times, China was reduced to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society, when bullying by foreign powers and frequent wars tore the country apart and plunged the Chinese people into an abyss of great suffering. Since its founding, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has closely united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in working hard for a century to put an end to China's national humiliation. The Chinese people have become the masters of their future, the Chinese nation has achieved the great transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong, and China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability."*¹⁵²

From these two documents, this thesis argues that national humiliation is primarily used by the Chinese Communist Party to feed into the nationalist narrative of national rejuvenation. To this regard, humiliation is perceived by the three-dimensional conceptual framework as a concept mostly targeted towards the Chinese population, with the aim to galvanize the people under Xi Jinping's ideology. Despite other literature finding that the humiliation discourse is used as a mean for China to justify aggressive behavior¹⁵³¹⁵⁴, this thesis' three-dimensional framework finds that the humiliation discourse is rather used to feed into domestic support, which to this study's understanding, relates to affirmative nationalism. Therefore, while some literature may review the humiliation discourse as a pattern of aggressive behavior, this thesis marks the distinction between what is aimed towards the Chinese people, and seeks to enhance nationalist feelings, and what is claimed towards the rest of the world. As suggested by the review of Zhang's work in the literature review, humiliation is used rather to feed into the

¹⁵¹ Speech by Xi Jinping at a ceremony marking the centenary of the Communist Party of China. 2021.

¹⁵² Full text of Xi Jinping's speech at first session of 14th NPC, 2023.

¹⁵³ Courmont, B., Lemaire, V. (2023). L'Humiliation nationale au service d'un discours chinois décomplexé, ASIA FOCUS n°205.

¹⁵⁴ Grosser, P. (2019). De l'histoire de la puissance chinoise à la puissance chinoise par l'histoire. Revue internationale et stratégique, 115, 27-37.

“Chinese dream” narrative¹⁵⁵, which qualifies it as affirmative nationalism to this research’s report.



Section 5 : Conclusions about Chinese nationalism with reference to Whiting’s typology

The main goal of this section was to answer the first operationalized sub-question of this thesis : **how does Xi Jinping’s rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism in the sense of Whiting’s typology** ? The three-dimensional conceptual framework served this section to question the application of Whiting’s typology on nationalism to the dataset of this thesis. As reviewed in Whiting’s work on China¹⁵⁶, motifs of affirmative and assertive nationalism have been identified in Chinese official discourse after the Deng era. By analyzing documents collected under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the thesis finds that there are no concrete signs of a drastic change in **nationalist discourse** during Xi’s era : elements of affirmative and assertive nationalism are identified in China’s official discourse. However, aggressive nationalism remains limited to pinpointing the US as the instigator of the instability in the US-China relation. To this regard, China portrays the US as a danger through the use of lexical fields of divisions, falsehoods, and sometimes calls it out in response to some diplomatic actions. Nonetheless, one may quote Whiting’s 1983 work to decipher the idea that « *China clearly values good relations with [...] the US for obvious economic and strategic reasons* »¹⁵⁷. Indeed, while China has seen a rise in its self-confidence, to the point of calling out American action on pursuing its own agenda at the expense of the interest of other countries, but also confronting the US for undermining China’s interest through diplomatic activities such as the signature of Hong Kong-related documents. When it considers that its own core interests are violated, Beijing does not advocate for formal action against the US, and instead chooses to showcase itself as the victim in the relation. Hence, motifs of self-confidence and self-reliance have become prominent in China’ official discourse, but it is too early to consider that China has shifted towards a general trend of aggressive nationalism, as it shows no sign of wanting to take action directly against the main threat of the US power. Therefore, the first two types of nationalism can easily be identified in China’s discourse, and there are elements of

¹⁵⁵ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

¹⁵⁶ Whiting, Allen S. “Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng.” *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 295–316.

¹⁵⁷ Whiting, Allen S. “Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy.” *Asian Survey* 23, no. 8 (1983).

aggressiveness in China's speech, but this research does not consider it robust evidence to indicate a shift in China's nationalistic discourse towards an aggressive nationalist policy. Aggressiveness is targeted toward the US-China relation and other sensitive topics such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, meddling with China's core interests, but it does not seek to subvert the existing world order by launching military actions against the US. This chapter helped answering the first operationalized sub-question of this thesis by analyzing China's nationalist discourse according to Whiting's typology. It is considered that China nowadays showcases strong signs of self-confidence and assertiveness; to this extent, this thesis considers that it has evolved from the state it was in at the time of Whiting's analysis in 1995. In contrast, we find that China has long abandoned its Deng policy, and is now placing itself at the center of international relations, and the next chapter of this research further explores the intentions and motives behind China's foreign policy. However, the extent of this research's conclusions must be taken into account when classifying China's nationalist discourse into Whiting's typology. Indeed, the concept of national humiliation is to the three-dimensional conceptual framework, analyzed as an element of affirmative nationalism. Despite this consideration, other literature also finds in the use of the national humiliation narrative a mean for legitimacy to justify aggressive behavior¹⁵⁸. To this extent, China portraying itself as the victim may not contradict with future plans for aggression. However, as this thesis solely seeks to provide a description of China's own vision of itself, conclusions are exclusively drawn from the three-dimensional conceptual framework and the engagement with the dataset. This research's conclusions on Chinese nationalist discourse therefore may present some limits, but classifies the topic of humiliation as a primarily domestic tool, aimed to fuel national support and enhance the goal towards national rejuvenation, instead of pin-pointing one clear enemy against which to take action. Finally, this thesis does not seek to redefine the nature of the relation among the US and China by examining China's discourse on US positions. The main concern of this study is to understand the logic and concern of China's nationalistic discourse. To this regard, critiques may appear in regard to the use of Whiting's typology, which might not be sufficient and may be obsolete to qualify China's current nationalistic discourse. To limit the shortcomings of this thesis, this study includes other theoretical frameworks such as Zhang's cognitive frames into the three-dimensional conceptual framework. Such a process ensures encompassing a larger scope of literature on the dataset, and providing external arguments to direct this research towards drawing conclusions.

¹⁵⁸ Grosser, P. (2019). De l'histoire de la puissance chinoise à la puissance chinoise par l'histoire. *Revue internationale et stratégique*, 115, 27-37.

CHAPTER 5 : THE MOTIVES OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY



The second analytical chapter of this thesis is dedicated to examining China's official discourse on foreign policy. The primary goal of this section is to collect elements of answer to this research second sub-question : **what are the motives behind Xi Jinping's foreign policy decisions ?** To answer this question, the research consisted of establishing links between CCP official speeches and communiques and linking those to goals of foreign policy which may be useful to this research. In order to orient this thesis, the literature review provided background academic research on China's foreign policy motives. Therefore, this section relies mainly on the work of Zhang's 2019 "The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations" to tackle concepts of foreign policy. The aim of this section is to question whether China's foreign policy discourse can be associated with the latter's work. As mentioned in previous chapters, Chinese foreign policy is highly linked to the official nationalist discourse. To this regard, this thesis provided mention of Callahan's work regarding the typology of nationalism according to the motives of foreign policy : nativism, conquest, conversion or diaspora¹⁵⁹. Although this typology is not formally included in this thesis's conceptual framework, those concepts may be mobilized after reviewing the dataset, to ensure further comprehension of China's official discourse on foreign policy and linking it to a nationalist aspect. Regarding Zhang's work, this section mostly relies on two of the three aspects explored in his work, given as the concept of national rejuvenation has been tackled in Chapter 4 and is, to this thesis's understanding, closely associated with a domestic aspect of nationalism rather than a tool for foreign policy. Hence, while nationalism and foreign policy are inherently linked in both Zhang and Callahan's view for example, this framework finds that rejuvenation relates rather to affirmative nationalism because it is a duel in the Chinese dream narrative. Therefore, this section is focused on the other two concepts present in Zhang's analysis of Xi Jinping's vision of international relations : global community and Chinese contribution. By relying on his analysis of Xi's conception of China's relations, this thesis ensures closer association between the documents examined and the existing literature on the topic. This chapter's analysis is divided into several sections according to the elements picked up throughout the dataset. First, a table of several representative documents this research includes is presented in order to provide background on the types of documents that this chapter mostly mobilizes : the following table provides an overview of a few speeches and policy announcements provided by the Chinese government in

¹⁵⁹ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

international instances, and how the three-dimensional conceptual framework analyzes those documents.

Table 5-1. Compilation of representative documents of the analysis in regard to Chinese foreign policy discourse.

Date	Title of the speech/announcement	International entity	Keynotes
2023-05	Xi Jinping's keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit	China-Central Asia Summit	Lexical field of cooperation : « shared future, friendship »; « mutual assistance »
2023-10	Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era	Foreign policy announcement	Lexical field of cooperation : « mutual benefits », « win-win cooperation » Lexical field of ideological proximity : « Asian Dream »
2023-10	Chair's Statement of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation	BRI Forum	Lexical field of cooperation : « Silk Road Spirit of peace and cooperation », « joint efforts and shared benefits »
2023-09	Speech by H.E. Li Qiang Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China At the 26th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit	ASEAN Plus China, Japan and ROK Summit	Elements of regionalism : « move toward an integrated regional market » Lexical field of cultural proximity : « we share a common home », « all members of the same East Asian family »
2022-11	Joint Statement on The 20th Anniversary of The Declaration on The Conduct of Parties in The South China Sea	ASEAN Summit	Lexical field of cooperation : « peaceful coexistence », « mutual respect, « promotion of friendly relations »
2022-06	XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration	BRICS Summit	Lexical field of cooperation : « mutual respect and understanding »; « mutual trust »; « deepening cooperation », « strengthen international cooperation and dialogue »; « inclusive consultation and collaboration »
2021-12	Remarks by State Councilor Wang Yi At the Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for	BRI Forum	Lexical field of family : « BRI family members »

	International Cooperation 2021		
2019-09	China and the United Nations: Position Paper of the People's Republic of China For the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly	UN Session	Promotion of a « new model of international relations » 
2022-11	Working Together to Meet the Challenges of Our Times and Build a Better Future	G20 Summit	Reference to « major countries » and idea that « all major countries should perform their responsibilities »
2022-02	Drawing Wisdom from History to Light up the Road Ahead	Shanghai Communique Anniversary	Mention of the US and China as « major countries » Link with the role of major countries : « we must should responsibilities as major countries »
2023-09	Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Jointly Deliver a Brighter Future for the World	UN Session	Reference to « major country » Link with the role of a major country : « fulfill the mission of a major country »

Source: author compiles from Xinhua News, 2023; Embassy of the People Republic of China in the Kingdom of Cambodia, 2023; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2023; ASEAN, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022 ; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs News, 2019; China Daily, 2022; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Jamaica, 2023.

