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Conceptualizing "International Leadership with Chinese Characteristics"

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THE RISE OF CHINA AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN THE POST-CRISIS ERA

CONCEPTUALIZING INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP
WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

**BY
BO PENG**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2018



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

**The Rise of China and Global Governance in the Post-Crisis Era:
Conceptualizing International Leadership with Chinese Characteristics**

**Kinas opstigning og den globale styreform i tiden efter krisen:
Konceptualisering af international ledelse med kinesiske karakteristika**

by

Bo Peng



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Dissertation submitted

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CV

My name is Bo Peng, my academic background is within the broad areas of IR, IPE and international politics. I obtained my bachelor degree of international politics in 2010 and obtained my double master degrees of international politics and development and international relations (DIR) in 2013, and I have been conducting my PhD study and research from 2014 to present. In my PhD dissertation, my research interests focus on the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international system through examining China's increasing role in global governance and through applying the lens of both Western and Chinese international relations theories. During the past years of my PhD study from 2014 to 2018, I have attended a number of international conferences and PhD courses that are both methodologically and empirically applicable to the theme of my dissertation - the rise of China and world order in general, the role of China and rising powers in global governance in particular, including other related themes, such as China and its soft/normative power, and the relationship between China and regional governance (Arctic region and East Asia), etc. During my PhD period I have also devoted myself to producing research output by publishing (and co-author with my supervisor) several English and Chinese articles and book chapters within the thematic areas of my research interests and my PhD dissertation. The list below represents the core of my publications:

- Peng, B. 2014. 从全球金融治理视角探析金砖国家银行 (A Study of the BRICS Bank from the Perspective of Global Financial Governance). *中国与国际关系学刊 (Journal of China and International Relations)*. 2 (2): 50-57.
- Li, X. and Peng, B. 2015. 超越西方中心主义软实力话语 (Beyond the West-Centric Discourse of Soft Power). *中国社会科学报 (Chinese Social Sciences Today)*. Issue. 809. 17 September 2015.
- Li, X. and Peng, B. 2016. 中国崛起与全球安全治理转型 (Conceptualizing the Transformation of Global Security Governance in the Nexus of China's Rise). *国际安全研究 (Journal of International Security Studies)*. No. 3: 51-72.
- Peng, B. 2018. China, Global Governance, and Hegemony: Neo-Gramscian Perspective in the World Order. *Journal of China and International Relations*. 6 (1): 48-72.
- Li, X. and Peng, B. 2018. The Rise of China in the Emergence of a New Arctic Order. *The Global Arctic Handbook*. Finger, M. and Heininen, L. (eds.). Springer. pp. 197-213.
- Li, X. and Peng, B. 2018. 从中国特色的“嵌入性”理论视角理解中国经济的成功 (Conceptualizing China's Economic Success from the Theoretical Perspective of “Embeddedness” with Chinese Characteristics). *演化与创新经济学评论 (Review of Evolutionary Economics and Economics of Innovation)*. No.2: 1-16.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Exploring the relationship between the rise of China and the existing international order and global governance, this PhD thesis provides a China-based interpretive perspective and contributes to constructing a framework of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) as a complementary analytical and explanatory structure. The thesis argues that the conceptual framework of the ILCC is co-shaped by a variety of components, such as Chinese cultural legacies and philosophical thought, China’s involvement in and contribution to the process and architecture of global governance, and China’s understanding and perception of international relations as well as other countries’ role expectations. Methodologically, the thesis applies relational theory, based on Chinese cultural and political thought, to redefining the key components (power, interest, vision) of international leadership through the logic of relationality/*guanxi*, leading to the construction of the ILCC with the inclusion of facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership. Role theory, using a combination of national role conceptions (NRCs) and national role performance (NRP), is applied to provide empirical analysis (verifying or falsifying) of the proposed ILCC framework. Empirically, the ILCC is applied by analyzing the interplay between a number of variables, such as Chinese leaders’ and decision-makers’ speeches and statements, China’s policy making and external behavior. The major contribution of the thesis is that it provides a holistic analytical and explanatory framework for understanding the rise of China and identifying China’s role in the transformation of global governance.

DANSK RESUMÉ

Ved at undersøge forholdet mellem Kinas opstigning, den eksisterende internationale orden og den globale styreform bidrager denne ph.d.-afhandling med et fortolkende perspektiv baseret på kinesiske forhold og giver sit bud på, hvordan ”international ledelse med kinesiske karakteristika” (ILCC) kan konstrueres som en komplementær analytisk og forklarende struktur. Afhandlingen fremfører, at ILCC’s konceptuelle ramme er opbygget af en række forskellige komponenter, herunder Kinas kulturarv og filosofiske tankegods, Kinas involvering i og bidrag til opbygningen af den globale styreform og Kinas forståelse og opfattelse af internationale forhold, samt forventningerne til den rolle, andre lande spiller. Som metode anvender afhandlingen relationsteori baseret på kinesisk kulturel og politisk tænkemåde i sin omdefinering af nøglekomponenterne (magt, interesse, vision) i international ledelse set i lyset af logikken i relationalitet/*guanxi*, der førte til dannelsen af ILCC med inddragelse af befordrende lederskab, konstruktiv lederskab og eksemplarisk lederskab. Rolleteori, dvs. en kombination af nationale rolleopfattelser (NRC’s) og national rolleudførelse (NRP), inddrages i en empirisk analyse (til verificering eller afvisning) af den foreslåede ILCC ramme. Den anvendte empiri bygger på ILCC, idet samspillet mellem en række variabler analyseres, fx taler og udtalelser fra kinesiske ledere og beslutningstagere, kinesiske politiske beslutningsprocesser og kinesisk adfærd udadtil. Afhandlingens betydeligste bidrag er, at den opstiller en holistisk analyse- og forklaringsramme for forståelsen af Kinas opstigning og for defineringen af Kinas rolle i transformeringen af globalt lederskab.

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Last but not least, I would like to express my deep love and thankfulness to my family members: my parents, my wife, and my daughter. Over the last three decades, my parents have devoted themselves to bringing me up and teaching me how to become a righteous and hard-working person. My wife and my daughter have also done a lot to support me emotionally and spiritually during my PhD study, especially when I encountered difficulties and hardship. To build a happy life for my family has always been the strongest motivation behind my commitment to the completion of my PhD project, and I look forward to the beginning of a new chapter of my life with confidence and responsibility.

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CHAPTER 1. PROBLEM FROMULATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1. THE MULTIFACETED RISE OF CHINA

During the last two decades, there have been a huge number of excellent academic publications on the topic of “the rise of China”. To be more specific, “the rise of China” has been interpreted according to the three major dimensions of economic development, diplomatic transition, and global governance.

First and foremost, since the “Opening-up and Reform Project” launched in 1978, China’s rise has been most clearly manifested in its dramatic economic growth and its continued integration into the global economy. In 2009, according to statistics from the International Energy Agency (IEA), China became the world’s biggest energy user by consuming 2.252 billion tons of oil equivalent, which exceeded the United States’ 2.170 billion tons (Swartz and Oster, 2010). In 2010, China replaced the United States as the largest manufacturing power (with a 18.9% share of the world’s manufacturing activities) and continued to widen its lead in the consecutive years (Mechstroth, 2015). In 2013, with its trade surplus rising by 12.8% to almost \$260 billion, China became the world’s largest trading nation by overtaking the United States (Monaghan, 2014). In 2014, according to IMF estimates using purchasing power parity (PPP), China became the world’s largest economy, worth \$17.6 trillion compared to the United States’ \$17.4 trillion (Duncan and David, 2014). In 2015, the IMF added Chinese Yuan to its Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket, with the Yuan having a 10.9% weighting in the basket, which ranks the third position after the US dollar’s 41.73% and the Euro’s 30.93% (Mayeda, 2015).

Second, China is gradually transforming its diplomatic focus from bilateralism to a combination of bilateralism and multilateralism. In 1996, a positive transition was observed in China’s diplomatic strategy, signaled by its first embrace of multilateralism through membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Christensen, 2015: 22). Since then, China has actively participated in the building of a number of regional multilateral groups and organizations. For example, in the area of security, China, Russia, and four other Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) co-founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001, aimed at “fighting terrorism and separatism and reducing mistrust and building confidence among the members” (Christensen, 2015: 23). During the SCO Astana Summit of 2017, India and Pakistan became full members of the

organization, “expediting the start of the organization’s historic expansion” (Hantke, 2016). Diplomatic multilateralism is considered by Beijing as a critical means of reassuring its neighbors that they will benefit from China’s rise.

Last but not least, further evidence of China’s rise can be observed through China’s increasing interest and participation in the making of global governance. Due to the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC), the existing Western-dominated global governance system is seriously under question and stands at a crossroads. Specifically, Western-based global governance has experienced four major crises (see 1.1.2 below) and is undergoing a process of transformation (Wolfgram, 2011; Pang, 2013; Tolarová, 2016). During this process of transformation, there are clear signs of “China’s aspiration to play a greater role in global governance as evidenced by its proactive participation in global institutions and its endeavors to make its voice heard by the existing powers in the West” (M. Li, 2012: 6).

1.1.2. THE WEAKENING WESTERN-BASED GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Since the beginning of the 21st century, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, the above-mentioned US-led international order, underpinned by its combined political, economic, security, and normative powers, has faced some rigorous challenges. According to Trine Flockhart and Xing Li (2010), as shown in Figure 1.1 below, these challenges can be abstracted into “four crises” faced by the liberal world order, as follows:

First, multilateral cooperation seems harder to achieve and sustain than liberals had anticipated, suggesting that the liberal world order is in a “crisis of functionality”. Second, whilst multilateral cooperation is difficult, there is a growing need for multilateralism to meet an ever-expanding set of new challenges in an increasingly globalized world, suggesting that the liberal world order is experiencing a “crisis of scope”. Third, the uneven record of liberal foreign policies in delivering a more secure and just world order has challenged key liberal values and prevented the liberal world order from living up to expectations. As a result, it is experiencing a “crisis of legitimacy”. Fourth, major shifts are taking place in the global power balance, shifting power from the United States and Europe to emerging new powers such as Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). As a result, the liberal world order is experiencing a “crisis of authority” (Flockhart and Li, 2010).

Inspired by the “four crises” argument, the thesis intends to draw on Flockhart and Li’s analysis of international order to interpret the current crisis/deficit in the existing sphere of global

governance, since the Post-Cold War architecture and process of global governance is largely built on the established US-led international order. Moreover, it witnesses that the weakening of Western-based global governance has been accompanied by the opportunities/challenges and new injections of energy and ideas brought about by the rise of China. In other words, a rising China is playing a complementary role to the existing Western-dominated global governance from the perspectives of function, scope, legitimacy, and authority.

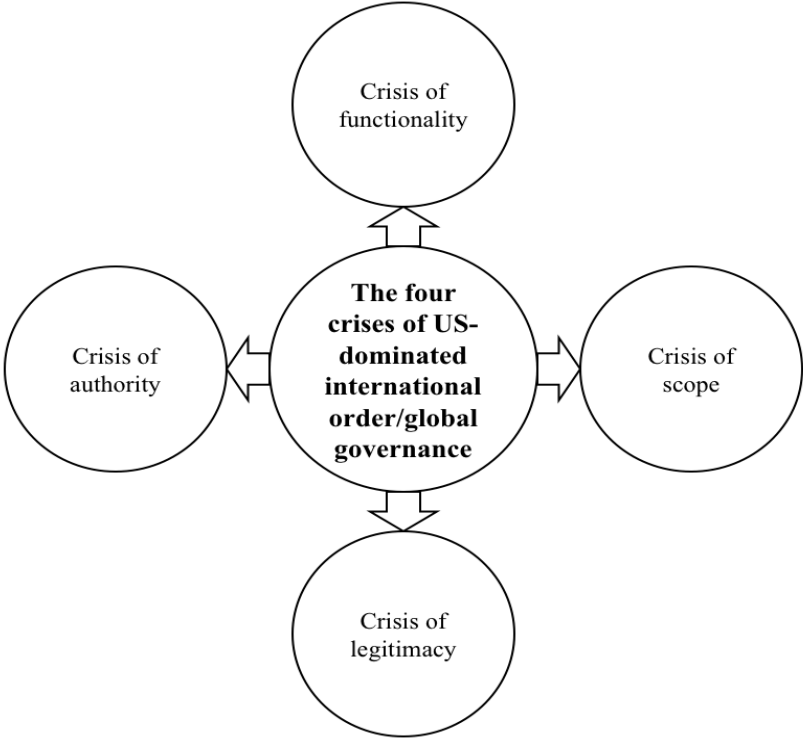


Figure 1.1 The four crises of the US-led international order/global governance
(source: the author’s compilation)

In the first place, the “crisis of functionality” of the existing global governance implies that the major Western-based multilateral international institutions are failing to achieve the expected outcomes. This crisis is mainly manifested in the three economic pillars (the IMF, World Bank and WTO) of the US-dominated global governance. For instance, multilateral cooperation has seemed harder to achieve under the US-led WTO over the last two decades. The 1999 Seattle Ministerial Conference collapsed against the backdrop of fierce protests in Cancun in 2003, where the participants were unable to reach any agreement because of their huge disagreement over Singapore Issues and Agricultural Trade Policy. Further, in 2017, the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires ended in failure due to divergence over the issue of subsidies in the fisheries sector. Against this background, China’s rise has injected fresh

impetus into addressing the “crisis of functionality” of the existing global governance. For instance, the China-proposed “Belt and Road Initiative” aims to revitalize multilateral cooperation and shape a new and open regional or inter-regional economy

In the second place, the “crisis of scope” of the existing global governance indicates that the established institutional arrangements are insufficient to address the increasing number of global issues. This situation calls for new institutions to be established to deal with these urgent concerns. For example, the major development aid agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have failed to fill the massive Asian infrastructure gap. According to ADB, “a substantial infrastructure gap remains (in Asia), with over 400 million people still lacking electricity, 300 million without access to safe drinking water, and about 1.5 billion lacking access to basic sanitation” (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Under these circumstances, China led the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), aiming to address the huge funding shortfall in Asian infrastructure construction and to play a complementary role to the World Bank and the ADB.

In the third place, the “crisis of legitimacy” of the existing global governance denotes that the established countries (especially the United States) failed in their policy-making attempts or to shoulder their responsibility to address the post-crisis development issues and to promote the world economy. Given the growing influence of populism and anti-globalization movements, the established countries are inclining to protect their domestic interests rather than to preserve the outcomes of globalization. For instance, since Donald Trump was elected as US president in 2016, his administration has unilaterally withdrawn from a number of critical treaties and organizations. Between January 2017 and June 2018, the Trump Administration withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Paris Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal, and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). However, in the meantime, as the largest beneficiary of the existing international order, China has remained committed to upholding the existing international order. For instance, in 2017, at the Davos World Economic Forum, President Xi Jinping argued that China is committed to becoming the guardian of global governance and the open trading system. In addition, against the backdrop of the United States’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, China reaffirmed its commitment to this hard-won achievement.

Last but not least, the thesis argues that the previous three crises led to the “crisis of authority” of the existing global governance. The “crisis of authority” mainly arose for two reasons: (1) the distribution of power between the developed and the developing countries is dramatically shifting in favor of the latter. This situation endows the developing countries and emerging powers (especially China) with more material capabilities and ambitions to transform themselves from the rule-followers to the rule-makers, which objectively challenges the Western-based rule-making process and architecture of global governance; (2) the above-mentioned three crises have exposed the lack of effectiveness and representativeness of the existing US-led global governance. Specifically, the “crisis of authority” stems from its failure to achieve effective multilateral cooperation, to address the emerging global issues, and to commit to shouldering due responsibility.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As the introduction shows, China’s multifaceted rise and the nexus between China and the relatively weakening US-led global governance are becoming the most eye-catching contemporary IR themes in political and academic circles across the globe. Being closely related to these themes, the China-US relationship is the most complicated and influential component of world politics and economics today, given that the debate over the relationship between the largest established power (the USA, as the largest economy) and the largest emerging power (China, as the second largest economy) has never ended. As Graham Allison, recently drawing on Thucydides’ Trap, argues “when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling one, the most likely outcome is war” (Allison, 2017: vii). Admittedly, Allison’s interpretation or prediction is just one of the possible scenarios.

Consequently, with the purpose of sustaining its global hegemony and dealing with the rise of China at regional and global levels, all sectors of American society, from government to universities and from transnational corporations to think tanks, have devoted themselves to studying the implications brought about by the rise of China and the United States’ feasible response and strategy. Moreover, by virtue of its superior hard power, the United States cultivates its soft power in the field of IR research, and it has dominated the development of the IR discipline for over half a century. Stanley Hoffman even claimed that “the discipline of IR is American social science” (Hoffman, 1977: 41). Therefore, it is argued that US IR research is at the cutting edge of this discipline, having given birth to the mainstream IR theories – structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism and structural constructivism – that have largely

influenced global scholars' and elites' perceptions, interpretations, and even their decision-making. Thus, the thesis intends to review the literatures/research on the striking theme of "*the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international system/global governance*" based on the three following mainstream IR theories.

1.2.1. STRUCTURAL REALISM

On the basis of Edward Carr's historical realism (Carr, 1939) and Hans Morgenthau's classical realism (Morgenthau, 1964), Kenneth Waltz developed the theory of structural realism or neorealism (Waltz, 1979). Compared to classical realism, according to Qin Yaqing, structural realism is a highly scientific and contracted IR theory (Qin, 2005c: 143). The scientificity of structural realism is manifested in its three major assumptions: (1) the international system is an anarchic structure; (2) the state is the basic unit/actor of international system; and (3) the structure of the international system determines actors' behavior. Waltz highlights the significance of structure and defines structure as the distribution of power among the nation-states (Waltz, 2010: 131). Thus, as structural realism indicates, the distribution of material capabilities is the core independent variable and the nation-state's behavior is set as the core dependent variable of the theory. In this respect, as Qin argues, structural realism is characterized by the logic of "structural selection" (Qin, 2005b: 39). It is a highly concise and falsifiable proposition, and it makes structural realism highly scientific.

Broadly speaking, structural realists see China as a revisionist power in the existing international system/global governance. A revisionist power is "a state primarily concerned with its own power and prestige above all other considerations, seeking to remodel the international system and order for its own benefit and in its own interest. This makes a revisionist power a staunchly realist one" (Combes, 2011: 5). This perception is mainly built upon the core assumption of structural realism: the international system is anarchic, and there is no higher power authority (world government) over the nation-state. Anarchy indicates that there is no guarantee of a state's survival and inter-state cooperation, and the international system is a sort of self-help system. Thus, in an anarchic system, a state emphasizes its own survival and security, and it tends to adopt competitive and conflictual policies (Grieco, 1988). Seen from this perspective, as the competitive power maximizer, a state always strives to exceed others' material capability, and it focuses more on relative gains than absolute gains. Therefore, states recognize that the best way to survive in a self-help system is to be as powerful as possible compared to their potential rivals. In the light of this idea, states "often fail to

cooperate even in the face of common interests” (J. M. Grieco, 1988: 488). In this respect, structural realism holds a fundamentally pessimistic attitude towards the achievement of international cooperation and questions the utility of international organizations. In the same vein, through the lens of structural realism, a state is uncooperative and unwilling to comply with the norms of the regime, since “it has little interest in achieving mutual gains through cooperation and more in advancing its own interests in relative term” (Combes, 2011: 5).

More specifically, in the context of the above-mentioned striking theme of “the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international system/global governance”, structural realists mainly focus on the China-US relationship, since the existing international system and global governance are established and sustained by the United States’ hegemony. Nevertheless, the thesis contends that the existing structural realism literatures on the US-China relationship can be further categorized into two major types. On the one hand, some neorealism scholars tend to investigate the striking theme through the lens of “the relationship between established and rising power” (Art, 2010; Bush, 2011; S. Zhao, 2016; Allison, 2017) in a general sense. In their eyes, the “structure” is mainly constituted and shaped by established and rising powers in terms of their dynamic distribution of power; on the other hand, other scholars are inclined to place the US-China relationship within a regional context, especially the regions of East/Southeast Asia. From their viewpoint, the “structure” primarily refers to the (East/Southeast Asian) regional order (Christensen, 2006; Kang, 2007; Ross, 2013) in which the United States and China constantly compete with each other for regional hegemony. It is clearly observed that these two types of research commonly emphasize the implications of “structure” on states’ policy and behavior.

From the perspective of the “structure” constituted by established and rising powers after the Cold War, China has come into the spotlight in virtue of its growing comprehensive national strength, leading to a controversial claim that China will inevitably play the role of a revisionist power because of its largest rising power status (Feng, 2009). The most representative of structural realists, Mearsheimer, argues that it is doomed to be a clash between the existing hegemon (the United States) and China, as the latter’s material capability is becoming prominent in terms of its astonishing economic development, increasing military modernization, and assertive diplomatic behavior (Mearsheimer, 2014). Other structural realists insist that the dynamic distribution of power between China and the United States is one of the best manifestations of power transition theory. Power transition theory (Lemke and Tammen, 2003; Chan, 2007) basically depicts a situation where China, with its increasing power, tries to use its

growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests, and other states in the system – especially the declining hegemon – see China as a growing security threat. This situation inevitably leads to tension, distrust, and conflict. In this respect, a rising China and a relatively weakening United States are “locked in an epic battle over the rules and leadership of the international system” (Ikenberry, 2008: 24). As the largest emerging power with unprecedented economic growth, China’s grand ascendance will lead to a shift in the regional and global power structure and the onset of an Asian-based international order.

From the perspective of the “structure” manifested in the regional order, since the end of the Second World War, the United States has invested a lot in East Asia in terms of shaping Japan, South Korea, and other Southeast Asian countries as the bridgehead against the socialist camp dominated by the former USSR. By doing so, it has woven extensive political, economic, and security networks throughout the regional countries over the last decades. However, China’s dramatic rise extensively changes the “structure” of East Asian order. Specifically, seen from the zero-sum perspective, China’s economic rise has brought about negative security implications. Since China is becoming the regional economic center in terms of its trade and investment with its major neighboring countries, analysts have become “nervous about whether these countries can be considered a reliable U.S. ally, particularly in conflicts that might directly affect U.S. strategic interests, but not their own” (T. J. Christensen, 2006: 97). Moreover, from the zero-sum perspective, with its strengthening economic and diplomatic ties with regional countries, China’s regional strategy aims to push the United States out of East Asia and establish its own regional hegemony. This perception is based on a historical policy – the “Monroe Doctrine” – according to which America’s leaders in the 19th century were “determined to push the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere” (Measheimer, 2010). According to Thomas Christensen, China’s regional strategy will lead the regional countries to “bandwagon with and accommodate a rising China, rather than balance against it by drawing closer to the United States” (T. J. Christensen, 2006: 98).

In sum, this thesis argues that structural realists overemphasize the conflictual aspect of the relationship between the rise of China and the existing world order/global governance system. They consciously or unconsciously place the US-China relationship within the context of a zero-sum game, and they tend to focus on the “structural contradiction” between the two great powers at the regional and global levels. They predict that the ascendancy of China will inevitably lead to the decline of the United States in a linear and direct causal manner. However,

the interdependent nature of the existing international system is often neglected by this school. It ignores the reality that China's economic success resulted from its integration with the US-led international order. In this respect, it is irrational for China to overthrow the established world order, and it cannot be in China's best interest. Given the interdependence of the international system, it is reasonable for China to take into account both its own interests and other countries' interests in order to achieve its peaceful rise and maintain its sustainable development. In an era of globalization and interdependence, there are no real winners in military or trade wars between countries – especially between great powers.

1.2.2. NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM

Compared to structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism emphasizes the significant influence of international institutions in resolving contentious interstate issues and promoting interstate cooperative behavior (Barnett, 2009: 64; J. M. Grieco, 1990: 27; Mitchell, 2006). Neoliberal institutionalists suppose that international institutions can promote nation-states to cooperate by providing reliable information so as to reduce the side effects of political market failure (Cogan, Hurd, & Johnstone, 2016: 39; Rittberger, Zangl, & Kruck, 2012: 2). Like structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism is also a systematic theory, it insists on the basic proposition of rationalism and establishes a concise theoretical system characterized by the logic of “institutional selection” (Qin, 2005b: 87).

Neoliberal institutionalists generally contend that China is a status quo power in the existing international system/global governance. As Randall Schweller argues, the status quo power tends to “preserve the essential characteristics of the existing international order” (Schweller 1998: 24). This perception is primarily based on the core assumption of neoliberal institutionalism: “the world has become interdependent in economics, in communications, in human aspirations” (Keohane & Nye, 1989: 3). With the increasing economic interactions between nation-states, the very nature of world politics changes. In other words, interdependence or complex interdependence “has changed the way states interact with one another” (Keohane & Nye, 1989: 24). Thus, although the anarchic international system inhibits the willingness of states to achieve cooperation, “states nevertheless can work together and can do so especially with the assistance of international institutions” (Grieco, 1988: 486). In this respect, in the eyes of neoliberal institutionalists, international institutions constitute “an important response to conditions of complex interdependence” (Karns, Mingst, & Stiles, 2010: 38).

More precisely, with respect to the above-mentioned striking theme of “the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international system/global governance”, neoliberal institutionalism, as a systematic theory, interprets China as a status quo power from two “structural” perspectives. On the one hand, neoliberal institutionalists contend that the international institutions constitute the “structure” that “provides a guaranteed framework for interactions and a context for bargaining” (Karns et al., 2010: 39). Specifically, this “structure” is characterized by the rules of international organizations/institutions and the principle of multilateral cooperation. On the other hand, neoliberal institutionalists do not deny the role of power in international institutions and contend that post-war US hegemony shapes the “structure” in which a small number of established countries, by virtue of the existing institutional arrangements, enjoy asymmetric benefits over a vast number of developing ones. More important, the established “structure” keeps functioning even though the hegemon declines.

From the perspective of the “structure” built upon international organizations/institutions, since adopting its reform and opening-up policy, China’s involvement in international cooperation has been initially driven by “the calculations of China’s domestic interests to create a peaceful peripheral environment for its economic growth and political stability” (Zhao, 2011: 53). However, since it has progressively benefitted from the existing system, China has shown increasing willingness and motivation to participate in the existing international organizations/institutions, and China has been gradually integrated into this “structure”, i.e., China has voluntarily accepted the “structure” and is largely shaped by it. More precisely, China’s compliance with the rules of international organizations, its diplomatic transition from bilateralism to multilateralism, and its increasing passive behavior in the United Nations are prominent instances of China’s desire to maintain and follow the international order of cooperation (Taylor, 2007). In the viewpoint of neoliberal institutionalists, integration is the core theme in the era of interdependence, and containment is out of date. According to Haass, “our goal should be to make China a pillar of a globalized world, too deeply invested to disrupt its smooth functioning. The aim is ambitious, even optimistic, but not unrealistic” (Haass, 2008: n/a). According to this viewpoint, China would play the role of status quo power and strengthening the existing “structure” built upon Western-based international organizations/institutions.

From the perspective of the “structure” built upon US hegemony, China’s role as status quo power is determined by the post-war U.S. project characterized by its institutional hegemony.

Over the last decade, China has become the largest rising power and the economic center of East Asia. However, this does not fundamentally change the rules of game in this region, since the United States has plenty of experience and motivations for “relying on multilateral institutions to bind and constrain challengers or using institutions to countervail potential threats” (He, 2009: 145). Moreover, as a rising power, China is confronted with a distinctive “structure” that profoundly differs from the previous ones. Specifically, rather than merely opposing the United States, China is faced with an open, integrated, and rule-based system that is embedded in deep political, economic, and social foundations. According to Ikenberry, with the purpose of maintaining its leadership of the Western order, the United States strives to “strengthen the rules and institutions that underpin that order – making it even easier to join and harder to overturn” (Ikenberry, 2008: 24-25). In this respect, the “structure” built on the US-led Western historical bloc will continuously sustain China as a rule follower rather than a rule-maker. The open and integrative nature of the Western order shapes China as a satisfied status quo power that “accepts the existing ordering principles of the international system” (S. Chan, 2004: 216).

Beyond the revisionist perspective, the neoliberal institutionalists emphasize in particular the interdependence and cooperative aspect of the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international system. Thus, they argue that although an authoritative China has become the second largest economy with strong military capabilities, international institutions and U.S. hegemony constitute the “structure” that shapes China as the vindicator or a rule-follower of the liberal world order. As the status quo power, it is natural for China to uphold the existing rules and institutions of the Western-dominated international system, and it would be too high a cost for China to make changes to this system. However, the thesis draws on Brantly Womack’s viewpoint on neoliberal institutionalism. Womack makes a conceptual distinction between the “status quo” and the “status ad quem”. The former literally indicates “the situation at which” (we are at present), and the latter refers to “the situation to which” (we are moving in the future). According to Womack, “if the status quo itself is moving and will not return then current concerns about whether China is a status quo power or a revisionist power are misplaced” (Womack, 2015: 135). In line with his conceptual clarification, Womack interprets China as a status ad quem power in terms of shaping a conducive neighboring environment at the regional level and preventing a comprehensive confrontation with the United States at the global level.

1.2.3. STRUCTURAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The most important development in international relations theory (IRT) in the 1990s was the emergence of constructivism. Among a myriad of constructivist theories, Wendt's structural constructivism is relatively moderate when compared to the other variations, and it is also commonly regarded as the mainstream approach within the scope of constructivism. Wendt's constructivism adopts the ontology of idealism, emphasizing the significant role of ideational and cultural structure (Wendt, 1999). In this respect, Wendt's constructivism is coined as the logic of "cultural selection" (Qin, 2005b)

Generally speaking, similar to the neoliberal institutionalists, structural constructivists see China as a "status quo power". Both of them highlight the capability of the existing international system of accommodating the rising power (China), and they insist upon the cooperative nature of the relationship between China and other states. However, a major divergence between the two schools is that the former emphasizes the role of international organizations/institutions, while the latter focuses on the significance of cultural and normative structure. In other words, unlike neoliberal institutionalists, structural constructivists are confident that China can be socialized to conform to the existing Western-based culture and norm system, and they believe in "the strength of international norms as sufficient constraints on rising powers such as China" (Johnston, 2007; Ikenberry, 2012).

More specifically, regarding the striking theme of "the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international system/global governance", as with the previous two mainstream IR theories, structural constructivism construes China as a status quo power from two "structural" perspectives. On the one hand, Wendt highlights the top-down socialization function of the international cultural system (Hobbesian culture, Locke's culture, Kantian culture) on nation-state (Wendt, 1999). This perspective emphasizes the role of ideas in shaping national identity and interests and stresses the importance of ideational "structure" in socializing nation-states' behavior. This branch of structural constructivism research is mainly based on the study of the socialization impact of international institutions. On the other hand, structural constructivists underline the significance of normative "structure" in the existing Western-based order. Within the normative "structure", norm diffusion plays a vital role in influencing states' choices and behavior. According to the prevailing understanding, an international norm has "a tripartite structure, consisting of a problem, a value and a behavior" (Winston, 2018: 638). Normally, the process of norm diffusion is divided into three stages – norm emergence, norm cascade, and

internalization (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This perspective insists that the existing normative structure, built on the established norms, is shaped and sustained by the existing powers and exerts implications on international relations. Divergence between these two perspectives is manifested in Yang Xiangfeng's argument that "while the transnational approach relies on social pressure to engender norm compliance, the institutional approach instead understands socialization as a top-down process wherein social learning by state elites is the key" (X. Yang, 2017: 81).

From the perspective of a top-down socialization process, China's role of status quo power is primarily socialized by the ideational "structure" that is embedded in the existing international institutions. Alastair Iain Johnston's *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (2007) is one of the most representative works to focus on research into China's top-down social learning in international relations. Drawing on sociology, Johnston investigates the motivations and consequences of China's active participation in the existing international institutions through the examination of three microprocesses of socialization – mimicking, social influence, and persuasion. By virtue of his extensive research, Johnston illustrates the major argument of this book: without any material impetus and external coercive pressure, Chinese elites were proactively involved in international security cooperation and global governance in a cooperative and self-constraining manner, owing to their increasing social interactions in international security institutions (Johnston, 2007: 197).

From the perspective of norm diffusion, China's role of status quo power is manifested in its acceptance and strengthening of the existing norm. According to Jochen Prantl and Ryoko Nakano, although the socialization literature has extensively investigated the relationship between global ideational/normative structure and its influence on nation-state behavior, "it misses out key parts that are essential for explaining norm diffusion" (Prantl & Nakano, 2011: 218). As a result, Prantl and Nakano proposed a framework of norm diffusion loops, and applied it to an empirical analysis of the norm diffusion of "responsibility to protect" (R2P) from global level to regional and domestic levels. R2P, defined as a transnational soft norm, is seen as one of the core norms in the Western-based normative structure. In doing so, the research discloses that norm diffusion of R2P has "softened the rigid Chinese understanding of state sovereignty and non-intervention, which has facilitated R2P acceptance" (Prantl & Nakano, 2011: 218).

