



The Logic and Contradictions of ‘Peaceful Rise/Development’ as China’s Grand Strategy

Barry Buzan

October 2014

Overview

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Introduction 1: China and Grand Strategy

- **Widespread view that China has no coherent grand strategy and needs to correct this**
 - **Some elements exist, but rapid changes in China are continuously redefining interests**
- **Some American realists (Goldstein; Swaine and Tellis) argue that China does have a transitional grand strategy (late 1970s to 2020s):**
 - **Rising peacefully within a US-led order**
 - **Biding its time until it has more power**

Introduction 2: China and Grand Strategy

- **My argument:**
 - **China does have a grand strategy**
 - **The home-grown idea of ‘Peaceful Rise/Development’ (PRD)**
 - **‘Peaceful Rise’ and ‘Development’ as interdependent ideas**
 - **PRD is not necessarily transitional**
 - **The moral purpose of the state works additionally to the logic of power politics**

Introduction 3: China and Grand Strategy

■ The logic behind PRD

- 1) the urgent need to develop;
- 2) the necessity for global engagement to do that quickly;
- 3) the consequence of China's neighbours and other great powers being unsettled, or feeling threatened, by the rising power generated by the successes of development in such a large country as China; and
- 4) the resulting security spiral threatening the global engagement on which the economy depends. China's geopolitical location, like rising Germany's was, is challenging

Introduction 4: China and Grand Strategy

- **The question is not whether China has a grand strategy. It does.**
- **The questions are:**
 - **1) Are the logic of this grand strategy, and the contradictions within it, fully understood by China's leaders?**
 - **2) Does China have sufficient depth and coherence in its policy-making processes to implement such a strategy?**
 - **3) Is it a Sun Tze style *Art of War* strategic deception or a long term policy?**

Grand Strategy 1

- **Definitions:**
- **Brooks, Ikenberry & Wohlforth: ‘a set of ideas for deploying a nation’s resources to achieve its interests over the long run.’**
- **Goldstein: ‘the distinctive combination of military, political and economic means by which a state seeks to ensure its national interest.’**
- **Payne: where theory and policy combine on the basis of a theory about how the world works**

Grand Strategy 2

■ Functions:

- To establish criteria for foreign and security policy formulation and evaluation.
- To provide a stable overarching framework that makes policy choices add up coherently.
- To embed and legitimize foreign and security policy politically by explaining it to the citizenry in broad terms.
- To project an image of the country to the rest of the world

Grand Strategy 3

- **Wang Jisi's (2011) Three Questions:**
 - **What are the country's core interests?**
 - **What external threats does it face?**
 - **What policy options does it have given its absolute and relative capabilities?**

Grand Strategy 4

- **Grand Strategy poses difficult choices:**
 - Between the realist idea of *raison d'état*, (pursuit of the national interest) and the English School concept of *raison de système* ('the belief that it pays to make the system work')
 - Between the state as the main agent, or civil society as the foundation of soft power
 - Between Ends (a set of core aims that define the national interest in terms of both domestic goals and how state and society are to relate to the wider world); and Means (absolute and relative capabilities of the state and society)

The Ends of China's Foreign and Security Policy 1

- A close reading of the literature reveals a set of seven core aims of China's grand strategy in practice over the last thirty-five years:
 - 1) Maintaining the exclusive rule of the communist party;
 - 2) Maintaining high economic growth;
 - 3) Maintaining the stability of Chinese society;
 - 4) Defending the country's territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes;

The Ends of China's Foreign and Security Policy 2

- **5) Increasing China's national power relative to the US, other great powers and China's neighbours, and achieving a more multipolar, less US-dominated, world order (anti-hegemonism);**
- **6) Maintaining favourable regional and global conditions for China's development;**
- **7) Avoiding having others perceive China as threatening.**

The Ends of China's Foreign and Security Policy 3

■ Questions:

- 1) Since aim 4 incorporates a set of disputed territories how does it square with aim 7?
- 2) In aim 6, what does 'a favourable regional environment' mean? China has relaxed, friendly and cooperative relations with its neighbours? Or China successfully intimidates its neighbours into compliance with its interests?
- 3) Is aim 7 merely transitional, as implied by the debate about moving on from Deng's low profile strategy, or long term?
 - Is China revisionist or status quo?