Then, Chapter 5 provides an overview of the core elements of answer to this chapter's sub-question by tackling first the topic of cooperation and good-neighboring policy. This chapter then picks up on different motifs of speech in the context of regionalist instances; the further section tackles the topic of multilateralism and the existing world order in China's official discourse. Finally, Chapter 5 examines the concepts of "major-country diplomacy" as a part of China's foreign policy motives and the promotion of a new model of international relations before drawing conclusions in accordance to the three-dimensional conceptual framework.

Section 1 : Cooperation and good-neighboring policy

This chapter is dedicated to analyzing the motives of foreign policy in Chinese official discourse in order to better comprehend Xi Jinping's ideology under the scope of foreign policy. In a second time, answering the sub-question of this chapter will guide the research towards the general research question, which seeks to analyze the extent to which Tianxia may influence Xi Jinping's nationalist discourse on foreign policy. After analyzing the dataset according to the three-dimensional conceptual framework, the research can be divided into several key concepts that were examined and represent elements of answer to the sub-question. Indeed, the first recurrent motive observed in which Chinese foreign policy decision is the concept of cooperation and the general idea of a "good-neighboring policy". This concept is one of the most recurrent throughout the dataset across all thematics interrogated in this thesis. To this regard, elements relating to the lexical field of cooperation are often mentioned in different manners. Among the documents, some representative quotes include the XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration, that advocates for "*deepening cooperation*"¹⁶⁰, strengthening "*international cooperation and dialogue*"¹⁶¹ as well as "*inclusive consultation and collaboration*"¹⁶². Calling for international cooperation is highly recurrent in China's official foreign policy discourse, as is displayed not only in instances such as BRICS summit, but also at the United Nations : at the Climate Action Summit and at the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, China advocates to "*enhance cooperation with other countries*"¹⁶³ and "*strengthen international cooperation*"¹⁶⁴. Instances such as the Belt and Road Initiative forums mention China's intention to promote the "*Silk Road Spirit of peace and cooperation*"¹⁶⁵ and call for "*joint efforts*"¹⁶⁶ of all members. Cooperation is presented by Beijing as one of its major goals, showcasing the country as a very open member of the international community, as a quote from a Position Paper issued in regard to China's interaction with the UN illustrates : "*China has worked tirelessly to advance international cooperation*"¹⁶⁷. Indeed, elements of cooperation are closely associated with an idea of beneficial outcome, hence China's discourse on foreign

¹⁶⁰ XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration, 2022.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ UN Climate Action Summit : China's Position and Action, 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Position Paper of the People's Republic of China On the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, 2020.

¹⁶⁵ Chair's Statement of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2023; Remarks by H.E. Wang Yi at the Press Conference of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2023.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Position Paper on China's Cooperation with the United Nations, 2021.

policy is often linked with the concept of “win-win” and “mutual benefits”. China seeks to enhance its relations with other countries because it considers that intensifying international relations is the key to beneficial outcomes for both itself and the countries it interacts with. Therefore, this thesis finds that the set of documents often link cooperation directly with a positive end result. Some representative quotes regarding this argument includes the mention of “*joint efforts and shared benefits*”¹⁶⁸, the advocacy for “*cooperation and shared benefits*”¹⁶⁹, and “*deepening international cooperation for shared benefits*”¹⁷⁰. From this research’ interpretation of the dataset, the concept of “*win-win cooperation*”¹⁷¹ is picked up as the main trait to describe China’s intentions regarding outer relations, as it is often mentioned in the titles of the documents examined. These documents therefore showcase the idea that cooperation is beneficial for both China and its partners through the key concepts of win-win cooperation and mutual benefits. These mentions generally intervene in settings of regional or world instances such as BRICS or the United Nations, but also in bilateral agreements¹⁷². Based on the analysis on the set of documents, concepts like “*mutual trust*”¹⁷³, “*mutual understanding*”¹⁷⁴ and “*mutual learning*”¹⁷⁵ also feed into the narrative that cooperation is the best way for countries to interact with one another, by supporting the idea that they may learn and gain much from cooperating with China. Finally, events like the COVID-19 outbreak also represented occasions for China to advocate for international cooperation, as terms such as “*mutually beneficial cooperation*”¹⁷⁶ and the “international firewall of cooperation against COVID-19” appear in documents issued in regard to managing of the pandemic. Therefore, this thesis’ conceptual framework allows the interpretation of the dataset as a foreign policy discourse primarily linked with the idea of cooperation. Enhancing exchanges with China is likely to favor both China and the countries it deals with, which is why Beijing largely advocates for “win-win cooperation”.

¹⁶⁸ Chair’s Statement of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2023.

¹⁶⁹ Position Paper of the People's Republic of China On the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation, 2020.

¹⁷¹ Rise to the Challenges, Serve the Nation and Embark on a New Journey for Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2021 ; Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance, Openness and Inclusiveness, Fairness and Justice, and Win-Win Cooperation, 2024 ; Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation, 2020.

¹⁷² Beijing Declaration-Toward an Even Stronger China-Africa Community with a Shared Future, 2018.

¹⁷³ Building a China-Viet Nam Community with a Shared Future That Carries Strategic Significance And Writing Together a New Chapter in Our Modernization Drive, 2023.

¹⁷⁴ Enhancing Mutual Trust and Cooperation To Embrace an Even Better Future of China-EU Relations, 2019.

¹⁷⁵ Proposal of the People’s Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance, 2023.

¹⁷⁶ Serving the Country and Contributing to the World: China's Diplomacy in a Time of Unprecedented Global Changes and a Once-in-a-Century Pandemic, 2020.

China seems to acknowledge that cooperation and a general state of openness among countries, at least in instances of economic exchange like the BRI projects and other bilateral agreements, is essential to its foreign policy. It is likely that China considers economic exchange as the key to bettering its position in the world. The recurrence of the cooperation concept and the advocacy for the latter are easily linked with the literature review of Zhang's work. Indeed, the concept of "global community"¹⁷⁷ is familiar to the analysis of China's foreign policy discourse, and this thesis draws the link between the two concepts. Furthermore, the cognitive frame of "Chinese contribution" may also be linked to this thesis's engagement with the documents. By promoting international cooperation and mutual benefits, China is likely to seek the smoothing of its own position among the international community, and give out a positive image of itself. Moreover, the Chinese discourse on foreign policy regarding mutual benefits brings this research to consider China's intention one step further. Indeed, China is not only trying to improve its image, but also to make itself more useful and promote its own role within international instances.

Section 2 : The discourse on regionalism : cultural proximity

Based on what has been examined in the first section of this chapter, the concept of cooperation is key in defining the motives behind Xi Jinping's foreign policy decision. Indeed, the recurrence of mentions of terms within the lexical field of cooperation or in close association to the latter provide this thesis with the elements to put cooperation as one main goal of China. By drawing these observations to the literature review and the three-dimensional conceptual framework, it is easy to take into consideration the cognitive frames of "global community" and "Chinese contribution" to understand what motivates China to enhance its discourse on cooperation. Indeed, this idea of collaboration is first and foremost evoked through regional instances, but the analysis of the dataset according to the three-dimensional conceptual framework goes further than solely promoting cooperation. In regional frameworks, it appears from the interaction with the data, that China seeks to showcase some emphasis on its cultural proximity with its closest neighbors. This argument is motivated by the examination of several documents in relation to regional instances such as the China-Central Asia Summit or the ASEAN meetings, but also in political communiqués issued directly by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presenting the directions for China's foreign policy. Indeed, while China seems to advocate cooperation with all the members of the international community, it

¹⁷⁷ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

showcases more dedication to its engagement with countries geographically closer, such as members of the ASEAN. In this sense, the analysis of the dataset first finds some recurrence in the mention of concepts linked to regionalism. While those documents mention ideas like “win-win cooperation”¹⁷⁸, many also mention aspects that go further than solely economic cooperation. Indeed, China generally advocates for the intensification of regional projects, as demonstrated by the speech “Opening a New Chapter Together For Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation”, in which Xi Jinping says : “we need to uphold open regionalism”¹⁷⁹; another example is Li Qiang’s speech at the Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China At the 26th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit, calling all members to “move toward an integrated regional market”¹⁸⁰. Those documents showcase China’s willingness to engage with its close neighbors and promote economic interaction in order to better be integrated into the world’s economy, as demonstrated by the quote : “East Asia is an important engine driving world economic growth”¹⁸¹. Indeed, regionalism also appears as one of the key components of China’s foreign policy, and China showcases itself open to cooperation with its neighbors, as quoted : “China is ready to work with Asian-Pacific countries”¹⁸². Countries of East-Asia and the Asia-Pacific region are generally linked to the vocabulary of community in China’s official discourse, through the mention of the “Asia-Pacific community”¹⁸³ in an APEC meeting speech for example. But where China goes further than when dealing with the rest of the world in its foreign policy discourse is in the concepts of friendship and family. Indeed, China seems to showcase more proximity with countries of its geographical or with which it has close relations. For example, a document presenting China’s vision for its foreign policy, “China’s Diplomacy in 2021 : Embracing a Global Vision and Serving the Nation and its People”, emphasizes China’s affirmation of friendship with the countries it has regional connections with : “we have focused on regional cooperation to cement the foundation of friendship”¹⁸⁴. Moreover, it is likely that Beijing seeks to promote the regional projects into cultural instances of proximity. What brings this thesis to this element of answer is the association of the lexical field of family to regional instances. Indeed, several documents

¹⁷⁸ Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China on Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture, 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Opening a New Chapter Together For Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2021

¹⁸⁰ Speech by H.E. Li Qiang Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China At the 26th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit, 2023.

¹⁸¹ Speech by H.E. Li Keqiang Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China At the 25th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit, 2022.

¹⁸² Let Us Strengthen Confidence and Solidarity and Jointly Build a Closer Partnership for Belt and Road Cooperation, 2021.