In sum, although structural constructivism provides insights that allow us to understand China's role of status quo power in the international system from the perspective of socialization and

norm diffusion, it attracted a number of critiques, as follows. First, Chinese Professor Qin Yaqing criticized structural constructivism theory in terms of its top-down unilateral and unidirectional socialization process, rather than paying due attention to the mutual and reciprocal constitution between China and the existing Western-based ideational structure (Qin, 2018). Second, by questioning the existing literatures on the emergence and diffusion of single norms, Carla Winston emphasized the importance of norm components and clusters, and thus, she developed a new concept, known as “norm cluster” that “allows for multiple combinations of conceptually interlinked but distinct values and behaviors, offering multiple acceptable solutions to similar and interlocking problems” (Winston, 2018: 638). Winston’s research opens a door for the co-existence of diversified norms in regulating international politics and global governance.

1.3. GAP IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE

By reviewing the above literature on the theoretical connotations of structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and structural constructivism and their interpretations of the striking theme of “the relationship between the rise of China and the existing international order/global governance”, it can be argued that there are a number of substantive differences between the three mainstream systematic theories. However, they still share several common aspects. For instance, the three mainstream systematic theories adhere to the epistemology of positivism, and they generally adopt the empirical study as their major research method. For a long time, under the influence of behaviorism, mainstream scholars have put a lot of effort into developing IR theory into a grand scientific theory, and they believe that the construction of systematic theory can effectively achieve this target. In this respect, Morten Kaplan and Kenneth Waltz have made groundbreaking attempts in this area (Kaplan, 1957; Waltz, 2001).

Moreover, it is also apparent that neoliberal institutionalism and social constructivism have been largely influenced by Waltz’s structural realism, as articulated in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979). To be more specific, neoliberal institutionalism, which was developed on the basis of its criticism of structural realism (Keohane, 1986), has gradually moved towards a “neo-neo synthesis” with structural realism in terms of their common emphasis of systematic factors. The development of social constructivism is seen as another achievement of systematic theory in international politics, since Alexander Wendt has explicitly acknowledged that he has been extensively inspired by the structural realism’s “systematic orientation” (Wendt, 1999). As Amitav Acharya argues, mainstream IR theories commonly

have a system bias that refers to “the tendency to privilege systematic forces at the expense of regional and local or sub-systematic ones. Waltzian structural realism, liberal theory in general and the moral cosmopolitanism flavor in constructivist norm diffusion theory are examples of this bias” (Acharya, 2004: 242).

According to Qin Yaqing’s analysis, the reason why systematic theory has a higher possibility (than other theories) of providing the necessary conditions for scientific research (Qin, 2002) is mainly based on the following three features. First is the *synchronicity* of systematic theory. The three mainstream systematic theories focus more on synchronicity than diachronicity. The synchronicity indicates that the major objective of analysis is seen as a system which surpasses time and space rather than a historical product which evolves over time. For example, in the context of systematic IR theory, a system is made up of states, and these states are considered as rational and stable units that are not affected spatiotemporally. In this respect, system and state are studied from a non-historical perspective, which promotes the study of international politics theory as a sort of “hard science” research within the natural sciences. Second is the *objectivity* of systematic theory. One of the basic conditions of scientific research is to treat the objective of analysis as an objective reality. By doing so, (social or natural) scientists can objectively observe, test, and verify the objective of analysis. Specifically, from the perspective of structural realism, a system is shaped by the distribution of material capability, and material capability can easily be observed and measured through objective indicators and criteria. From the perspective of neoliberal institutionalism, a system is established on and characterized by institution. Although institution does not belong to the material category, the existence and implementation of institution and the degree of institutionalization are regarded as facts that can be observed and measured objectively. From the perspective of social constructivism, Alexander Wendt adopts Durkheim's sociological approach of defining social facts as social reality. This emphasizes that “sociologists can study in a way similar to how other scientists, such as physicists, study the physical world” (Durkheim, 2014). Third is the *simplicity* of systematic theory. Normally, scientific theory has the feature of simplicity. In this respect, systematic theory, as a sort of scientific theory, has a higher possibility of providing a simple theoretical system. Systematic theory mainly focuses on the influence of systematic factors on individuals. Therefore, systematic theory generally sets system and individual as two basic variables and makes hypothetical statements regarding the relationship between these two variables. As a result, by focusing on the two variables, systematic IR theory is able to meet the requirement of simplicity, as other natural scientific theory does.

Although systematic IR theories, by virtue of their above-mentioned defining features, interpret international relations and world affairs in a more “scientific” manner, they are also faced with several limitations because of these very features.

In the first place, although *synchronicity* is a major precondition for constructing systematic IR theory as a scientific theory, it cannot ignore the significance of diachronicity in understanding international politics. In fact, it is inadvisable to merely emphasize the synchronicity of systematic IR theory and to neglect the historical origins and evolution of international politics. The contemporary international system and nation-state are products of historical development. Thus, the thesis argues that although the international system before the Peace of Westphalia and the pre-20th century Chinese Tributary system was not an inter-state system in contemporary terms, their significance are valuable for understanding and interpreting contemporary international relations. Specifically, as with the synchronicity of systematic theories, it neglects the role of history in interpreting the rise of China. This “neglect” is manifested in two aspects. First, mainstream systematic theories neglect the crucial role of China’s long history. It is widely-acknowledged that China has one of the oldest ancient civilizations in the world. This means that China has rich historical and cultural legacies that extensively influence the Chinese way of thinking. To be more precise, in the field of international relations, China possesses a great number of heuristic ideas and political philosophies for dealing with the relationships between states¹. For instance, during the pre-Qin period, a large number of strategists, diplomats, and philosophers contributed their wisdom to the then governors/*zhuhou wang* (诸侯王) in terms of identifying their inter-state’s/*zhuhou guo* (诸侯国) strategy and making appropriate decisions depending on various situations. Second, mainstream systematic theories also neglect the history of interactivity between China and the

¹ In Chinese history, there are several manifestations and interpretations of “state”. Before the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), China was in the feudalistic (封建) political system. In the context of feudalism, “state” refers to “*zhouhou guo*” (诸侯国). *Zhuhou* (诸侯) were the feudal lords, and their estates or states were named as “feudal states”/ “*zhuhou guo*”. For instance, during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), the term “states” represents the “*zhuhou guo*”. However, since Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇) established a unified China, the Chinese political system transformed from feudalism to a “unified and power-centralized state”. In this context, “state” refers to a powerful central government and is governed by a supreme monarch without the existence of “*zhouhou wang*” (诸侯王). From the Qin Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, China witnessed division and unification. During the period of division, such as the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280 AD), there were several power-centralized states competing with each other for the reunification of China. The 1911 Xinhai Revolution ended the last monarch-governed centralized state in Chinese history. Since then, **China has become a combination of modern nation-state and civilization-state**. The former implies that China accepts the Westphalian nation-state system characterized by state sovereignty and international law, while the latter indicates that durable Chinese ancient political thoughts and cultural legacies largely influence its way of thinking and practices in contemporary international relations.

rest of the world. The long-standing interaction between China and the world, from “tributary system” to “hundred years of humiliation” to “reforming and opening-up”, contribute a great deal to Chinese unique perception and understanding of international relations. Thus, the neglect of China’s historical experience is not conducive to the complete and holistic interpretation of China’s policies and practices in the existing international system.

In the second place, systematic theory’s overemphasis of *objectivity* inevitably leads to the neglect of the mutual constitution between structure and agent. Systematic IR theory sees the international system and nation-state as two separate objective realities. From this point of departure, systematic IR theory focuses on investigating the impact of the international system on nation-state. Specifically, in order to simplify their theoretical assumptions, structural realism and neoliberal institutionalism deliberately avoid discussions of the role of nation-state and respectively emphasize “structural selection” and “institutional selection”. In its initial stage, as Alexander Wendt illustrated in *The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory* (1987), social constructivism placed emphasis on the mutual constitution between the international system and nation-state. However, since Wendt draws on the systematic model (of structural realism) when reinterpreting social constructivism, it undoubtedly weakens the bidirectional constitution between structure and agent, and it highlights instead unidirectional constitution from the international system to nation-state. With regard to China, defining it as a “constrained emerging power” verifies this unidirectional constitution process. In other words, social constructivism overemphasizes the role of the existing norm and cultural structure in shaping China unidirectionally rather than paying due attention to China’s agency in shaping the norm structure. However, in the era of global governance, according to Matthew Hoffmann and Alice Ba, “actors have always had the ability and wherewithal to affect their own conditions” (Hoffmann & Ba, 2005a: 254). Moreover, the dynamic era continuously creates opportunities for agency. Although global governance consists of a set of hegemonic ideas and institutions that sustain the power structure and the privilege of the established powers, it does not imply that “those ideas and structures are not constantly undergoing contestation; nor is it to say that non-core actors see themselves without agency” (Ba, 2005: 195). In particular, globalization and regionalism offer the nation-state a platform and opportunity to assert various ideas, solutions, and visions, etc.

In the third place, the simplicity of systematic theory normally leads to an oversimplified interpretation of complex international politics. When undertaking analyses of foreign policy, systematic IR theories assume that the nation-state is a rational and unitary actor. By doing so,

systematic theories aim to avoid interference from domestic factors and processes. However, at this point, systematic theories encounter an unavoidable dilemma. On the one hand, domestic political and social processes clearly play a crucial role in defining national identity, formulating national interest, and shaping a country's external behavior; on the other hand, if domestic factors are considered, a universally valid systematic factor for conducting analysis cannot be identified. Although systematic theories' complete elimination of domestic factors helps to achieve a scientific simplicity of analysis, they overlook a great number of problems and phenomena that should not be ignored. In terms of China, systematic theories usually treat China as a rational and unitary actor without seriously taking into account Chinese domestic political and social conditions. For example, John Mearsheimer believes that Chinese leaders, given the dramatic rise of China, will inevitably strive to establish regional hegemony and seek to push the United States out of East Asia. This indicates that China, as a rational actor, will mirror the United States' logic of "pushing the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere" (Mearsheimer, 2010). However, it is misleading to argue that one country's policy and behavior is solely determined by the objective environment shaped by the distribution of power, institutional, and norm structure. In other words, a kind of mathematic or physical formula cannot simply be applied to interpret a nation-state's motivations and the calculations that lie behind its foreign policy and practice. In this regard, for the purpose of understanding Chinese policy and behavior, it is essential to explore domestic factors. In this thesis, China's domestic factors are manifested in China's national role conception (NRC) and national role performance (NRP).

Last but not least, in addition to the three major deficiencies outlined above that are embedded in US-based mainstream IR theories with respect to research into the rise of China, this thesis acknowledges that there are also a number of different Western-based IR approaches that place emphasis on the role of history and domestic issues in interpreting international affairs, such as the English School and the Copenhagen School. However, according to Amitav Acharya, Western-dominant IR approaches have four major tendencies when theorizing international relations, as follows:

(1) Auto-centrism refers to the tendency of theorizing about key principles of mechanisms of international order from mainly Western ideas, culture, politics, historical experiences and contemporary praxis, and disregarding non-Western ideas, culture, politics, historical experiences and contemporary praxis; (2) universalism refers to the tendency to view or present Western ideas and practices as the universal standard, while non-Western principles and

practices are viewed as particularisms, aberrations or inferiorities; (3) disjuncture refers to the lack of fit between what passes for IR theory and the experience of the non-Western world, although Western scholars seldom see this as an obstacle to theory-building; (4) agency denial refers to the lack of acknowledgment of the agency of non-western states, regional institutions, civil society actors in contributing to world order. (Acharya, 2007)

In sum, this thesis argues that the existing US mainstream systematic IR theories and other Western-dominant IR approaches possess the power to define the rise of China (Huntington, 1996) and have limitations in interpreting its implications for global governance. In other words, due to their lack of Chinese characteristics, these mainstream IR theoretical approaches cannot provide a holistic and dialectic picture that understands the nexus between the rise of China and the existing international order/global governance.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF “INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS”

The deficiencies of systematic IR theories – synchronicity, objectivity, simplicity – have led to misperceptions and incomplete interpretations of the rise of China. The author supposes that these misunderstandings are mainly derived from the Western discursive monopoly. This discursive monopoly is manifested in Western-dominated IR paradigms that interpret international affairs, judge the appropriateness of other countries’ behavior, and even influence other countries’ policy making, etc. This makes the contribution of this PhD thesis of an applicable concept that would be more useful to interpret the rise of China in a more holistic manner. However, it is necessary to point out that the critique of mainstream IR paradigms does not aim to de-legitimize the applicability of these paradigms, but to point out their limitations in terms of incompleteness and one-sidedness.

Therefore, with the purpose of producing a more comprehensive interpretation of China’s rise and its implications for the existing international system, *the main objective of this PhD project is to make a contribution that is based on a conceptual framework of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics”, embedded in “Chineseness”, to supplement mainstream Western IR paradigms and to interpret China’s foreign policy and external practice in global governance.*

Before constructing a framework that I have called “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC), it is essential to clarify the concept of leadership as presented in this thesis. In Chinese, the concept “leadership” (领导) has a number of different connotations, such as leader (领导者), hegemony (领导权), the leading class (领导阶层), and leadership ability (领导能力), etc. According to Chinese historical and contemporary experience, the legitimacy of leadership is mainly derived from and based on the ability of leadership that is mainly manifested in the Chinese idea of meritocracy (精英治国). As Daniel Bell argued, over the last decades, the legitimacy of China’s government has been sustained due to the successful implementation of China’s centuries-old meritocratic model (Bell, 2015). Furthermore, Bell interpreted the basic idea of meritocracy as “everybody should have an equal opportunity to be educated and to contribute to politics, but not everybody will emerge from this process with an equal capacity to make morally informed political judgements. Hence, the task of politics is to identify those with above-average ability and to make them serve the political community. If the leaders perform well, the people will basically go along” (Bell, 2015: 32). In this regard, meritocracy is rooted in performance legitimacy that suggests that “the government has an obligation to improve the people’s material well-being and intellectual/moral development is a central part of the Confucian tradition” (Coicaud, 2017: 26).

Being influenced by these ideas of meritocracy and performance legitimacy, the thesis intends to adopt ability-based leadership, rather than status-based leadership, in conceptualizing and interpreting the ILCC.

First, the application of ability-based leadership, derived from the idea of Chinese meritocracy and performance legitimacy, to the construction of the ILCC is a culture-based conceptualization and interpretation. In this regard, it indicates that the ILCC is closely associated with Chinese traditional culture and political philosophies and with China’s ontological assumption of IR, which is based on them. In other words, Chinese decision-makers’ worldview, built on Chinese history and culture, has a strong impact on the construction and implementation of the ILCC. In addition, the ILCC is also undeniably influenced by China’s perception of the international situation and its involvement in the process and architecture of global governance. As a consequence, the conceptualization and interpretation of the ILCC contributes, to some extent, to remedying the three above-mentioned deficiencies (synchronicity, objectivity, simplicity) of the systematic theories on the rise of China, and it provides more heuristic insights into an understanding and forecast of China’s role in

international relations and global governance in the coming decades. It should also be noted that the culture-based approach adopted in the thesis aims to explore “Chinese characteristics” rather than to address the “China Exceptionalism” that isolates China from global politics and academia.

Second, ability-based leadership helps the author to conceptualize the ILCC outside of the traditional logic of the hegemonic transition that is characterized by the status-based concept of hegemony/leadership. The analytical paradigm of power transition habitually asserts that, with its ongoing rise and accumulating capacities, China will inevitably replicate the hegemonic transition that has occurred in the last several centuries and seek to achieve its hegemonic status regionally and globally. However, the construction of the ILCC, by virtue of its focus on ability-based leadership, is a robust response to mainstream American-based IR theories on discussing the repeated hackneyed topics of “China Threat” (Roy, 1996; Gertz, 2000; Chang, 2018; Peña, 2018), “China Collapse” (Chang, 2010; Mattis, 2018), and “Is China a revisionist power or a status quo” (Johnston, 2003; Taylor, 2007; Kastner and Saunders, 2012). In other words, the conceptualization and interpretation of the ILCC do not set out to claim that China is becoming a new hegemon, rather it aims to interpret China’s facilitative, constructive, and exemplary role in improving and promoting international cooperation and global governance. From this perspective, it creates more opportunities for discussing the positive implications brought about by the rise of China.

1.4.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with the proposed research objective, the thesis raises the main research question as:

How to conceptualize and interpret the rise of China and global governance through constructing and analyzing the conceptual notion of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics”?

With the purpose of better answering this main research question, the project decomposes it into several sub-research questions by considering the relevant ontological, epistemological, methodological, theoretical, and empirical issues. Since the thesis aims to interpret the impact of “Chinese characteristics”/ “Chineseness” on the understanding and implementation of international leadership, and it adopts a culture-based perspective, a number of sub-research questions are proposed as follows, and they constitute the interpretive logic of this PhD project as shown in Figure 1.2 below:

(1) How do Chinese IR-related political thoughts and cultural heritage impact Chinese (decision-makers' and elites') ontological assumptions/worldview of contemporary international relations?

(2) How do Chinese decision-makers and elites, on the basis of their worldview, conceptionally construct and practically implement “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) through China’s involvement in a myriad of issue-areas/mechanisms in global governance?

(3) What are the implications of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) for world politics and global governance, and what opportunities and challenges are faced in the construction and implementation of the ILCC?

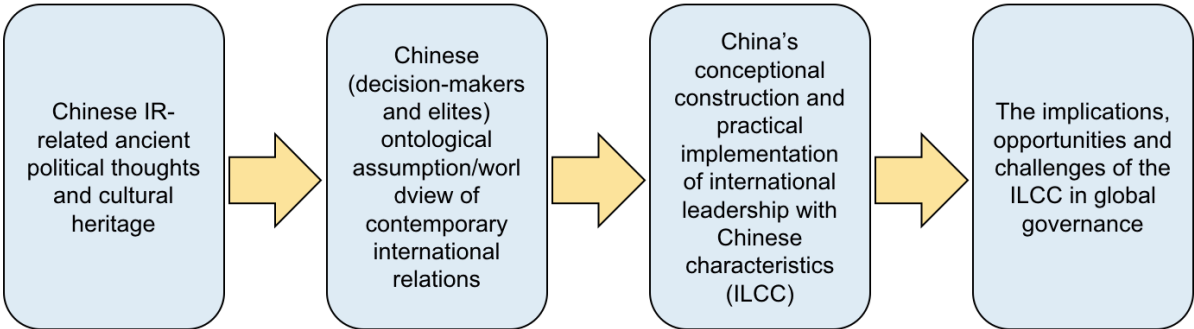


Figure 1.2 The interpretive logic of the PhD dissertation

(source: the author’s compilation)

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This second chapter intends to provide a research design in order to fill the defined knowledge gap and answer the proposed research questions. The research design is mainly constructed on the basis of the conceptualization of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) – the ILCC is identified as the core concept of the PhD thesis. In this respect, the ultimate goal of this thesis is to verify or falsify this conceptualization through the combination of theory application and empirical case analysis.

2.1. ONTOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

The first and most step in conceptualizing the ILCC is to provide a detailed interpretation of “Chinese characteristics”. Specifically, the interpretation of “Chinese characteristics” is embodied in a clarification of the “Chinese ontological assumption of IR”², since the ontological assumption is identified as “the source of paradigmatic divergence in political science” (Hay, 2006: 79).

As Colin Hay argues, unlike research in the natural sciences, “*no political analysis has ever been ontologically neutral*” (Hay, 2006: 78). This rule also applies to the study of international relations. For instance, since the end of the Second World War, on the basis of its hegemonic (structural) power, the United States has dominated the IR community, endowing the discipline of IR as “an American social science” (Hoffman, 1977: 41). In this respect, American values and standards, as manifested in American ontological assumptions of IR, have clearly exerted a great deal of influence on the establishment and development of the mainstream IR research paradigms. According to Qin Yaqing, the core theme of the American IR research paradigm is “the preservation of US hegemony” (Qin, 2005a). This means that the major concern of US IR theories is to figure out ways of maintaining the United States’ hegemonic status in international relations and to ensure the stability of the US-based international system. In this regard, the American ontological assumption of IR emphasizes the struggle for material power and institutional domination among the individual states, especially the struggle between established powers and rising ones. Thus, in line with the American ontological assumption of

² “Chinese ontological assumption of IR” refers to Chinese ontological assumption/worldview of the relationship between itself, the nearby regions, and the extended world.

IR, the rise of China is inevitably considered as a serious challenge both to the United States' hegemonic position at regional and global levels and the US-based international system.

Moreover, international relations, as a discipline and a research agenda, was originally created by Western academia. The theoretical constructions and practical experience of this discipline are deeply embedded into Western history, culture, and discourse. For instance, the frequently cited "Thucydides Trap" in relation to the US-China relationship is mainly derived from the historical experience of the Peloponnesian War, i.e., "the rise of Athens, and the fear that this inspired in Sparta, that made war inevitable" (Thucydides & Crawley, 2004: 11). Historically, following the first Opium War, China was "reluctantly dragged into new international involvements" (Stearns, 2008: 243). Over the last more than hundred decades, China has had to unconditionally follow and comply with Western-based concepts and norms in exchange for being accepted and recognized by the existing international system. In this respect, as Zhao Tingyang argues, no matter how strong its economic capacity is, China remains a "small state" if it cannot become a "knowledge producer" (T. Zhao, 2011). The lack of an IR paradigm with "Chinese characteristics" impedes the development of China's discursive power in terms of explaining its external behavior and producing knowledge. Hence, the ability of knowledge production is critical for the rise of China and each emerging power because it provides opportunities for other countries to pay due attention to certain hidden perspectives when interpreting the rise of China (and the emerging powers in general) in a more objective manner. It further makes a contribution to the increase of legitimacy of China's policies and practices, which ultimately helps China to construct a favorable environment for its future development and prevents the "tragedy of great power politics" (Measheimer, 2014) between established powers and emerging ones (the United States and China being an outstanding example).

In sum, it is essential to interpret Chinese ontological assumptions of IR on the basis of Chinese political culture and philosophies when conceptualizing and undertaking an empirical analysis of the ILCC. In this respect, a number of questions need to be answered, such as which and how Chinese traditional culture and political philosophies shape Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. What understanding do Chinese people have of the nature of international relations (IR)? According to Chinese understanding, what is does IR consist of? In Chinese eyes, what are the general principles governing the functioning and development of IR? What ontological assumptions regarding IR do Chinese people hold? *The thesis argues that an understanding of these questions lays an ontological foundation for conceptualizing and interpreting the ILCC.*

It is significant to note that the identification of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR, on the basis of major Chinese IR-related ancient concepts and political thoughts, has largely been influenced by Jyrki Kallio's clarification of three approaches to the impact of Confucianism on Chinese IR or Chinese IR theory. According to Jyrki, the first approach lists certain relevant key Confucian concepts and virtues and then discusses their applicability to international relations. The second approach looks at those Confucian texts that explicitly talk of state-to-state relations, and analyzes the behavioral modes expressed in them. The third approach sketches the Chinese world view based on a variety of Confucian texts and then projects this idealized world view into the practicalities of the modern world (Kallio, 2015: 80).

Jyrki questioned the first approach, as "the real meaning of the concept is far from clear" (Kallio, 2015: 81) because "the concepts have undergone numerous semantic shifts" (Kallio, 2015: 80) and "rival schools of rival philosophers have used the same concepts to advance very different ideas" (Raphals, 1992: 7). Thus, Jyrki argued that "it is meaningless to directly extrapolate ideals, such as harmony or *zhongyong*, into state-to-state relations" (Kallio, 2015: 81). Although Jyrki acknowledges that the second approach may "be more fruitful in the quest of finding the roots of a Chinese IR theory" as it helps limit researchers to those texts and excerpts that explicitly discuss state-to-state relations, he also suggests that it would be ahistorical "to extrapolate those remarks which are predominantly related to the state's internal affairs into the realm of international relations" (Kallio, 2015: 81-82). Therefore, Jyrki appreciated the aims of the third approach "to overcome the obstacles described above and discover whether there is something permanent which they could all agree upon" (Kallio, 2015: 82).

The thesis recognizes the legitimacy and applicability of Jyrki's third approach. Thus, this section consists of two parts: the first part (2.1.1) discusses the original connotations and extracts the contemporary significance of selected Chinese cultural heritage and ancient political thought as the major sources for understanding Chinese ontological assumptions of IR; and the second part (2.1.2) interprets the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR on the basis of the discussion in the first part.

2.1.1. THE MAJOR SOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING CHINESE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

According to the Western standard, China is not considered as a Westphalian type of modern nation-state. In other words, China has no Western inter-state cultural and historical legacies.

As a result, *China is generally defined as a civilization-state rather than a nation-state, and the civilization-state China has unique cultural and philosophical sources for shaping its ontological assumptions of IR.* According to Martin Jacques, “the most fundamental defining features of China today, and which give the Chinese their sense of identity, emanate not from the last century when China has called itself a nation-state but from the previous two millennia when it can be best described as a civilization-state characterized by its history, culture, and way of thinking” (Jacques, 2011, online). As a well-known Sinologist, Lucian Pye argues that “China is a civilization pretending to be a state...The fact that the Chinese state was founded on one of the world’s great civilizations as given inordinate strength and durability to its political culture” (Pye, 1990: 58). In a similar vein, Zhang Weiwei contends that the most outstanding characteristics of the civilization-state China is manifested in its unique centuries-old historical legacy and profound cultural heritage (Zhang, 2011).

However, defining China as a civilization-state does not impede China from making contributions to knowledge accumulation and innovation regarding contemporary IR. In recent years, pluralism has become a hotly-debated topic in international relations. According to Yong-Soo Eun, pluralism maintains that “there are many legitimate ‘ways of knowing’ and thus endorses a wide range of epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives” (Eun, 2016: 1). The increasing calls for (ontological, epistemological, and methodological) pluralism (Eun, 2016) in the field of IR and the growing popularity of the “Global IR” debate (Acharya, 2014) help China to provide dynamics for the development of the IR discipline from both conceptual and practical perspectives. As Emilian Kavalski articulates, “the inquiries into how China thinks and in what way its history and traditions inform the idiosyncrasies of China’s international outlook have grown into a cottage industry both in IR and across the full spectrum of the humanities and social sciences” (Kavalski, 2016: 551).

Consequently, the thesis argues that both the definition of civilization-state China and the ongoing advocacy for ontological pluralism in IR help to provide the necessary background knowledge for the introduction of several relevant concepts to underpin the project’s core conceptual framework of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics”. In this respect, although China, as a civilization-state, has a splendid history characterized by a rich cultural heritage and concepts such as the Five Elements (五行), Eight Trigrams (八卦), and Feng Shui (风水), the project applies just three major Chinese cultural and philosophical concepts – the

Tianxia (天下), the Humane Authority (王道), and the State of Equilibrium and Harmony (中庸) – to the interpretation of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. The following paragraphs contain an interpretation of the conceptual connotation of these three concepts and reveal their contemporary significance in relation to existing research.

2.1.1.1 Tianxia (天下)

In 2005, by publishing the book *Tianxia Tixi: Shijie Zhidu Zhexue Daolun (The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of a World Institution)*, Chinese philosophical scholar Zhao Tingyang resurrected the concept of Tianxia. According to Zhao Tingyang, Tianxia is an order of coexistence that is established based on the idea of an entire world (Zhao, 2005). In this respect, Tianxia defines “the world as a categorical rethinking unit of viewing and interpreting issues” (T. Zhao, 2006: 30) and develops a perspective of envisaging a political order compatible with the ongoing globalization. In other words, according to Zhao’s research, Tianxia provides a lens for understanding world politics and defining the legitimacy of a political order based on the idea of “worldness” rather than the individual state. Since then, the concept of Tianxia has attracted a great deal of excitement and controversy in both Chinese and international IR academia, as we will see below.

Since Zhao’s revival and interpretation of the Tianxia concept, a large number of Chinese and international scholars have contributed arguments and criticisms to the discussion of this concept. As a representative international scholar who has conducted extensive research on the concept of Tianxia, William A. Callahan criticized Zhao Tingyang’s interpretation of this concept from philosophical and social perspectives. Specifically, Callahan pointed out that Zhao’s Tianxia utopia “has serious theoretical problems both in terms of its cavalier reading of classical Chinese texts and its odd use of contemporary social theory’s vocabulary of ethical relations in a way that promotes ‘conversion’ rather than ‘conquest’” (Callahan, 2008: 756). From the practical perspective, by disclosing the serious flaws of the Tianxia and Westphalian systems and investigating China’s foreign policies, June Teufel Dreyer argued that “in the absence of compelling incentives for major players in the current international system to adopt the Tianxia system, Westphalian sovereignty appears likely to remain the organizing principle of international relations for the foreseeable future” (Dreyer, 2015: 1015). In a similar vein, by mentioning China’s pragmatic emphasis on sovereignty, Allen Carlson contended that China has not carried out any actual strategy or policy to revitalize the ancient Tianxia system in Asia. However, he did not deny the positive implications of the Tianxia system and argued that “a

Tianxia order might pave the way for the novel solution of disputes and controversies, and as such lead to greater stability within the region (Asia)” (Carlson, 2011: 102).

Moreover, from the perspective of strategic rationality, Zhou Fangyin applied an instrumental approach to interpreting the concept of Tianxia and argued that the Tianxia system represents “a spontaneous order, an endogenous and self-enforcing institutional arrangement of East Asia which appeared and reproduced as an outcome of continuous strategic interaction among actors within the region” (Zhou, 2011: 150). In Zhou’s definition, Tianxia system is composed of rational states/actors that seek material interest during the process of their strategic interaction. Zhou contended that the Tianxia system should not simply be characterized by China’s conciliatory policy of “giving more and getting less” in exchange for the periphery’s (surrounding states) submission, rather it is “the result of rational choice and strategic interaction among China and its neighboring states” (Zhou, 2011: 176).

Unlike Zhou’s strategic rationality, Zhang Yongjin and Barry Buzan recognized the significance of institutional rationality and adopted a constructivist approach to interpreting the Tianxia system by an emphasis on cultural elements and social constitution (Zhang and Buzan, 2012). From this perspective of institutional rationality, Zhang and Buzan argued that “the Tianxia system, as a bundle of shared and common institutional practices, is the articulation of international society in East Asia, as it is constitutive of deep rules of the game in the relations between Imperial China and other constituent states” (Y. Zhang & Buzan, 2012: 34). In this respect, according to Zhang and Buzan, it is beneficial to conceptualize the Tianxia system as an international social structure, providing more opportunities and inspiration for understanding this ancient Chinese world order in both cultural and structural terms. The structural perspective is conducive to the interpretation of the Tianxia system “from power-political and co-existence in the outer circles, to cooperation and convergence in the inner circles” (Y. Zhang & Buzan, 2012: 34).

The above-mentioned literatures respond to Zhao Tingyang’s study of the concept of Tianxia in both a supportive and critical manner to different extents, and they have played a crucial role in developing the concept and improving understanding of the concept. However, in terms of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR, the thesis recognizes that Zhao’s proposition and analysis of relational rationality offers the most useful interpretation of Tianxia. In other words, for this thesis, the Tianxia concept provides an alternative perspective on relational rationality, supplementing the individual rationality perspective, for understanding international affairs and

global governance (T. Zhao, 2016: 31-44). Individual rationality defines the maximization of individual interest as the ultimate goal of behavior; it is logically embedded in the calculation of individual gains and losses. In an era of interdependence, one actor's individual rationality cannot guarantee its own interests in the long term. Individual rationality is insufficient to ensure peace and security and enhance mutual trust; on the contrary, it often increases levels of hostility and risk and leads to mutual suspicion. Therefore, it is essential to explore a more effective and valid form of rationality in the interactive relationship.

Against this backdrop, Zhao argues that relational rationality is a necessary supplement to individual rationality and is crucial to the realization of cooperation and peace (T. Zhao, 2016). Relational rationality and individual rationality do not oppose each other in nature; instead, they are in a complementary relationship and are considered as two sides of one coin – the coin refers to the complete/sufficient rationality. Relational rationality places the consciousness of coexistence in the central position and it is understood as a self-restraining means of individual rationality. In this respect, relational rationality is conducive to the construction of a stable and credible coexistence.

The distinction between individual rationality and relational rationality is also reflected in their different interpretations of “universal value” (T. Zhao, 2016). On the one hand, individual rationality interprets universal value by taking the individual as the unit of analysis. In this respect, universal value indicates the universalization of a specific value around the globe. However, the deficiencies of individual rationality, in defining universal value, are observed in its inability to balance the diverse and multiple demands between individuals and its inability to guarantee universal benefits. The universalization of value does not necessarily lead to universal benefits, rather it sometimes leads to a collective decline (for example, the failure of the Washington Consensus). On the other hand, relational rationality interprets universal value by taking relations as the unit of analysis. In this regard, it interprets universal value as the foundation of acceptable relationship between individuals.

Specifically, according to relational rationality, universal value contains two major principles. One is the principle of being “universally beneficial”. It indicates that all parties will accept a sort of relationship if it is universally beneficial. This principle prevents the worst-case scenario caused by irrational common consent. Although a universally beneficial relationship must be built upon common consent, common consent does not necessarily lead to universal benefits. In this regard, compared to common consent, the principle of being “universally beneficial” is

much closer to sufficient rationality. The other principle is that of being “universally compatible”. It means that all parties agree with a sort of relationship if it could guarantee mutually compatible cooperation. This principle does not aim to interfere with any lifestyle or grant privileges of any particular group. In other words, the universally compatible relationship benefits all parties symmetrically rather than prioritizing one specific party over others. In this respect, the principle of “universally compatible” is a more effective way of solving conflicts and coordinating relationships among multiple appeals.