The Means of China's Foreign and Security Policy 1

- **Rapid and ongoing rise in China's material capabilities as the ongoing baseline fact**
- **Will these be channelled mainly into hard power or mainly into soft power?**
- **Is Deng's policy of keeping a low profile now redundant, and if so what should replace it?**
- **The problem of rising power undermining aim 7 of preventing 'China threat' responses**

The Means of China's Foreign and Security Policy 2

- **Ends/means contradictions in China's foreign and security policy practice:**
 - **1) How to pursue territorial disputes and an aspiration to regional primacy, while striving to maintain a peaceful and favourable international environment and harmonious relations with both neighbours and the US?**
 - **2) How both to integrate China into a US-led global economic order and promote a stable international environment, while treating the US as a strategic rival?**

The Means of China's Foreign and Security Policy 3

- 3) How to feature anti-hegemonism as a general goal while apparently coveting primacy within its home region?
- 4) How to pursue stability domestically by the use of internal crackdowns (as in 1989 and recently), while countering the 'China threat theory'?
- 5) How to cultivate nationalism and a sense of historical victimhood to bolster regime legitimacy domestically, without becoming hostage to nationalist opinion regarding the military pursuit of territorial disputes, and the casting of Japan and the US as enemies?

The Means of China's Foreign and Security Policy 4

- 6) How to achieve rapid development without creating a market society ruled by a communist party, thus threatening the goals of social stability/harmony?
- 7) How to reconcile the high priority to domestic security issues with the unavoidable linkage of China's development to a Western-dominated global economy?
- 8) How to pursue soft power by re-legitimizing the use of classical Chinese thought and culture, while maintaining the legitimacy of the CCP and the anti-democratic line, and seeming to link China's rhetoric of harmony with hierarchical relationships?

PRD as a Grand Strategy for China 1

- **Warlike rise is ruled out as a rational option:**
 - The 21st century is not analagous to the 1930s
- **Only peaceful rise remains, defined as:**
 - A growing power makes both absolute and relative gains in both its material and its status positions, in relation to the other great powers in the international system.
 - It does this without precipitating major hostilities between itself and other great powers.
 - There is a two-way process in which the rising power accommodates itself to the rules and structures of international society, while at the same time other great powers accommodate some changes in those rules and structures to adjust to the new disposition of power and status.

PRD as a Grand Strategy for China 2

- Peaceful rise divides into two quite distinct grand strategies:
 - *Cold (CPR) or negative* peaceful rise (no great power war, but an environment of threat and suspicion: think of Israel and Egypt or Russia and the West); and
 - *Warm (WPR) or positive* peaceful rise (a friendly environment with a considerable depth of trust, and a low sense of threat: think of the EU, or US-Canada)

PRD as a Grand Strategy for China 3

- **China's foreign policy rhetoric and behaviour drifts awkwardly between these two models.**
- **Its talk of harmony and co-development, and of itself as a status quo power, and its practices of joining intergovernmental arrangements, and contributing to peacekeeping operations, lean towards WPR.**
- **Its talk of nationalism, victimhood, and the rights of the big over the small, and its practices of assertive military pursuit of territorial claims and gagging of its own civil society, lean towards CPR.**

PRD as a Grand Strategy for China 4

- **Mixing WPR and CPR rhetoric and practice will produce a CPR outcome**
 - **Logic of prudence for China's neighbours**
- **If China wants to achieve WPR it will have to create a more coherent foreign and security policy**
- **How do CPR and WPR measure up against China's seven foreign and security policy aims?**

Cold Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 5.1

- **No obvious or immediate contradiction between CPR and China's first five ends:**
 - **maintaining the exclusive rule of the communist party;**
 - **maintaining high economic growth;**
 - **maintaining the stability of Chinese society;**
 - **defending the country's territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes;**
 - **and increasing China's national power relative to all others.**

Cold Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 5.2

- **A very obvious and immediate contradiction between CPR and aim 7 of avoiding others perceiving China as threatening**
- **A likely contradiction between CPR and aim 6 of cultivating a favourable regional and global environment.**
 - **Unless ‘favourable’ is defined in terms of Chinese primacy in Asia**

Cold Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 5.3

- **Cold Peaceful Rise is de facto China's current policy:**
 - **US, Japan, India**
 - **Russia (fragile and instrumental strategic partnership)**
 - **South China Sea neighbours since 2008**
- **Main beneficiary is the US**

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.1

- **More demanding, but more rewarding**
- **Pursuing all seven aims with reduced contradictions:**
 - **Keeping aim 7 about minimising ‘China threat’**
 - **Defining aim 6 ‘favourable environment’ in reciprocal, consensual, not primacy, coerced, terms**

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.2

- **Assumes that Deng's analysis of international relations from 1978 remains valid:**
 - **That peace and development have become the main characteristics of international society**
 - **That China is no longer existentially threatened by other great powers;**
 - **That China's own development depends on it being engaged with the world economy**