¹⁸³ Opening a New Chapter Together For Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ China's Diplomacy in 2021: Embracing a Global Vision and Serving the Nation and its People, 2021.

showcase China's proximity with its interlocutors : in Xi Jinping's keynote speech at a China-Central Asia Summit, the quote "*brotherhood*"¹⁸⁵ is picked up from the description of China's relations with Central Asian countries. Another example finds itself in Li Qiang's speech at ASEAN Plus' 26th Summit, where the Minister describes the countries of this regional instance as "*all members of the same East Asian family*"¹⁸⁶. Then, this thesis also finds that China is advocating for cultural proximity with its closest neighbors by the creation of common concepts under which those countries find themselves. Indeed, although there is a certain mention of a "global community" in Chinese official discourse, which has been picked up by previous literature¹⁸⁷ and throughout this thesis, China marks a difference when dealing with its neighbors, as regional speeches and communiques are associated with terms that showcase cultural proximity. Two representative quotes of this argument can be drawn from some foreign policy communiques delivered by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. First, in "Maintain a Global Vision, Forge Ahead with Greater Resolve and Write a New Chapter in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics", the Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi calls for building "*a prosperous Asian home together*"¹⁸⁸. Then, the "Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era" mentions the project of the "*Asian Dream*"¹⁸⁹. Those elements, vocabulary of "family" and mentions of common ideological projects, are exclusively limited to the scope of regional instances, which emphasize China's intention to showcase more proximity with its neighbors rather than with the rest of the countries it deals with. One exception to this observation is the mention of "*BRI family members*"¹⁹⁰ in a speech made by Wang Yi in 2021. However, this thesis finds that such a quote does not erase the conclusions we may draw from previous examinations on Asian discourse, but to the contrary, also pushes the narrative of regional proximity. As the BRI seeks to enhance exchanges through bilateral agreements, it is also to a certain extent, an instance of regionalism. Finally, the idea of "people-to-people exchanges" is a recurring observation in the dataset, specifically in documents of regional settings. This research finds that such a term corroborates the intention from China to intensify cultural proximity. Some representative quotes throughout the dataset include the previously mentioned speech of Li Qiang at ASEAN Plus' 25th Summit, calling for "*people-to-*

¹⁸⁵ Xi Jinping's keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit, 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Speech by H.E. Li Qiang Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China At the 26th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit, 2023.

¹⁸⁷ Zhang, 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Maintain a Global Vision, Forge Ahead with Greater Resolve and Write a New Chapter in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era, 2023.

¹⁹⁰ Remarks by State Councilor Wang Yi At the Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2021.

people and cultural exchanges”¹⁹¹; then two documents also speak of “*people-to-people exchanges*”¹⁹², and finally the idea of “*people-to-people connectivity*”¹⁹³ is mentioned. To sum up, China seemingly seeks to take part in regional projects, and to do so showcases more vocabulary linked to the concepts of community and family when dealing with countries from the Asian region and the Belt and Road Initiative. However, China shows more proximity in its interactions with Asian countries when compared to other summits in international occurrences: lexical fields of family and friendship are exclusively found in those instances. Therefore, enhancing cultural proximity through such discourse may be linked to some of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, notably Callahan’s conception of Chinese nationalism as a theme of conversion. By defining China as Da Zhonghua (大中華), “Greater China”¹⁹⁴, China applies a cultural, political and economic exchange aspect into expanding China’s civilization. Because its official discourse showcases intentions for enhancing economic exchanges, but also goes further as to promote “people-to-people exchanges” and citing common cultural concepts such as motifs of familiarity brings this thesis to consider China’s intentions from Callahan’s scope. While there is no sign of China wanting to expand its own culture onto other countries, its discourse is clearly aimed towards promoting more cultural and economic interaction with its neighbors, which must be taken into account when analyzing China’s official discourse. Moreover, China’s general position towards regional instances also further corroborates Zhang’s argument on the concept of “global community”¹⁹⁵ : as China seeks to promote regional relations, it also tries to improve its image among those countries in order to gain more positive relations.

Section 3 : The discourse on multilateralism

From the engagement of this thesis’ three-dimensional conceptual framework with the set of documents provided by the Chinese Communist Party, it is reasonable to deduce that cooperation is the primary aspect that Beijing seeks to advocates in the way it conducts its

¹⁹¹ Speech by H.E. Li Keqiang Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China At the 25th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit, 2022.

¹⁹² Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship, 2023; Enhancing Solidarity and Cooperation to Overcome Risks and Challenges and Jointly Build a Better World, 2023.

¹⁹³ Building an Open, Inclusive and Interconnected World For Common Development, 2023.

¹⁹⁴ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

¹⁹⁵ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

external relations. Moreover, the regional setting appears to provide the opportunity for China to enhance closer relations with its neighboring countries. Indeed, Chinese official discourse embraces agreements that take place within somewhat restricted instances such as the ASEAN or bilateral agreements with East Asian countries, and promotes in addition to international cooperation, concepts that create more familiarity with those countries. By associating terms related to family and friendship to regional instances, China may create the effect that those countries are closer to China's civilization. From there, the study draws on the recurrence of the term "people-to-people exchanges" to link such discourse to Callahan's conversion theme on the Chinese civilization. However, despite showcasing ideas of cultural proximity, China's discourse does not officially state an intention to expand its own culture onto its neighbors, therefore this thesis may further elaborate on the motives of Chinese foreign policy before making conclusions linked to the existing literature. Indeed, the third motive behind China's foreign policy decision is, according to this study's engagement with the data, the concept of multilateralism. Several documents support the idea that China engages fully towards promoting multilateralism, as the term is explicated in numerous settings across the dataset. For example, a communique issued in 2020 reminds the "*need to uphold multilateralism*"¹⁹⁶ and "*promote multilateral coordination*"¹⁹⁷ in the context the COVID-19 crisis management among BRICS members. "Multilateralism" is a term that regularly comes back in Chinese official discourse, and most often in instances of international cooperation. In the 2021 statement "Rise to the Challenges, Serve the Nation and Embark on a New Journey for Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics", Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi advocates for "*demonstrating the power of multilateralism*"¹⁹⁸. By the same token, China's commemoration of fifty years of official diplomatic relations with the United Nations was also the occasion for Beijing to reinforce its advocacy for multilateralism, as some quotes from the keynote speech associated to this event showcase how China "*vigorously promotes the spirit and approach of multilateralism*"¹⁹⁹ and strikes to "*hold[...] high the banner of multilateralism*"²⁰⁰. In other instances such as China-EU relations and Climate Change discussions settings, China also advocates for equal contribution of consideration of all actors,

¹⁹⁶ Deepening BRICS Cooperation to Combat COVID-19, 2020.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Rise to the Challenges, Serve the Nation and Embark on a New Journey for Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2021.

¹⁹⁹ A New Journey Ahead after Fifty Extraordinary Years : Keynote Address by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi At the Lanting Forum on China and the UN: Cooperation in 50 Years and Beyond, 2021.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

as displayed by the terms “*upholding multilateralism*”²⁰¹ and “*stay committed to multilateralism*”²⁰² found in the dataset. From these observations made throughout the dataset, multilateralism is understood as a pillar in China’s foreign policy approach. Beijing strongly advocates for cooperation in an international setting of equality among countries. To this regard, China supports the existing world order, as it advocates for equal contribution of all members of the international community. This idea is pushed by the findings of some quotes linking the concept of multilateralism to the existing world order. Indeed, by associating multilateralism to the existing system, and promoting the latter, China showcases itself as a peaceful actor within world relations. Such an argument is motivated by quotes such as “*multilateralism is a cornerstone of the existing international order*”²⁰³, which illustrates China’s acknowledgement of the UN system. Furthermore, China also portrays itself as a supporter of this system, as the quote from “Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation » showcases : « *China will continue to firmly support the multilateral trading system*”²⁰⁴. By the same token, “*dialogue*”²⁰⁵ and “*consultation*”²⁰⁶ are also two frequently found terms in China’s foreign policy discourse, which participates in advocating for China’s call for multilateral cooperation among countries. From these observations, the study shows that among China’s primary interests in foreign policy, at least in official discourse, is the idea of equal participation and balance among countries of the world. Nonetheless, reviewing the data also allowed this thesis to pick up on the term “true multilateralism”, as opposed to “false multilateralism”. This narrative is consistent throughout the data, as several documents mention “*true multilateralism*”²⁰⁷, therefore implicating the idea that “false multilateralism” is also promoted in international relations. From these observations, the study associates China’s

²⁰¹ Enhancing Mutual Trust and Cooperation To Embrace an Even Better Future of China-EU Relations, 2019.

²⁰² For Man and Nature: Building a Community of Life Together, 2021.

²⁰³ Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China For the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2022.

²⁰⁴ Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation, 2020.

²⁰⁵ Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Jointly Deliver a Brighter Future for the World, 2023 ; Jointly Implementing the Global Security Initiative For Lasting Peace and Security of the World, 2023.

²⁰⁶ Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China For the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2022 ; Position Paper on China’s Cooperation with the United Nations, 2021 ; Toast by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People’s Republic of China At the Welcoming Banquet of The Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022, 2022 ; Full text: Remarks by Li Xi at Summit of the Group of 77 and China, 2023.

²⁰⁷ Opening a New Chapter Together For Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2021 ; Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the Conference Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Lawful Seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, 2021; Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties To Build a Better World, 2021.

advocacy for “true multilateralism” with its goal to improve its own image, as a-explained by Zhang’s literature on the cognitive frame of “*global community*”²⁰⁸. By advocating for equal balance among countries, China showcases itself as a peaceful power; and by calling for “true multilateralism” in opposition to “false multilateralism”, it is likely that China reaffirms its will to remain a supporter of the existing world order. However, this nuance in the mention of “true” multilateralism never pinpoints an actor practicing “false” multilateralism, but rather remains a general term, which this thesis considers as a way to keep the focus on China’s position in international relations, instead of a showcase of aggressivity towards other actors. China seeks to make itself known as a supporter of multilateralism and equality among countries, because strategic partnerships are an essential aspect in China’s foreign policy, given projects such as the BRI and regional integrations China takes part in.