2.1.1.2 Humane Authority (王道)

The Humane Authority is an ideal political system of Confucianism, and it is also known as the Confucian rule of virtue and benevolent governance. In this regard, the Humane Authority is usually regarded as a pattern of governance. It contains a set of ideas and institutions relating to political life. Generally speaking, there are two major interpretations of the Humane Authority: Mencius’ idealistic type and Xunzi’s realistic type (Ren, 2012). Specifically, Mencius’ interpretation focuses on the norm dimension (合规则); and Xunzi’s interpretation emphasizes the rule dimension (合法则). These two interpretations of the Humane Authority are not opposed, but rather they are two interdependent sides of one coin. In other words, they have together constituted the connotations and extensions of the Humane Authority. According to Liu Zhiqing, either Mencius’ “kind-heartedness” or Xunzi’s “The Rule of a True King” are merely one side of the Humane Authority. The Humane Authority can only be achieved through the combination of “benevolent governance” (仁政) and “good law” (善法), based on the spirits of “kind-heartedness” (Liu, 2017: 56).

On the basis of the above interpretations, several Chinese scholars have studied the contemporary implications of the Humane Authority for the field of IR. One of the pioneering Chinese IR scholars on the study of Humane Authority is Professor Yan Xuetong from Tsinghua University. In his work *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (2011), Yan reviewed a number of intellectual contributions made by the Pre-Qin thinkers – Guanzi, Mencius, Xunzi – in terms of their discussions of two types of leadership: Hegemonic Authority (霸道) and Humane Authority (王道) (Yan, 2011a: 47). First, Guanzi insists that moral ability is the decisive factor in distinguishing the Humane Authority from Hegemonic Authority. In this respect, if the moral prestige of one leading state was high, that state is seen as the Humane Authority, with a large number of followers; otherwise, it is regarded as the Hegemonic

Authority, with a lower level of moral prestige. Second, Mencius believes that the fundamental variance between the Hegemonic Authority and the Humane Authority is determined by their different ways of upholding international order. Specifically, Mencius argues that “the Hegemonic Authority relies on power whereas the Humane Authority relies on a stronger morality for its maintenance and can survive without a particularly large material force” (Yan, 2011a: 49). Third, being different from Mencius, Xunzi deems that both Hegemonic Authority and Humane Authority rely on the combination of morality and power. The disparity between the two is that the Hegemonic Authority places more emphasis on the role of power and the Humane Authority stresses the role of morality. In Xunzi’s context, one state’s morality is largely presented as its political credibility.

Inspired by these Pre-Qin thinkers, Yan argues for moral realism by emphasizing the significance of international authority and strategic credibility for a state to establish and maintain its leadership and establish a new international order (Yan, 2016). According to the level of morality and strategic credibility, Yan categorizes international leadership into three types: tyranny, hegemony, and Humane Authority. First and more precisely, tyranny indicates that a dominant power only focuses on the significance of material power without paying due attention to the role of morality. In this respect, tyranny’s ignorance of moral principles inevitably leads to the undermining of international norms. This ultimately results in instability and turmoil in the international order. Second, hegemony means that a leading state adopts double standard in international affairs, i.e., “keeping strategic credits within its alliance while adopting a policy to deal with non-allies according to jungle law” (Yan, 2016). In this respect, on the one hand, hegemony can effectively maintain the stability and solidarity of its alliance; however, on the other hand, it may lose its strategic credibility in the entire international system. Third, Humane Authority refers to a leading state that “practices moral principles and maintains high international strategic credibility” (Yan, 2016). It usually sustains the established international order through (1) being a good example to other states; (2) rewarding the states that obey international norms; (3) punishing the states that violate international norms (Yan, 2011b).

2.1.1.3 The State of Equilibrium and Harmony (中庸)

The State of Equilibrium and Harmony comes from both Taoism and Confucianism (Pang, 1980). It implies that “neither have/do too much nor too little, but follow the middle way to have/do the appropriate amount” (Jiang, 2013: 444). This thought helps the Chinese to have a

more tolerant attitude toward different opinions and beliefs. Practically, being directed by the State of Equilibrium and Harmony, Chinese people are usually reluctant to do anything to extremes, and they are more willing to look for common ground among various opinions and to try to reconcile conflicting stances.

According to Liu Tonghui, the State of Equilibrium and Harmony is naturally a sort of Yin-Yang thinking and practical thinking (Liu, 2015). Originally, the Yin-Yang model of thinking/Yin-Yang dialectics derive from Chinese observations of nature in the era of agricultural civilization, and it played a dominant role in Chinese society and culture from the Spring and Autumn period (春秋时期, 722-481 B.C.) and the Warring State period (战国时期, 480-222 B.C.). As Jiang Xinyan argues, “Chinese naturalistic, dialectical, and optimistic attitudes toward the world and life are all based on the yin yang model of thinking” (Jiang, 2013: 438). Specifically, over thousands of years, it has intensely influenced the development of ancient China in all aspects of astronomy, meteorology, chemistry, arithmetic, music, and medicine, etc. In addition, it profoundly shapes Chinese correlative logic through which Chinese people interpret various issues or the diverse aspects of one issue in a dynamic and dialectic manner. Hence, it is argued that the Yin-Yang dialectic is not only a philosophical issue in terms of ontology and world outlook, but also it has practical significance in terms of guiding ordinary people’s daily life and shaping the way decisions are made by political elites.

The core connotation of the Yin-Yang dialectics is “everything is the unity of yin and yang opposites, everything implies its opposite, and everything will change to its opposite” (Jiang, 2013: 444). In this respect, the State of Equilibrium and Harmony can be understood in the following three aspects. First, yin and yang are mutually contained, i.e., yin contains yang and yang contains yin. In other words, yin and yang are two sides of one coin. On the one hand, yin and yang are considered, respectively, as the ego and the alter, they are two separate individuals; on the other hand, yin and yang together constitute a perfect whole and they are continuously revitalizing each other. For instance, as shown in the fish eye of Tai Chi, the ego exists within the other and the other exists within the ego. Thus, in line with this thinking, the two poles of one thing are not thesis and anti-thesis, rather they form the co-thesis. Second, yin and yang are mutually complementary, and they constitute a complementary relationship. In this relationship, the strength of yin complements the weakness of yang, and vice versa. However, the interaction between yin and yang does not lead in a particular linear direction, rather they are in a dynamic and circular process of continuously supporting and even transforming each other. This circular

process maintains the dynamic balance of life and promotes the evolution of cooperation and coordination.

Finally, in the context of the State of Equilibrium and Harmony, the relationship between yin and yang is harmonious. Harmony between yin and yang is the basic precondition of generating dynamics and sustaining prosperity. Chinese culture sees harmony as the natural state of the world. More significantly, harmony is dynamic and open rather than static and closed. Harmony is realized through constant coordination and mutual tolerance amidst diversity. The harmonious way of thinking does not deny the existence of conflict, rather it believes that conflict is the precondition for the birth of harmony, as exemplified by, “an appropriate combination of different musical notes so that a beautiful melody is made” (Qin, 2016: 41). Hence, it is argued that the State of Equilibrium and Harmony has huge potential for containing contradictions and great capabilities for reconciling conflicts, given the “neutralization” characteristics of the State of Equilibrium and Harmony. Thus, yin and yang, as two poles, have the tendency to transform one another. This transformation ultimately leads to a harmonious state in both the natural world and human society.

Furthermore, in virtue of the above understanding and discussion of the historical implications and connotations of the State of Equilibrium and Harmony, it is useful to draw a comparison between the Yin-Yang dialectics (harmonious dialectics) and Hegelian dialectics (conflictual dialectics) in further exploring the Chinese way of thinking and behaving.

Hegelian conflictual dialectics contend that two poles of one thing should be seen as thesis and anti-thesis, and that the natural state of the world is conflictual and contradictory. In this respect, a stable and harmonious state can only be achieved if one pole is fully overturned or eliminated by the other. As Brincat argues, Hegelian (conflictual) dialectics hold that “change results from the internal dynamism of society, from the interactions between human beings that leads to inter-societal tension and the potential sublation of these contradictions to different forms” (Brincat, 2010: 681). Hegelian dialectics, characterized by “either or” thinking, emphasize that social change and development is achieved through a classical three-step pattern: (1) the highlighting of contradictions and conflicts; (2) the emphasis of struggle; and (3) the generation of social upheaval.

On the other hand, the Yin-Yang dialectics stress the mutual existence, the complementary interaction, and the harmonious symbiosis of the two poles of one thing. In other words, they focus on seeking commonalities among contradictions and transforming conflicts into harmony.

With respect to the change and evolution of social relations, the Yin-Yang dialectics, embedded in the State of Equilibrium and Harmony, consider the development of society as a moderate evolutionary way of softening contradictions and avoiding extremes, i.e., seeking common ground while preserving differences. In sum, the “either or” way of thinking is not regarded as rational and smart in Chinese culture. Instead, the State of Equilibrium and Harmony provides an alternative “both and” way of thinking to observe and interpret a natural phenomenon, social transformation, and world politics in a moderate and processual manner.

2.1.2. THE MAJOR FEATURES OF CHINESE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

First of all, it is essential to note that the above review of Chinese political thought and cultural legacies (the Tianxia, the Humane Authority and the State of Equilibrium and Harmony) is (1) neither a mere cultural and historical study of these concepts, (2) nor is it intended to claim that contemporary China will rejuvenate its imperial glory and re-establish a hierarchical order based on these concepts’ original ideas. Instead, as Qing Jiang argues, Chinese ancient political philosophies are able to “transcend concrete history and have everlasting value” (Qing, 2013). In the same vein, Jyrki also emphasizes the contemporary value of Chinese ancient political thought by discovering “whether there is something permanent which they could all agree upon” (Kallio, 2015: 82). As a result, the major function of the above review is to explore the contemporary significance of these concepts and interpret the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of contemporary international relations that are identified as relationality, inclusiveness, and processuality.

2.1.2.1 Relationality

In this thesis, relationality is seen as the most fundamental feature of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR, since the central role of relationality is well manifested in all of the three selected streams of Chinese political thought and philosophical ideas, such as (1) the relational rationality contained in the Tianxia concept, (2) the close relationship between power and morality emphasized by the Humane Authority, and (3) the mutual complementarity of Yin-Yang presented in the State of Equilibrium and Harmony. All of these philosophies arguably highlight the significance of relationality in Chinese culture and politics. However, given the recent emergence of a ‘relational turn’ in social science and IR, it is necessary to note that the study of relationality in IR is not the exclusive privilege of Chinese community; a number of Western IR scholars have also begun to emphasize the necessity of studying

relations/relationality. Hence, in order to interpret and understand relationality with Chinese characteristics more accurately, this thesis includes a comparative study between Chinese and Western research on relationality, as follows.

Western scholars studying the relationality of IR mainly focus on the distinction between “substantialism” and “relationalism” at the ontological and methodological level (Emirbayer, 1997; Jackson and Nexon, 1999). For instance, substantialism and relationalism respectively take “things” and “relations” as their basic unit of analysis (Kavalski, 2016). In the same vein, Qin Yaqing, a representative Chinese IR scholar carrying out research into relationality, has also endowed relationality with ontological significance. Qin criticizes the lack of “relations” in mainstream Western IR theories and emphasizes the critical role of relationalism in defining the concepts of power, identity, and governance (Qin, 2016). In this respect, it is argued that the major convergence between Western and Chinese research on relationality is observed in their shared ontological assumption. Unlike most dominant Western mainstream IR approaches, the emphasis on “relations” is a proactive attempt to achieve ontological pluralism in the IR field. Emilian Kavalski borrowed the idea from Zhang Feng (2015) and argued, “a relational IR acts simultaneously as a reminder about the multiverse world we inhabit and the composite nature of IR’s episteme.....what makes post-Western IR ‘post-Western’ is its responsiveness and receptivity of other perspectives” (Kavalski, 2016).

In addition to recognizing the convergence between Western and Chinese research on relationality, the project aims to identify “relationality with Chinese characteristics” by pointing out the divergence between the two approaches. Being different from the Western approach of merely defining relationality from a methodological perspective, it is argued that “relationality with Chinese characteristics” is mainly manifested in its conceptual connotation and practical extension. In other words, in virtue of the unique *guanxi* culture found in China, relationality is not only an ontological issue, but it also profoundly shapes Chinese decision-makers’ world outlook and is reflected in China’s foreign policy and strategy. More precisely, the conceptual connotations and practical implications of Chinese relationality are manifested in the facts that (1) the Chinese government attaches great importance to its reputational profile in the international community and (2) China has established various types of strategic partnerships across the globe.

On the one hand, *guanxi*, as an exclusive component of Chinese culture, plays a critical role in understanding the conceptual connotation of relationality. In most cases, *guanxi* and “relations”

are seen as a pair of synonyms. However, when compared to “relations” in the Western context, Chinese *guanxi* has richer and more encompassing connotations, as observed in a number of related concepts: obligation, reputation, face, and recognition, etc. According to Luo Yadong, from the perspective of business, *guanxi* refers to “the cultivation of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence, and the manufacturing of reciprocal obligation and indebtedness” (Luo, 2007: 4). As Zhang Feng argues, *guanxi* “stresses the reputational profile as the main currency of relationality” (Zhang, 2015). The heavy emphasis on obligation and reputation in Chinese society mainly results from Chinese *face* (*mianzi*) culture. Furthermore, in Chinese culture, *face* is normally understood as “public image”, representing one person’s or one country’s recognition by others in (international) society. The cultivation of reputation or *face* by one country in international community is interpreted as the country’s pursuit of international recognition. In this respect, China’s proposal of the “right approach to justice and interests” (正确的义利观) is a clear sign that China seeks a balance between the pursuit of its own interest and the preservation of its international reputation and recognition, key to the maintenance of China’s favorable relationships with other countries.

On the other hand, the practical extension of Chinese relationality is mainly observed in China’s strategic partnership policy in the field of diplomacy. China’s emphasis on partnership “is consistent with the Chinese face culture, namely, people often arbitrarily define themselves as an acquaintance and then include anyone they wish to bring into their circle” (Nguyen, 2015: 245). Unlike the traditional logic of strategic alliances, the Chinese government consistently upholds a non-alignment policy and identifies the strategic partnership as the central element of its diplomatic relationship with other actors (nation-states and international organizations). From Chinese official elites’ point of view, alliances derive from a ‘Cold War’ mentality and are an outdated security concept; they increase the possibility of military conflict and go against comprehensive peace and security. Examining the narrative of China’s top leaders and China’s foreign policies, China has, for a long time, pursued partnerships rather than alliances. According to Nguyen’s summary, partnership with China means that “neither party should view the other one as an enemy; the parties need to treat each other with respect and equality; the parties should not intervene in each other’s internal affairs; the parties need to coordinate with each other to advance their common political and economic interest and they need to support each other in international affairs” (Nguyen, 2015: 57). This interpretation clearly echoes the nature of the State of Equilibrium and Harmony and Yin-Yang harmonious dialectics.

In sum, the above conceptual connotations and practical extensions of Chinese *guanxi* demonstrate how the feature of relationality of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR shapes Chinese decision-makers' policies in (a) seeking China's international reputation and recognition, (b) managing complex relations in order to maintain social and political stability in the international community, and (c) constructing a favorable relational network for both China's and global sustainable development.

2.1.2.2 Inclusiveness

By reviewing the concepts of the Tianxia, the Humane Authority, and the State of Equilibrium and Harmony, this thesis considers inclusiveness as another significant feature of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. Generally speaking, the logic of inclusiveness in Chinese culture does not seek for absolute and extreme homogenization, rather it respects differences and strives to achieve "harmony with diversity". In this respect, the author obtained critical inspiration from Jyrki Kallio, a well-established sinologist from the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), through a semi-structured interview regarding the implications of Chinese culture and worldview on Chinese foreign policy. According to Dr. Jyrki, being influenced by the State of Equilibrium and Harmony, the logic of inclusiveness guides people or a state to (a) accept differences while opposing absolute conformity, (b) seek for stability of the society, and (c) keep within the bounds of propriety.³ In order to support his argument, Dr. Jyrki further quoted an ancient Chinese saying as "I follow my heart's desires but do not transgress the bounds" (从心所欲, 不逾矩).

The logic of inclusiveness has its domestic roots in ... and has been verified by Chinese historical experience over thousands of years. One prominent example is the long-lasting harmonious and coexistent relationship between three Chinese domestic beliefs: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. According to Ren Jiyu, a famous master of Chinese culture, although the three beliefs take different viewpoints and have certain divergences from each other, they generally maintain a harmonious relationship and none of them has the radical aspiration to thoroughly eliminate the others (J. Ren, 2016). In addition, as Lin Anwu argues, Chinese culture is the best manifestation of a harmonious culture, and the logic of inclusiveness also reflects the spirits of symbiosis and common prosperity of the Humane Authority (Lin, 2017). The logic of inclusiveness has become an indispensable component of Chinese culture.

³ Interview with Dr. Jyrki Kallio from Finnish Institution of International Affairs. Date: 11th September, 2018.

In the history of Chinese foreign relations, the logic of inclusiveness is manifested in several ways. One is the proposition of the idea of ‘seeking common ground while reserving differences’ (求同存异) by former Premier Zhou Enlai during the Bandung Conference in 1955. The idea successively resolved the differences and promoted consensus between the then participants and laid a solid foundation for the Ten Principles of Bandung. In addition, this idea is seen as one of the most significant pillars of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (和平共处五项原则). The latter has played a dominant role in guiding Chinese international strategy and shaping Chinese diplomatic policy over the last decades. Another example is the idea of ‘shelving differences and seeking joint development’ (搁置争议, 共同开发), first proposed by Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s in the context of the China-Japan territorial issue. The idea effectively prevented the escalation of the dispute and created conditions for strengthening mutual understanding and trust between China and Japan. Moreover, this idea has also played a positive role in the relationship between China and ASEAN in terms of the South China Sea. These Chinese foreign accomplishments adequately verify the effectiveness of the logic of inclusiveness and reflect Paltiel’s argument of “a Confucian commitment to harmony without sameness may accommodate difference better than the messianic idealism of American exceptionalism” (Paltiel, 2011: 403).

2.1.2.3 Processuality

In addition to relationality and inclusiveness, this thesis sees processuality as another critical feature of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. It is argued that processuality mainly derives from the State of Equilibrium and Harmony and the Yin-Yang harmonious dialectics embedded in the former. Being influenced by these two streams of Chinese philosophical thought, processuality indicates that (a) the nature of the world is dynamic rather than static, (b) the dynamics of the world is understood as the Shi (grand tendency) of international situations that should be allowed for and followed, and (c) change and transformation should be guided by a manageable and balanced process rather than in a radical manner. By placing international society within the “entity–process” IR ontological disputes, Qin Yaqing made a great contribution to the interpretation of Chinese processuality by undertaking a comparative study of international society between the English School pattern and the Chinese way of thinking.

According to Qin, there are two approaches to understanding international society. The English School sees international society as an entity and the Chinese way of thinking considers

international society as a process (Qin, 2010). The differences between the two approaches (entity approach and process approach) result from their divergent ways of thinking, i.e., the category-oriented, taxonomical thinking of the English School and Chinese relation-oriented processual thinking. The entity approach is deeply rooted in the Hegelian dialectic or conflictual dialectic. It insists that “each category is independent, and a synthesis can be achieved only when one of the opposites is either eliminated or absorbed” (Qin, 2010: 137). In this respect, homogenization is naturally defined as absorption of non-Western categories into the Western-centric category (e.g. international society is seen as an evolving ego-category by English School scholars). Otherwise, the conflict between the Western ego-category and non-Western alter-categories is irreconcilable. Thus, based on the “either-or” thought pattern, Barry Buzan defines China as a “reformist revisionist” (Buzan, 2010) of the existing international society and argues that the Westphalian view of non-democratic China’s peaceful rise and its further integration into post-Westphalian international society seems much more difficult compared to its success over the last three decades.

On the other hand, the process approach derives from the traditional Chinese Yin-Yang dialectics. In contrast to the entity approach, the process approach attaches great significance to change and inclusiveness. It focuses “more on the context than on the independent individual, and the synthesis is always the combination and inclusion of the two rather than the elimination or destruction of one by the other” (Qin, 2010: 139). Context, in this quote, refers to interactive processes and complex relations. Process plays a central role in maintaining continuous interaction, promoting the fluid of relations, and transforming the self and the other through inter-subjective practices toward a new synthesis. Unlike the above-mentioned homogenization, the Chinese way of integration stresses “change through complementation and unity in heterogeneity” (Qin, 2010: 146). Consequently, on the basis of the “both-and” thought pattern, Qin defines three elements of the process approach as major sources for understanding the possibility and desirability of China’s peaceful rise: they are he/和 (the essential harmony or non-conflict assumption), shi/ 勢 (the general tendency of the process), and bian/ 变 (transformation in the process). Broadly speaking, these three elements reflect the Chinese relational, inclusive, and processual ontological assumptions of IR, and they together constitute the fundamental logic and major concerns of China’s foreign policy and international strategy.

More precisely, the divergence between the two approaches is also manifested in their interpretations of identity and institution, the key concepts of international society. First of all,

the entity approach sees identity and institution as being independent and objective. However, the process approach treats identity and institution as being intersubjective. Second, in line with the conflictual dialectics, the change of identity and institution refers to homogenization through the absorption of the alter-category into the ego-category, or elimination of the alter-category. Thus, identity has a definite and homogenous feature. However, according to the non-conflictual dialectics, the change of identity and institution is understood as an inclusive coexistence and a complementary, ongoing interaction between the ego-category and alter-category. In this respect, identity is “constructed and reconstructed by processual forces which come from relations in motion” (Qin, 2010: 149).

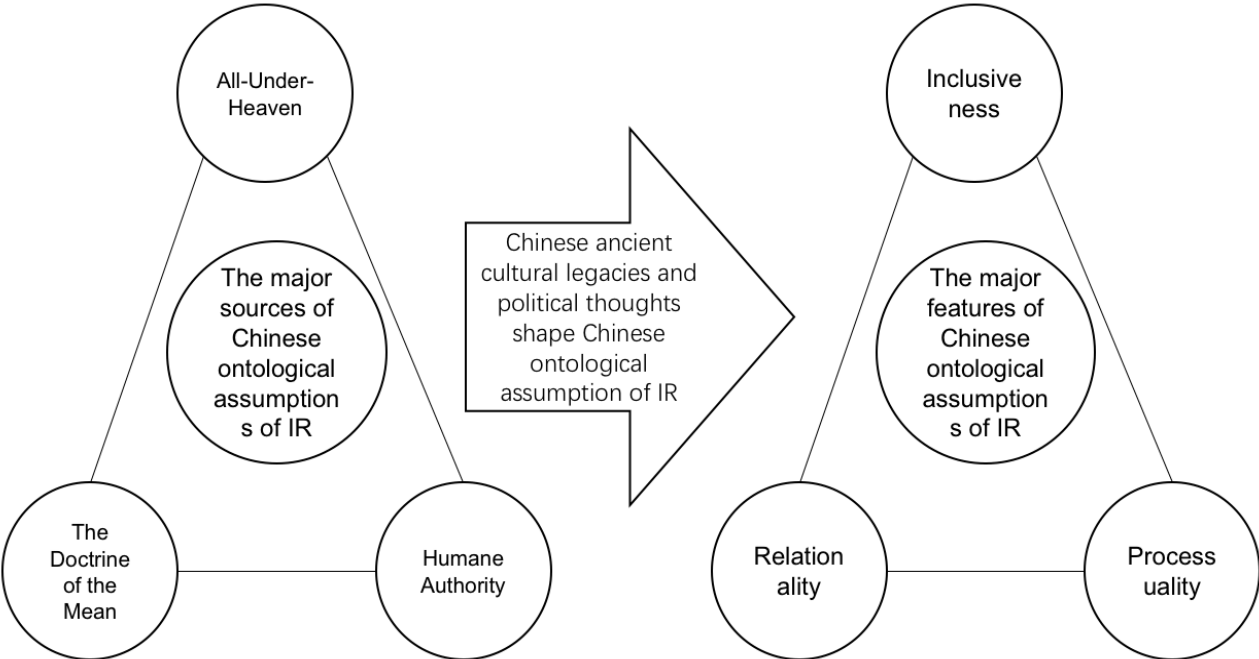


Figure 2.1 The major features of Chinese ontological assumptions/worldview of IR
(source: the author’s compilation)

In sum, as Figure 2.1 above shows, it is argued that three major Chinese IR-related cultural legacies and streams of political thought (the Tianxia, the Humane Authority, and the State of Equilibrium and Harmony) have shaped the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR, which are relationality, inclusiveness, and processuality. Furthermore, the project argues that these features have largely influenced the course of China’s participation and involvement in international affairs and global governance.

To be precise, the Tianxia, characterized by oneness and worldness, provides wisdom for establishing an inclusive governance pattern. This pattern emphasizes the principle of

“inclusion of all” and aims to address global problems based on commonly-agreed principles and institutions. In addition, the relational rationality of the Tianxia leads to the Chinese logic of *guanxi*/relationality, and the latter is widely manifested in China’s foreign affairs. The Humane Authority, being different from hegemony and tyranny, stresses the significance of benevolent governance. This benevolent governance pattern does not exclude the role of power, but it emphasizes the significance of morality. In the field of IR, a country, with a strong moral code, tends to set an exemplary role for other countries to follow without imposing and enforcing its values and ideas. In this regard, the Humane Authority pattern of governance does not pursue the elimination or aggressive assimilation of other civilizations, rather it emphasizes inclusiveness and relationality among countries and civilizations.

The State of Equilibrium and Harmony, as the core value of Confucianism, has shaped the Chinese approach to governance, characterized by a step-by-step progressive model in terms of avoiding extremes and seeking common ground while maintaining differences. This governance model attaches significance to “harmony in diversity” and “unity and equilibrium of contradiction”. Moreover, Yin-Yang dialectics, as the philosophical foundation of State of Equilibrium and Harmony, cherishes continuous and dynamic process. As Jiang explains, “all things are in constant ongoing process with changes, all changes are caused by the interactions between yin and yang, and everything involves its negation” (Jiang, 2013: 439). In the same vein, according to a famous comment in the *Romance of Three Kingdoms* (a 14th-century Chinese historical novel), it is a general truism of this world that anything long divided will surely unite, and anything long united will surely divide (话说天下大势，分久必合，合久必分). In this regard, processuality is a central rule of law for investigating and studying the international situation. Chinese elites tend to understand the international situation by exploring the general tendency rather than focusing on individual issues.

Last but not least, it should be noted that the three extrapolated features of the Chinese ontological worldview – relationality, inclusiveness, processuality – commonly possess an integrative and encompassing nature. This integrative and encompassing nature can be interpreted as a sort of ontological pluralism that has two-tier implications: (1) from the perspective of the *content* of this thesis, ontological pluralism implies that the Chinese ontological worldview shapes the “Chinese” (elites and decision makers’) way of understanding global issues and implementing its foreign policies in global governance; (2) from the perspective of the *structure* of this thesis, ontological pluralism leads to

epistemological pluralism and methodological pluralism, since there is a directional/causal relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Both perspectives are not only essential foundations in the formation of the dissertation's core conceptual notion – “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” – but also in the way that the conceptual notion is theoretically applied and empirically verified.

2.2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy relating to the acquisition of knowledge. Epistemology provides the ultimate toolset for searching for the answers to the most fundamental questions: what is knowledge and what are its limits? What can be considered as acceptable knowledge? How is knowledge justified? and so on. In this respect, epistemology is defined as “the claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of reality” (Blaikie 1993: 6-7). For a long time, epistemological approaches, particularly within the scope of social science and international relations, have generally been grouped into two enduring and rival camps: positivism/empiricism and post-positivism/interpretivism/reflexivism.

On the one hand, positivism/empiricism aims to provide casual explanations for observable general patterns of actors' behavior. It insists that the research methods of natural science can be drawn into the study of social science. As Lamont argues, empiricism is based on the broad assumption that “knowledge can be accumulated through experience and observation and is also often referred to as positivism” (Lamont, 2015: 19). In addition, positivists believe in the distinction between research objective (“facts”) and researcher (value). In the context of international relations, positivism/empiricism consists of several features. First, international relations is said to have an objective and independent existence from the researcher; second, international relations theory is seen as one significant tool and criterion for making valid predictions; third, in line with the methods of natural science, hypotheses in international relations should also be falsifiable (Lamont, 2015).

On the other hand, post-positivism/interpretivism focuses on disclosing the constitutive role of ideas and social structures on actors' identity and behavior. According to post-positivists/interpretivists, natural science research methods, such as the replicable experiment, cannot simply be applied in the realm of social science, since the goal of social science is the “grasping or understanding of the meaning of social phenomena” (Schwandt, 1998: 221). Thus, followers of this approach contend that there is no distinct line between the research objective and researcher, and “the researcher intervenes in observed social realities through their own

role in knowledge production” (Lamont, 2015: 20). In other words, the research objective and researcher are “mutually constituted through intersubjective understanding” (Lamont, 2015: 20). In this respect, constructivism and interpretivism are interchangeable. According to Schwandt, constructivists share the interpretivists’ emphasis in the sense that “the world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors” (Schwandt, 1998: 221).

Given the directional/instrumental relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology, the ontological pluralism of the “Chineseness”, presented in last section, leads to epistemological pluralism – the combination of interpretivism and empiricism – for conceptualizing and conducting empirical analysis of the core conceptual framework of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC). According to Ron Weber, “interpretivists recognize that the knowledge they build reflects their particular goals, culture, experience, history, and so on” (Weber, 2004: vi). In this respect, an interpretive conceptualization of the ILCC through the application of relational theory to study the extent that “Chineseness”, i.e., the role of history, culture, value and worldview for Chinese IR decision-makers and scholars, is decisive in answering the research question. However, the verification and falsification of the ILCC is an empirical analysis process, since this process requires observable and reliable evidence according to the guidelines provided by role theory. Using role theory, China’s national role conception (NRC) and its national role performance (NRP) are identified as an appropriate analytical lens for conducting an empirical analysis of the construction and implementation of the ILCC.

2.3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

With epistemology considered as an overall guide to the acquisition of knowledge and production of legitimate conclusions, the methodology part of this thesis aims to draw a road map (or GPS) consisting of two major parts: the choice of theory (2.3.1) and the choice/design of empirical analysis (2.3.2). In this respect, methodology represents a research strategy or set of guiding principles for the choice of analytical methods rather than the method itself. Briefly, methodology is best understood as “the means by which we reflect upon the methods appropriate to realize fully our potential to acquire knowledge of that which exists” (Hay, 2006: 83).

In line with directional influence between ontology, epistemology, and methodology, the above-mentioned epistemological pluralism naturally leads to a methodological pluralism that

is characterized by a combination of interpretative analysis and empirical analysis. In this way, the thesis is able to contribute a comprehensive and holistic answer to the defined research question and to fulfill the identified knowledge gap.

2.3.1. THE CHOICE OF THEORY

Generally speaking, theory and research questions are isomorphic (L. Lu, 2017), i.e. they reflect each other. Thus, in line with the various types of research questions, IR theories can be identified and categorized into the following six functions: (1) descriptive function, i.e., the statement of existence of phenomena or facts; (2) explanatory function, i.e., reduction of complex phenomena to simple explanations or ideal-typical insights; (3) interpretative function, i.e., meaningful structuring of specified areas of ‘reality’; (4) constitutive function, i.e., constitution of specified areas of ‘reality’ by means of theoretical concepts; (5) goal defining function, i.e., guidance for practical action in ‘reality’; (6) legitimation function, i.e., legitimation of acts and/or results of actions in ‘reality’. In a similar vein, Tim Dunne (2013) and his colleagues have classified IR theories into five types, as follows:

Explanatory theory attempts to explain events by providing an account of causes in temporal sequence...critical theory explicitly sets out to identify and criticize a particular set of social circumstances and to demonstrate how they came to exist...normative theory typically addresses how things should be, or ought to be, whether or not we should value them, which things are good or bad, and which actions are right or wrong...constitutive theory examines the ways in which rules, norms and ideas constitute social objects...the “lens” type of theory which simply attempts to explore how social actors navigate their way through social events and processes (Dunne, Hansen, & Wight, 2013: 409-411).

As a consequence, the project argues that the deliberate selection of theory, on the basis of functions and types, is one of the most important factors in ensuring the applicability and legitimacy of research design in terms of answering the questions and filling up the knowledge gap.

In addition to ensuring consistency between the choice of theory and research question and the knowledge gap, it is critical to ensure that the choice of theory reflects the ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations of the project. On the one hand, with respect to ontological considerations, as Robert Cox and Björn Hettne assert, “the first task of a contemporary political theory is to declare its ontology” (Cox & Hettne, 1995: 36), and Cox

also argues that “theory is always for someone, and for some purpose” (Cox, 1981: 128). In this regard, the above-mentioned Chinese ontological assumptions of IR – characterized by relationality, inclusiveness, and processuality – have largely influenced my choice of relational theory (2.3.1.1), which is constructed based on Chinese cultural heritage and political thought.