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.3

- **Emphasises that common problems require collective action because they generate shared fates**
 - ***Common security: security 'with' rather than security 'against'***
- **China has a good record of WPR behaviour in some areas:**
 - **Relations with ASEAN 1990-2008**
 - **In global IGOs and PKOs**

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.4

- The problem is not China's rise
 - broadly accepted as inevitable
 - in many ways seen as beneficial
- The problem is how China rises:
 - Cold, negative, and threatening, or
 - Warm, positive and attractive
- Policy requirements on three levels for WPR: domestic, regional, global

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.5

■ Domestic Policies for WPR

- How China behaves at home shapes how it is seen abroad**
- 1) Reform of the Party needs to keep pace with the social market society**
 - From 'market' to 'pluralist' communism**
- 2) A more multicultural approach to Tibet and Xinjiang and a long game of convergence with Taiwan**
- 3) More centralised government control over foreign and security policy with a coherent pursuit of WPR**

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.6

■ Regional Policies for WPR

- China cannot insulate its region and needs to be systematically nice to its neighbours, (like Germany and Indonesia have done)
- 1) Needs to address the history problem and de-link it from nationalism: look forward!
- 2) Needs to acknowledge territorial disputes and offer to submit all to binding arbitration. Also offer CBMs.
- 3) Support India's and Japan's claims for UNSC seats as part of China's multipolarity world vision.

Warm Peaceful Rise as a Grand Strategy for China 6.7

■ Global Policies for WPR

- Improving relations within its region would weaken the US position in East Asia at no risk to China
 - Japan as the crucial relationship here
- Take the 'multipolar world' rhetoric more seriously
- Weaken the 'China threat' lobby in the US by being nice to the Asian neighbours
- Have confidence in the natural effects of China's rising power to raise its status and give it more influence.

Conclusions 1

- **What kind of great power does China want to be?**
- **One that claims its place in international society mainly by power political means looking backward, seeking vengeance for the century of humiliation and to restore a Sino-centric system in East Asia?**
- **Or pursuing consensual means, using its rising power to look forward, and create a more pluralist, decentred international society in the post-Western age?**

Conclusions 2

- **Assessing CPR and WPR as grand strategies in terms of:**
- **Cost:**
 - **CPR high in military expenditure resulting from threat perceptions and action-reaction dynamics; high in political costs of opposition to China; and possibly high in economic costs if fear of China affected trade and investment.**
 - **WPR considerably less in all of these respects, but there would be significant domestic political costs associated with some U-turns on current policy.**

Conclusions 3

- Risk:

- **CPR: high in confrontations, alienating neighbours, and reinforcing the US position in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans.**
- **WPR: low risk, because the US could not oppose it either regionally or globally, and the natural extension of China's power and influence would happen anyway.**

Conclusions 4

- Probability of success:

- **CPR: high because its conditions are undemanding and present trends point to it. The question is not whether it can be done, but whether or not it is a good idea to take this path.**
- **WPR: lower because it is difficult to do, and would take a long time to deliver fully on its potential. It would have been easier to begin it before the 2008 turn towards a harder foreign policy line. There is a real risk that the continued pursuit of current policy towards Japan and ASEAN will foreclose the option of WPR.**

Conclusions 5

- **Morality:**
 - **CPR takes the moral low ground internationally, though the backward looking militant nationalists in China might construct it morally as justified payback for the century of humiliation.**
 - **WPR gives China several options to take the moral high ground internationally, but might be difficult to sell domestically given the way present Chinese nationalism has been constructed around victimhood and anti-Japanese sentiment.**

Conclusions 6

- **WPR is achievable but not easy**
- **China needs to think very carefully about the self-fulfilling prophecy aspect of realism**
- **The present mix of soft and hard foreign policy rhetoric and behaviour will not work for WPR**
- **China must choose:**
 - **To think of itself as living in a realist, Hobbesian world, and accept CPR as the consequence;**
 - **or accept as durably valid Deng's view that the nature of the international system had changed towards a low risk of great power war, and open opportunities for co-development.**

Conclusions 7

- **China cannot have a coherent grand strategy until its leaders commit to one or the other of these views.**
- **History will judge harshly a leadership whose rhetoric of peace and harmony raised hopes of WPR, but whose performance delivered CPR.**
- **PRD is a unique idea for China's grand strategy. A leadership that delivered it as WPR could claim a truly historic accomplishment that would mark the end of the Western dominated era of warlike rise, and the move to a new model of international relations.**