Section 4 : “Major-country diplomacy” and the differentiation of world actors

Although China clearly advocates its intentions for good relations with the countries it deals with through a discourse based on cooperation, mutual benefit and the support of multilateralism in the existing world order, some aspects examined in the dataset differ from this narrative and call for further analysis. Indeed, some concepts seem to be inherently in contradiction to the first key concepts evoked when describing China’s foreign policy discourse. Among those, the idea of “major country diplomacy” is a concept on which the analysis came across, which calls for a reconsideration of China’s interests, and notably establishing the potential differences between China’s official and unofficial discourse. This concept is relatively new in Chinese official discourse, as it is exclusively associated with Xi Jinping’s ideological project. From the engagement with the documents, this thesis first picks up on the term “major country”, which demonstrates a differentiation among countries. Indeed, in defining China’s foreign policy, speeches like the “Outlook on China’s Foreign Policy on its Neighborhood In the New Era” mentions “*major country relations that feature peaceful coexistence*”²⁰⁹. The idea of major country is first and foremost linked to the status of China itself. In international relations, China may advance ideas such as cooperation, consultation and multilateralism, but it also considers itself a major country, which sets it apart from the rest of the international community. In the speech “Steering the Wheel of China-U.S. Relations and

²⁰⁸ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

²⁰⁹ Outlook on China’s Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era, 2023.

Piloting Asia-Pacific Cooperation”, Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi mentions “*Xi Jinping as the head of a major country*”²¹⁰; then another document issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs refers to Xi Jinping as “*the leader of a major country*”²¹¹; therefore, China is established as a major country by Chinese official discourse. Then, the review of the data showcases another country as a major country : the United States. Indeed, the study of the dataset finds that almost all mentions of major countries relates exclusively to China or to the United States. One must nuance this aspect by the existence of the document “Forging Ahead to Open a New Chapter of China-Russia Friendship, Cooperation and Common Development”, in which Russia and China are both referred to as major countries : “*we are both major countries in the world*”²¹². Nonetheless, several documents issued in instances of bilateral cooperation with the US such as “Galvanizing Our Peoples into a Strong Force For the Cause of China-U.S. Friendship” and “Wang Yi’s note to the Press about the Summit Meeting Between Chinese and U.S. Presidents in San Francisco” respectively mention the US and China’s “*status as major countries*”²¹³ and describes them as “*two major countries*”²¹⁴. Therefore, the United States and China appear in the majority of Chinese official discourse on foreign policy, as the only two major powers in the world. In this configuration, China then advocates for a “*major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics*”²¹⁵. The latter appears as an integral part of Xi Jinping’s ideology, as it is often mentioned in the titles of his address, for example with “Maintain a Global Vision, Forge Ahead with Greater Resolve and Write a New Chapter in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics”. By this token, China is likely to want to apply a different treatment to its relations with the US because of the two countries’ status as major countries. Although defining what makes a power “major” is not explicated throughout the dataset, this thesis links it directly to the US and China’s respective spots as first and second economies of the world. Therefore, China seeks to maintain relations with the US in a different manner than it does with other countries. Moreover, the concept of major country is often supplemented with the idea that major countries may have a certain role to perform among the

²¹⁰ Steering the Wheel of China-U.S. Relations and Piloting Asia-Pacific Cooperation, 2023.

²¹¹ Jointly Implementing the Global Security Initiative For Lasting Peace and Security of the World, 2023.

²¹² Forging Ahead to Open a New Chapter of China-Russia Friendship, Cooperation and Common Development, 2023.

²¹³ Galvanizing Our Peoples into a Strong Force For the Cause of China-U.S. Friendship, 2023.

²¹⁴ Wang Yi Speaks to the Press about the Summit Meeting Between Chinese and U.S. Presidents in San Francisco, 2023.

²¹⁵ Steering the Wheel of China-U.S. Relations and Piloting Asia-Pacific Cooperation, 2023 ; Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance, Openness and Inclusiveness, Fairness and Justice, and Win-Win Cooperation, 2024 ; Implementing the Guiding Principles of the Central Conference On Work Relating to Foreign Affairs and Breaking New Ground In Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2024.

international community. Indeed, in an address to the UN, Beijing reassures its willingness for China to “*make its contribution as a major country*”²¹⁶. Another document explicitly showcases China’s intention to “*fulfill the mission of a major country*”²¹⁷. This quote implies the argument that major countries are different from the rest of the countries because they would have a supposedly precise role to perform. Indeed, “The Right Way for China and the United States to Get Along in the New Era” mentions the importance for China and the US to “*fulfill the responsibilities as major countries*”²¹⁸. Therefore, the analysis of the set of documents showcase China’s advocacy for the establishment of a “major country diplomacy” in which at least China and the US are prone to specific roles. To this regard, the concept of major country may be drawn to this thesis’ inclusion of cognitive frames in the conceptual framework. Indeed, the narrative of responsibilities inherently linked to a country’s status as a major power is easily associated with Zhang’s third frame on “Chinese contribution”. By acknowledging “*China’s responsibility as a major country*”²¹⁹, China seems to provide itself with the legitimacy to perform a certain role, different from any other member of the international community. This idea feeds into Zhang’s conclusions that through advocating common cooperation and global development, China may seek to offer its own ideas in the existing world system under the frame of its role as a major power²²⁰. Therefore, this section draws on the narrative of the major country diplomacy pushed by China’s foreign policy discourse in international settings to collect some elements of answer to the research sub-question. Regarding China’s foreign policy motives, the idea of major country seems to clash with the advocacy of cooperation and multilateralism that China consistently maintains throughout the dataset of documents. Nonetheless, this term is interesting to examine, because it sets major countries apart from the rest of other countries, and feeds into the narrative that major countries might need to should some responsibilities. As major countries have a specific role to fulfill, they may be more prominent than other countries in leading the relations and shaping the world order. Hence, a sense of hierarchy is picked up from analyzing the dataset in regard to “major country diplomacy”, as China marks a distinction when dealing with whom it considers major countries, solely the US, and other countries. By the three-dimensional conceptual framework’s analysis of this idea, this thesis draws a link between China’s “major country diplomacy” and

²¹⁶ Position Paper of the People's Republic of China On the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, 2020.

²¹⁷ Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Jointly Deliver a Brighter Future for the World, 2023.

²¹⁸ The Right Way for China and the United States to Get Along in the New Era, 2023.

²¹⁹ Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance, Openness and Inclusiveness, Fairness and Justice, and Win-Win Cooperation, 2024.

²²⁰ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

the sense of hierarchy which results from it as a clue towards Babones' 2017 work. Indeed, by taking into consideration China's International School of International Relations, Chapter 2 reviewed the idea that hierarchy is one of the key components of Tianxia²²¹. Therefore, picking up on such a term throughout the dataset is a motive for this thesis to elaborate further on, in regard to China's advocacy of a Tianxia system in international relations.

Section 5 : Advancing a new model of international relations

After reviewing the data with the second sub-question of this analysis in mind, being “what are motives behind Xi Jinping’s foreign policy decision?”, the main key concepts that this research finds relate to the concepts of international cooperation. China advocates for enhancing its relations with other countries, and advertises it as mutual benefit in order to ensure improving its image in international relations. Nonetheless, some aspects of China’s official discourse highly contrast with the advocacy Beijing showcases for concepts like multilateralism and equality among powers. Indeed, by advancing the idea of major country diplomacy, China’s official discourse is oriented towards the idea of creating a hierarchy among countries. Despite advocating for multilateralism and showing support to the existing world order, China therefore showcases hints of feeding opposing ideas into the current world system. Indeed, this argument is formed by the previous observations made in this chapter, but mostly by the last key concept picked up by the three-dimensional conceptual framework on foreign policy. There is an idea new to Xi Jinping’s discourse on foreign policy which may be linked to questioning the state of international relations. As reviewed throughout the dataset, the idea of promoting a new model of international relations is picked up on several occasions, which brings this thesis to question the latter term and its significance for China’s foreign policy motives. Some examples of documents include “Rise to the Challenges, Serve the Nation and Embark on a New Journey for Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics”, “Serving the Country and Contributing to the World: China's Diplomacy in a Time of Unprecedented Global Changes and a Once-in-a-Century Pandemic”, “Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China For the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, which although they were delivered in different settings, respectively being a foreign policy communique directly issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a communique in regard to the COVID-19 crisis management or an address to the United Nations, all present the same mention of the term “new

²²¹ Babones, S. (2017). Taking China seriously: Relationality, Tianxia, and the “Chinese School” of International Relations. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

type of international relations”²²². The latter was also previously mentioned directly in front of the international community, as an address for the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly tackled the idea of providing a “*new model of international relations*”²²³. Finally, Foreign Affairs Minister Qin Gang also publicly mentioned China’s goal to “*promote a new type of international relations*”²²⁴. From these observations, this thesis considers this promotion of a new model of international relations as a contradiction with China’s discourse on multilateralism and support of the existing world order. However, reaching such conclusions might be too premature, as the exclusive analysis of China’s foreign policy discourse is limited to structured speeches and communiques. Nonetheless, the concept of “new model of international relations” remains one core aspect of China’s foreign policy motives, and might provide elements of answer in regard to this thesis’s general research question.

Section 6 : Conclusions on China’s foreign policy motives

After examining the dataset in regard to this thesis’s second sub-question regarding the motives of foreign policy decision in Xi Jinping’s China, several elements showcase the key concepts one must link to China’s foreign policy. First cooperation is highly encouraged and advocated by China. China seeks to make itself a good partner to other countries and looks for more cooperation with members of the international community. Furthermore, China rejects mechanisms that go against useful cooperation, and showcases economic cooperation as advantageous and encouraged. This idea is drawn by the three-dimensional conceptual framework to Zhang’s reference work on the “global community” cognitive frame. By advancing cooperation among countries, China seeks to “*foster common interests and contribute to global governance*”²²⁵, therefore improving its image and its position in world relations. Then, regionalism is showcased throughout China’s foreign policy discourse. In settings like the BRI, the BRICS and Asian projects, China showcases more proximity with countries within its regional area, trying to bring closer Asian countries under such banners as

²²² Rise to the Challenges, Serve the Nation and Embark on a New Journey for Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2021 ; Serving the Country and Contributing to the World: China’s Diplomacy in a Time of Unprecedented Global Changes and a Once-in-a-Century Pandemic, 2020 ; Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China For the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2022.

²²³ China and the United Nations: Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China For the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2019.

²²⁴ Foreign Minister Qin Gang Meets the Press, 2023.