On the other hand, ontological considerations have “profound epistemological, methodological, and practical political consequences” (Hay, 2006: 79). In this respect, the choice of theory is also closely associated with epistemological and methodological considerations. As noted above, the project attaches significance to epistemological pluralism characterized by a combination of interpretivism and empiricism, and this epistemological pluralism further leads to methodological pluralism, characterized by compatibility and complementarity between interpretative analysis and empirical analysis. As a result, the selected theories have been specifically chosen to achieve methodological pluralism and are equipped with both interpretive and explanatory/empirical functions. Thus, in addition to the choice of relational theory as the interpretive theory, role theory (2.3.1.2) functions as an empirical/explanatory theory and plays a complementary role to relational theory in the study of the ILCC. Figure 2.2 below depicts the theoretical and functional complementarity between relational theory (in yellow) and role theory (in blue) in responding to the research question.

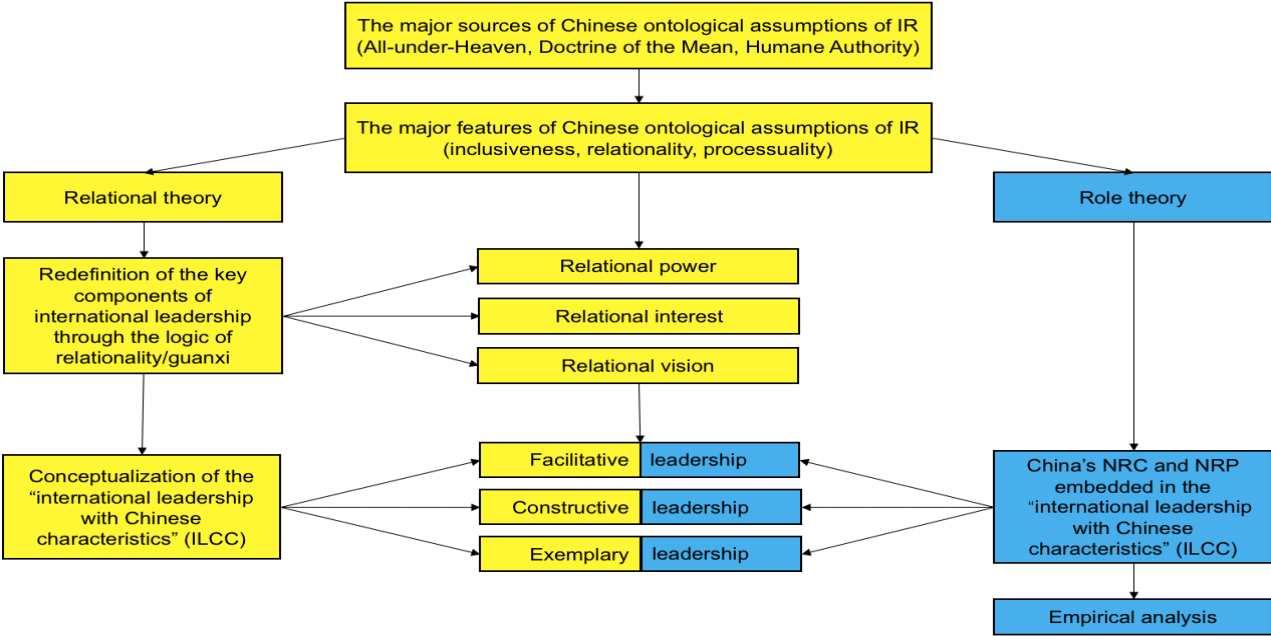


Figure 2.2 The conceptualization of the ILCC as an analytical framework

(source: the author’s compilation)

2.3.1.1 The choice of relational theory (interpretive theory)

As shown in the yellow part of Figure 2.2, the choice of relational theory is largely influenced by ontological considerations – Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. Specifically, the major function of relational theory is manifested in (1) the redefinition the major components (power, interest, and vision) of international leadership and (2) the conceptualization of the “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC). The choice of relational theory is mainly based on the following four major considerations.

In the first place, Qin Yaqing made a great contribution in bringing Chinese ideas and culture into IRT and developing relational theory (Qin, 2016). According to Qin, “culture matters in social theory construction because the metaphysical component of the theoretical hard core is primarily shaped by the background knowledge of a cultural community” (Qin, 2016: 33). In this respect, Qin argued that relational theory “will bear its cultural birthmark throughout” (Qin, 2016: 45). In addition to its implications for the construction of theory, Qin also contended that “culture plays an important role in human life, in the way of thinking, and therefore in policy-making” (Qin, 2012). Generally speaking, according to Qin’s analysis, Chinese culture is presented as having four major features:

Contextuality refers to the overall situation and the relational context wherein decisions are made. It is believed that actors are always part of the context rather than isolated from the context and problems are within the context rather than out of the context...Correlativity means that everything is related to everything else, and nothing is isolated. Chinese correlativity has four major connotations, namely, relationality, processuality, the mianzi complex and the guanxi assumption...Complementarity derives from Chinese dialectic. It emphasizes that thesis and antithesis work as opposing forces to complete a transformation into a new synthesis...Changeability comes from *Yiching*. It emphasizes that the two opposites in a conflict can transform to each other or they can co-move together. Everything in the universe is in the process of consistent change rather than static (Qin, 2012).

From Qin’s viewpoint, the four major features of Chinese culture – contextuality, correlativity, complementarity, and changeability – have exerted a tremendous influence on the understanding of the rationalities behind China’s foreign policy making and are the basis for constructing a Chinese culture-based IR theory – relational theory. In this regard, Qin’s argument coincides with the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR.

Therefore, this ontological convergence is the primary consideration for selecting relational theory as the interpretative theory of the project.

In the second place, relational theory treats relationality as the metaphysical core. According to Qin, relationality “represents a worldview, a way of thinking and doing, and a perspective that differ from IR theories with individual rationality as their theoretical core” (Qin, 2016: 35). By reviewing the (Western) existing literature on international leadership (3.1.1), three major concepts/components of international leadership are abstracted as power, interest, and vision. *As a consequence, the project argues that various ways of defining these concepts/components shape the different ways of understanding and implementing international leadership in global governance.* As Qin argues, relational theory “provides new possibilities for research, for revisiting key IR concepts, and for a broader comparison of international systems” (Qin, 2016: 41). For instance, in the context of relationality, power is redefined as relational power, which refers to “a process of constantly manipulating and managing one’s relational circles to one’s advantage” (Qin, 2016: 42). In this respect, as shown in Figure 2.2, compared to Western approaches to the interpretation of power, interest, and vision, the project proposes that the logic of relationality (3.2.1) provides a complementary perspective for redefining these concepts/components as relational power, relational interest, and relational vision (3.2.2.1). More importantly, these redefinitions further lay significant foundations for the conceptualization of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics”.

In the third place, on the basis of the above redefinitions, relational theory provides a “lens” through which to interpret and conceptualize the “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (3.2.2.2) as shown in Figure 2.2. Compared to the traditional understanding of international leadership (the ideas of Pax Britannica and Pax Americana) based on the established interpretations of power, interest, and vision, relational theory conceptualizes “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) in accordance with the above-mentioned definitions of relational power, relational interest, and relational vision. More specifically, by virtue of relational theory, “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” is conceptualized as a triad analytical framework consisting of facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership. Moreover, relational theory also contains the elements of inclusiveness and processuality. In this respect, it endows the ILCC with inclusive and progressive features.

Last but not least, as mentioned in the literature review, structural constructivism emphasizes the role of an ideational structure in terms of constraining and shaping behavior in both a regulative and constitutive manner (Copeland, 2000). As Alexander Wendt argues, “state cognition depends on states systematic culture...in analyzing what states think it makes sense to start with the culture of the international system and work top-down, rather than start with unit-level perceptions and work bottom-up” (Wendt, 1999: 372). Wendt’s preference for top-down logic is clearly manifested in his categorization of three kinds of systematic culture (Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian) and their implications for actors’ ideas and behavior. As a result, in terms of complementing the partial ontological assumptions of structural constructivism, relational theory weakens “the top-down causality between the ideational structure at the systematic level and the identity construction of the units, shifting from emphasizing ideational structures to studying inter-subjective practices” (Qin, 2009: 8). In this respect, relational theory provides more opportunities for investigating actors’ individual features and interaction between actors. Thus, the project argues that relational theory is appropriate for interpreting the ILCC due to its Chinese culture-based ontological assumptions. However, the project also argues that relational theory is inadequate for providing essential empirical analysis for verifying or falsifying the proposed analytical framework of ILCC or for responding to research questions. Thus, role theory, as an empirical/explanatory theory, is chosen as a complementary theory.

2.3.1.2 The choice of role theory (empirical/explanatory guiding theory)

As shown in Figure 2.2 above, the conceptualization of the ILCC through the relational theory (in yellow) can provide only half of the answer to the research question, while role theory (in blue) provides the other half of the answer in verifying/falsifying the ILCC. In other words, role theory, as an empirical theory, is complementary to interpretative relational theory in terms of providing guidelines for conducting empirical analysis.

First of all, the choice of role theory is closely associated with the major research question: being applied with the purpose of guiding empirical analysis of the ILCC conceptualized by relational theory, role theory functions as an empirical tool. Holsti, the scholar who first introduced role theory into Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), interpreted and decomposed role theory into two major concepts/components: national role conception (NRC), referring to national leaders’ perceptions of their nations’ positions in the international system, and national role performance (NRP), referring to the general foreign policy behavior of governments

(Holsti, 1970). As a result, the project argues that the two core concepts/components of role theory are conducive to the empirical verification or falsification of the ILCC, since it supposes that the major components of ILCC – facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership – are manifested in Chinese decision-makers’ rhetoric and China’s foreign practices in the field of global governance.

Second, role theory remedies the deficiencies of mainstream systematic theories on the rise of China in terms of their underestimations of China’s individual agency. First, as an important branch of sociological theory, role theory shares some ontological assumptions with Wendt’s constructivism on the issue of idealism. Role theory claims that role is constructed in the process of social interaction between actors. Almost all of the role theorists present their research by first mentioning Mead’s differentiation between “I” and “me”: the “I part” is regarded as the objective reality, and it has certain social meaning only if socialized as the “me part”, and the latter “has been reconciled with the perceptions of social norms through performances (routines)” (Mead, 1934: 199). For example, as the core concept of role theory, NRC is conceived as an ideational product of material factors. Second, being different from the structuralist approaches which neglect or underestimate the role of agency, role theory promises to “build an empirical bridge between agent and structure in international relations” (Breuning, 2011: 16). In this regard, role theory aims to analyze the NRC not only based on the distribution of power and social norms in the international system, but also on the basis of the state’s material capability, cultural heritage, and self-perception. (Breuning, 2011: 26).

Third, role theory integrates empiricism and interpretivism in terms of maximizing the utilities of causal and constitutive modes of thinking in the analysis of a state’s NRC without accounting for the traditional sharp epistemological opposition. For instance, as a critical concept of role theory, role learning is either conceptualized as a causal process from the perspective of rationalism and cognitivism, or it is depicted as a constitutive process from the perspective of social constructivism (Harnisch, 2011). In this respect, role learning implies one state either changes its NRC on the basis of new experience in a causal manner or obtains a new NRC in an evolving social context in a constitutive sense. Overall, it is argued that role theory plays a significant role in the integration of two factors (material and ideal) and two levels of analysis (individualism and holism) into one theoretical framework (MinGyu, 2014).

2.3.2. THE DESIGN OF EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS – CASE STUDY APPROACH

In order to undertake the empirical analysis (verify/falsify) of the proposed conceptual analytical framework of the “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) and investigate how this framework can play a decisive role in explaining the nexus between the rise of China and global governance through representative cases, the project intends to apply a case study approach to analyzing China’s NRP embedded in the ILCC via four significant international mechanisms: The Group of Twenty (G20), the BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As Figure 2.3 below shows, the two major concerns of empirical research design are the choice of cases (2.3.2.1) and the operationalization of cases (2.3.2.2). The former illustrates the case selection on the basis of research question and core concept, and the latter further consists of three major components: case study materials, case study methods, and case study process.

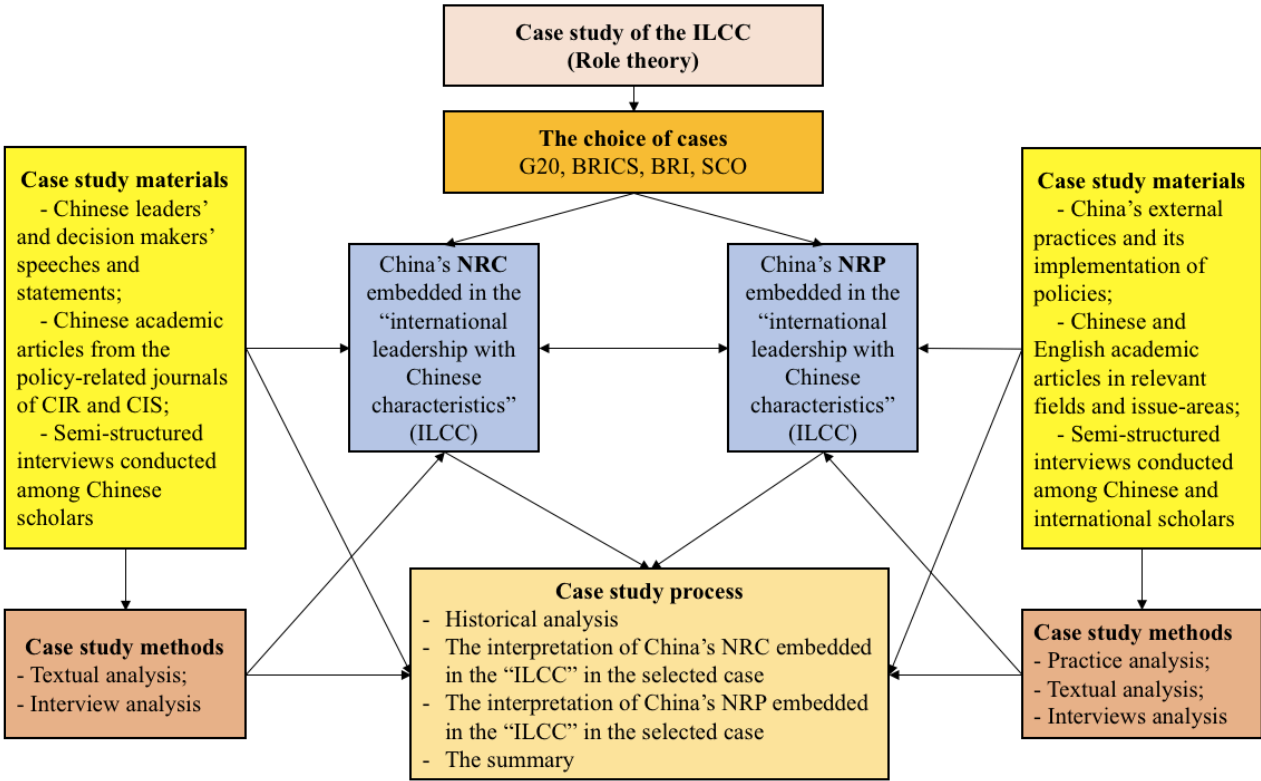


Figure 2.3 Structure of empirical analysis of the ILCC

(source: the author’s compilation)

2.3.2.1 The choice of cases

Before discussing the details involved in designing and operationalizing case studies, there are two fundamental questions that should be answered. The first fundamental question is: *what can I expect to learn from the case study?* The project supposes that Christopher Lamont's argument is an appropriate insight to this question. According to Lamont, case study research not only "provides insights into particular cases. In fact, carefully constructed case studies often provide insights into social processes that inform how we understand or explain IR more broadly. In fact, paradigmatic work that has generated new insights into IR has often come in the form of case studies" (Lamont, 2015: 126). The second fundamental question is: *why should I select these cases for analysis?* As Alexander George and Andrew Bennett argue, "case selection should be an integral part of a good research strategy to achieve well-defined objectives of the study" (George & Bennett, 2005: 83). In this respect, the appropriateness of case selection greatly influences the legitimacy and reliability of research results and the achievement of the research objective. Consequently, using the method of structured and focused comparison, the project discusses the selection of four major cases (G20, BRICS, SCO, BRI) for conducting empirical analysis of the conceptualized "international leadership with Chinese characteristics" in the context of global governance. Specifically, in the following paragraphs, three major criteria account for the choice of cases: (1) to what extent is the core concept most relevant, visible, and consensual in connection with these cases; (2) to what extent are the cases representative in terms of their authority, role, scope, and function in global governance; and (3) to what extent do the institutional features influence the construction and implementation of the ILCC in these cases?

First, it should be pointed out that the primary consideration of case selection is closely related to the research objective and core concepts. As Klotz argues, "appropriate case selection depends first and foremost on ontology, because any research question relies on core concepts. That bring us to the starting point for case selection: a case of what?" (Klotz, 2008: 44). In this respect, it is argued that the mechanisms of G20, BRICS, SCO, and BRI are considered as appropriate cases for undertaking empirical analysis of the ILCC – the core concept and research objective of the project. (1) The G20. Compared to the G7, which is dominated by the advanced industrial countries, the G20 is co-dominated by the established and emerging powers. Thus, as the largest emerging power in the world, China's role in the G20 has become more prominent since the G20 was upgraded to be the most significant international cooperation mechanism in the post-crisis era. Against this backdrop, China has become an indispensable

player in the G20 and has gradually participated in the process of agenda setting and framing of this mechanism. The most outstanding example to confirm China's vital role in the G20 is China's hosting of the G20 summit in 2016. The successful hosting of this summit is widely recognized as signaling that China has assumed a leadership role (Chin and Dobson, 2015; Kirton, 2016; W. Wang, 2016) in the G20. (2) The BRICS. Unlike the G20, the BRICS is solely constituted by a group of emerging powers. After demonstrating a relatively vigorous trend of economic growth during the early years of the post-crisis era, since 2013, the BRICS has been criticized as having faded (Davis, 2013; Freund, 2017) in terms of the member states' slowing economic growth. In these circumstances, China's role as the "ballast stone" – manifested in its continuous and stable economic growth at a relatively high level – of the BRICS group is quite exceptional. In addition, China is also a key player in the establishment of the BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA). To create a \$100 billion CRA, China committed \$41 billion, Brazil, India, and Russia committed \$18 billion each, and South Africa committed \$5 billion. In this respect, China undoubtedly plays a sort of leadership role in the development of the BRICS. (3) The SCO. During the last two decades, China has played a central role in the establishment, operation, and institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. From the Shanghai Five to the Shanghai Spirit, and from an emphasis on security and economy to a focus on multiple cooperative fields, China has continuously injected strong drivers and innovation into the development of the SCO. As a result, China's leadership role in the SCO has received wide attention and has been studied by many scholars (Jia, 2007; Yuan, 2010; Carroll, 2011; Song, 2016). (4) The BRI. In 2013, the new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping proposed the "Belt and Road Initiative" (the former "One Belt One Road"). This initiative is seen as a landmark in China's strategic transformation from "Tao Guang Yang Hui" (keep a low profile) to "You Suo Zuo Wei" (make a contribution to international society). As the initiator and major driver, China has contributed a lot to this grand project, both materially and ideationally. For instance, with the aim of turning this initiative into practice/reality, China led the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to provide financial support for regional infrastructure construction. More importantly, both BRI and AIIB were greeted with a massive, positive response from a large number of countries (Solmecke, 2016; Suetyi, 2017). This situation, to some extent, confirms China's role of leadership in the BRI.

Second, the selected cases are identified and classified into a focused phenomenon or a specific field. According to George and Bennett, "the cases in a given study must all be instances of

only one phenomenon, and the identification of the class or subclass of events for any given study depends upon the problem chosen for study” (George & Bennett, 2005: 69). Thus, the project supposes that although the G20, BRICS, SCO, and BRI are designed for various purposes and equipped with different functions, their common ground is manifested in their key roles in *regional and global governance*. (1) The G20. Due to the 2008 global financial crisis, the G20 has replaced the G8 as the most important platform of global economic governance. The increasing significance of the G20 gives the developing countries a louder voice in the construction of the global economic order, strengthens international financial regulation, and enhances the representativeness of the international financial system. In addition, in recent years, with ever-deepening communication and cooperation between members, the G20 has gradually expanded its cooperative areas. For instance, at the 2016 Hangzhou G20 summit, the major issue-areas of global governance – climate change and green finance – were added to the agenda of the G20. Thus, it is undoubtedly true that the G20 is one of the most important and representative mechanisms in the field of global governance. (2) The BRICS. Since the first summit held in 2009 and the inclusion of South Africa as a new member in 2010, the BRICS group has increasingly improved its standing in global governance as its members continue to insist on reforming the existing system of global financial governance. One outstanding example is the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) by the BRICS members in 2014. It reflects the BRICS members’ dissatisfaction and their strong resolution to address the “governance deficit” caused by the Western-based financial institutions (the IMF and the World Bank) and the Western-based governance model (the Washington Consensus). Moreover, with the purpose of forestalling short-term balance of payments pressures, providing mutual support, and strengthening financial stability, the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA) was also founded by the BRICS members in 2014. (3) The SCO. In the post-Cold War era, non-traditional security problems have become an imperative factor influencing the security of Central Asia. Against this backdrop, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has gradually shifted its focus from traditional security cooperation to non-traditional security cooperation. It makes many contributions to regional and global security governance in terms of constructing a comprehensive security system and shaping the New Security Concept. Moreover, the SCO also devotes itself to promoting economic cooperation and improving the regional economic mechanism. (4) The BRI. In the face of feeble global economic growth and the huge infrastructure gap in Asia, the BRI mainly focuses on regional development and infrastructure construction, and it aims to provide solutions to regional and global development. Thus, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB),

established under the leadership of China, provides financial support for Asian infrastructure construction. Furthermore, China has also contributed a “China Plan” to a new modality of global governance based on the major principles of the BRI in terms of policy coordination, facilitated connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and a people-to-people bond.

Third, the project selects cases based on their diverse (institutional) characters within the same given class (global governance). By doing so, the thesis aims to conceptualize the ILCC in global governance in a more comprehensive manner and in a broader scope. In other words, it is argued that the legitimacy and reliability of the conceptualization is enhanced if the coverage of cases is as broad and as wide as possible. (1) The G20. Compared to formal intergovernmental organizations such as the IMF and World Bank, the G20 is characterized as an informal mechanism or forum of international cooperation. The informal nature of the G20 is largely manifested in the fact that its members prefer to seek for non-legally binding international consensus (communiqués, declarations, announcements) rather than international legal obligation. The major advantage of this informality is observed in its flexibility in adapting to changes in the international situation, i.e., “the ability to renegotiate or modify previous agreements as circumstances change” (Choe, 2010: 6). (2) The BRICS. The BRIC was originally proposed as a business concept by Jim O’Neill, the then Goldman Sachs economist, in 2001. The proposition of this concept initially aimed to identify promising investment destinations for potential investors. In June 2009, in order to jointly cope with the global financial crisis, leaders from China, Russia, India, and Brazil gathered at the first BRIC’s summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia, transforming the loose concept into a leader-level mechanism for South-South Cooperation (SSC) and global governance. However, it should be pointed out that the New Development Bank (NDB), jointly founded by the BRICS members, is a formal intergovernmental organization for providing financial support for regional and global development. In this regard, according to Cooper and Farooq, “the NDB represents a formal institutional extension of the BRICS as an informal club” (Cooper & Farooq, 2015: 5). (3) The SCO. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an intergovernmental organization created in 2001. The SCO consists of a number of formal and permanent organs. The Council of Heads of State is the highest SCO organ and the ultimate decision-making body. Its functions comprise the identification of priority areas, the determination of principles, and the shaping of basic direction for the SCO. The SCO’s formal organs also include the Council of National Coordinators, the Secretariat, and the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), etc. In the meantime, with the purpose of overcoming mutual suspicion between intra-organizational

powers (notably Russia and China), the SCO also relies on an informal and flexible normative base with the emphasis of friendship-building and a meeting mechanism. In this respect, the SCO is defined as “an inter-governmental organization with a minimal institutional structure and an extensive informal cooperation network” (Maduz, 2018). (4) The BRI. The institutional character of the “Belt and Road Initiative” is distinct from the former three cases/mechanisms., Its degree of institutionalization is by far the lowest among the four. As its name implies, the BRI is more appropriately viewed as a China-proposed initiative that calls for the (potential) participants to be involved in the construction of an open and inclusive regional and global economy. The open and inclusive character of the BRI is manifested in its non-specific set of defined participants. However, as with the relationship between the NDB and the BRICS, the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), as a formal intergovernmental organization, plays a significant role within the framework of the BRI. The formal nature of the AIIB is observed in its international standards, governance structure, governing principles, and the choice of investment projects.

Fourth, the final consideration in case selection focuses on the possibility of undertaking a comparative study and the potential of generating a comparable and inductive conclusion. As Klotz argues, “well-crafted case selection takes into account the universe of possible cases and the logic of comparison implied by the research question” (Klotz, 2008: 43). On the basis of the previous three considerations, it is argued that the ILCC can be interpreted by (1) the various manifestations of the ILCC China exhibits in (2) a myriad of issue-areas in global governance (3) through China’s participation in and establishment of mechanisms with diverse characters. Moreover, using the method of structured and focused comparison, it is necessary to ask “a set of standardized, general questions of each case, and these questions must be carefully developed to reflect the research objective and theoretical focus of the inquiry” (George & Bennett, 2005: 69). In this regard, the project contends that the G20, BRICS, SCO, and BRI are appropriate for the application of standardized questions and the subsequent acquisition of comparable data for the empirical research. In this respect, the comparative study of selected cases contributes to the comprehensive and reliable analysis and interpretation of the ILCC in global governance. As George and Bennett contend, “both within-case analyses, which help test historical explanations of cases, and cross-case comparisons, which help identify the domains to which these explanations extend” (George & Bennett, 2005: 124).

Last but not least, with respect to the issue of selection bias, the thesis clarifies three major points. (1) Since the thesis intends to discuss and conceptualize the ILCC in the post-crisis era,

it does not regard the international organizations of the Western-based Bretton Woods system – the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO – as appropriate cases. In the similar vein, although China has consistently named the United Nations as the core organization and the most representative and authoritative actor in international cooperation and global governance, this international organization was established at the end of the Second World War and its rules and institutional design were mainly shaped by the major Western victors, especially the United States. As a result, in these established organizations, there is little room for the construction and implementation of the ILCC, which is based on a combination of the rise of the Chinese economy and China's unique culture heritage and political thought. (2) Some critics contend that the BRI is a Chinese initiative in which China is the sole player and others are just recipients of Chinese investment. However, this thesis argues that compared to other Western-based established international mechanisms, because the BRI was solely proposed by China, there are more opportunities and less historical constraints for China in fully constructing and implementing the ILCC through the promotion of the BRI. However, it does not mean that China will not face real challenges and constraints during the development process of the BRI: because the BRI was solely led by China, other countries may suspect, and even fear, that this China-proposed initiative was established on the basis of their perceptions of China's motivations and strategic goals. In this regard, the BRI can be considered as both an opportunity and a severe test for China's construction and implementation of the ILCC. (3) The thesis does not select cases that are closely related to China's national core interests of sovereignty and territory, such as the South China Sea and anti-separatism in Xinjiang, since China's government consistently claims that it will never compromise on its national core interests. However, the implementation of the ILCC exhibits and allows for a certain degree of flexibility and compromise that are derived from the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR – relationality, inclusiveness, and processuality. Nonetheless, the thesis does not believe that the framework of the ILCC is applicable to issues that are closely associated with China's core interests.

2.3.2.2 The operationalization of cases

Another major concern of case study design is to figure out how the selected cases can be operationalized appropriately for conducting an empirical analysis of the ILCC. Generally, the operationalization of cases is closely related to three major issues: the choice of case study materials, the choice of case study methods, and the design of case study process. The project argues that the three issues are mainly influenced and determined by the choice of theory. As

mentioned above, role theory has been selected as the major empirical/explanatory theory of the project, and it consists of two components: national role conception (NRC) and national role performance (NRP). Therefore, first, research materials were identified and collected based on Chinese top leaders' and decision-makers' statements and speeches, China's top-level domestic and international documents, Chinese and English academic articles, and semi-structured interviews conducted among Chinese-speaking and English-speaking scholars. Second, the choice of research materials indicates that qualitative analysis is the primary research approach. Thus, textual analysis and practice analysis are selected as the major analytical methods. Third, based on the choice of research materials and analytical methods, the project maps a four-step interpretive process of conducting empirical analysis of the ILCC in terms of an historical analysis, the interpretation of China's NRC embedded in the ILCC, the interpretation of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC, and the summary.

Case study materials: reliability, validity, and the defined periods

Before discussing the types of research materials used, it is essential to first identify the time period for the empirical data collection. The thesis argues that the construction and implementation of the ILCC follows an implicit logic embedded in Chinese diplomatic practice over the last decade (from 2009 to 2018). The choice of 2009 as the start year results from two key events. First, the 2008 global financial crisis led to a shift in power distribution from the West to the East and from the established powers to the emerging powers. This situation objectively provided China, the largest developing country and emerging power, an opportunity to play a more active role in global governance. Second, is the then Chinese president Hu Jintao's argument of "four stronger" elements regarding China's role on the international stage, i.e. "stronger political influence, stronger economic competitiveness, stronger image affinity, stronger moral appeal" (Wang, 2009). Hu's argument is interpreted as China's political willingness to shoulder more international responsibility and enact the role of international leadership in the post-crisis era (Li and Zhang, 2009). Thus, it is appropriate to collect the relevant empirical data during the period between 2009 and 2018.

Moreover, the choice of research materials is question-oriented and theory-based. Thus, the selected materials should be suitable for the application of role theory in the interpretation of China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC. In addition, the issues of reliability, validity, and accessibility of the selected materials are discussed and evaluated.

a. Case study materials for interpreting China's NRC embedded in ILCC

First of all, since NRC refers to leaders' and decision-makers' perceptions of their country's role in the international system, the primary research materials for interpreting China's NRC embedded in the ILCC, are speeches and statements made by Chinese top leaders and foreign policy makers. Thus, in line with the time period (2009-2018) identified above, the project focuses on speeches, statements, and comments from the following Chinese leaders and decision-makers: the former Chinese President and General Secretary of CCP Hu Jintao (2003-2013), the current Chinese President and General Secretary of CCP Xi Jinping (2013 to now), the former Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (2003-2013), the current Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (2013 to now), the former Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi (2007-2013), the current Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi (2013 to now), and both Yang Jiechi (2013 to now) and Wang Yi (2018 to now) who hold the influential positions of State Councilor.

It is well known that China is an authoritarian party-state in which the Central Committee of the CCP enjoys incomparable authority over and exerts unrivaled influence on domestic and foreign issues. This implies that Chinese decision-makers' statements have a high level of reliability and validity. As Teemu Naarajarvi argues, "in the centrally controlled political system of China, known as democratic centralism, the statements of the decision-makers carry an even stronger message than in liberal democracies" (Naarajarvi, 2017: 25). In this respect, these speeches and viewpoints represent the grand trends of Chinese foreign strategy and the domestic legitimacy of its foreign policy. In addition, these types of research materials also have a high level of accessibility, since the statements and speeches are delivered on public occasions and are accessible in both Chinese and English written versions.

Second, academic articles and literatures are another important source for the interpretation of China's NRC embedded in the ILCC. Specifically, two influential Chinese-based journals were selected: *Contemporary International Relations (CIR)* and *China International Studies (CIS)*. These two journals are respectively published by two Chinese policy-related think tanks. The former is published by the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), affiliated to the Ministry of State Security, and the latter is published by the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The CICIR and the CIIS concentrate on the issues of international affairs and world politics and economy, and they play a central role in the study of the international situation and provide policy recommendations to Chinese leaders and decision-makers. In this respect, it is believed that,

due to their function of academic and governmental exchange of views and their strong influence on the Chinese government, these two journals (CIR and CIS) have a high level of reliability and validity for interpreting China's NRC, especially in terms of explaining Chinese leaders' rhetoric, deliberating international situations, and analyzing China's national role expectations from other states.