²²⁵ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

“Asian home”²²⁶, which also contributes to the cognitive frame of “global community” to “smooth China’s international engagement”²²⁷. These ideas linked to Callahan’s framework on Chinese civilization allow this thesis to draw linkages between China’s advocacy for regionalism and the idea of China as Da Zhonghua²²⁸, providing a larger conception of Chinese civilization, notably through the encouragement of “people-to-people exchanges” found in the dataset. However, this idea remains nuanced by the absence of indicators that China would try to “convert” other countries under its authority. Then, China publicly advocates for multilateralism and the equal consultation of countries in cooperation among the international community. However, Beijing regularly draws a distinction between true and false multilateralism. This motif showcases some vagueness regarding the idea of multilateralism and the correct performance of it ; no actor is pin-pointed as a performer of “false multilateralism”, but it may easily be interpreted as the US given the Chinese tendency to accuse the US of hegemonic acts, as reviewed in Chapter 4. Finally, Xi Jinping’s Thought on diplomacy advocates a “new model of international relations with Chinese characteristics”, which includes the concept of “major country diplomacy”. Xi’s thought on diplomacy therefore showcases to some extent the questioning of the existing world order, by advancing a new conception of international relations, one in which major countries would shoulder certain responsibilities different from the rest of the countries. As demonstrated by “Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in China’s External Work”, China seeks to promote this new model of international relations as a part of Xi Jinping’s ideological project :

*“Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, being ever enriching and developing, offers a fundamental guidance for us to analyze and understand the current international situation, and provides a powerful intellectual inspiration for China’s external work to forge ahead against all odds”*²²⁹

Therefore, China’s foreign policy discourse displays advocacy for international cooperation and multilateralism. Nonetheless, its official discourse showcases a sense of hierarchy in understanding relations among countries notably by differentiating its own status and responsibility, but also by promoting a new type of international relations, one “with Chinese characteristics” to the rest of the world, going in contradiction with its support of the existing

²²⁶ Maintain a Global Vision, Forge Ahead with Greater Resolve and Write a New Chapter in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2022.

²²⁷ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China’s International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

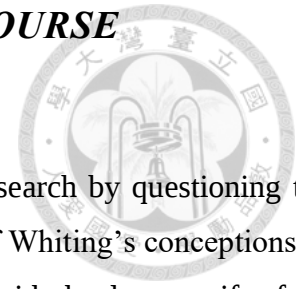
²²⁸ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

²²⁹ Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in China’s External Work, 2022.

world order. From this thesis' interpretation of the data, this last idea of a new model of international relations may be associated with Zhang's frame on "Chinese contribution"²³⁰, in which China would use its renewed position in international relations to advance its ideological motivations. To this regard, China's signs of opposition to the existing world order are clues for this thesis' questioning on China's motives to promote the Tianxia system into international relations, which will be further explored in the last analytical chapter.

²³⁰ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

CHAPTER 6 : CHINESE REJUVENATION AND THE PROMOTION OF TIANXIA IN OFFICIAL DISCOURSE



Chapter 4 aimed to answer the first sub-question of this research by questioning the possibility of fitting China's current nationalist discourse into one of Whiting's conceptions of nationalism : affirmative, assertive or aggressive. From engagement with the data, motifs of the first two aspects are easily identified and allow this thesis to draw elements of answer : China's nationalist discourse presents elements of both affirmative and assertive nationalism. Nonetheless, while some elements of speech, notably regarding China's relation to the US, provide ground for this thesis to question China's potential aggressive behavior, the research finds that nationalism in Xi Jinping's China has not reached a point of aggressivity, as the official Beijing discourse does not portray the US as a threat to eliminate, but rather a danger to the existing world system. China tends to lean on the latter narrative to promote itself in contrast to the US superpower, as a peaceful power aiming for good relations with the international community. Indeed, the second analytical chapter features the topic of foreign policy discourse as the main focus. The thesis seeks to examine the motives of Chinese foreign policy throughout the official documents issued by different instances of the Chinese government or closely related agencies. After examining the data, the research picks up on several key concepts that seem to shape China's foreign policy discourse. Ideas like cooperation and good-neighboring diplomacy are recurrent in Chinese speeches and communiques, as well as intents to promote regionalism. China promotes exchanges in the name of mutual benefits, and seeks to improve its international image through such processes. China also frames itself as a peaceful power, supporting the existing state of multilateralism and advocating for equal consultation of all powers. However, from this observation on, the thesis picks up on a few concepts which create some dissonance within China's foreign policy discourse. Indeed, while advocating for equal cooperation and mutual respect, China also brings forward concept like "major countries", which inherently create a sense of hierarchy among countries. Finally, it is a frequent mention that China seeks to promote a "new model of international relations", which would impede on the country's support for the existing multilateral order. Therefore, the first two analytical chapters tackled key aspects of the first two concepts of this thesis, namely nationalism and foreign policy. This last analytical chapter is dedicated to analyzing the discourse on rejuvenation by Xi Jinping and his administration, and trying to find correlation between the latter and the traditional political idea of Tianxia. Hence, this chapter reviews the dataset by keeping in mind the third sub-question of the research : **How does the rejuvenation**

Section 1 : Chinese rejuvenation and Xi's project for the Chinese nation

This chapter's sub-question is oriented by the concept of "national rejuvenation" to question the possibility of China promoting a Tianxia system in international relations. This bias in the operationalized sub-question is motivated by the observations made throughout the literature review that Xi Jinping's project calls for China's rejuvenation, as well as the general re-popularization of the Tianxia concept in popular discourse. As national rejuvenation is proper to Xi's era, this thesis seeks to question whether there is a link between China's rejuvenation and the academic questioning of Xi's intentions to promote Tianxia in his foreign policy. Hence, the first section of this chapter is dedicated to the link between national rejuvenation and Xi's official discourse. While the concept of national rejuvenation has been tackled in Chapter 4, it is once again examined in this chapter as a part of the three-dimensional conceptual framework. Indeed, the first understanding of national rejuvenation, under the scope of nationalist discourse analysis, allowed this research to draw links between the discourse on "national rejuvenation" and the concept of the "Chinese dream", and the aim for the Chinese government to gain domestic support. In this sense, national rejuvenation is associated in this thesis first as a key component of affirmative nationalism in Whiting's understanding. From there, this section may once again mobilize this concept to further elaborate on the links with Tianxia. Indeed, analyzing Xi Jinping's discourse finds a short route between the concept of national rejuvenation and Xi Jinping's official ideological project. This first aspect in which this is showcased is through the mention of a "new era". Indeed, as this thesis seeks to draw connections between Xi's official discourse and the idea of Tianxia as a political system, the "new era" narrative provides Beijing with the tools to put forward new political ideas. In this sense, several documents make explicit mentions of the concept of a "*new era*"²³¹, such as the "Outline of 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China" and "The Right Way for China and the United States to Get Along in the New Era". Then, the idea of the new era is also often directly associated with Xi Jinping's ideological project. In a 2022 communique, the Chinese head of diplomacy made an address to the People's Daily Online called "Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in

²³¹ Outline of 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China, 2020 ; The Right Way for China and the United States to Get Along in the New Era, 2023.

China's External Work". This document is crucial in understanding the link between the idea of "new era" and Xi Jinping's official ideological project, as it presents Xi's ideas and the method to apply them for the Chinese nation. Therefore, this document directly links the idea of the "new era" to Xi's project in quotes such as "*Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*"²³². Then, other documents also showcase Beijing's linking of the Chinese Communist project with the idea of a renewed era, as demonstrated by the quote : "*the Party's major achievements and historical experience over the past century, and sounded a clarion call for forging ahead on a new journey and making still greater contributions in the new era*"²³³. Therefore, based on the interaction with those documents, it appears that the idea of a new era is coming, but it is also supported and guided by Xi Jinping's ideological project. Indeed, some documents mention the Chinese leader as the exclusive carrier for this project, which closely link China's ascension into a new era to the leadership of Xi Jinping : in one document, the presence of the quotes "*following the fundamental guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy*"²³⁴ and "*the correct guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a new era*"²³⁵ demonstrate the link between Xi's leadership and China's intent to enter a "new era". Xi Jinping is therefore portrayed as the guide for China to fulfill its goals and the "Chinese dream", as the quote "*Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy*"²³⁶ showcases. Furthermore, there are other ways in which the idea of a "new era" is mentioned, for example through the use of terms like "*new journey*"²³⁷, "*new starting point*"²³⁸ and the concept of "*New China*"²³⁹. From selecting these quotes, this thesis finds that the idea of a new era for China and generally the rest of the world is advocated in China's official discourse. Moreover, it seems like the "new era" concept is a major component in Xi

²³² Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in China's External Work, 2022.

²³³ Striding Forward Holding High the Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, 2022.

²³⁴ Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in China's External Work, 2022.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Rise to the Challenges, Serve the Nation and Embark on a New Journey for Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2021.

²³⁷ Ibid ; Striding Forward Holding High the Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, 2022 ; State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Gives Interview to Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group on International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2021, 2021; 2023 New Year Address by President Xi Jinping, 2023.

²³⁸ Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era, 2023.

²³⁹ Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Conscientiously and Break New Ground in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2020 ; Outline of 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China, 2020.

Jinping's direct line of thought, as it represents a goal of his ideology. By the same token, Xi Jinping is depicted by some of the data as the guide for the Chinese nation to achieve China's national goals and therefore enter the new era. As the new era concept is closely linked to Xi Jinping's ideology, namely socialism with Chinese characteristics or Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, this research finds that such mention associate China's rise to the promotion of a new model. Indeed, some quotes lead this thesis to consider China's promotion of a new era as one of the components of other changes in world relations. This argument is motivated by some quotes which showcase first the idea of a new era as linked to China's development, but also to the rest of the world. Indeed, an interview of Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi in 2021 mentions the "*new journey towards the second centenary goal*"²⁴⁰, while the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan closely associates the ideas of "*new era*"²⁴¹ and "*Chinese dream*"²⁴². In this context, the new era is first directed towards the Chinese nation, but it is also aimed towards the rest of the world, as demonstrated by the quote : "*Secretary Xi has put forward a series of important new thoughts, providing a guide to action for steering the major changes of the world in the right direction*"²⁴³. Therefore, China is likely to make itself the promotor of major changes in world relations. Based on this thesis' three-dimensional conceptual framework, the research may draw links between the latter observations and Zhang's cognitive frame on "*Chinese contribution*"²⁴⁴. Indeed, it is likely that China may promote through the ideas of the "new era" and Xi Jinping's general ideology, a new project steering the world towards major changes. Therefore, the idea of Chinese contribution linked with the new era supported by China provides groundwork for this thesis to establish connections with the concept of Tianxia. Despite not making explicit mentions of the concept, this thesis finds that China's willingness to set up change in the international framework might be a clue towards advancing a new model of international relations, as tackled throughout Chapter 5. Hence, the next section is dedicated to finding common elements of speech between Tianxia-related ideas and China's official discourse. Such a process would ensure our analysis to then make connections between China's official discourse and the literature review in Chapter 2 regarding Tianxia.