Finally, in addition to the written materials, the Chinese-based semi-structured interview plays a part in providing heuristic insights into the actual intentions and considerations behind Chinese leaders' and decision-makers' speeches and statements. According to Wengraf Tom, the major advantage of a semi-structured interview is manifested in the fact that it is "designed to have a number of interviewer questions prepared in advance but such questions are designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorized way" (Tom, 2001: 5). Moreover, the major location for carrying out the semi-structured interviews is Beijing. As the capital of China, Beijing is the political center and the center of foreign affairs. In Beijing, the author carried out a number of semi-structured interviews with professors and experts on China's foreign policy and global governance. The interviewees came from different institutes, including the official think tank, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), the civil think tank, the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), and the University of International Relations (UIR), etc. In addition, interviews are also conducted with international scholars from university and international think tank, such as the University of Nottingham and Finnish Institute of International Studies (FIIS).

b. Case study materials for interpreting China's NRP embedded in the ILCC

In the first place, the primary research material for interpreting China's NRP embedded in the ILCC is identified as state practice. Traditionally, state practice is a term used in the discipline of international law. As Mark Weisburd contends, state practice is "an important element of international law, both as a key component of customary international law and as a crucial tool for interpreting treaties" (Weisburd, 2009: 295). In addition, according to Michael Wood and Omri Sender, state practice is defined as "an element in the formation and identification of rules of customary international law, one of the principal sources of international law" (Wood and Sender, 2017). Inspired by these above definitions, in the context of IR and global governance, state practice refers to one country's practices/behaviors in the formation and implementation of its foreign policies, and these practices generate certain outcomes in terms of declaring joint

communiqués, achieving cooperation agreements, establishing international mechanisms, and shaping international norms and rules, etc.

In the second place, the academic article is regarded as another major source for the interpretation of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC. However, unlike the application of the above-mentioned two Chinese policy-related journals in the analysis of China's NRC, the selection of academic articles is based on a broader range of journals specializing in the fields of IR, IPE, and global governance. Also, the selected articles are in both Chinese and English. It is believed that the wide range of academic articles published by Chinese and international scholars allows for a comprehensiveness and reliability of analysis in terms of explaining the intentions and motivations behind certain state practices and in interpreting the implications of China's policy making and implementation of specific issue-areas.

Last but not least, since a study of international leadership cannot neglect the significance of the expectations and thoughts of non-Chinese observers, the project carries out semi-structured interviews among international scholars to collect their understanding and interpretations of China's practice as regards leadership implications in global governance. Specifically, since the project's central argument is culture-based and attaches significance to "Chinese characteristics", the choice of interviewees focuses on scholars and pundits who are specialized in Chinese political culture, China's foreign policy, and China's unique role in global governance, etc. On the basis of their viewpoints, it aims to analyze the legitimacy and effectiveness of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC.

Case study methods

Being similar to the choice of research materials, the choice of analytical methods is question-based and theory-oriented, and it is also closely associated with the selected research materials. In this respect, textual analysis and practice/behavior analysis are identified as the two major analytical methods of the project.

a. Textual analysis

Given that speeches, academic articles, and interviews are selected as the principal analytical materials for interpreting China's NRC embedded in the ILCC, the primary analytical method of the project is identified as textual analysis.

First of all, the primary function of applying textual analysis is to identify and interpret the connotation behind tens of thousands of words in speeches and articles. While the United States often takes its leadership role in the world for granted and believes it is “bound to lead” (Nye, 1990), China is much more modest and has often sought to remove the word “leadership” from its statements (Medeiros, 2009). Although several scholarly studies have started to label China as having various types of “international leadership”, it is rare to see Chinese decision-makers officially acknowledging China as an “international leader” in their speeches, statements, and official documents, etc. However, this situation does not indicate that Chinese leaders and elites do not have the willingness or the sense of responsibility to exhibit China’s leadership role in international relations and global governance, at least the role of leadership with Chinese characteristics. Under these circumstances, the proposed analytical framework of the ILCC provides the author with an opportunity to pay due attention to the relevant information in Chinese leaders’ and decision-makers’ speeches. For instance, the ILCC, as a triad framework, mainly consists of three types of manifestation: facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership, and each type of leadership respectively contains certain conceptual connotations (3.2.3). Therefore, one major target in conducting textual analysis is to carefully read the relevant speeches, statements, and articles and interpret why and how the ILCC are conceptionally constructed (NRC) and practically implemented (NRP) by Chinese elites.

Second, with the purpose of effectively and comprehensively investigating and analyzing the selected speeches, statements, and articles, the author used the guidelines provided by Breuning’s model (3.3.2) of NRC to study these research materials more pertinently. The most significant value of Breuning’s model lies in its identification of identity, domestic audience, cultural heritage, capability, and opportunity, acting as five functional components for interpreting one country’s NRC. In this respect, it is argued that Breuning’s model, as an empirical toolkit, plays a complementary role to the proposed analytical framework in terms of interpreting China’s NRC embedded in the ILCC in the selected cases.

b. Practice analysis

The major function of practice analysis is to investigate China’s NRP (state practice) embedded in the ILCC in the selected cases. As mentioned above, state practice refers to one country’s practices/behaviors in the formation and implementation of its foreign policies, and these policies and practices generate certain outcomes in terms of declaring joint communiques, achieving cooperation agreements, establishing international mechanisms, and shaping

international norms and rules, etc. Therefore, in this project, practice analysis takes the form of four major perspectives – institutional, policy, material, and ideational perspectives – to interpret China’s policy implementation and practical contributions to the architecture and process of global governance.

From the institutional perspective, China’s practical contributions to global governance are demonstrated in its active participation in the existing institutions. As the largest emerging power and developing country, China’s integration in and compliance with the established institutional rules and norms have greatly strengthened the legitimacy of the existing international system. However, with the purpose of further increasing the representativeness of the international system and the effectiveness of global governance, China’s practices are also manifested in its reform of the existing international institutions and the establishment of new ones.

From the policy perspective, China’s practices are mainly exhibited through its policy proposals and policy implementation. The former refers to China’s policy propositions with respect to the strengthening of and innovative developments/supplements to the existing institutional arrangements and the established code of conduct. The latter refers to China’s contribution of putting the policy documents into practice through the material and institutional channels. In this context, policy documents consist of joint declarations, action plans, policy programmes, policy frameworks, and development strategies, etc.

From the material perspective, China’s practices in global governance were initially manifested in its material provision of public goods in the areas of economic development, security management, and trust building, etc. Another critical practical contribution by China to global governance is its provision of material foreign development assistance (FDA) to the vast number of developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs). It aims to support the capacity building of these countries. China’s material contribution is also observed in the fact that it strongly emphasizes collective goods over individual good and self-restrains its own dramatic increasing material power for the sake of establishing new types of interstate relationships and shaping the new-modality of regionalization and globalization.

From the ideational perspective, China’s practices are exhibited in its propositions of a number of ideas and visions as to how international relations should be managed and how regional and global affairs should be governed. With its increasing significance in world economics and politics, China has articulated its understanding of the nature and development trends of global

governance and proactively contributed a “China Plan” to a myriad of issue-areas, such as the community of human destiny, community of shared interests, and new types of major power relations, etc.

Case study process

On the basis of the selected theories, case selection, research materials, and analytical methods above, it is essential to further design an interpretive analytical process of operationalizing the selected cases. As shown above, each case is presented as one mechanism (G20, BRICS, SCO, or BRI). Broadly speaking, in the context of global governance, mechanism refers to an international organization, an institutional arrangement, a multilateral platform, or an initiative for regional/global cooperation, etc. Thus, the interpretive process provides a guideline for undertaking an empirical analysis of the proposed conceptual framework of “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) through the selected mechanisms (G20, BRICS, SCO and BRI). In other words, the empirical analysis of each selected case/mechanism follows an established interpretive process in order to verify the interpretive conclusions. This conclusion leads to the conceptual verification of the dissertation’s core notion of ILCC. Specifically, as Figure 2.4 below shows, the project identifies the interpretive process as a four-step process: (1) the historical analysis, (2) the interpretation of China’s national role conception (NRC) embedded in the ILCC, (3) the interpretation of China’s national role performance (NRP) embedded the ILCC, and (4) the summary.

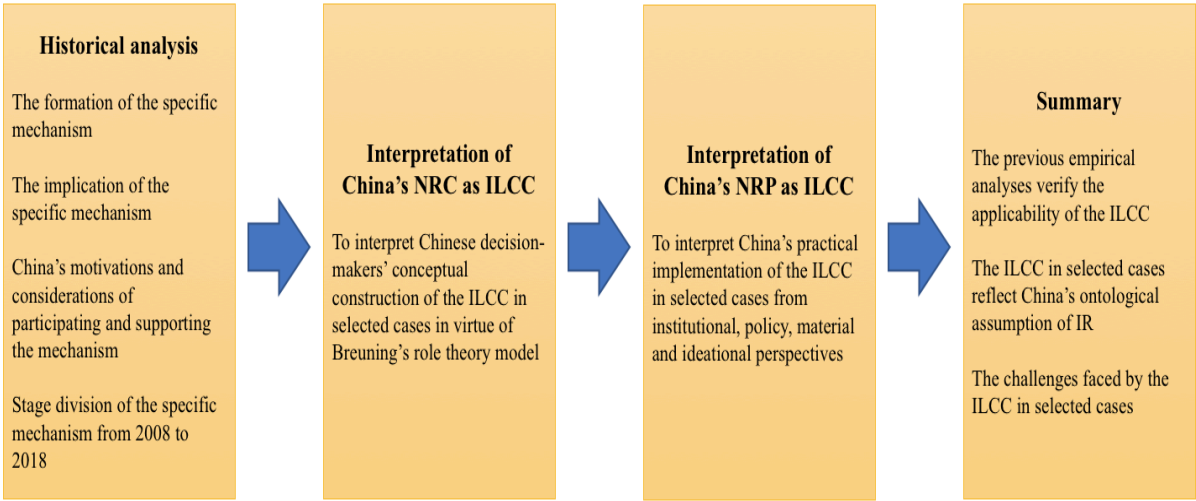


Figure 2.4 The four-step interpretive analytical process of the ILCC in the selected cases

(source: the author’s compilation)

a. Historical analysis

The empirical analysis of each case starts with an historical analysis of the selected mechanism (G20, BRICS, SCO, or BRI). This historical analysis aims to provide an holistic picture of the mechanism's formation and development by interpreting its dynamics. In this respect, the historical analysis makes a fundamental contribution to the subsequent interpretation of China's NRC and NRP embodying ILCC in two major aspects.

First and foremost, by doing the historical analysis, the thesis places each of the selected mechanisms within the broader international environment and makes it echo/reflect the evolution of the existing international order and the transformation of global governance as discussed in the introduction of the thesis. By doing so, the thesis aims to interpret the nexus between the mechanism and the existing international system in terms of its founding background and developing impetus. In addition, the thesis investigates the implications of this mechanism for the development of international relations and global politics and economics. In other words, the historical retrospect is important in providing overall background knowledge of the dynamic international interplay to which each mechanism is relevant.

Second, based on a critical assessment of the international situation and the significance of the mechanism, the historical analysis of each case illustrates the specific mechanism's implications for China. As the largest emerging power and developing country, China has increasingly been involved in global governance in terms of participating in the existing international institutions and in establishing China-led international financial institutions. As mentioned above, the choice of cases/mechanisms (G20, BRICS, SCO, BRI) is closely associated with China's increasingly significant role in global governance. Thus, in each case, a comprehensive historical study of the specific mechanism's process of development and dynamics provides inspirational clues for understanding China's motivations and calculations in shaping its role conception and undertaking its role practice, as embedded in the ILCC in each of these mechanisms.

Third, by reviewing and being inspired by the existing literature, the thesis divides the development of each selected mechanism into several historical periods. In doing so, it is conducive to an understanding of the evolutionary features of this mechanism, which can help in an interpretation of the manifestations and dynamics of the ILCC that is characterized by the logic of processuality.

b. Interpretation of China's NRC embedded in the ILCC

The second step of the interpretive process is the interpretation of China's NRC embedded in the ILCC for each case/mechanism. As Figure 2.2 shows, this interpretation is achieved through the dyad combination of the ILCC conceptualized by relational theory and Breuning's model, derived from role theory. On the one hand, the ILCC, as a triad conceptual/analytical framework, provides several conceptual propositions and arguments to be verified or falsified; on the other hand, as an empirical toolkit developed from role theory, Breuning's model plays a guiding role of examining and interpreting China's national role conception on the basis of five components – identity, cultural heritage, domestic audience, material capability, and opportunity to act. This interpretation is expected to reflect (verify or falsify) the analytical framework of ILCC to various extents in different cases.

As the left-hand side of Figure 2.3 shows, two major factors influence the interpretation of China's NRC embedded in the ILCC; the research materials and analytical methods. Specifically, as mentioned above, the interpretation of China's NRC embedded in the ILCC is achieved through (1) textual analysis of Chinese leaders' and decision-makers' speeches, statements, and arguments which are directly or indirectly associated with the selected cases/mechanisms, such as Chinese Presidents' and Premiers' speeches at the summits of each of the mechanisms (G20, BRICS, SCO, BRI) and the relevant comments made by Chinese Ministers of Foreign Affairs and State Councilors in press conferences and interviews; (2) textual analysis of scholarly research articles from the two major policy-related journals, *Contemporary International Relations (CIR)* and *China International Studies (CIS)*. The articles published by these two journals are highly relevant to and influential in Chinese policy making. Thus, the viewpoints expressed in these articles are selectively utilized with the purpose of comprehending and interpreting the connotations contained in Chinese leaders' rhetoric; and (3) direct quotation or reinterpretation of the data collected through semi-structured interviews with scholars and pundits specializing in international relations or in specific issue-areas of global governance. Moreover, in each case, China's NRC is interpreted in line with the stage of development of each specific mechanism. In doing so, an evolutionary process of China's NRC symbolized as the ILCC can be mapped.

c. Interpretation of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC

The third step of the interpretive process is to analyze China's NRP embedded in the ILCC in the selected cases/mechanisms. As with the interpretation of China's NRC, the interpretation

of China's NRP as ILCC is obtained by exploring the mutual complementarity between the analytical framework of the ILCC guided by relational theory and the empirical analysis demanded by role theory.

However, unlike the identification of role conception based on the five components of Breuning's model, in each case, the project interprets China's NRP embedded in the ILCC through the analysis of China's four-dimensional practices and actions, i.e., China's institutional, policy, material, and ideational contributions to the specific mechanism of global governance. Precisely, as shown in the right-hand side of Figure 2.3, the interpretation of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC is achieved through: (1) an analysis of China's actual practices and its implementation of policies. These practices and policy implementations are categorized into China's material, institutional, and ideational contributions to the specific mechanism/issue-area; (2) a textual analysis of Chinese and English articles in the relevant fields and issue-areas. These articles provide interpretations of China's external practices and actions from the perspectives of both domestic and international-based scholars. Their viewpoints are conducive to a more holistic understanding of the connotations and implications of China's practices; and (3) a discourse analysis of the materials collected by semi-structured interview. Unlike the interpretation of China's NRC, at this interpretive stage, the semi-structured interviewees comprise both Chinese and international scholars. This ensures the relatively high reliability and comprehensiveness of the interpretation of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC from the above-mentioned four dimensions.

d. Summary

The final step of the interpretive process is to summarize the analytical findings in each case. In other words, the thesis undertakes an overall analysis of the ILCC for each mechanism (G20, BRICS, SCO, or BRI) on the basis of the previous three steps. Specifically, the summary largely consists of three parts, as follows.

The first section of the summary draws some general conclusions about the ILCC exhibited in each case/mechanism. Specifically, using the interpretations of China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC based on the stage of each specific mechanism's historical development, this section summarizes the various manifestations of the ILCC on the basis of the different stages and depicts the dynamic process of the ILCC exhibited in each selected case/mechanism. In doing so, this general assessment of the ILCC in each mechanism provides empirical evidence for the next two sections of the summary.

The second section of the summary, on the basis of the above generalizations, interprets the ILCC in each case/mechanism in relation to the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR, identified as relationality, inclusiveness, and processuality in the methodology. This activity has two critical implications: (1) in terms of the thesis content, it clearly demonstrates how the practical manifestation of the ILCC echoes Chinese philosophical and political ideas, which strengthens the thesis' core assumption that Chinese political thought and cultural legacies influence the Chinese way of thinking, policy making, and behaving; (2) in terms of the thesis structure, this activity ensures the consistency and coherence of the thesis' logic, which is regarded as the most significant indicator of measuring quality of the thesis.

The third section of the summary dissects the challenges and limitations faced by China's role in the ILCC in each case/mechanism. The thesis contends that, in relation to the existing international order, the ILCC is still a new concept and practice that is embedded in "Chineseness". As a result, given that the IR discipline is Western-dominated and that international politics is a complicated arena, it is not difficult to understand that the ILCC faces conceptual and practical challenges. Hence, the summary adopts a multilevel (i.e., global, intra-regional, regional, sub-regional, and domestic levels) and multidimensional (i.e., divergences in political system and appeals, economic competition, potential security risk and conflict, and diverse development stages) perspective to interpret these challenges. In this respect, the interpretation of the challenges and limitations is conducive to a more dialectic understanding of the ILCC in global governance, and it is also useful in predicting the possible scenarios in the development of the ILCC in a more realistic and reasonable manner.

CHAPTER 3. THEORY APPLICATION – THE CONSTRUCTION OF “INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS” AS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As shown in the research objective and research question outlined in Chapter 2, the “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) is seen as the core concept of the project. Therefore, this section has twofold objectives: (1) to review the existing research on international leadership in a general sense, and (2) to construct an analytical framework for “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” based on this review.

3.1. THE EXISTING RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In the context of international relations, leadership has long been an under-researched and self-evident concept (Ren, 2017). The situation is manifested in some scholars’ arguments; Joseph Nye, for example, considers that we still lack a consensus definition regarding international leadership (Nye, 2008: 21). In the same vein, Oran Young also argues that “international leadership is a complex phenomenon, ill-defined, poorly understood, and subject to recurrent controversy among students of international affairs” (Young, 2001: 1). This section reviews several representative pieces of research on international leadership in the mainstream Western academic community as well as emerging explorations of international leadership in the context of China’s rise more specifically.

3.1.1. WESTERN MAINSTREAM RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

From the behavioristic perspective, Oran Young argues that leadership refers to “the actions of individuals who endeavor to solve or circumvent the collective action problems that plague the efforts of parties seeking to reap joint gains in processes of institutional bargaining” (Young, 1991: 285). Specifically, he further classifies international leadership into three major types: structural leadership, entrepreneur leadership, and intellectual leadership. Structural leadership refers to the ability of a leader to transform their material possessions into bargaining leverage in order to reach agreement during institutional bargaining. Entrepreneurial leadership indicates the negotiating skill possessed by a leader to frame issues, promote coordinative bargaining, and integrate various deals with the purpose of formulating international regimes. Intellectual

leadership implies the leader's production of intellectual capital to shape the perception of participants and has a determining influence on the establishment of international institutions. This categorization shows that Young's research on international leadership has little to say in the areas of international institution building and international bargaining and, hence, is unable to provide an inclusive definition of international leadership (Chen, Zhou and Wang, 2018).

Similar to Young's categorization, John Ikenberry has also proposed three types of international leadership: structural leadership, institutional leadership, and situational leadership (Ikenberry, 1996). According to Ikenberry, structural leadership indicates that some states make good use of the distribution of material capabilities, using them to their advantage to shape the international political and economic order (Ikenberry, 1996). In this regard, the relevant concepts of "hegemonic stability theory" (Gilpin, 1987), "hegemonic leadership" (Wiener, 1995), and "world leadership" (Modelski, 1987) share common ground in suggesting that leadership is rooted in the distribution of power. Institutional leadership refers to the capabilities of leaders to materialize performances, rules, and principles as institutions for ensuring the continuity of interstate relations, facilitating concerted action, and realizing mutual interest. The most representative interpretation of institutional leadership is Robert Keohane's "neoliberal institutionalism theory", proposed in the era of declining American hegemony (Keohane, 1984). Situational leadership refers to the ability of leaders to seize opportunities to initiate actions, promote cooperation, and shape international order. In this regard, this type of leadership shares some similarities with Oran Young's "entrepreneurial leadership". Similar to Robert Keohane, Ikenberry finally points out that the future of American international leadership lies in the resilience of the existing US-led institutional arrangements against the backdrop of the relative decline of US material capabilities.

From the power perspective, Nye argues that hard power and soft power are major sources for establishing leadership (Nye, 2008). Based on this view, we can deduce that the above-mentioned structural leadership relies on hard power, and institutional/entrepreneur/situational leadership results from soft power. Moreover, on the basis of the nature and various definitions of hard power and soft power, Nye articulates the distinct differences between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. On the one hand, transactional leadership is the capability of leaders to take advantage of its hard power to mobilize followers in terms of material interest. On the other hand, transformational leadership is the ability of leaders to make good use of its soft power to induce followers to prioritize the purposes of the group on the basis of common expectations and moral principles.

3.1.2. RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF CHINA'S RISE

The above research on international leadership is obviously Western-centric and embedded in the Western (American) experience and practice. China has not yet officially and explicitly announced that it is assuming a leadership role in international relations. However, due to China's increasing significance in global politics and the global economy, and its proactive participation in global governance, this thesis argues that China is already exhibiting a pattern of international leadership in a number of issue-areas. Against this backdrop, a number of Chinese scholars have begun to discuss international leadership from various perspectives, and most of the research, more or less, reflects Chinese thinking on the construction and implementation of international leadership.

From the perspective of multilateralism, Pang Zhongying argues that one leading state is currently an initiator, supporter, or accelerator of international collective action, and he points out that ineffective multilateralism is usually caused by a lack of international leadership. In this regard, Pang believes that strong shared or collective international leadership is urgently required in the era of post-American hegemony, and that China can play an important role in this type of international leadership (Pang, 2010). From the perspective of international norms, Yan Xuetong claims that the prevailing type of international leadership influences the principle of international interaction between states through three mechanisms in terms of example-imitation, support-reinforcement, and punishment-maintenance. These principles of international interaction ultimately evolve into an international norm. Moreover, Yan predicts that the competition for leadership between China and the United States will be more beneficial than harmful to the world, and that "China and the United States should demonstrate to the world the advantages of their different leadership" (Yan, 2011b).

By accounting for the indicators of the number of leaders, the purpose of leadership, and the style of leadership, etc., Chen Zhimin (2018) and his colleagues make a detailed categorization of various types of leadership through the analysis of the China-led Belt and Road Initiative. Having undertaken a comparative study between American and Chinese leadership models on the basis of this categorization, Chen et al. propose the concept of "facilitative leadership" as a new model of international leadership and argue that "facilitative leadership is the most proper type for China in the near future" (Z. Chen et al., 2018: 25). Specifically, Chen and his colleagues interpret "facilitative leadership" in terms of its collective, attractive, win-win, and empowering features (Z. Chen et al., 2018: 18-21). By focusing on the specific case of the G20,

Ren Xiao (2017) argues that China and global governance are in a relationship of mutual reliance and mutual necessity, i.e., “China has an important role to play in global governance, and global governance needs a larger role for China” (X. Ren, 2017: 433). However, Ren also points out that Chinese “culture” leads China to prefer to take a low profile, placing an emphasis on partnerships in its rhetoric to publicly announce its role as an international leader. In this respect, the thesis argues that Ren’s understanding of Chinese culture reflects the nature of the State of Equilibrium and Harmony and the Yin-Yang Dialectics. Nevertheless, according to Ren, it cannot be denied that China is taking a leadership role in the G20 in terms of forging a partnership for structural reform, improving global financial governance, institutionalizing the coordination of the G20 trade and investment policy, formulating guiding principles for global investment, and co-leading the ratification process of the Paris Agreement on climate change (X. Ren, 2017: 438-440).

3.1.3. FOUR MAJOR REFLECTIONS ON THE EXISTING RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Having reviewed the literature of international leadership in both Western and Chinese academic communities in the previous section, four major reflections can be abstracted and articulated as follows.

The first major reflection is the identification of three key elements of international leadership as power, interest, and vision. First, power is an essential component of international leadership. Used to exert effective leadership in international relations, power should be appropriately understood (hard power, soft power, or smart power) and exercised (reward or punishment), according to the situation. In other words, the way in which power is exercised shapes the interstate relationship and determines the success or failure of international leadership. Second, the interest of international leadership refers to the provision of public goods to other states. It emphasizes the leader’s capability and willingness to transform its superiority in the distribution of material power into regional and global public goods for other countries to gain free ride. Third, the construction and dissemination of vision is regarded as another significant element for effective leadership in international relations. A leading country either enforces (by applying its hard power) a specific vision on other countries or persuades (by virtue of its soft power) the others to accept or follow its vision.

The second major reflection is made on the basis of Chinese scholars’ debates about the Chinese model or style of international leadership in the context of China’s rise. Specifically, this

reflection is manifested in two aspects. First, three key elements of international leadership, power, interest, and vision, are clearly observed in the majority of Chinese scholars' discussions and research. Second, based on their various interpretations of how these elements should be understood and manipulated, they reach a consensus that China is gradually practising and shaping China-based types/styles of leadership in international relations as opposed to the traditional Western/American ones. For example, compared to the United States' reliance on its (political, economic, military) coercive power, to varying degrees, to preserve its hierarchical leadership throughout various administrations (from Bill Clinton to Donald Trump), China is inclined to wield its material superiority to attract, rather than to enforce, potential partners to be involved in an inclusive network under its horizontal leadership (Chen, Zhou and Wang, 2018).

The third major reflection is Chinese scholars' understanding of the concept of "leadership". In Chinese, the concept of "leadership" (领导) has a number of various connotations, such as leader (领导者), hegemony (领导权), the leading class (领导阶层), and leadership ability/skills (领导能力/才干), etc. In this respect, by examining Chinese scholars' research on China's international leadership from a myriad of perspectives, it is argued that they share a common ground of understanding and interpreting the concept of leadership as a sort of ability/skill rather than a position or status. *As a consequence, compared to traditional Western-based conceptualizations of international leadership or hegemony, the thesis argues that this ability/skill-based understanding of leadership leads to new interpretations of China's leadership role in global governance.*

Last but not least, on the basis of the previous reflections, the last major reflection aims to provide a complementary means of conceptualizing and interpreting China's leadership role in IR and global governance to the existing theoretical approaches. Therefore, this thesis has the following goals: (1) the abstraction of the logic of relationality (3.2.1) from relational theory and relevant research; (2) the redefinition (3.2.2) of power, interest, and vision as relational power, relational interest, and relational vision through the logic of relationality; (3) the conceptualization (3.2.3) of an analytical framework of "international leadership with Chinese characteristics" on the basis the above redefinition, and (4) the design of an empirical analysis for verifying/falsifying the proposed analytical framework through the application of role theory (3.3). *By doing so, it expects to enrich the understanding of international leadership by reflecting the Chinese ontological assumptions of IR (ontological reflection), achieving full*

engagement with the selected theories, answering the research questions, making a conceptual conclusion, and responding to the knowledge gap, etc.

3.2. THE APPLICATION OF RELATIONAL THEORY

As previously discussed in Chapter 2 (Research Design), the three major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR are identified as relationality, inclusiveness, and processuality. In the meanwhile, the thesis' proposition of relational theory aims to fill the conspicuous gap in mainstream IR theories in terms of their neglect of "relations". According to Qin, "processes and relations are two important factors in the Chinese socio-cultural context and key concepts of Chinese political philosophy" (Qin, 2009: 6). Thus, the thesis argues that relational theory is an appropriate lens of reflecting the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR and providing the logic of relationality to define the concepts of relational power, relational interest, and relational vision and conceptualize the analytical framework of "international leadership with Chinese characteristics" (ILCC).

3.2.1. THE LOGIC OF RELATIONALITY/GUANXI

According to Qin, one of the major reasons why there is no Chinese IR theory is "the absence of a theoretical hard core" (Qin, 2007: 322). The hard core, or the nucleus, of a social theory consists of two components: the substantive component and the metaphysical one. The former is related to the material world and plays a role of perception, and the latter is related to the speculative world and plays a role of conception (Qin, 2016: 34). To be more specific, the substantive hard core is normally manifested in the verifiable/falsifiable theoretical hypotheses on the basis of the observable empirical experience, whereas the metaphysical hardcore is closely associated with certain cultural contexts in terms of history, world outlook, universal vision, intellectual tradition, and way of thinking (Qin, 2009). Of the two components, Qin argues that the metaphysical part is particularly important as it "produces the ontological essence" and "defines a distinct social theory" (Qin, 2007: 327). Based on this presupposition, compared to Western mainstream IR theories which have rationality as their common hard core, Qin defines relationality as the theoretical hard core of relational theory.

Relational theory endows relationality with ontological significance and defines relational orientation as one of the basic features of Chinese society. According to Qin, relational orientation emphasizes the overall environment in a complex relational system (a relational web), and individuals change along with the change in their relations (Qin, 2009: 15). The

relational orientation further leads Qin to interpret a number of concepts, such as relational power, relational identity, relational governance, and relational international system, etc.

- Relational power means that a state's power results from its relational circles and the state can make use of its relational circles to accumulate its prestige and reputation, which can be seen as the intangible type of power (Qin, 2016: 42).
- Relational identity not only refers to the identity of an individual being defined in terms of their positioning in the complex relational web, but also indicates the identity is "multifold, interactive and changeable along with practice" (Qin, 2009: 16).
- Relational governance, as an alternative and a complementary governing pattern to rule-based governance, refers to the management of "complex relationships in a community to produce order so that members behave in a reciprocal and cooperative manner with mutual trust evolved over a shared understanding of social norms and human morality" (Qin, 2011: 133).
- Relational international system, unlike the atomistic system depicted by mainstream IR theories, is seen as a "relational system, a system of complex relations rather than individual actors" (Qin, 2016: 44).

Through the interpretation of these concepts, the logic of relationality is observed in three dimensions. First, whether states' action is rational or not is judged on the basis of their relational totality or social context. In this respect, the logic of relationality triumphs over the logic of instrumental rationality (consequences) and the logic of normative rationality (appropriateness). In other words, social relationships define what is rational and appropriate (Qin, 2016: 38). Second, states actively take advantage of their relational circles to reach their instrumental goals in terms of material and nonmaterial gains. Material gains refers to the state's national interest, and the latter indicates the state's social capital as reputation and prestige. Driven by the logic of relationality, states typically prioritize long-term intangible and nonmaterial gains through the maintenance and cultivation of their relations with others over merely seeking short-sighted, egoistic benefits (Qin, 2016: 38). Third, in line with the logic of relationality, states strive to accomplish social order through the utilization of their relational circles and stress the significance of collective agency in a cultural community. In this respect, harmony is seen as the ultimate ideal type of (international) society and it "does not mean to converge all members of a society into a homogeneous one, but to manage relations among these members in such a way that their differences will not lead to conflict and disorder, but on the contrary, can add up to stability" (Qin, 2016: 39).

Furthermore, relationality, as an English term, normally reminds Chinese people of its counterpart in the Chinese language, Guanxi (关系). As an indispensable element in Chinese culture, *guanxi* has been studied and defined from a myriad of perspectives. Luo Yadong has labeled *guanxi* as “the lifeblood of all things Chinese – business, politics, and society” (Luo, 1997: 45). From a political perspective, Lucian Pye, a famous American political scientist and sinologist, defined *guanxi* as “one of the most fundamental aspects of Chinese political behavior” (Pye, 1995: 35). From a philosophical perspective, according to Jia Wenshan, *guanxi* is depicted as a central philosophical concept that “reflects the Chinese way to know about reality (ontology), the Chinese way to interpret reality (phenomenology), and the Chinese values about humanity (axiology)” (Jia, 2006: 49-54). From a practical perspective, *guanxi* is often interpreted as the “establishment and maintenance of an intricate and pervasive relational network engendered by the practice of unlimited exchange of favors between its members and bound by reciprocal obligation, assurance, and mutuality” (Pye, 1982: 882; Luo, 1997: 44).

Based on these definitions, the nature of *guanxi* is identified as interdependence, mutuality, and reciprocity or “reciprocal obligation” (Barbalet, 2015: 1046). *Guanxi* emphasizes social relations and sees relations as “ends in and of themselves rather than means for realizing various individual goals” (Tsui & Farh, 1997: 61; Farh et al., 1998: 473). Given the complexity and dynamics of external circumstances and situations, the maintenance of *guanxi* relationships demands “ongoing adaptations from all those involved in its webs of reciprocal implication” (Kavalski, 2018). The significance of maintaining a long-term *guanxi* relationship is manifested in the increase of predictability by “lowering the transaction costs, ensuring the peaceful resolution of conflict, and aiding the ability to engage an ever-changing world” (Kavalski, 2018). In light of these interpretations of the nature of *guanxi*, Emilian Kavalski has recently proposed the logic of *guanxi* (2018). In this thesis, it is argued that Kavalski’s logic of *guanxi* and Qin’s logic of relationality are mutually complementary and echoing, and they express the same idea in different words, beautifully (异曲同工之妙). Being similar to the interpretation of the logic of relationality, the logic of *guanxi* also contains three major components: (1) its harmonious respect for the other; (2) its logic of relationship; (3) its community of practice (Kavalski, 2018).