²⁴⁰ State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Gives Interview to Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group on International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2021, 2021.

²⁴¹ Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era, 2023.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in China's External Work, 2022.

²⁴⁴ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. Asia Policy, 14(3), 7–24.

Section 2 : Universality and cultural proximity of civilizations : harmony, stability and the discourse around humanity

The literature review of this thesis allowed the building of a three-dimensional conceptual framework and ensured that the research remains within the scope of the existing literature. Indeed, by basing the analysis of the dataset on some previous existing academic work, this research is more prone to create connections based on interpretations that other authors may have also observed, and therefore provide further interpretations on the chosen set of documents. The literature review is all the more important to the third analytical chapter, as it allows this thesis' analysis to draw connections between the Chinese official discourse on nationalism and foreign policy and the concept of Tianxia, despite no direct mention of the term being made throughout the dataset. Therefore, this thesis relies on concepts close to the Tianxia system to support the argument that Xi Jinping's ideological project may include the promotion of Tianxia as a new system of international relations. This section presents the concepts picked up by the framework's interaction with the data which are interpreted as links to the idea of Tianxia. First, the concept of harmony is very frequently cited in documents issued by the Chinese government. Settings like regional summits or a communique on China's foreign policy guiding lines are prone to mention the idea of harmony : for example with the mention in Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the Central-Asia Summit of the term "*harmony*"²⁴⁵ and the qualification of a "*harmonious central Asia*"²⁴⁶. Then, documents issued by the State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang like "Providing New Opportunities to the World Through Chinese Modernization" are documents which highly showcase China's discourse on harmony, as the concept is mentioned twice : first speaking of "*human progress and world harmony*"²⁴⁷ and second mentioning the goal for "*a world of great harmony*"²⁴⁸. The concept of harmony is not only associated with China, but appears as a goal for world relations; indeed, other documents mention "*world harmony*"²⁴⁹ and "*harmony among nations*"²⁵⁰. Therefore, harmony is promoted by China's discourse as a goal for international relations.

Then, other concepts may be closely associated with Tianxia in regard to China's official discourse. The thesis notably picks up on the ideas of prosperity and peace throughout the

²⁴⁵ Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit, 2021.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Providing New Opportunities to the World Through Chinese Modernization, 2023.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Implementing the Guiding Principles of the Central Conference On Work Relating to Foreign Affairs and Breaking New Ground In Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, 2024.

²⁵⁰ Openness and Cooperation for a Shared Future, 2019.

dataset. Examining those documents, the mention of “*prosperous*”²⁵¹ is found in two documents relating to international relations, namely summits at the occasion of China-Central Asia Summits. Prosperity is also associated directly with Xi Jinping’s political project, as the “Outline of 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People’s Republic of China” mentions the goal of “*socialist prosperity*”²⁵². Therefore, prosperity is first and foremost linked to the national project of China, but it also expands onto China’s external relations. An Outlook on China’s Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era mentions the term “*peaceful coexistence*”²⁵³, which is known as a key component of Xi Jinping’s ideological project. By the same token, China also expands its peaceful goals into regional settings, as review throughout chapter 5. When discussing ASEAN and China’s role, there is therefore the mention of “*building a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable homeland together*”²⁵⁴. Overall, harmony, peace and stability are advocated throughout China’s official foreign policy discourse. These observations showcase the country’s intentions first to establish and conduct peaceful relations with its neighbors and the international community, as reviewed in Chapter 5, but this thesis may also draw on the academic work examined in the literature review to create linkages with the concept of Tianxia. Notably, Babones’ and Puranen’s work are included in this thesis’ three-dimensional conceptual framework, in order to help this research consider connections with Tianxia. Hence, as the two authors mention the ideas of harmony and stability as key components of the Tianxia system²⁵⁵, this research considers the latter as expressions of China’s willingness to incorporate elements of its traditional cultural and political concepts into its foreign policy discourse. Indeed, while Tianxia is not mentioned in China’s promotion of external relations, clues like the mention of harmony and the support for global stability showcase Beijing’s intention to advocate for such concepts like Tianxia. Advocating for “*world harmony*”²⁵⁶ in close association with China’s external relations is examined by this thesis as a clue towards advancing Tianxia-like values into the framework of international relations.

²⁵¹ Full text of Xi Jinping’s keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit, 2021 ; Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship, 2023.

²⁵² Outline of 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People’s Republic of China, 2020.

²⁵³ Outlook on China’s Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era, 2023.

²⁵⁴ Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China on Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture, 2022.

²⁵⁵ Babones, S. (2017). Taking China seriously: Relationality, Tianxia , and the “Chinese School” of International Relations. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics ; Puranen, M. (2019). “All under heaven as one family” : Tianxiaist ideology and the emerging Chinese great power identity. Journal of China and International Relations, 7(1), 44-61.

²⁵⁶ Providing New Opportunities to the World Through Chinese Modernization, 2023.

Section 3 : Building a “community with a shared future for mankind”

After reviewing some key components of China’s official discourse on foreign policy, this thesis finds elements of answer throughout the use of traditional values in modern Chinese discourse. Indeed, by advocating for international relations under the scope of harmony and prosperity, which are concepts inherently linked to China’s ancient conceptions of society, this thesis is able to draw a link between Xi Jinping’s official discourse in the international community and the concept of Tianxia. From there, this research may be able to consider China as a promotor of the Tianxia system given the previous academic work on the topic, and the convergence in this thesis and the latter’s findings. However, there is one aspect on which this research has made considerations which was not previously mentioned in the literature review. Indeed, this last section of the chapter on Tianxia discourse is exclusively based on the three-dimensional conceptual framework’s interaction with the data, and this thesis here seeks to draw new linkages in order to advance research on understanding Xi Jinping’s discourse and motives of foreign policy. Indeed, one concept is consistently mentioned throughout the dataset, whether in settings of international summits, regional meetings, or in political communiques issued by the Chinese government as guiding lines for China’s interests. Based on the engagement with the set of documents provided for this thesis, some supplementary concepts are found as elements of answer to this research’s central question. Indeed, the Chinese official discourse not only showcases ideas like harmony or peace, but its attitude generally advocates for stability among the countries. One of the ways this is demonstrated is by the use of universal terms : the entire population of the world is understood as one entity throughout several parts of the dataset. For example, Chinese official discourse often refers to the framework of international relations with a sense of universality, as demonstrated by the quote “*our world is an indivisible community with a shared future*”²⁵⁷. Then, some documents refer to the public they are addressed to in all-inclusive terms, such as a communique issued in regard to the COVID-19 crisis management, which mentions “humankind as a whole”²⁵⁸. “*Humanity*”²⁵⁹ is also a recurring theme in Chinese official discourse, as some documents like “Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation” and the Lunar New Year Message from Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi mention. Finally, one key concept

²⁵⁷ Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation, 2020.

²⁵⁸ Serving the Country and Contributing to the World: China's Diplomacy in a Time of Unprecedented Global Changes and a Once-in-a-Century Pandemic, 2020.

²⁵⁹ Fostering a New Development Paradigm and Pursuing Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation, 2020 ; Lunar New Year Message from H.E. Wang Yi State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of The People's Republic of China, 2022.

this thesis picks up on is the “community of shared future for mankind”. Such a concept is very frequently found in Chinese official discourse, as it was found in no less than eighteen of the documents reviewed in the dataset. The “community of shared future for mankind” is also mentioned in different types of documents, whether in political communiques²⁶⁰ BRICS summits²⁶¹, or at the United Nations²⁶². Picking up on the mention of this concept is important to this thesis first because of its recurrence, which makes it difficult to ignore, but also because documents which mention the “community with a shared future for mankind” are also ones that mention ideas close to the Tianxia concept such as harmony and universal concepts like humanity. Therefore, this thesis considers that more work must be made in relation to this latest concept in order to provide linkages between the concept of the “community with a shared future for mankind” and China’s potential goals of advocating for the setting up of a Tianxia system. Indeed, this thought is also supported by the fact that this last concept is exclusively linked to Xi Jinping’s school of thought and official discourse, which makes it a part of his ideological project.

Section 4 : Conclusions on the rejuvenation discourse and the link to the official understanding of Tianxia

To sum up this last analytical chapter, this thesis finds that although the concept of Tianxia is never explicitly mentioned throughout the set of documents examined, some concepts close to it are frequently referred to. The background research and conceptual framework based on previous literature on the topic allow this study to establish linkages between some key concepts we may find in the dataset and the promotion of the Tianxia system in Chinese official discourse. Among those, the ideas of harmony, peace and stability most eloquently showcase China’s intent to promote Tianxia, as based on the conceptual framework and notably Grydehøj and Su’s work²⁶³, as well as Puranen and Babones’s frameworks²⁶⁴. Therefore, while the discourse on harmony may be linked to China’s foreign policy and its intention to fulfill good relations

²⁶⁰ China's Diplomacy in 2021: Embracing a Global Vision and Serving the Nation and its People, 2021 ; Striding Forward Holding High the Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, 2022.

²⁶¹ Keep Abreast of the Trend of the Times to Shape a Bright Future, 2022.

²⁶² Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the Conference Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Lawful Seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, 2021.

²⁶³ Grydehøj, A., & Su, P. (2021). China and the Pursuit of Harmony in World Politics: Understanding Chinese International Relations Theory (1st ed.). Routledge.