Qin emphasizes that harmony in diversity is not achieved through the convergence of all members into a homogeneous one (Qin, 2016); in a similar vein, Kavalski defines respect for the other as the “cardinal value” of harmony. According to Barbalet, the implicit meaning of

“respect for the other” refers to “non-willful actions directed to realizing the potential events and others, and is action that animates others to act on their own behalf” (Barbalet, 2011: 342-347). Premised on this understanding of “harmonious respect for the other”, Kavalski further interprets the nature of harmony as both a pattern of order and a sort of interaction (Kavalski, 2018). As a pattern of order, harmony is built upon reciprocal relationships and it emphasizes the dedicated cultivation of connectivity. As an interaction, harmony is maintained on the basis of actors’ intentional commitments to exercise self-restraint and allay the concerns of other actors. This establishment of harmonious order and maintenance of harmonious interaction “is not about the intentional projection of self-interest, but about strategic receptivity” (Kavalski, 2018: 242). In this respect, harmonious order and harmonious interaction are shaped and mediated by the ethical responsibilities characterized by the awareness of coexistence and the practices of sharing a relational global life (Kavalski & Cho, 2015). In sum, an international actor, following *guanxi*’s philosophy of harmonious respect for the other, aims to cultivate its reputation profile on the world stage (Kavalski, 2018), to acquire and expand its social resources (Barbalet, 2015: 1044), and to enhance its trustworthiness by “meeting the expectations of others” (Ho, 1976: 873).

The logic of relationships is another significant component of *guanxi*. As with Qin’s logic of relationality, Kavalski’s logic of relationships also provides another perspective for defining the concepts of power and practice and framing “future patterns of interaction” (Kavalski, 2018) in a non-material manner. The logic of relationships emphasizes the continuity of relationships and sees it as the minimum meaning of “mutual benefit”. In this respect, the logic of relationships favors the longevity of a relationship over the pursuit of immediate gains (Kavalski, 2018). The longevity of a relationship is achieved through “an active, committed, and responsible involvement in world affairs” (Kavalski, 2018: 243) and through reciprocity rather than equality of exchanges (Womack, 2008: 295-297). The involvement and reciprocity demonstrate the significance of interaction through which the likelihood of future relations is facilitated and shared understandings are shaped rather than imposed as rules and obligations (Kavalski, 2018).

Finally, *guanxi*’s community of practice motivates shared meaning-generation and engenders the reputational profile of participants (Kavalski, 2018). Community of practice emphasizes the establishment and maintenance of “a set of particular international relationships with concrete obligations rather than the application of abstract norms to cases” (Womack, 2008: 265; Kavalski, 2017: 234). For this purpose, community of practice helps “stimulate new and

contextual definitions of the ‘common good’ and reveal a new way of being present in the world” (Kavalski, 2018: 245). Above all, respect for the other, the logic of relationships, and community of practice together spell “a longer-term horizon for relations than the short-term gains espoused by mainstream IR” (Kavalski, 2018: 245).

3.2.2. REDEFINITION OF THE KEY COMPONENTS OF INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE LOGIC OF RELATIONALITY

As shown in Section 3.1.3 above, three key elements of international leadership are identified as power, interest, and vision. *One of the central arguments of the project indicates that this different way of defining these elements shapes and leads to the different conceptualization and interpretation of international leadership.* Hence, as shown in Figure 3.1, the project redefines these elements as relational power, relational interest, and relational vision through the logic of relationality/*guanxi*.

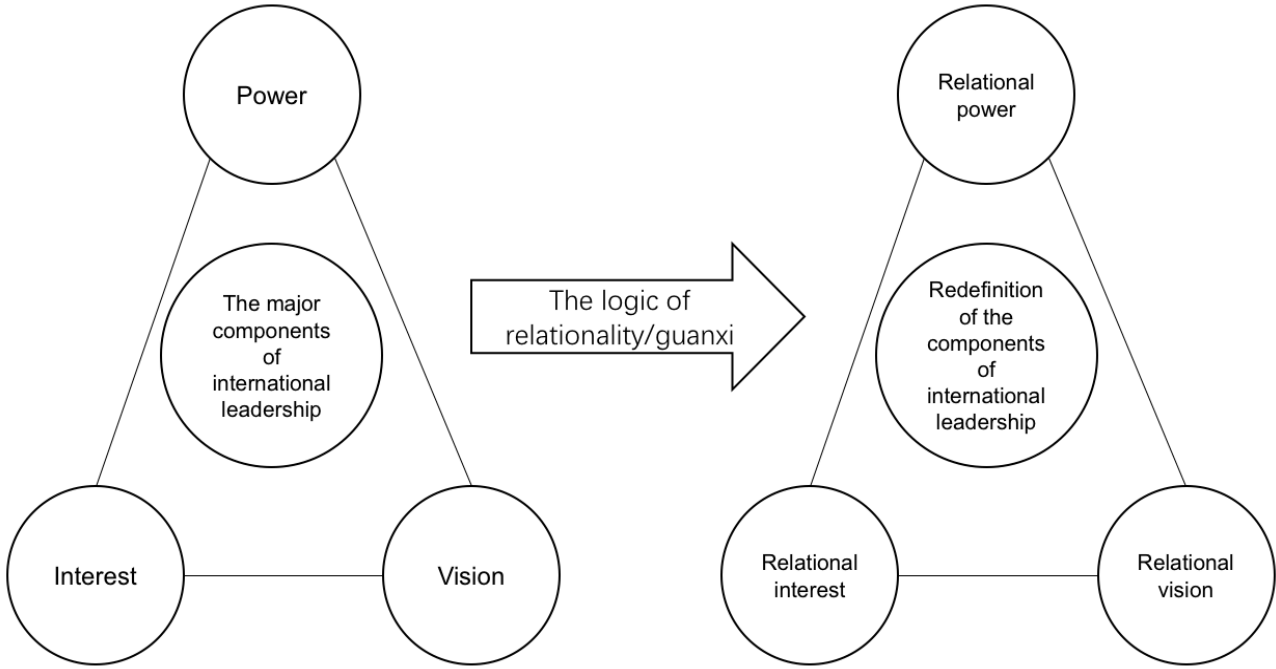


Figure 3.1 Redefinition of the components of international leadership through the logic of relationality (source: the author’s compilation)

3.2.2.1 Relational power

By reviewing the existing literatures on power in political science and IR, two major approaches to power are identified as the “substantive power” approach and “relational power” approach. The former sees power as a possession or property. Nye’s conceptualization of hard power

(economic capability, military force, and population size, etc.) and soft power (political institution, cultural appeal, and diplomatic skill, etc.) belongs to this “power-as-resource” approach. The latter conceives of power as a type of causation or a relationship between actors. In this relationship, the behavior of A is the cause of the behavior of B. In this respect, Dahl’s definition of power as “command” and Lukes’ understanding of power as “manipulation” are considered as manifestations of “relational power”.

However, compared to the Western (Dahl’s and Lukes’) interpretations of a causal or linear logic, relational power is illustrated in a more circular manner through the above-mentioned logic of relationality/*guanxi*, thus, it contains broader connotations and implications. As Qin argues, relational power means that “power comes from relations, or simply, relations are power” (Qin, 2016: 41). Moreover, according to Melody Chong and her colleagues, “*guanxi* can become a source of power to a leader and also influence the leader’s attitudes and behavior in ways different from the position power or personal power of an agent as identified in the Western power literature” (Chong, Fu, & Shang, 2013: 56). In this respect, being distinct from the substantive type of power, relational power is interpreted as a process during which one’s relational circles are under constant manipulation and management in one’s favor (Hwang, 1987). The effective manipulation and management of one’s relational circles lead to the gain and accumulation of *mianzi*/reputation – a major manifestation of relational power. In the field of IR, *mianzi* is so significant that it influences the acceptance rates of one country’s initiative by other international actors. Therefore, as Figure 3.2 below shows, the project argues that a country cultivates its relational power through two major channels: (1) the self-restraint of its own power in order to maintain its relational circles with others; (2) its empowerment of others in terms of creating opportunities for increasing the others’ sense of importance and providing development assistance for strengthening the others’ capacity building.

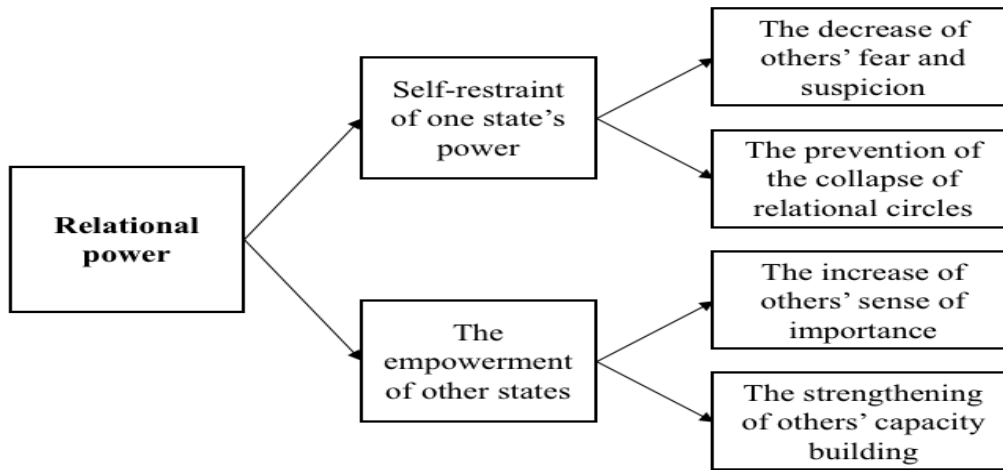


Figure 3.2 Relational power

(source: the author's compilation)

One state's self-restraint of power is the foundation of securing its relational circles and obtaining its relational power. Normally, great asymmetric material power possessed by one state results in panic and uneasiness in others. If one state refuses to limit the abuse of its asymmetric power, it risks provoking negative responses from others who feel they are being manipulated or victimized. Even worse, relational circles between states may be weakened and collapse. Thus, with the purpose of maintaining its relational circles, it is necessary for the state that has huge material advantages to consciously self-restrain its power and bind itself to the other states through institutions or legal agreements. Nevertheless, one state's self-restraint of power does not mean the absolute reduction of its power, rather it requires the state to figure out a grand strategy for exercising its power in a less threatening manner in the eyes of the others. In doing so, the state's self-restraint of power contributes to the decrease of fear and suspicion among other states and prevents the deterioration or collapse of relational circles between them, eventually leading to the state's accumulation of relational power.

However, as mentioned above, the cultivation of one state's relational power also stems from its empowerment of others in terms of (1) increasing the others' sense of importance and (2) strengthening their capacity building. First, generally, empowerment refers to the mitigation or removal of barriers and the construction of a favorable environment which encourages the participants to make meaningful contributions to and be fully involved in common projects. In the field of IR, empowerment indicates that one state shares its power and responsibilities with others and creates sufficient conditions for others to be involved in the process of communication, coordination, and decision-making on regional and global affairs. In addition,

as Chen argues, empowerment means that one state “cannot impose its solutions onto other countries, and should respect and encourage the primary role of other states in managing their own problems and participating in international issues” (Z. Chen et al., 2018: 21). By doing so, the state grants the others a sense of justice and importance, and this is conducive to the maintenance and improvement of their relational circles.

Second, empowerment in IR also denotes one state’s efforts and willingness to use its material superiority as an essential support for the capacity building of others. As a famous Chinese saying goes, “giving the method of fishing is better than giving fish” (授之以鱼不如授之以渔). In doing so, one state helps the others develop their own problem-solving capabilities in addressing further challenges and building their capacities to develop their economies sustainably. This logic of empowerment is clearly reflected in the Chinese idea and policy of providing foreign development aid (FDA) to developing countries and the least developed countries (LDCs). Specifically, China’s FDA mainly focuses on the recipients’ development without attaching any political conditionality, and it does not aim to transform their political and economic systems into so-called universal “good governance” models. From this perspective, compared to the traditional model of hegemonic power, an empowerment-focused China can be seen as a horizontal instructor in global governance, and China’s attitude and policies are thus more readily accepted by others.

3.2.2.2 Relational interest

This thesis redefines interest using the Chinese logic of relationality/*guanxi*, in a similar way to the redefinition of the concept of relational power in the previous section. As mentioned above, in the Chinese context, the core of relationality or *guanxi* is the construction and maintenance of relational circles. Thus, the concept of relational interest is understood as a symbiotic/co-existent relationship between self-interest and others’ interest. In other words, relational interest indicates that individual/self-interest is always closely associated with collective/others’ interest, and it is normally realized through an emphasis on and search for the common interest rather than as an absolute zero-sum game. Specifically, in line with the logic of relationality/*guanxi*, as shown in Figure 3.3 below, relational interest is realized in two major ways: one is in the reconstruction of interest, and the other is in an emphasis on inclusive growth.

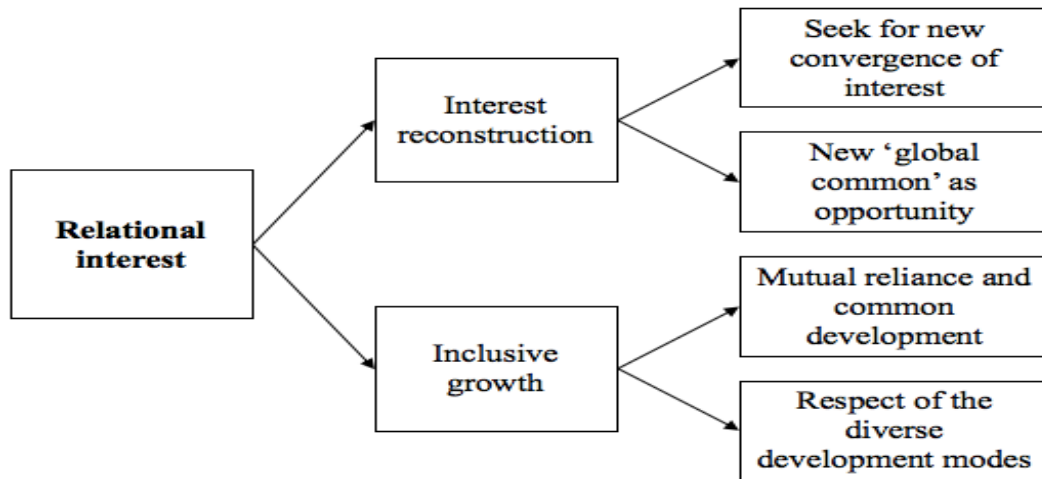


Figure 3.3 Relational interest

(source: the author's compilation)

One way of realizing relational interest is through the reconstruction of interest. The possibility of reconstructing interest lies in the open, dependent, dynamic, and negotiable features of interest. Owing to the profound changes in the global market system and international security structure, no country can now realize its interest in isolation, and it is also impossible for one country to continuously maintain interest in its original form. In the contemporary world, few countries can protect their interest in a closed and stagnant way, no matter whether the country is a small one or a superpower. In the long term, a country's ignorance of the open, dynamic, and dependent features of interest and its failure to achieve interest reconstruction usually leads to the shrinkage and loss of its national interest. The openness and dynamics of interest reconstruction are ultimately manifested in the interdependence of interest between countries, especially between major powers. In this regard, the most effective way of reconstructing interest is to emphasize the interdependence of (economic, security, social) interest. Openness in international relations and the mobility of transnational capital both contribute to the reconstruction of interest.

Moreover, interest reconstruction largely results from the emergence of new cooperation areas. New cooperation areas are largely manifested in a number of emerging problems and challenges in "global governance systems". More specifically, the emergence of new cooperation areas has resulted from the following situations. First, it has been impossible for the traditional international system to fully accommodate the dramatic development of globalization. For example, there are increasing calls for the reform of the international monetary system and global economic governance (Zhou, 2009; Caliarì, 2011). Second, owing to the rapid

development of science and technology, human activities have expanded to some areas that were previously inaccessible. These areas, including space, deep sea, and polar, urgently require the creation of new operational and management rules. Third, the rise of uncontrolled and unsustainable problems, such as resources shortages, ecological deterioration, and climate change, are seen as common challenges/threats for all mankind. This situation requires that all countries, particularly the great powers, shoulder their respective responsibilities. Fourth, the development of networks and the global flow of information has led to serious network security and hacking problems. These security issues, together with transnational criminal networks, have become major challenges for global governance. However, according to Chinese dialectics, the Chinese word *weiji* [危机] (*wei* means the challenges and *ji* refers to the opportunities) indicates the coexistence of challenges and opportunities. In this respect, the emerging problems are not only challenges that are common to different countries, but they also create new opportunities for countries to seek out common ground for cooperation and interest reconstruction.

Relational interest is also realized through the achievement of inclusive growth. According to the American economic historian Rostow, social development can be divided into five stages: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption (Rostow, 1959). In this respect, countries, at different development stages, inevitably choose their own development models and priorities, such as the development of innovation capabilities, the optimization of their industrial structure, or the increase of productive inputs, etc. This situation inevitably leads to policy contradictions and strategic conflicts between countries. China's consistent advocacy of inclusive growth aims to overcome these contradictions and conflicts. Specifically, China is focusing on the reform of the international economic order currently dominated by the developed countries and the establishment of a new one that brings the benefits of economic globalization to all countries, regions, and people. This new order is built upon principles of fairness and reasonableness, mutual reliance, common interests, and cooperation. In this new world order, countries have the freedom to adopt the appropriate economic growth modes for their particular circumstances, and this diversity of economic growth modes contributes to the dynamics of the world economy and promotes a situation of "harmony but not sameness".

Furthermore, inclusive growth also highlights "common development" or "common prosperity". According to the Chinese experience, development is an effective prescription for addressing a series of social problems including social inequality and social instability. In this

regard, at the international and global level, the realization of common development is an effective prescription for problems of global inequality and regional instability. The provision of public goods characterized by non-excludability and non-rivalry and other empowering practices are seen as appropriate ways of achieving common development or common prosperity.

3.2.2.3 Relational vision

In this thesis, as Figure 3.4 below shows, relational vision has inclusive and ethical features embodied in its mechanism of formation and dissemination. First, the inclusive feature of relational vision is mainly manifested in its formation and dissemination through communicative consensus. Relational vision implies that all of the participants are involved in the process of seeking a shared vision in a communicative and interactive way, and the shared vision functions as a driving force for their collaboration. In this regard, shared vision is understood as a socialized vision, i.e. a vision established between participants, rather than considered as an individual vision announced and promoted by a hegemonic country. In this respect, relational vision, seen as socialized vision or shared vision, means that all participants are encouraged to take part in the process of shaping a vision that provides a “realistic, credible, attractive future” (Nanus, 1992: 8). Moreover, in relational vision, differences and variations between participants are not eliminated, rather, the role of creativity and energy, brought about by these differences and variations, in the construction of shared vision is emphasized.

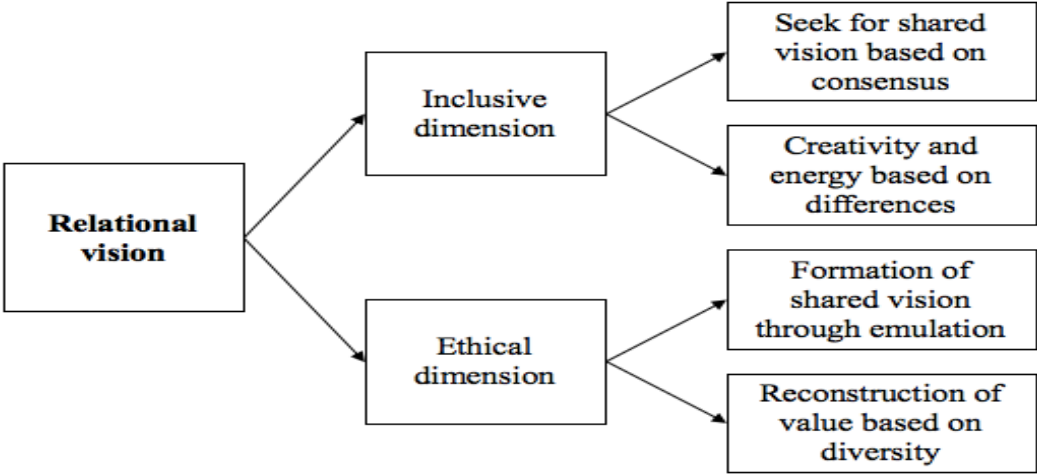


Figure 3.4 Relational vision

(source: the author’s compilation)

Second, from the ethical perspective, relational vision is closely associated with issues of values and standards, since ethics is understood as “the principles of conduct” or “standards of behavior” (Shea, 1988) that govern a profession. Values, as a form of ethics, are regarded as the guiding principles in relation to the desired social ends (Kouzes and Posner, 1993). In this respect, relational vision aims to construct or reconstruct shared values and to take advantage of them as “sources of motivation for the exertions required of the group” (Gardner, 1990: 191). For a long time, Western values have played a dominant role in the field of IR and are considered as the accepted “standards of behavior”. However, with the rise of the emerging powers and the power transition from the west to the east, the hegemonic status of Western values has been challenged and a greater diversity of values is increasingly being appreciated. Against this background, the reconstruction of values has been placed on the agenda of world politics. For China, the reconstruction of values implies neither a complete reproduction of the Western “universal value system” nor complete discarding of the existing values accumulated and tested during the long evolution of the world system. As a builder of global governance, China provides the dynamics and innovative ideas for the reconstruction of the value system of contemporary international relations (R. Huang, 2013).

Along with the ethical characteristic of relational vision, shared vision/values are also formed and disseminated by means of emulation. In other words, one country’s vision or values are voluntarily accepted and embraced by others. In this respect, it is implied that some countries, intentionally or unintentionally, play an exemplary role of “showing others by their own example that they live by the values that they profess” (Kouzes & Posner, 1987: 134) or simply by “modeling the way”. In the context of IR and global governance, “modeling the way” does not mean that an exact copy is imposed in the hierarchical relationship between a hegemon and other states, but it refers to “a medium of diffusion of normative principles that serve as the ground to develop novel governance, policy and legislation thinking and performances” (Vangeli, no date). In other words, unlike the hegemon’s imposition of its hegemonic visions, values, and codes of conduct on other states, relational vision emphasizes that the diffusion of vision, values, and norms is “to a great extent a voluntary process, which depends on the demand side of the interaction” (Vangeli, no date).

3.2.3. THE PROPOSED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF “INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS”

In response to the research objective and research question, this section aims to conceptualize the “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) for investigating the nexus between the rise of China and global governance. Specifically, the conceptualization of the ILCC is achieved on the basis of three major considerations, as follows.

First and foremost, as one central argument of the project implies, the diverse ways of defining the core elements of international leadership (power, interest, and vision) shape and lead to the various conceptualizations and interpretations of international leadership. Thus, the conceptualization of the ILCC largely benefits from the concepts of relational power, relational interest, and relational vision defined through the Chinese logic of relationality/*guanxi*. In other words, these three newly-defined concepts play a heuristic role of interpreting the formation and performance of international leadership on the basis of Chinese culture and political thought.

Second, as discussed in the first chapter, in the context of Chinese culture, the legitimacy of leadership is mainly derived from the Chinese understanding of meritocracy and performance legitimacy. As Coicaud argued, meritocracy is rooted in performance legitimacy suggesting that the fact that “the government has an obligation to improve the people’s material well-being and intellectual/moral development is a central part of the Confucian tradition” (Coicaud, 2017: 26). In this respect, according to Chinese culture and philosophical ideas, the ideas of meritocracy and performance legitimacy place a strong emphasis on the significance of ability in shaping a legitimate leadership. Therefore, this thesis conceptualizes the framework of the ILCC through an ability-based understanding of leadership rather than a position-based one.

Third, in line with Chinese ontological assumptions of IR, the ILCC is also characterized by processuality and inclusiveness. In relational theory, process refers to “on-going interactive relations, embedded in social practice and producing social meaning” (Qin, 2009: 9). The major roles of process are identified as: (1) generating norms and rules; (2) constituting meaning for interaction between states; (3) nurturing collective identity and emotion; (4) building the structure of roles in the system; and (5) defining interest and shaping the behavior of actors (Qin, 2009: 12-13). In this respect, the ILCC is understood as an inclusive process of social influence that is characterized by co-discussion, co-consummation, or co-promotion of

cooperative issues and common concerns through interactions between the participants and relevant stakeholders.

In sum, by virtue of the above three conditions, as shown in Figure 3.5 below, the ILCC is conceptualized as a triad analytical framework that consists of three manifestations of leadership: facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership. Before interpreting each of them in more detail, it is worth mentioning that, from the perspective of semantics, the three manifestations of the ILCC are likely to be considered as different leadership styles. However, the essence of these so-called leadership styles should be understood as different varieties of leadership ability that influence the construction and implementation of the ILCC.

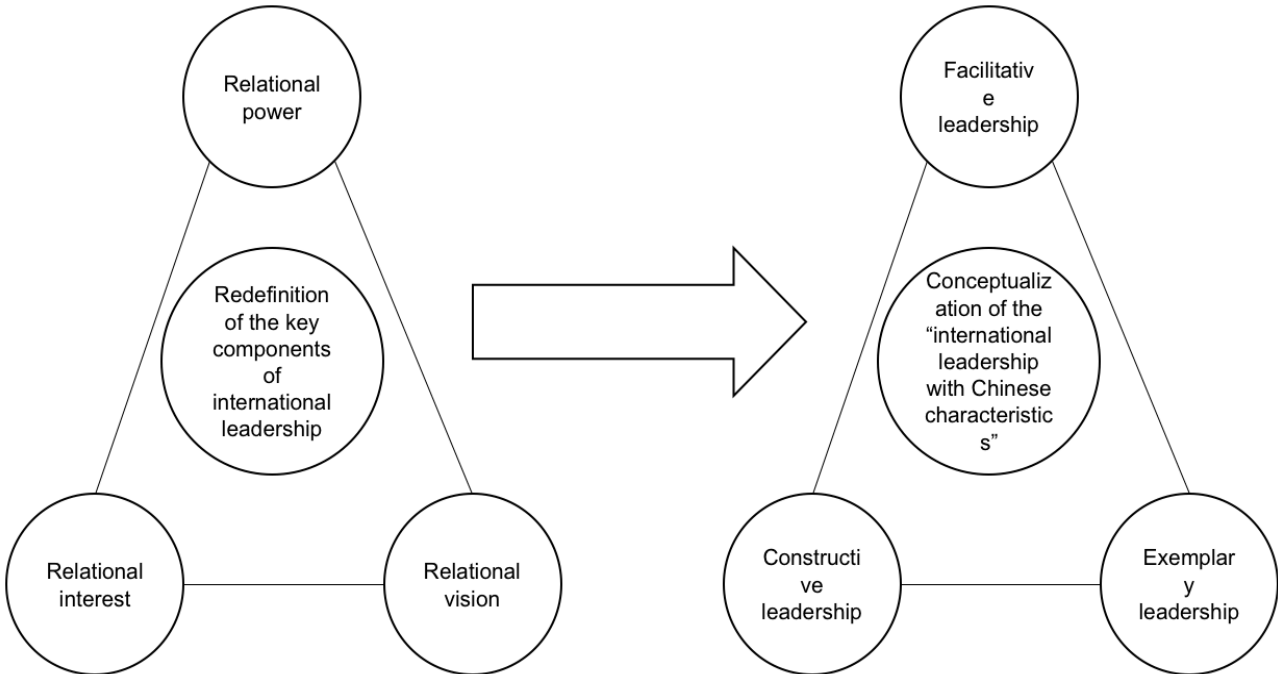


Figure 3.5 Conceptualization of “International leadership with Chinese characteristics”

(source: the author’s compilation)

3.2.3.1 Facilitative leadership

Facilitative leadership is one manifestation of the ILCC. The project borrows and refines the concept of facilitative leadership proposed and articulated by Chen Zhimin (2018). In light of Chen’s idea, as shown in Figure 3.6 below, the project interprets facilitative leadership through its three major features – collectiveness, inclusiveness, and empowerment.

First, the collectiveness of facilitative leadership indicates that the number of leaders is multiple rather than single. Compared to the unparalleled dominant positions of the United States and Soviet Union in their respective camps during the Cold War, facilitative leadership emphasizes that a group, co-operative, or project is co-led by a number of key actors. With the rise of the emerging powers and the redistribution of global power, the collectiveness between the established powers and the emerging ones represents an irresistible trend. According to Barry Naughten, “the world at large would be looking to such a concert of great powers to provide collective leadership on global policy issues such as a stable and durable peace, mitigating the risk of catastrophic climate change and the prevention of pandemics” (Naughten, 2013: 677). Specifically, inspired by relational power, the collectiveness of facilitative leadership is manifested in two major aspects. First, China’s self-restraint of its power helps it to relieve anxiety and gain trust from other states, generating a peaceful and favorable international and neighboring environment for China’s continuous economic development. Second, the collectiveness of China’s facilitative leadership places an emphasis on coordination between major powers in different issue-areas. This inclusiveness is conducive to the democracy of international relations and shape the structure and process of global governance with higher representativeness and effectiveness.

Second, inclusiveness is another important feature of China’s facilitative leadership. The inclusiveness of facilitative leadership is mainly derived from interpretations of relational interest and relational vision. In this respect, inclusiveness emphasizes the realization of inclusive interest/vision rather than individual interest/vision. According to Joseph Stiglitz, one manifestation of individual interest can be observed in American leadership, “the United States used its leadership to create a globalization that advanced corporate and financial interests in America and rich countries; the interests of workers, consumers, and those in emerging markets and developing countries were only of secondary concern” (Stiglitz, 2017: 77). In this situation, old-fashioned globalization under US leadership aims to consolidate the foundation of the US-led international system and to expand American asymmetric advantage over other states. In addition, examples of individual vision are also manifested in the US-led international system, such as the previous hegemonic vision of the Washington Consensus. Conversely, in accordance with the inclusiveness of China’s facilitative leadership, the inclusive interest/vision attaches great significance to the accomplishment of common development and shared vision. Chen, for example, explains that the realization of facilitative leadership “is based on the promotion of the win-win development of the leading country and all other

countries” (Z. Chen et al., 2018: 20). By doing so, China’s facilitative leadership aims to facilitate the emergence and development of a “new and open” globalization, characterized by the inclusion and integration of a myriad of interests and visions.

Third, in addition to collectiveness and inclusiveness, empowerment is another key feature of China’s facilitative leadership. To be precise, the feature of empowerment is observed in two aspects. First, as exhibited in American international/hegemonic leadership in the post-Cold War era, a traditional hierarchical leader tends to take its own experience and ideas as gospel truth and impose these “credendum” on others without serious consideration of their specific conditions. In this respect, hierarchical leadership can be seen as a sort of patronal leadership that accentuates the omnipotence of Western-based policies and values in addressing all problems across the world. However, it cannot be denied that different countries have their own particular problems and conditions. The empowerment of China’s facilitative leadership, unlike hierarchical and patronal leadership, recognizes the primary role of others in addressing their own problems. For instance, with the rise of the so-called “Beijing Consensus” or “China Model”, China has never sought to force other countries to follow its own mode of governance and path of development. China has always respected other countries’ choices for governing their political and economic systems. In other words, empowerment leads to a situation in which differences between countries are inclusively understood and mutually accommodated. Second, the above interpretation of empowerment does not imply China’s ignorance of other countries’ problems and difficulties. Rather, China’s facilitative leadership seeks to support others’ capability building rather than imposing a specific mode or direction on them. For instance, China’s facilitative leadership is manifested in its provision of FDA to African countries without any political conditionality. It is believed by China that development, rather than democracy, is the basic prerequisite for addressing domestic and global problems.

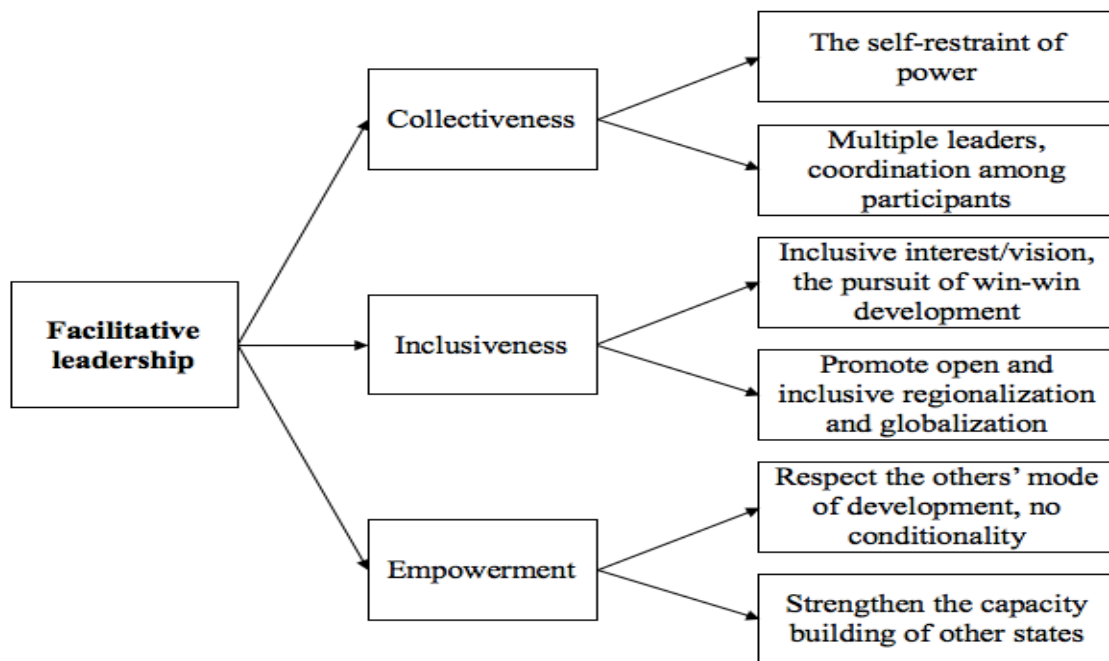


Figure 3.6 Facilitative leadership embedded in the ILCC

(source: the author's compilation)

3.2.3.2 Constructive leadership

Constructive leadership is another significant manifestation of the ILCC. The thesis' proposition of constructive leadership not only benefits from the concepts of relational power, relational interest, and relational vision, but also it is largely inspired by Ren Xiao's (2017) definition of China's role as a "reform-minded status quo" in global governance. As Figure 3.7 below shows, China's constructive leadership comprises three features: institutional construction, interest construction, and ideational construction.