²⁶⁴ Puranen, M. (2019). “All under heaven as one family” : Tianxiaist ideology and the emerging Chinese great power identity. *Journal of China and International Relations*, 7(1), 44-61 ; Babones, S. (2017). Taking China seriously: Relationality, Tianxia , and the “Chinese School” of International Relations. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

among the international community, this thesis also creates connections to the concept of Tianxia. Moreover, this thesis also finds that using general concepts and universal ideas is a way for China to advocate for Tianxia-like conceptions of the world. Therefore, documents often refer to the world population and the targets of China's speeches and communiques as "humankind" and understand the world as one unique entity. This last aspect is most easily showcased through the mention of the concept of "community with a shared future for mankind". This thesis considers that this concept is key to understanding China's goals in international relations and in promoting Tianxia. Indeed, the concept itself is universal as it encapsulates the whole population under one single entity, as would the establishment of a Tianxia system. Then, it also showcases the world's need to cooperate and remain in harmony through the idea of a "shared future". Therefore, this thesis is able to draw links between Xi Jinping's ideology and the renewed mentions of harmony and concepts close to it. Then, Xi's ideology mobilizes the concept of Chinese rejuvenation in association of a "new era", both for the Chinese nation and the rest of the world. The "new era" is promoted through Xi's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, or his definition of diplomacy, and the general Chinese discourse calls for major changes coming along Xi's era and instigated by China for the whole world. Therefore, more universal concepts are mobilized in Chinese official discourse, along with the upbringing of a "new era" guided by Xi Jinping's ideological project. This thesis finds that the concept of "community with a shared future for mankind" most easily covers the general conclusion of the analysis of the dataset : by using a universal concept, China infuses a sense of unique entity into its relations, and links all humanity under one banner with a single future. When associating those concepts to the advocacy for a "new era" under the guidance of Xi Jinping, one must question China's intentions regarding the major changes it seeks to steer for the world, and calls for more questioning of the concept.

CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSION

Section 1 : Key findings and implications



The last chapter of this thesis is dedicated to summarizing the key conclusions of the research. This section first revisits the key findings of the analysis, then reviews the empirical and conceptual implications of the research; finally, this chapter presents the general concluding remarks of this thesis. After dividing the analytical process into three key notions, the thesis conceptualized a framework built around three operationalized sub-questions. Chapter 4 presents the findings linked to the first key notion of nationalism, and seeks to answer the question : How does Xi Jinping's rhetoric reflect Chinese nationalism in the sense of Whiting's typology ? The aim of this chapter was to categorize China's current nationalist discourse according to Allen Whiting's approach, qualifying either as affirmative, assertive or aggressive nationalism. As no category is excluding of the others, the aim was to determine whether China may have evolved from an assertive standpoint, as determined by Whiting's 1995 work, to a more general aggressive position, notably regarding China's consideration of the US as a rival. The first observation this thesis makes regarding China's nationalist discourse is the confirmation of affirmative motifs. Affirmative nationalism serves the main purpose of gathering domestic support, and this research finds elements of the latter notably relating to themes linked to Xi Jinping's ideology, such as the national rejuvenation and the Chinese dream discourse. This thesis finds three main aspects in which affirmative nationalism is the most easily identified. First, Chinese official discourse makes frequent use of nationalist elements of speech, which are generally linked to China's role as a world leader and a powerful country. China seeks to enhance its own confidence by advancing its own success publicly, linking China's successful economy to Xi Jinping's ideology but also showcases references to Chinese cultural aspects, which ponder the ancientness of Chinese civilization. China views itself as a world leader and seeks to better its domestic support by galvanizing the Chinese nation around Xi Jinping's project. Therefore, the Chinese rejuvenation and Chinese dream projects are considered by this thesis as motifs of affirmative nationalism, as they are directly linked to the leader's ideology. Cultural references are also explained as a mean to enhance China's longstanding history and therefore improve its legitimacy. Then, the thesis reviewed elements of assertive nationalism identified in Chinese official discourse. Those are manifested in the creation of boundaries throughout speeches and communiques. For example, China's core interests are defined and often mentioned, like the importance of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this sense, assertive nationalism qualifies China's discourse because

Beijing creates a narrative dichotomy between “us” and “them” to Whiting’s sense. In international settings, China’s official discourse reinforces its interest for boundaries, as documents of the dataset showcase the advocacy for mutual respect and often call for no interference from countries in one another’s internal affairs. Based on this thesis’ analytical framework, those elements are understood as assertive nationalism because they are easily linked to sensitive territorial topics such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. To this regard, China seeks to pursue the protection of its territorial interests and advocates its right to act independently on territories it considers its own. By showcasing this behavior to the international community, the research finds that China identify to Whiting’s definition of assertive nationalism. Finally, Chapter 4 reviewed China’s potential aggressive position regarding external relations from analyzing its nationalist speech. The main aspect in which this is observed is China’s relation to the United States, and more precisely its portrayal of the US as a potential threat to China’s security. Indeed, from what is picked up throughout the dataset, the US is often depicted as antagonistic to China, for example through lexical field of divisions and oppositions, but it is also the only actor portrayed as such in public discourse. Furthermore, Chinese official discourse oftentimes creates a narrative surrounding the US which makes the latter a threat to China and to the rest of the world, where Washington is associated with motifs of lies and danger. By the same token, China’s discourse easily calls out the US in regard to its wrongful behaviors, through the publication of political communiques in direct response to US diplomatic actions, declarations, and qualifies it as US interference. Finally, China’s perception of itself as a victim in regard to the American position puts its rival as the instigator of instability, which contributes to the danger narrative. To this regard, the thesis also makes a link with China’s humiliation discourse, but the analytical framework qualifies the latter rather as an element of affirmative nationalism, used to fuel domestic support rather than showcase China as a victim of US action. Chapter 4 therefore finds that affirmative and assertive nationalism are easily found in Chinese discourse, but because China does not pin-point the US as a clear threat, which would need to be annihilated, no conclusions can be drawn on China’s aggressive state in regard to Whiting’s typology. Nonetheless, since Whiting’s 1995 works, this thesis finds that China has gained confidence, and does not hesitate to call out US behavior; hence this tendency may possibly lead to aggressive behavior. This thesis concludes this section by reminding the nuance which must be made between the observations made throughout the dataset, which are strictly limited to China’s official discourse, and the official actions taken by the Chinese government, which may reflect different positions when observed empirically.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the analytical framework in relation to the second key notion of this thesis : foreign policy. The goal of this section was to decipher the general line

of foreign policy presented by the Chinese government, by trying to answer the second operationalized sub-question : what are the motives behind Xi Jinping's foreign policy decisions ? In order to guide the analysis, this section relies on some existing literature, notably the works of Callahan and Zhang regarding China's nationalism and motives of foreign policy. Indeed, Callahan's framework on a four-sectioned typology of Greater China allows one to understand the vision from which China considers itself and therefore how it shapes its own foreign policy discourse through either nativism, conversion, conquest or diaspora²⁶⁵. Then, the thesis relied mainly on Zhang's work regarding cognitive frames mobilized by the three-dimensional conceptual framework. Among those, the notions of "global community" and "Chinese contribution"²⁶⁶ are precisely covered to question the intentions of Xi Jinping's foreign policy project. The goals of this section are therefore to understand the goals of Chinese foreign policy discourse by analyzing a dataset of speeches and communiques in contexts of international relations for China. From the interaction with the data, the analysis picked up on several general aspects that define China's foreign policy line. The first among those is the concept of cooperation and good-neighboring policy. Analyzing Chinese discourse showcases clear intentions from the Chinese government to advocate for international cooperation and enhance its own relations with the rest of the world. China seeks to make itself a trustful partner and improve its own image in regard to the international community. Indeed, those findings correspond with the analysis evoked by Zhang's work regarding China's frames on "global community" and "Chinese contribution" : on one hand, China is looking to better its situation in international relations, on the other, it may use such a process to ensure making itself more legitimate and therefore pursue larger goals, notably the promotion of its own values on the international scene. By the same token as cooperation, regionalism is a frequent motive in Chinese foreign policy discourse : when examining documents from regional settings such as ASEAN or bilateral agreements in the BRI framework, this thesis finds that China seems prone to enhance proximity as a way to enhance trust and cooperation based on cultural common aspects. The third aspect the research found on China's foreign policy motive can be identified in the idea of multilateralism. Indeed, throughout a large panel of documents, China repeatedly makes references to the concept of multilateralism : it generally makes itself a defending actor of the latter, with speeches implying a strong support to multilateralism and the existing world order. Nonetheless, the engagement with the data also picks up on an opposition between the concept of 'true' and 'false' multilateralism, which would imply that some actors of the

²⁶⁵ Callahan, W. A. (2005). Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(43), 269–289.

²⁶⁶ Zhang, F. (2019). The Xi Jinping Doctrine of China's International Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(3), 7–24.

international community practice a ‘false multilateralism’. The next notion picked up by the analytical framework from the dataset is the idea of “major country diplomacy”. On this topic, the thesis provides the observation of a contradiction in the official Chinese discourse. Indeed, although China openly advocates for cooperation, consultation and makes itself a pillar for supporting the existing world order which is based on multilateralism and equal contribution of all actors, some members of the international community are not understood as equal in their roles through the concept pushed by Xi Jinping’s narrative. Major countries, which are defined solely as the United States and China, seem to operate under a different scope than the rest of the world actors. As picked up by the analysis, China applies a specific role to those major countries, which comes with larger responsibilities, notably the obligation to guide members of the international community towards global development. This observation is easily linked with the last notion put forward by Chapter 5, which is the idea of China promoting a “new model of international relations”. The contradiction perceived by the analytical framework on multilateralism goes along the same line as this last one : despite supporting the existing system, Chinese official discourse on foreign policy also includes the intention to promote a new model of international relations. The latter is formatted as a part of Xi Jinping’s ideological project and therefore operates under “Chinese characteristics”. Those observations allow the thesis to draw a link between China’s discourse and the second dimension of the three-dimensional conceptual framework, notably the frame put forward by Zhang’s work, showcasing “Chinese contribution” as a way for China to promote its own ideas into shaping international relations. To conclude, Chapter 5 reviews Chinese official discourse on foreign policy, and finds that while China advocates for cooperation and multilateralism, some contradictions are picked up by the engagement with the data, which showcase China’s other intentions to promote a new world system. These observations therefore help the research make connections towards the political concept of Tianxia, which is potentially the new system of international relations that China could seek to establish through Xi’s ideology.