China's constructive leadership plays a critical role in the institutional construction of global governance in two major ways. First, China simultaneously contributes a lot to the strengthening and reforming of existing international institutions. Since the introduction of its Reform and Opening-up Policy, China has proactively attended the existing international institutions and complied with the established rules and norms. In this respect, the existing international order has been consolidated by China's attendance, since the latter is the largest developing country. However, the "governance deficits" of the established institutions badly hinder the representativeness and effectiveness of the governance system. Due to economic globalization, political multi-polarization, and cultural diversity, the existing system of global governance is experiencing a significant period of transformation. During this transformation,

China's constructive leadership has been prominent in its advocacy for reform of the existing institutions and in requesting more representativeness for developing countries and emerging powers. Second, China's constructive leadership is also manifested in the establishment of new international institutions. Given that the emerging powers are deeply "frustrated by the fact that the international institutions built in the 1940s and 1950s remain unreformed, and western powers still hold sway" (Nougayrede, 2015), China and other emerging powers have taken a circuitous route in shifting global governance towards a more representative situation. For instance, the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is allowing the voices of the emerging powers and developing countries to be heard. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the use of "constructive", rather than "destructive", denotes that China's constructive leadership does not seek to overthrow the established international institutions, but aims to construct a more balanced and representative international order on the basis of the complementarity between the existing and the emerging institutions.

Interest construction is another vital feature of China's constructive leadership. Being a double-edged sword, globalization not only promotes economic growth and technological development, but it also generates a large number of non-traditional security problems with global impact. Few states can escape the effects of these problems or deal with these challenges on their own, and it requires joint coordination between states to address these non-traditional security problems. Certainly, these problems/challenges have objectively opened up new areas or created new opportunities for countries to find common ground and build common interest. With its increasing integration into the existing international system, China has shown a great willingness to construct shared interest with other members in the international community, since its interests are deeply intertwined with others'. For instance, by virtue of its extraordinary political and economic influence, China's constructive leadership plays a crucial role in proposing and implementing the construction of a "community of common interests" (利益共同体) in various issue-areas. In general, the community of common interests meets the common aspiration of addressing the challenges of globalization and achieving economic and social development. Thus, with regard to interest construction, China's constructive leadership is prominent in the building of communities of common interests in terms of identifying common challenges, proposing constructive solutions, and emphasizing relational interest and inclusive growth, etc.

Finally, ideational construction is the third feature of China’s constructive leadership underneath the ILCC. In an era of deepening globalization and increasing diversity, Western-based ideas, visions, and values are no longer considered as universal. The rise of the non-Western powers (Asian Tigers and BRICS) proves that Western-based development ideas and values are not omnipotent and are unique (Huntington, 1996). Moreover, the success of the non-Western countries has led to the recognition of plural ideas and plural values. In line with relational vision, common ideas/visions/values are constructed or reconstructed through communication or emulation rather than being solely shaped and imposed by a hegemonic power. In this respect, in terms of ideational construction, China’s constructive leadership contributes to the proposal of innovative concepts, such as the “community of common destiny” (命运共同体), for the discussion and the promotion of people-to-people exchange by sticking to the principle of “finding common ground and shelving differences”.

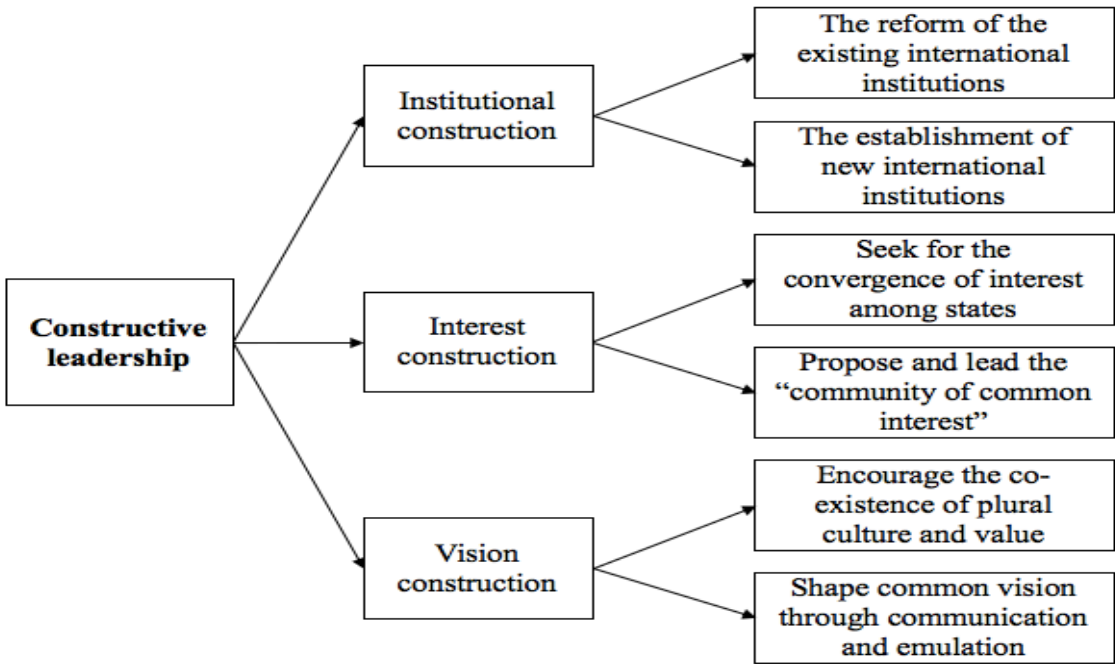


Figure 3.7 Constructive leadership embedded in the ILCC

(source: the author’s compilation)

In sum, by reviewing the above three features, it is argued that China’s constructive leadership will make a significant contribution to the improvement of global governance in terms of (1) making insightful judgments of the overall international situation, consisting of the major challenges and the major development trends, (2) contributing innovative/constructive proposals to resolve pressing issues and to the reform of the existing global governance system on the basis of insightful judgment, (3) promoting the realization of such proposals – the

establishment of new institutions and the construction of communities of common interest/destiny – by virtue of its material capabilities and political influence. However, it is essential to emphasize once again that China’s constructive leadership does not represent a subversive power in relation to the existing institutions and arrangements in global governance, rather it is more appropriate to define China as a “reform-minded status quo” (Ren, 2017).

3.2.3.3 Exemplary leadership

In addition to facilitative leadership and constructive leadership, exemplary leadership is another vital manifestation of the ILCC. In Chinese culture, the exemplary role of leader is consistently canonized as one of the most effective ways of implementing a benevolent and legitimate governance. Amongst the various streams of Chinese ancient beliefs, Confucianism attaches great significance to exemplary leadership in state governance. In the Confucian school, this type of leadership is mainly illuminated through the concept of *Junzi* (君子), referring to an exemplary or paradigmatic person. According to Guo Xuezhi (2002), the nine major features of *Junzi* can be identified as follows:

(1) A deep inner sympathy towards other human beings. The *junzi* personality demonstrates consideration for others; (2) a strong sense of honor. The *junzi* personality implies a strong motivation for political success; (3) fearlessness. The *junzi* personality is founded on strength, courage, and determination. It also demonstrates strength of purpose, willpower, and endurance; (4) a sense of a strong moral mission. The *junzi* personality implies a strong personal moral mission in pursuing the Way, regardless of possible negative consequences for oneself. The *junzi* personality demonstrates a strong sense of social justice; (5) a pursuit of altruism based on the virtue of *shu* (reciprocity); (6) a capacity for self-restraint; (7) a sense of self-respect; (8) a desire for individual autonomy and self-development. This feature also implies a liberality of mind; (9) a sense of dignity and integrity. Trustworthiness toward other human beings is central to the *junzi* personality (Guo, 2002: 56).

Using Guo’s interpretation, Christine Wong (2013) proposes the concept of *Junzi* leadership, and she clarifies the features of *Junzi* leadership in terms of an awareness of moral obligation, a passion for social harmony, and a model for transformation (Wong, 2013: 66-81). These features together shape *Junzi* as an exemplary or paradigmatic person. *Junzi* leadership has inspired the interpretation of China’s exemplary leadership underpinning the ILCC in this thesis. As a consequence, in the following paragraphs, we will (1) discuss the features of *Junzi*

leadership according to the interpretations of Confucian scholars, and (2) deliberate the implications of *Junzi* leadership on domestic governance in relation to China's exemplary leadership in global governance.

First and foremost, *Junzi* leadership cares a great deal about moral obligation. *Junzi*, as a moral leader, upholds a code of moral conduct that influences the mindset and behavior of others. As Shun argues, the *Junzi* leader is closely associated with an ethical ideal and "someone who has approximated the ideal will have affection and reverence for others and will seek actively to promote their well-being. This involves not just attending to their material goods, but also educating them and helping them and cultivating themselves" (Shun, 1997: 140). In this respect, a *Junzi* leader does not need to gain support by exerting hierarchical and coercive force on their followers; on the contrary, potential followers are attracted by and voluntarily follow the behavior modelled by the *Junzi* leader.

Second, it is argued that *Junzi* leadership emphasizes the achievement of the collective good and the promotion of social harmony. With the purpose of realizing social harmony, the concepts of Ren (仁, benevolence), Li (礼, rite), and Zhi (智, wisdom) are considered as the indispensable qualities of *Junzi* leadership. To be more specific, a *Junzi* leader's quality of Ren stresses that power cannot be abused immorally and it should be understood and implemented for the sake of achieving the collective good; a *Junzi* leader's quality of Li defines the roles that people should play and the relationships through which people should interact with each other, and it focuses on the issue of a proper title or "name" (名) by which a leader can be recognized; a *Junzi* leader's quality of Zhi identifies the appropriate timing for establishing appropriate visions for guiding their actions and those of their potential followers.

Third, the pursuit of social harmony reflects the transformational feature of *Junzi* leadership. Specifically, the transformational role of *Junzi* leadership is embodied in two ways. On the one hand, a *Junzi* leader is required to keep in mind that they should constantly improve themselves through a process of self-transformation. On the other hand, a *Junzi* leader empowers and transforms others, intentionally or unintentionally. A *Junzi* leader's role of empowering and transforming others is not limited to the provision of material assistance to others, but it can be observed in four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). To be more precise, idealized influence, also known as model setting, is regarded as a mechanism of norm diffusion; inspirational motivation refers to the creation of a shared vision for a common future;

intellectual stimulation emphasizes the importance of knowledge accumulation and education; individualized consideration stresses each individual's differences and provides opportunities for each member's development and growth in the community.

Inspired by the above discussion of *Junzi* leadership, as shown in Figure 3.8 below, this thesis identifies the major features of China's exemplary leadership in the context of international relations and global governance as follows: (1) China's exemplary leadership underneath the ILCC is morally orientated (仁) in terms of upholding certain moral standards and being responsible for the collective good of all states. Establishing a harmonious world order is one of the key demonstrations of the morality of China's exemplary leadership. Another critical moral proof of China's exemplary leadership is China's strong sense of self-restraint of its own power. This self-restraint echoes the Ren character of *Junzi* leadership; (2) China's exemplary leadership emphasizes the significance of self-cultivation and self-transformation. During the last decade, China's great economic achievements and social development have gradually produced demonstrative effects on other states. In other words, China's exemplary leadership is manifested in the (unintentional) dissemination of its successful experience to others. In this respect, it is argued that China's exemplary leadership unintentionally exerts a certain "idealized" influence over others. This "idealized" influence is a process of norm diffusion that objectively transforms others; (3) China's exemplary leadership is also presented as intellectual guidance (智). China was an outsider to the Western-based international system before it started its program of Reforming and Opening-up. However, today's successful China has largely benefitted from its integration into the existing international order. Thus, on account of China's unique position as the second largest economy of the capitalist system and the largest developing country in the South-South cooperation, it is argued that China's exemplary leadership affords it an open-minded understanding of how the regional and global economy should be promoted and of how the world should be governed to help the formation and development of a long-term vision for the international community.

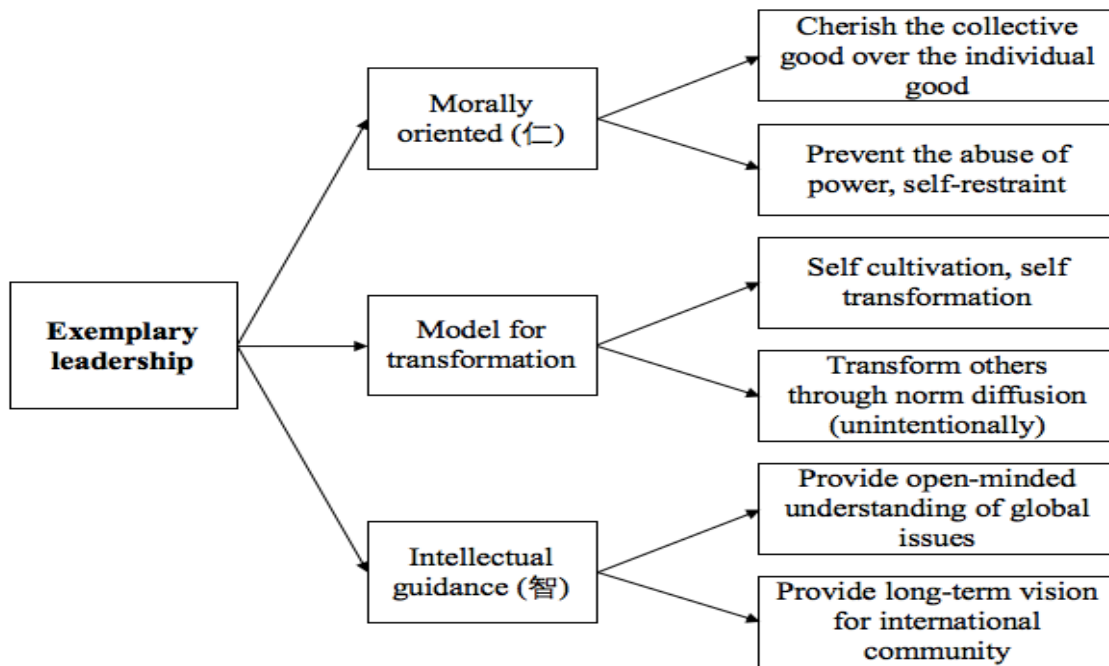


Figure 3.8 Exemplary leadership embedded in the ILCC

(source: the author's compilation)

3.3. THE APPLICATION OF ROLE THEORY

As shown in the empirical framework established in Section 2.3, China's leaders' and decision-makers' speeches and statements were chosen as the primary research materials for exploring China's NRC, i.e., the "international leadership with Chinese characteristics" in global governance. In this respect, the project identifies Breuning's model as an appropriate empirical tool for achieving this target, since the model provides a relatively comprehensive framework that gives due consideration to the structural, agent-based, ideational, and material factors used to interpret these speeches and statements. The major function of this model is observed by Breuning as follows:

It seeks to understand how actors fashion their role in the international system, navigating between domestic sources of identity and/or cultural heritage, taking advantage of the material resources at their disposal, circumnavigating as best as possible the obstacles imposed by their position in the international structure. More importantly, it accommodates both domestic and international sources of national role conceptions by adopting a cognitive perspective: decision makers form their conceptions of their state's role on the basis of both their understanding of the state's identity and cultural heritage, and their perception of their state's place and possibilities within the international system (Breuning, 2011, p. 26).

More precisely, as shown in Figure 3.9 below, China’s NRC embedded in the ILCC will be empirically analyzed using the following five elements:

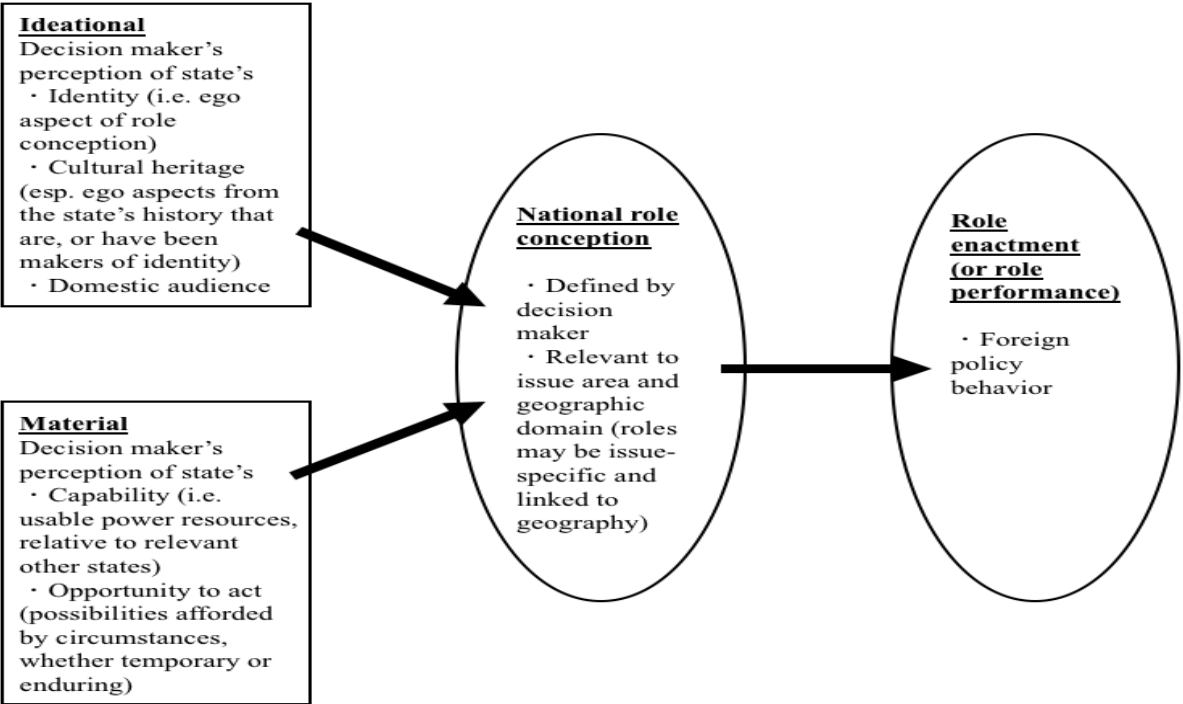


Figure 3.9 Breuning model of role theory

(source: Breuning, 2011: 26)

(1) *Identity* is considered as the ego aspect of role conception (Breuning, 2011: 26). In this thesis, it mainly refers to Chinese decision-makers’ understanding with respect to China’s role and function in international relations. Such self-perception can also shape Chinese decision-makers’ understanding of the collective identity connecting China and other member states in the selected cases – G20, BRICS, SCO, and BRI. More importantly, this self-identity and collective identity can further shape China’s construction and implementation of the ILCC. For instance, Chinese decision-makers’ emphasis on collective identity among the BRICS member states influences China’s role of facilitative leadership that was conducive to the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB). China’s self-identify, for example, with regard to the necessity to transform its model of economic growth, has encouraged China to practise its exemplary leadership in reforming its domestic economy and exerting spillover effects on other members. In practice, China’s self-identity and its perception of collective identity can be revealed by examining Chinese elites’ speeches and statements delivered at summits and other significant occasions involving the above-mentioned cases.

(2) **Cultural heritage** indicates the “ego aspects from the state’s history that are, or have been, makers of identity” (Breuning, 2011: 26). In China’s case, it refers to Chinese decision-makers’ understanding of the relationship between China’s history and culture and its identity. As discussed in the ontological part of the thesis (Section 2.1), it is argued that Chinese political thought and cultural legacies largely influence China’s understanding of contemporary international relations, and they are repeatedly observed in Chinese decision-makers’ speeches and statements. To be more specific, in terms of the research question of the thesis, Chinese history and its unique cultural heritage clearly shape China’s construction and implementation of the ILCC in global governance.

(3) **Domestic audience** is understood as domestic popular opinion. As Breuning argues, a country’s national role conception is issue-specific, and it is partly due to the influence of the domestic audience. With China’s rapid economic development and the rise of the middle class, its citizens, especially the intellectual elites, enjoy more freedom to express their ideas and (professional) opinions. In this respect, the domestic audience, to some extent, influences China’s decision-makers in terms of their understanding and interpretation of international affairs.

(4) **Capability** refers to the usable power resources, relative to relevant other states (Breuning, 2011, p. 26). In Breuning’s model, China’s capability indicates Chinese decision-makers’ understanding and assessment of China’s economic, technology, and military capabilities for dealing with regional or global issues. For instance, Chinese decision-makers’ perceptions of China’s material capability influence the way in which China constructs and implements the ILCC in global governance. In addition, the way in which Chinese decision-makers understand a specific opportunity also influences the extent to which China emphasizes its material capability for achieving its target.

(5) **Opportunity to act** implies the opportunities afforded by circumstances, whether temporary or enduring (Breuning, 2011, p. 26). Opportunities, in this project, comprise the ego aspect of NRC and the alter aspect of NRC as the role expectation. From the perspective of the ego aspect of NRC, opportunity refers to Chinese decision-makers’ understanding of the international situation according to how many opportunities China can seize for exhibiting the ILCC in world affairs. For example, against the background of Donald Trump’s retreat from the global international stage and his refusal to take international responsibility in various issue-areas, Chinese decision-makers see this as a good opportunity to advance China’s global influence.

Moreover, from the perspective of the alter aspect of NRC, or the role expectation, opportunity implies that other states expect China to play a more proactive role in defending globalization and multilateralism and to become an emerging international leader in the invigoration of the world's economic development. Although opportunity, as the component of capability, is seen as a component of the material aspect of NRC, it needs to be reinterpreted by Chinese decision-makers through their speeches and statements.

In sum, Breuning's model of role theory, including the above-mentioned five major elements, provides an empirical toolkit for collecting data based on the speeches and statements delivered by Chinese decision-makers to either verify or falsify the "international leadership with Chinese characteristics".

CHAPTER 4. CASE I: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ILCC IN THE G20

4.1. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The birth of the G20 mechanism has a profound historical background. After the Second World War, three major international economic organizations, the IMF, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, came to constitute the cornerstone of global economic governance and solidified the dominant position of Western developed countries in global economic governance. During that time, the vast number of developing countries were in the position of being governed. After the Cold War, the rapid development of economic globalization and the rise of a large number of emerging economies prompted the developed countries to gradually reach a consensus: effective global economic governance could not be achieved without the effective participation of the developing countries and contributions from the emerging economies.

However, the traditional mechanisms of international economic governance, represented by the Western-led institutions, have failed to adapt to changes in the global economic situation and international economic structure. A small number of developed countries, such as the United States, still control the processes of decision-making and agenda setting. This results in problems for the developing countries in truly integrating into the core system of international economic governance. In this respect, the need to reform global economic governance mainly stems from contradictions between economic globalization and the non-globalization of economic management. More precisely, these contradictions are manifested in three aspects: (1) the contradiction between the globalization of demand and supply and the non-globalization of macroeconomic management, (2) the contradiction between financial globalization and the non-globalization of financial management, and (3) the contradiction between the globalization of trade and the non-globalization of trade management. These contradictions are seen as the major causes of the shock of the financial crisis.

Against this background, the developed countries carried out a “passive revolution” in terms of inviting China, India, Mexico, Brazil, and South Africa to be involved in the discussions at the G8 summit and in establishing the G8+5 mechanism. Nevertheless, these measures did not lead to the effective reform of the existing Western-dominant order. Thus, given the increasing calls for the establishment of a more representative and effective international system, the G20 has

gradually become the central component of international economic cooperation and global economic governance. More importantly, due to its high representativeness and inclusiveness, the G20 better reflects world development trends and has a number of positive implications for the existing international system, as follows.

First of all, in terms of its members, the G20 includes all of the major established powers and the emerging ones. In addition, the total GDP of G20 accounts for more than 85% of the global economy and the G20 member states account for two-thirds of the world's population. In the light of these statistics, compared to the G7/8, the G20 has a higher degree of representativeness in the era of globalization. Thus, any consensus achieved under the framework of G20 is more likely to be accepted by countries and to influence global politics and the global economy. In this respect, the G20 contributes to the realization of global macroeconomic policy coordination. Second, traditional international economic governance mechanisms cannot cope with the risk brought about by globalization and cannot effectively avoid economic crises. However, the G20 is able to incorporate major emerging economies into the global economic governance system and to promote coordinated macroeconomic policies among the developed and developing countries. In this respect, the G20 has a greater ability to stem risks. It is argued that the foundation and development of the G20 is in accordance with the nature of world economic development and meet the needs of global governance in a new era.

This thesis argues that the nexus between China and the G20 is mutually supportive and mutually reliant. On one hand, as the second largest economy in the world and the largest emerging power, China contributes a great deal to the enhancement of the representativeness and legitimacy of the G20. China's engagement with and endorsement of the G20 has granted this mechanism a central role in the world economy. On the other hand, the G20 also provides China with a number of opportunities to play a more proactive role in world development and global governance. Specifically, the G20 meets China's requirements from the following perspectives.

First, from an economic perspective, China needs a vigorous, stable, and development-oriented international economic system. The eruption of the global financial crisis and the subsequent unstable world economic situation highlighted several weaknesses in various issue-areas of the existing economic system. For instance, in the field of international finance, the existing financial system does not truly reflect the interests of the developing countries. Although the global financial crisis broke out in the United States and involved all of the Western established

powers, the US dollar's hegemonic status was not undermined and the reform of the existing international financial institutions is wavering. Against this backdrop, the G20 plays a significant role in the alleviation of the negative effects caused by the lack of representativeness of the existing economic governance and is driving the reform of the Western-based established institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. In this respect, the G20 demands to build a more representative, stable, and flexible international financial system. In the field of international energy, due to poor supervision of financial derivatives based on bulk commodities (food and oil), the price of bulk commodities keeps fluctuating at a high level. This situation poses a severe challenge for China, which is a major energy importer. Fortunately, the G20 provides a cooperation platform for addressing this challenge by virtue of its role of gathering the producers and consumers of the bulk commodity around the same table.

Second, from the perspective of international order, China has requested a platform on which to play a more proactive role. The last four decades have witnessed a dramatic increase of China's influence in the global economic system in terms of its astonishing GDP growth, international trade, and foreign-exchange reserves. With the purpose of transforming itself from a big country to a great power, China needs to participate in the construction of the international system. Against this background, compared to other groupings such as the G2 and G8, the G20 is considered as the most appropriate grouping by China. This mainly results from the G20's balance between legitimacy and effectiveness. One major concern of global governance is to seek a balance between representativeness and effectiveness. An overemphasis of representativeness challenges effectiveness, as seen in the UN and G33. In this respect, the G20 has provided an forum that is repeatedly balanced between the two indicators. The G20 consists of the major developed and emerging countries and it also includes the representative international organizations. Thus, it is seen as one of the most important platforms on which China can participate in global economic governance.

Third, from the perspective of value, China requires an international mechanism that is in accordance with its identity. Politically, for a long time, China has claimed itself to be an indispensable component of and steadfast supporter of the vast number of developing countries. However, China is the second largest economy, and it shares a number of common interests with the developed countries. Hence, in terms of economic capability, China is no longer treated as a developing country. For this reason, it is essential for China to actively participate in an institution that provides China with a platform that strikes a balance between its relationship with the developing countries and its relationship with the developed countries. In this regard,

compared to the G8 or G8+5, the G20 is an appropriate mechanism through which China can be involved in the dialogue and cooperation of global governance, since the G20 has greater cultural and geographical inclusiveness. The inclusiveness of the G20 creates opportunities for balancing the North-South relationship in a more effective way.

Fourth, from the perspective of addressing global problems, China needs a broader and more inclusive international stage. With the development of economic globalization, economic, political, cultural, and social interdependence between countries has become far greater. In the meanwhile, a number of global problems, such as environmental deterioration, climate change, inequality between north and south, and economic crisis, have been exacerbated. In terms of economic governance, most of the contemporary economic problems are globally significant, also requiring a pertinent global solution. These challenges suggest that the solutions to global economic problems should be discussed and agreed under a multilateral framework. In this respect, the G20 is a suitable choice in terms of focusing on the “global, strategic, long-term, and macroeconomic issues” and emphasizing the persistence and stability of the multilateral trade system. Moreover, the G20 is in a position to obtain bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

By considering the implications of the actions of the G20 that have motivated China and the rest of the world to participate in the G20, this chapter undertakes an empirical analysis of the “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) in the G20 using interpretations of China’s NRC and its NRP. In line with Breuning’s model, China’s NRC embedded in the ILCC is verified or falsified based on five major factors: identity, cultural heritage, domestic audience, capability, and opportunity to act. The major research materials for interpreting China’s NRC are Chinese leaders’ speeches at the G20 summits, decision-makers’ comments on relevant occasions, and Chinese policy-related journals. In addition, the chapter also conducts an empirical analysis of China’s NRP embedded in the ILCC in terms of China’s material, institutional, and ideational contributions to the G20.

Furthermore, this chapter’s empirical analysis of China’s NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in the G20 is in accordance with the stages of the G20’s development. In this respect, the project borrows and modifies John Kirton’s chronological division. According to Kirton (2016), having been upgraded from a ministry conference to a leaders’ summit in 2008, the development of the G20 over the last decade can be divided into three major stages: the stage of counter-crisis management (2008-2009), the stage of consolidating cooperation (2010-2012), and the stage of global steering (2013-2018).

4.2. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA'S NRC EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE G20

4.2.1. COUNTER-CRISIS MANAGEMENT (2008-2009)

Against the backdrop of the global financial crisis, the G20 was successfully upgraded to the most significant mechanism of international economic cooperation in 2008. Between 2008 and 2009, the primary function of the G20 was to address the crisis' immediate side effects in terms of “an exceptionally sharp fall in global industrial production, significant contractions in GDP in most of the major economies, and the collapse of business and consumer confidence” (Edey, 2009: 188). Thus, at this stage, China's NRC embedded in the ILCC was shaped and characterized by Chinese decision-makers' judgments of the crisis' causes and effects, their proposals of possible countermeasures and solutions to these side effects, and their perceptions of China's leadership role in overcoming these immediate effects, etc.

First and foremost, according to role theory, China's NRC embedded in the ILCC in the G20 is closely associated with Chinese decision-makers' understanding of the “opportunity to act” – their overall judgment of the international situation. Specifically, at the level of crisis management, Chinese leaders clearly recognized that the world economy had been significantly damaged by the fatal financial crisis, as the then Chinese President Hu Jintao argued:

The international financial crisis has spread from parts of the world to the entire globe, from the developed countries to the emerging markets, and from the financial sector to the real economy, which has exerted a big impact on the economic development and people's life worldwide.

[国际金融危机已从局部发展到全球，从发达国家传导到新兴市场国家，从金融领域扩散到实体经济领域，给世界各国经济发展和人民生活带来严重影响] (Hu, 2008a).

This perception was also manifested in Hu's speeches in the subsequent two summits held in London and Pittsburgh in 2009. In his remarks during the London G20 summit, Hu repeatedly highlighted the achievements of the Washington G20 summit, such as the strengthening of financial supervision and the promotion of financial system reform; however, Hu also pointed out that the “international financial crisis is still sprawling and intensifying with ever increasing impact on the global real economy and the world financial and economic situation remain complicated and grim” [国际金融危机仍在蔓延和深化，对全球实体经济的冲击日益显现，

世界经济金融形势依然复杂严峻] (Hu, 2009a). At the third summit held in Pittsburgh, although Hu recognized the positive changes in the world economy and the increasing stability of financial market, he insisted that “the foundation of an economic rebound is not yet solid, with many uncertainties remaining. A full economic recovery will take a slow and tortuous process” [世界经济形势好转的基础并不牢固，不确定因素仍然很多，实现全面复苏将是缓慢和曲折的过程] (Hu, 2009b).

On the basis of the overall judgments of the then international environment, Chinese leaders stated several times that China had the capability and willingness to alleviate the negative effects caused by the crisis. On one hand, although China was also badly influenced by this financial crisis, the generally positive trend in China’s economic growth and development did not change, and Chinese economic fundamentals and capabilities remained solid, as Hu explained:

Through the open-up and fast enduring economic development for three decades, China has accumulated abundant material basis and further improved the domestic institutional environment. There is a huge development space for infrastructure construction, industrial optimization and upgrading, technological progress and innovation, conservation of ecosystem, resident consumption, the expansion of domestic demand, and social undertakings, etc. China also has rich human resources, and its financial system is generally sound.