In order, to determine the characteristics of this new model of international relations, Chapter 6 is dedicated to answering the third operationalized sub-question and tackle the third dimension of this thesis : how does the rejuvenation discourse correlate with the official understanding of Tianxia in Xi’s terms ? First, the notion of national rejuvenation was first explored throughout Chapter 4, and the research establishes it as an element of affirmative nationalism. Indeed, national rejuvenation is a staple of Xi’s ideology to enhance domestic support regard a grand project for the Chinese nation. Nonetheless, national rejuvenation is also mobilized by this section as an element of Xi’s ideology in relation to the Tianxia concept. Indeed, as Xi Jinping’s project urges for the impulse of a new era, and therefore creates

incentives for change in the Chinese nation as well as the international community, Chapter 6 directly questions Xi Jinping's guiding role in this change, and seeks to link the latter to the definition of Tianxia established throughout the literature review and the making of the three-dimensional conceptual framework. Hence, Chapter 6 reviews elements of the dataset which allow this thesis to create linkages between China's official discourse, and the possibility of it advancing Tianxia as an alternative model of international relations. This is made by relying on literature on Tianxia, which guides the research in linking some concepts to Tianxia. Therefore, Babones' emphasis on harmony and stability, and Puranen's typology of vocabulary placing harmony in contrast to the Western system showcase the possibility for this thesis to create those connections and provide elements of answer to the third sub-question. This research therefore finds a growing link between China's ideological project and the promotion of Tianxia, despite no document throughout the dataset explicitly mentioning Tianxia. Then, the thesis also tries to build its own connections from the engagement with the dataset. Notably, the concept of the "community with a shared future for mankind" is a recurring theme throughout the analysis, which the thesis picks up as an element of answer. Indeed, as this formula englobes most of what has been analyzed previously, it allows one to link it to the Tianxia concept. Despite advocating for territorial integrity, China's speech on harmonious concepts, universality and its own role in shaping international relations, the narrative surrounding the "community with a shared future for mankind" depicts precisely the contradictions of China's foreign policy discourse. It creates a global future, which is common to all humanity, and therefore allows this thesis to draw a direct link in resonance with Tianxia concepts, which advocates for universal values and a unique political system. In conclusion of Chapter 6, concepts like harmony, peace and stability are highly advocated by China. From the literature on Tianxia, this thesis is able to reference Chapter 2 in order to provide elements of answer to the last sub-question, and link the rejuvenation discourse, and Xi Jinping's general ideology, to the project of re-shaping the model of international relations in guidance of Xi's authority. Therefore, based on the material found in the dataset, Tianxia is the most likely of projects to be launched, given China's references to Tianxia-linked concepts in its official discourse.

Section 2 : Empirical and Conceptual Implications of this Research

The engagement between the three-dimensional conceptual framework and the dataset of documents issued by various bodies of the Chinese government has allowed this research to produce elements of answer to each of the three operationalized sub-questions. Answering the overarching research question of this thesis therefore calls for a summary of the implications

that come with the conclusions from this analysis. By following the question “to what extent does Tianxia shape Xi Jinping’s nationalist discourse on foreign policy?”, this thesis mobilized three key notions : nationalism, foreign policy and Tianxia. The analytical framework interacted with some discourse material from Chinese leader Xi Jinping or people and institutions close to him following those three notions. From the analysis, the first conclusion this research is able to reach is related to China’s vision of itself. By analyzing nationalist discourse, this research finds that China’s vision of itself among the international community is one of a great power with great implications. China has evolved from the Mao and Deng eras to grow more confident regarding its capacities and power, and showcases it first to own nation but also to the rest of the world. However, this research does not consider that China’s behavior may have shifted towards an aggressive position, notably in relation to its rivalry with the US. Indeed, the findings showcase that China may have identified the US as a potential threat, but its official discourse remains limited to calling out the US on interfering behavior rather than building a defensive narrative, the latter which would imply the duty to annihilate the threat. Nonetheless, this research also finds its first limits in this conclusion, as it is a strictly discursive analysis, therefore some contradictions may be found in the difference between China’s official speech and its actions on the international scene, whether in regard to the US or in other settings. Then, analyzing the Chinese foreign policy discourse provides an overview of China’s external interests. The most recurring theme is the intent for international cooperation, and China’s commitment to not upsetting the existing world order by promoting multilateralism. However, some contradictions appears in China’s ideology : the notion of major countries and the promotion of a new model of international relations. Indeed, the former creates a dichotomy between the supposed equality of all countries among the international community and provides China with a more prominent role in international relations, while the latter openly undermines the official support to the existing world order by promoting an alternative system. Finally, this thesis examined the linkages between China’s official discourse and the political concept of Tianxia, questioning China’s intention to promote the latter as the new model of international relations advocated. Evidence found in the dataset is quite engaging, despite no mention of Tianxia being officially made. China is likely to try and impose a Tianxia system based on the analysis of Xi’s administration narrative. Nonetheless, this thesis is limited in drawing conclusions, and considers that more research, as well as a close observation of the evolution of China’s discourse remains necessary in order to decipher whether Xi Jinping’s ideology covers a revival of a Tianxia-like system in contemporary international relations. Notably, the notion of “community with a shared future for mankind” is a first orientation for further research; including to decipher whether this notion is typically a figure of speech or whether it may be clearly associated to formal elements of Xi Jinping’s ideological project beyond the

official discourse. However, Tianxia as a political concept, and as pushed by China's authority in international relations, may be limited to a regional scope so far. Indeed, this thesis does not find evidence of China trying to impose a Tianxia-like system to the rest of the world, but findings show that the emphasis on cultural proximity which are elements that the framework considers linked to Tianxia, are strictly limited to regional settings. To this sense, China's understanding of Tianxia from this thesis' standpoint may create a contradiction with the original definition of Tianxia. Indeed, "all-under-heaven" therefore appears contradictory with China's perception, as regional speech is more culturally-oriented in Chinese discourse, whereas China showcases importance dissonance with Western powers, most prominently the US. Nonetheless, while Tianxia's definition is inherently contradictory with a regional application of it, it is not considered as a paradox in regard to China's behavior and discourse. Indeed, the history of Tianxia in Chinese history has never showcased a case without any external rivalry. To this sense, China's understanding of Tianxia does not contradict with making sense of a rival today. For example, imperial China eras saw the continuous threats of non-Han ethnicities, therefore while China sought to impose Tianxia, it also evolved in a setting aware of its great rivals and numerous threats. Tianxia in this defining context does not have to consider strictly "all" under heaven. Instead, rivals were the justification that China always had to defend itself; hence, Tianxia is not inherently paradoxical with the existence of China's rivals. In the case of the US, perceiving the latter as a rival does not undertone China's intentions to promote a Tianxia system in international relations. Rather, this thesis considers that the US are simply not the primary target on which China seeks to promote its model of international relations with Chinese characteristics, which explains the restriction to a regional scope of influence so far. Tianxia does not have to consider the US, but solely the countries interested in engaging relations with China. To this regard, this research finds clear limitations in the conclusions it able to draw from strictly interacting with the dataset. Indeed, a more thorough work on China's conception of Tianxia, and the conducting of qualitative interviews is a step which would allow this research to find further elements of answer to its overarching research question. This process would ensure the creation of a more defined analysis of the Tianxia concept, and therefore provide more keys to analyze both Chinese discourse and actions.

Section 3 : Concluding remarks

As a work intended for a master's thesis, this research is able to draw some conclusions on the central aspects of questioning China's position. Chinese official discourse offers a large panel of occasions from which to draw elements of analysis of Xi Jinping's ideological project. This thesis has sought to engage with China's public discourse in order to build more

knowledge on China's conception of itself and its surroundings; of its intentions with its neighbors and the international community, and finally its projects to participate in shaping the contemporary system of international relations by promoting a traditional Chinese political concept like Tianxia in its foreign policy. This research considers that more research must be done on the topic and close attention must be paid to China's official discourse as well as its actions in order to provide fuller comprehension of Xi Jinping's project and the position of China in international relations. One key concept on which to start more academic discussion could be the "community with a shared future for mankind", as it encapsulates well the universal discourse China is promoting externally in relation to Tianxia. This thesis may therefore be considered a first work on which to base either empirical analysis of China's behavior, or future analysis of China's discourse. Indeed, by analyzing China's nationalistic narratives, this thesis is able to get further information on China's state behavior. However, while contradictions are picked up by the research, these observations remained limited to a certain extent, and completing this thesis' work could also call for an evaluation of China's external ambitions solely by analyzing China's foreign policy actions. The latter would allow drawing an extensive portrait of China's discourse and following actions, and notably detect some points of contradiction and differences between the official narrative carried by Beijing and the substantial actions of China under Xi Jinping's leadership.

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Annex 1

Table 5-1. Compilation of representative documents of the analysis in regard to Chinese foreign policy discourse.

Date	Title of the speech/announcement	International entity	Keynotes
2023-05	Xi Jinping's keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit	China-Central Asia Summit	Lexical field of cooperation : « shared future, friendship »; « mutual assistance »
2023-10	Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era	Foreign policy announcement	Lexical field of cooperation : « mutual benefits », « win-win cooperation » Lexical field of ideological proximity : « Asian Dream »
2023-10	Chair's Statement of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation	BRI Forum	Lexical field of cooperation : « Silk Road Spirit of peace and cooperation », « joint efforts and shared benefits »
2023-09	Speech by H.E. Li Qiang Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China At the 26th ASEAN Plus China, Japan, ROK Summit	ASEAN Plus China, Japan and ROK Summit	Elements of regionalism : « move toward an integrated regional market » Lexical field of cultural proximity : « we share a common home », « all members of the same East Asian family »
2022-11	Joint Statement on The 20th Anniversary of The Declaration on The Conduct of Parties in The South China Sea	ASEAN Summit	Lexical field of cooperation : « peaceful coexistence », « mutual respect, « promotion of friendly relations »
2022-06	XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration	BRICS Summit	Lexical field of cooperation : « mutual respect and understanding »; « mutual trust »; « deepening cooperation », « strengthen international cooperation and dialogue »; « inclusive consultation and collaboration »
2021-	Remarks by State Councilor	BRI Forum	Lexical field of family : « BRI family

12	Wang Yi At the Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation 2021		members »
2019-09	China and the United Nations: Position Paper of the People's Republic of China For the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly	UN Session	Promotion of a « new model of international relations »
2022-11	Working Together to Meet the Challenges of Our Times and Build a Better Future	G20 Summit	Reference to « major countries » and idea that « all major countries should perform their responsibilities »
2022-02	Drawing Wisdom from History to Light up the Road Ahead	Shanghai Communique Anniversary	Mention of the US and China as « major countries » Link with the role of major countries : « we must should responsibilities as major countries »
2023-09	Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Jointly Deliver a Brighter Future for the World	UN Session	Reference to « major country » Link with the role of a major country : « fulfill the mission of a major country »

Source: author compiles from Xinhua News, 2023; Embassy of the People Republic of China in the Kingdom of Cambodia, 2023; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2023; ASEAN, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022 ; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs News, 2019; China Daily, 2022; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Jamaica, 2023.