[经过改革开放 30 年持续快速发展，中国积累了较为雄厚的物质基础，体制环境进一步完善，基础设施建设、产业优化升级、科技进步和创新、生态环境保护、居民消费、扩大内需、社会事业等方面有巨大发展空间，人力资源丰富，金融体系总体稳健] (Hu, 2009a).

On the other hand, by virtue of its material capabilities, China showed its great determination and willingness to respond to this crisis. This determination and willingness were observed in all three of Hu’s speeches at the G20 summits during that stage. For instance, faced with the impact of the global financial crisis, Hu said that “China will persist in the basic state policy of opening to the outside world and pursue a win-win strategy of opening up” [继续坚持对外开放的基本国策，始终不渝奉行互利共赢的开放战略] (Hu, 2009a). As one of the largest beneficiaries of globalization and international cooperation, “with a responsible attitude, China would like to continuously participate in the preservation of international financial stability and

be engaged in the international cooperation for promoting world economic development” [继续本着负责任的态度，参与维护国际金融稳定、促进世界经济发展的国际合作] (Hu, 2008a). In this respect, it is argued that China exhibited exemplary leadership by insisting on its opening-up policy and responsible attitude. At that stage, although China was as seriously affected by the disastrous crisis as many other countries, it tried to play an exemplary role of pursuing the collective good and appealing for anti-protectionism. As Hu emphasized, “we should together fight against any types of trade protectionism” [我们应当共同反对任何形式的贸易保护主义] (Hu, 2009a).

In addition to showing their determination and willingness to address the crisis, Chinese leaders and decision-makers also illustrated their understanding of the causes of the crisis, such as the “inappropriate macroeconomic policies of the economies and deficiencies in financial regulation” [既有经济体宏观经济政策不当的原因，也有金融监管缺失的原因] (Hu, 2008a). Thus, China recognized the necessity to reform the existing system of economic governance. As the major representative of the emerging powers and developing countries, China dedicated itself to “promoting the development of international financial order towards more fair, equitable, inclusive, and well-organized” [推动国际金融秩序不断朝着公平、公正、包容、有序的方向发展] (Hu, 2009a). More precisely, by virtue of its increasing influence in world politics and the global economy, China exhibited constructive leadership through its proposals, including a number of specific suggestions alluding to the deficiencies of the existing financial system:

First, we need to strengthen cooperation on financial regulation, including the formulation of internationally accepted standards and norms for international financial regulation and the improvement of the code of conduct and the regulatory system for rating agencies; second, the international financial institutions should increase assistance to the developing countries; third, the Financial Stability Forum (FSF) should play a bigger role in terms of providing applicable advice in order to stabilize financial market and strengthen financial supervision; fourth, the IMF should reinforce and improve supervision over the macroeconomic policies of related parties, especially the major economies issuing reserve currencies. Particular focus should be put on the regulation of currency issuance policies. Fifth, the governance structure of the IMF and the World Bank should be improved to enhance the representativeness and voice of the developing countries. Sixth, we should improve the international monetary system and the

reserve currency issuing regulatory mechanism, maintain the relative stability of the exchange rates of major reserve currencies and promote a diverse and reasonable international currency system.

[一是加强金融监管合作，尽快制定普遍接受的国际金融监管标准和规范，完善评级机构行为准则和监管制度；二是国际金融机构应当增强对发展中国家的救助；三是金融稳定论坛应该发挥更大作用，就稳定金融市场、加强金融监管提出更多可行性建议；四是国际货币基金组织应该加强和改善对各方特别是主要储备货币发行经济体宏观经济政策的监督，尤其应该加强对货币发行政策的监督；五是改进国际货币基金组织和世界银行治理结构，提高发展中国家代表性和发言权；六是完善国际货币体系，健全储备货币发行调控机制，保持主要储备货币汇率相对稳定，促进国际货币体系多元化、合理化] (Hu, 2009a).

Furthermore, given the austerity and deteriorating economic conditions faced by the developing countries during the crisis, China attached great importance to the provision of foreign development assistance (FDA) to these countries. As a result, China not only appealed to G20 members to provide material support to the developing countries and the least developed countries (LDCs), but it also actively displayed facilitative leadership in making a commitment to a large number of African countries, as observed in Hu's speech:

China explicitly promised that it will conscientiously implement the various assistant measures to Africa identified during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. China will, in its power, continue to increase aid to African countries, reduce or cancel their debts, expand trade with and investment to Africa, and strengthen China-Africa substantial cooperation. Under the framework of South-South Cooperation, China will continue to provide assistance to other developing countries in an affordable manner, including grant assistance, debt relief, and trade promotion assistance, etc.

[中国明确承诺，将认真落实中非合作论坛北京峰会确定的各项援非举措，在力所能及范围内继续增加对非援助、减免非洲国家债务，扩大对非贸易和投资、加强中非务实合作。中国将在南南合作框架内，继续向其他发展中国家提供力所能及的援助，包括无偿援助、债务减免、贸促援助] (Hu, 2009a).

4.2.2. THE CONSOLIDATION OF COOPERATION (2010-2012)

Having effectively contained the most acute effects of the crisis over the previous two years, in 2010, Chinese decision-makers made a new pronouncement on the international situation, i.e., “with the concerted efforts of G20 members and the entire international community, the world economy is gradually recovering” [在二十国集团成员和国际社会共同努力下，世界经济正在复苏] (Hu, 2010b). However, Chinese leaders also recognized that “the recovery is neither firmly established nor balanced and there are still quite many uncertainties down the road” [复苏基础不牢固、进程不平衡，存在较大不确定性] (Hu, 2010b). Against this backdrop, they commented that China and other member states should play a more important role in the consolidation of the G20’s achievements. In this respect, it is essential to “reform the financial system and promote stable development” [完善金融体系，推动稳定发展] (Hu, 2010d).

This pronouncement was followed by a transformation in China’s perceptions of the G20. During the fourth G20 Toronto summit in 2010, the then Chinese President Hu Jintao proposed that “we need to turn the G20 from an effective mechanism to counter the international financial crisis to a premier platform for advancing international economic cooperation” [推动二十国集团从应对国际金融危机的有效机制转向促进国际经济合作的主要平台] (Hu, 2010b). More specifically, Hu advocated that the major concerns of the G20 members should transform “from co-stimulation to co-growth, from short-term emergency to long-term governance, from passive response to active project” [从协同刺激转向协调增长、从短期应急转向长效治理、从被动应对转向主动谋划] (Hu, 2010b). Through these proposals, China provided a long-term vision for the development of the G20.

In addition to providing a long-term vision, China’s constructive leadership was manifested in its detailed plan for the reform of existing international financial and economic governance, as follows:

We should continue to push for fair and merit-based selection of the management of international financial institutions (IFIs), enable more people from developing countries to take up mid-level and senior management positions and redress the underrepresentation of developing countries at the management level in the institutional framework of IFIs. We should support the IMF in its effort to strengthen the monitoring and early warning of capital flows and prevent the destructive impact of large capital movement, both inward and outward, on

individual economies. We should improve the international monetary system and build an international reserve currency system with stable value, rule-based issuance and manageable supply.

[我们应该继续推动以公平择优为原则选择国际金融机构管理层，提高发展中国家中高层管理人员比例，填补发展中国家在国际金融机构制度框架中的管理缺口。我们应该推动国际货币基金组织加强资本流动监测预警，防止资金大进大出对单个经济体的破坏性冲击。我们应该完善国际货币体系，建立币值稳定、供应有序、总量可调的国际储备货币体系] (Hu, 2010d).

Furthermore, China's constructive leadership was also observed in its construction of common interests and a common vision among the G20 members. In terms of interest construction, during the Seoul G20 summit in 2010, the then Chinese President Hu actively proposed that "we should make great efforts to promote North-South cooperation, expand common interests" [我们应该着力推动南北合作，拓展利益交汇点] (Hu, 2010d). Hu's statement acknowledged the fact that different countries have diverse economic situations and interests. However, it also indicated that countries with diverse interests can also pursue win-win cooperation. In the post-crisis era, common interests between countries are built upon their aspirations to eliminate the crisis' effects and prevent potential crises in the future. Specifically, Hu proposed detailed measures for constructing common interests: "we should strengthen consultation and coordination, introduce mutually supporting and complementing policy measures, and tackle sovereign debt risks, massive unregulated cross-border flow of capital and other financial risks" [我们应该加强沟通和协调，努力形成相互支持、相互补充的政策措施，妥善化解主权债务、跨境资本大规模无序流动等金融风险] (Hu, 2011b). In terms of vision construction, with the purpose of maintaining the hard-won economic recovery and achieving world economic sustainable development, in line with Hu's *Scientific Outlook on Development* regarding China's domestic governance, Chinese leaders firmly advocated the Concept of Sustainable Development for the international community. According to Hu, "we should actively develop green industries such as energy-saving and environment-friendly industries, and build a resource-saving, environment-friendly society" [我们应该积极发展节能环保等绿色产业，增加资金投入，强化机制保障，努力建设资源节约型、环境友好型社会] (Hu, 2012b).

Moreover, at the G20 Seoul summit in 2010, Chinese decision-makers identified one major bottleneck of world economic development as the failure of the vast number of developing countries to achieve full development and strengthen their capacity building. Thus, at that stage, in order to strengthen the capabilities of the developing countries and the least developed countries (LDCs), in terms of achieving recovery from the current crisis and avoiding potential future crises, China stressed the importance of empowering these countries in two aspects. First, China claimed that it maintained the principle of “taking into full account of different national circumstances and development stages of various countries, and appreciate and respect each country’s independent choice of development path and policies” [充分考虑各国不同国情和发展阶段，理解并尊重各国选择发展道路和发展政策的自主权] (Hu, 2010d). Second, China committed to “offer sincere and selfless assistance to fellow developing countries as its ability permits and actively promoted South-South cooperation, contributing its share to world development” [中国尽己所能、向其他发展中国家提供真诚无私援助，积极促进南南合作，努力为世界发展做出贡献] (Hu, 2010d). As Hu said:

China has taken various measures, including tariff reduction and exemption, to create conditions for other developing countries to increase exports to China. To further help the least developed countries in their development endeavor, China will, in the context of South-South cooperation, give zero-tariff treatment to 97 percent of the tariff items of exports to China from the least developed countries having diplomatic ties with China.

[中国坚持通过减免关税等多种途径，为发展中国家对华出口各类产品创造条件。为进一步帮助最不发达国家发展，中方愿在南南合作框架内，对同中国建交的最不发达国家 97%的税目的产品给予零关税待遇] (Hu, 2011b).

Furthermore, for the sake of sustaining the sound momentum of its economic and social development in the post-crisis era, China also placed a strong emphasis on its self-cultivation and self-transformation. At the G20 Cannes summit in 2011, Chinese decision-makers identified China’s grand strategy for its economic growth and social development as follows:

We will continue to pursue development in a scientific way and redouble efforts to shift the growth model. We will continue to strengthen and improve macro control and maintain a balance between achieving steady and fast economic growth, adjusting the economic structure and managing inflation expectation. Putting people’s interests first and taking a holistic

approach to development. We will work harder to achieve all-round, balanced and sustainable development, deepen reform and opening-up, and improve people's well-being.

[我们将坚持以科学发展为主题、以加快转变经济发展方式为主线，继续加强和改善宏观调控，继续处理好保持经济平稳较快发展、调整经济结构、管理通胀预期的关系，更加注重以人为本，更加注重全面协调可持续发展，更加注重统筹兼顾，更加注重改革开放，更加注重保障和改善民生] (Hu, 2011b).

4.2.3. GLOBAL STEERING (2013-2018)

Since 2013, according to John Kirton, the G20 has “moved beyond coping with successive financial and economic crises to become a more general steering committee for the world” (Kirton, 2016: 70). Occasionally, since then, China's participation and role in the G20 has also entered a new phase. This new phase is marked by the selection of a new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping in 2013. Under Xi's leadership, China's foreign policy has gradually become more proactive than that of Hu's era, and China is showing a stronger willingness to play a more significant role in shaping international order and global governance. Against this background, during this stage, China's NRC embedded in the ILCC in the G20 was more pronounced than in the previous two stages, and it was most prominent during the G20 Hangzhou summit in 2016.

During this stage, China reaffirmed the nature of the G20 in the following aspects. First, as the host of the G20 Hangzhou summit in 2016, China placed strong emphasis on the collectiveness of the G20 rather than defining it as a sort of hegemonic project. This position resulted from Chinese leaders' recognition of the G20 members' prominent positions in world development and economic growth, as Chinese President Xi explained at the Opening Ceremony of the 2016 G20 summit, “the G20 has brought together the world's major economies, and their influence and role are significant. They are at the forefront of addressing risks and increasing growth space” [二十国集团聚集了世界主要经济体，影响和作用举足轻重，也身处应对风险挑战、开拓增长空间的最前沿] (Xi, 2016e). In this respect, although the G20's member countries vary in political system, economic level, and social culture, China advocated that they should carry out collective actions and “all parties should strengthen macroeconomic policy communication and coordination, and form synergy in our policies and actions” [加强宏观经济政策沟通和协调，形成政策和行动合力] (Xi, 2015e). Second, China identified the

inclusiveness of the G20 through its emphasis on the G20 as a mechanism of sharing rather than as a political tool dominated by any one superpower. According to Xi, the G20 “should be about participation by all and benefits for all. Instead of seeking dominance or winner-takes-all results, it should encourage the sharing of interests and win-win prospects” [提倡所有人参与, 所有人收益, 不搞一家独大或者赢者通吃, 而是寻求利益共享, 实现共赢目标] (Xi, 2016d). Third, Chinese decision-makers repeatedly endorsed the G20 as an empowering mechanism for addressing global development problems and promoting global economic growth. As a result, China identified the necessity of “promoting the G20 member states to conduct cooperation and help these countries to accelerate industrialization through capacity building, increasing investment, improving infrastructure and other measures, so as to achieve their poverty alleviation and sustainable development goals” [中方推动 G20 成员开展合作, 通过能力建设、增加投资、改善基础设施等举措, 帮助这些国家加速工业化发展, 实现减贫和可持续发展目标] (Y. Wang, 2016).

Moreover, in line with its understanding of the nature of the G20, China further contributed its own plan for the development of the G20 in terms of institutional construction, interest construction, and vision construction. First, Chinese leaders consistently emphasized that the G20 is the most representative mechanism in global economic governance. Thus, China is devoting itself to strengthening the institutionalization of the G20. For instance, at the Closing Ceremony of the G20 Hangzhou summit, Chinese President Xi confirmed that “it is necessary to transform the G20 from a crisis-responding mechanism to a long-term governance mechanism, and expand its focus from short-term policy response to a combination of short-, medium-, and long-term policy making” [二十国集团有必要进一步从危机应对机制向长效治理机制转型, 从侧重短期政策向中长期政策并重转型] (Xi, 2016f). More precisely, China puts a great deal of emphasis on the revitalization and institutionalization of international trade and investment as two critical engines of world economic growth, as Xi said:

We have worked out the G20 Strategy for Global Trade Growth which promotes the development of inclusive and coordinated global value chain, supports the multilateral trade system and rejects protectionism. We have also worked out the G20 Guiding Principles for Global Investment Policymaking which lays out the first global framework of multilateral rules governing international investment. We look forward to renewed vitality of the world economy driven by strong international trade and investment.

[我们共同制定《二十国集团全球贸易增长战略》，促进包容协调的全球价值链发展，继续支持多边贸易体制，反对保护主义。我们制定了《二十国集团全球投资指导原则》，这是全球首个多边投资规则框架，填补了国际投资领域空白。期待在我们的共同努力下，在强劲的国际贸易和投资推动下，世界经济将重新焕发活力，经济全球化进程继续蓬勃发展] (Xi, 2016f)

Second, during this stage, Chinese decision-makers repeatedly stressed the importance of two major concepts: growth linkage [增长联动] and integration of interests [利益融合]. Specifically, on one hand, growth linkage indicates that “all countries should build the awareness of a community of common destiny. Give consideration to the interests of other countries, when pursuing the national interests of our own” [各国要树立命运共同体意识，在追求本国利益时兼顾别国利益] (Xi, 2013b). On the other hand, integration of interests implies that “all countries should build a global value chain that shares interest, and foster a big global market that benefits all parties, achieving the development of mutual benefits and win-win results” [各国应当建设利益共享的全球价值链，培育普惠各方的全球大市场，实现互利共赢的发展] (Xi, 2013b). Third, China also proposed a number of visions for guiding the development of the G20. The most eye-catching China-proposed vision during this stage was the construction of a ‘Community of Common Destiny’ [命运共同体]. As Chinese President Xi articulated at the G20 Brisbane summit in 2014, “the G20 members should establish the awareness of a community of common destiny, and strive to form a pattern of win-win cooperation in which the growth of each country promotes and complements that of other countries” [二十国集团成员要树立命运共同体意识，坚持做好朋友、好伙伴，积极协调宏观经济政策，努力形成各国增长相互促进、相得益彰的合作共赢格局] (Xi, 2014c).

Furthermore, during this stage, China exhibited its exemplary leadership in terms of being morally orientated, emphasizing self-transformation, and providing intellectual guidance. First, in order to promote mutual trust and maintain positive relational circles/links between G20 members, Chinese decision-makers attached great importance to the principle of morality. As the world’s second largest economy, China has massive asymmetric advantages (economically and politically) over other G20 member states. Nevertheless, Chinese leaders repeatedly advocated that “all countries should be committed to building a fair, just, inclusive and orderly international financial system, enhance the representation and voice of emerging markets and

developing countries, and make sure that all countries enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities under equal rules in international economic cooperation” [建设公平公正、包容有序的国际金融体系，提高新兴市场国家和发展中国家的代表性和发言权，确保各国在国际经济合作中权利平等、机会平等、规则平等] (Xi, 2014c). Second, due to persistent global economic weakness, China’s economic growth has continuously slowed in recent years. In this respect, China is facing a number of concerns and doubts from external observers, such as whether China will be able to achieve sustainable economic development and whether China will sustain and further promote the policy of opening-up and reform. Against this backdrop, to the members of the G20 group, China insists upon its willingness and resolution to transform itself into a more responsible and capable player domestically and internationally. Chinese decision-makers have acknowledged that China’s reform has entered a “deep-water zone”, with tough challenges to be met, as Chinese President Xi stressed in his keynote speech at the 2016 B20 Hangzhou summit:

We have the resolve to make painful self-adjustments and tackle problems that have built up over many years, particularly underlying issues and entrenched interests and carry reform through to the end. We are implementing the innovation-driven development strategy so as to leverage the role of innovation as the primary growth driver and make growth quality based rather than quantity based. We will unwaveringly pursue a strategy of sustainable development and stay committed to green, low-carbon and circular development and China’s fundamental policy of conserving resources and protecting the environment. We will meet the people’s aspirations for a better life, raise their living standards and the quality of their lives, improve the public services system and enlarge the middle-income group. We will continue to be fully involved in economic globalization and support the multilateral trading regime.

[我们将以壮士断腕的勇气、凤凰涅槃的决心，敢于向积存多年的顽瘴痼疾开刀，敢于触及深层次利益关系和矛盾，把改革进行到底；我们正在实施创新驱动发展战略，发挥创新第一动力的作用，努力实现从量的增长向质的提升转变；我们将毫不动摇实施可持续发展战略，坚持绿色低碳循环发展，坚持节约资源和保护环境的基本国策；我们将顺应人民对美好生活的向往，不断提高人民生活质量和水平，健全公共服务体系，扩大中等收入者比重；我们将继续深入参与经济全球化进程，支持多边贸易体制] (Xi, 2016d)

Third, although China suffers from the sluggish global economy, it still maintains relatively high growth rates and is trying to transform itself to a “New Normal”. On the basis of its own successful experience in addressing difficulties and preserving sustainable economic and social development, China has provided intellectual guidance for other G20 members. For instance, as the host of the 2016 Hangzhou G20 summit, Chinese leaders issued a *G20 Blueprint on Innovative Growth* [二十国集团创新增长蓝图], aiming to pave a new way for growth in terms of “seeking impetus through innovation and vitality through reform, seizing the historic opportunity presented by innovation, new scientific and technological revolution, industrial transformation and digital economy to increase medium- and long-term growth potential of the world economy” [向创新要动力，向改革要活力，把握创新、新科技革命和产业变革、数字经济的历史性机遇，提升世界经济中长期增长潜力] (Xi, 2016d).

4.3. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA’S NRP EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE G20

4.3.1. COUNTER-CRISIS MANAGEMENT (2008-2009)

In 2008, the G20 was upgraded to the level of a leaders’ summit. During the period from 2008 to 2009, the major targets of the G20 were to alleviate the damage caused by the crisis and prevent the crisis from leading to more serious detriment. This thesis argues that China made a number of contributions to the realization of the G20’s targets. In line with the *practice analysis* defined in the methodology part (section 2.3), China’s contributions are analyzed through its NRP embedded in the ILCC from institutional, material, and policy perspectives.

First of all, from the institutional perspective, Chinese decision-makers highlighted the causes of the crisis as both the inappropriate macroeconomic policies and deficiencies in financial regulation. Thus, with the purpose of increasing the effectiveness and representativeness of global financial governance, China struggled for equal rights and positions for itself and other major emerging powers in the reform of the existing international economic mechanisms. At the London G20 summit in April 2009, by demonstrating its willingness to be a global leader (Kirton, 2016: 39), China made a contribution to the establishment of and obtained full membership of the G20’s Financial Stability Board (FSB), which replaced the Financial Stability Forum led by the G7. As a newly-established international body that monitors and makes recommendations in the field of global finance, the FSB shapes the existing global financial system in a more democratic and authoritative fashion, and it plays a significant role

in promoting macroeconomic policy coordination between the established and emerging powers and in strengthening global financial regulation.

China's contribution to the existing financial institutional architecture was also witnessed in its accession to a number of international financial platforms, such as the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, and the Technical Committee of the International Organization of Securities Commissions (Ye, 2015b). Given China's profound economic influence, China's accession increases the representativeness and legitimacy of these mechanisms in international financial governance. At the Pittsburgh G20 summit in September 2009, China achieved a number of accomplishments in the institutional reform and construction of the G20. Among them, the most decisive achievement was the promotion of the G20 as the primary platform for international economic cooperation. This promotion of the G20 led to a more equal top-tier place for China and the other major rising powers in the field of global financial governance (Kirton, 2016: 40). Moreover, due to the increased significance of China and other emerging powers in the world economy, the established powers promised to share some of their quotas in the existing IFIs. For instance, they decided to increase the quota of the developing countries in the IMF from 43% to 48%, and to increase China's voting power from 3.81% to 6.07%. At the same time, at the World Bank, China's voting power rose to third place in the ranking.

Second, from the material perspective, China made several material contributions to the G20, as follows. At the Washington G20 summit in 2008, China practised its facilitative leadership through the provision of major support on exchange rate and financial policy, and China led the agreement on large-scale, simultaneous stimulus among the G20 member states. At the London G20 summit in 2009, before it secured its proportionate international rights to greater representation at the World Bank and the IMF, China showed its willingness to assume global responsibilities by providing US\$ 40 billion to the IMF's US\$ 500 billion financial support package. In addition, although China was unsatisfied with its IMF quota shares, it aimed to address the financial crisis by purchasing \$50 billions of IMF debt (He, 2015). Through its provision of these public goods for the recovery of the global economy, China not only benefitted its export-dependent economy, but also it ensured a multiplier effect that profited the world as a whole (Kirton, 2016: 34). In this respect, it is argued that China practised its exemplary leadership in addressing the financial crisis and stabilizing the financial order.

Moreover, China also practised its exemplary leadership by transforming itself into a more capable actor in coping with the financial crisis. Given China's huge economic power and its implications for the world economy, its steady and relatively fast pace of growth is regarded as making a significant contribution to global financial stability and world economic development. China promoted its economic growth by adopting incentive policies in terms of reducing the bank reserve ratio, lowering the deposit interest rate, reducing the corporate tax burden, etc. In addition, in 2008, the State Council of the People's Republic of China announced a stimulus package of 4 trillion RMB (US\$586 billion) in an attempt to stimulate both China's and the world's economic growth and to minimize the impact of the global financial crisis.

Third, from the policy perspective, China practised its facilitative leadership by making policy contributions to the G20 in terms of strengthening the existing arrangements in a collective and inclusive manner. In 2008, financial regulation was the focal point of the Washington G20 summit. Due to its closed domestic financial system and its lack of relevant specialized knowledge, China could not contribute much to the discussion or to policy making. However, as the largest developing country, China showed a responsible attitude by allowing its first Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP) to take place before August 2009. With the purpose of responding to the crisis, in 2009, the FSAP experienced critical changes in terms of producing a clear definition of the components of stability assessments and the Risk Assessment Matrices (RAMs). China's policy consequently resulted in the agreement of the United States on its own first FSAP. Following co-promotion by China and the United States, the other G20 member states were also encouraged to conduct that program for themselves. At the Pittsburgh summit in 2009, with the purpose of securing a durable world economic recovery in the post-crisis era, China accepted the US-proposed initiative and contributed to the creation of the Framework for Strong, Sustained and Balanced Growth. In the meanwhile, China actively participated in and promoted the Mutual Assessment Process (MAP) – the backbone of the G20 – that contributes to the identification of shared objectives and corresponding policies among member states.

Moreover, at the London summit in 2009, Zhou Xiaochuan, the then governor of the People's Bank of China, published an article "Reform the International Monetary System", in which he pointed out the inherent weakness of the current international monetary system and made a public policy proposal that "called for a gradual move towards using IMF special drawing rights (SDRs) as a centrally managed global reserve currency" (Zhou, 2009). In this regard, it is argued that Zhou's article was one of China's most important proposals for global governance

reform during that stage, and it is considered to have demonstrated China's public support for the success of the US-initiated creation of US\$250 billion in SDRs (Kirton, 2016).

4.3.2. THE CONSOLIDATION OF COOPERATION (2010-2012)

As mentioned above, this stage witnessed a transformation of the G20 "from being a mechanism to counter the international financial crisis to becoming a platform for advancing international economic cooperation" (Kirton, 2016: 49). One of the major achievements of this stage was the G20's success in preventing a European-centered financial crisis from spreading globally, as the 1997 Asian crisis and the 2008 American one had. In addition to its contribution to preventing an upgrade of the eurozone crisis, China also made a number of institutional, material, and policy contributions to consolidating cooperation between the G20 members.

First, from the institutional perspective, China worked hard to consolidate the institutionalization of the G20 as the most significant international cooperation mechanism. For instance, China promoted the establishment of a cooperative relationship between the G20 and G8 in terms of its and other members' co-promotion of thematic consistency between the G20 Toronto summit and the G8 Muskoka summit. By emphasizing the convergence between the G20 and the G8, it increased the representativeness and legitimacy of the G20, which objectively led to the consolidation of cooperation between the G20 members. This form of collectiveness in China's facilitative leadership can be observed in the birth of a new China-France partnership at the 2011 Cannes G20 summit. The establishment of this partnership played a decisive role in the host's (France) acceptance of China's priorities on monetary system reform.

Moreover, the first three G20 summits were held in developed countries without exception. However, during this stage, China played a significant role in assisting the transfer of the G20 hosting rights from the advanced member states to the emerging and Asian ones. For instance, with China's support, South Korea, as a non-G8 member, successfully hosted the 5th G20 summit. The then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak publicly expressed his appreciation for Chinese leaders' support of Seoul's successful hosting of the summit (Xinhua, 2010). At the Seoul summit, with the purpose of encouraging the emerging powers to achieve agreement on the reform of IMF's quota share, China practised its facilitative leadership and exemplary leadership in abnegating part of its rightful share to other G20 emerging powers, such as India and Brazil. According to Kirton, China's compromising behavior demonstrated "its institutional leadership had again appeared in self-abnegating form" (Kirton, 2016: 54).

Second, from the material perspective, at the 2012 Los Cabos G20 summit, China (\$43 billion) co-sponsored nearly 40% of IMF's new US\$430 billion fund with two other major developed countries: Japan (\$60 billion) and Germany (\$54.7 billion). China also allied with other emerging countries from the BRICS (Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa) to contribute US\$75 billion to this recapitalization. China's exemplary leadership was especially prominent against the backdrop of the United States' absence from leading the IMF recapitalization for the first time. In the meanwhile, by virtue of its large foreign exchange reserve topping US\$2.85 trillion, China practised its facilitative leadership by purchasing US\$7.5 billion in Spanish bonds and at least US\$5 billion of Portuguese debt (Saunders, 2011) and empowering the troubled European countries to cope with this crisis. In this respect, China contributed a great deal to preventing the eurozone crisis from spreading into other regions and to stabilizing the international financial order. By doing so, as Kirton argues, "China had partly replaced the United States as the global leader in the core hegemonic financial function of acting as lender of last resort" (Kirton, 2016: 69).

Third, from the policy perspective, during this stage, China's policy priorities had accepted by other members of the G20, and it practised its constructive leadership in shaping the common interests among the G20 members. At the Seoul summit in 2010, under China's strong advocacy, G20 members reached the *Seoul Development Consensus*. This consensus included the development-related issues in the G20 agenda for the first time. At the Cannes summit in 2011, in response to its vulnerabilities in the fields of food and energy security, China successfully introduced its policy priorities for dealing with commodity price fluctuations. At the Los Cabos summit in 2012, China attached great significance to food security in the Development Working Group. China's arguments obtained positive feedback from other G20 members, the latter reaffirming poverty eradication and sustainable growth as the core objectives of the G20 development agenda. In addition, China also introduced a number of its priorities in terms of green technology transfer, science and technology, and structural reforms to the G20 agenda for the first time (Kirton, 2016: 58).

4.3.3. GLOBAL STEERING (2013-2018)

Having experienced the stages of countering crisis and consolidating cooperation between G20 members, the G20 has, since 2013, been transforming itself in to a more comprehensive flagship institution for the promotion of economic growth and global governance. In the meanwhile, since China's new leadership under Xi Jinping was elected in 2013, China's foreign strategy

has also transformed from “Tao Guang Yang Hui” (keep a low profile) to “You Suo Zuo Wei” (make more contributions). Under this strategic shift, China has repeatedly emphasized the central role of the G20 in global economic governance and China’s willingness to contribute further to the development of this mechanism. During this stage, the most prominent event was China’s hosting of the G20 summit in Hangzhou in 2016; this summit to a large extent reflects China’s NRP embedded in the ILCC. As in the previous two stages, China’s practices are also invested in the institutional, material, policy, and ideational dimensions.

First, from the institutional perspective, China practised its constructive leadership by developing and strengthening the institutional arrangements of the G20. Specifically, China made a great contribution by promoting the member states to implement the G20’s achieved documents. As an authoritarian county, China’s political system is characterized by a high degree of effectiveness and strong execution. These features were also vigorously practised at the Hangzhou G20 summit. For a long time, the G20 summit has been criticized as a talk shop or a theory-discussing forum. With the purpose of enhancing the G20’s institutional effectiveness, China made a great deal of effort at the Hangzhou summit to ensure four major aspects: (1) the first is to strengthen the importance of implementation. According to the *G20 Leaders’ Communique Hangzhou Summit*, “the founding spirit of the G20 is that major economies are working together on an equal footing and taking actions together. All commitments are set to be implemented” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016); (2) the second is to strengthen the operability of document planning at the summit. For instance, the *G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* not only set out the guiding principles and scope of work for the implementation of the UN’s *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, but also it made specific proposals on relevant issues for member states in order to safeguard the implementation of this action plan. In other words, the action plan was considered as constructing a vision for the further development of the G20; (3) the third is to strengthen the working group mechanism. The G20 working group is an intermediary that transforms policy from concept to concrete action and plays an important role in implementing the conference documents. Under China’s constructive leadership, the Hangzhou summit decided to establish a number of new working groups in addition to the existing ones, such as the G20 Trade & Investment Working Group (TIWG) and the G20 Network Working Group; (4) the fourth is to strengthen the measurement and supervision of the implementation of documents. One typical example is the drawing up of the *G20 Enhanced Structural Reform Agenda* in which nine priority areas and eight specific operational guidelines are identified. In

addition, the agenda also established a quantitative framework and indicator system for testing the reform process (Yu, 2016).

Second, from the material perspective, according to China's own experience, development is the basic condition for accumulating material capabilities and addressing global affairs. Thus, at the G20 Hangzhou summit, China promoted the G20 members to achieve "Three First" (Zhang, 2016) in the development field: (1) for the first time, the development issue was placed in a prominent position under the global macro-policy framework; (2) for the first time, an action plan was proposed for the implementation of the *UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*; (3) for the first time, all of the G20 members showed their collective support for the industrialization of the African countries and the least developed countries (LDCs) by releasing the *G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and Least Developed Countries*. This initiative has groundbreaking implications in the G20's history. In addition, during the preliminary negotiations for a further replenishment of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) in 2013, compared to a decrease in foreign assistance from Western countries, China's exemplary leadership was once again manifested in its contribution of US\$300 million, twice as much as its last donation, to this international organization. In this regard, China has made important contributions to the successful completion of this donor mission (Ye, 2015a). Moreover, with the purpose of modernizing China's economy and promoting the structural reform of the G20, China has strived to achieve its self-transformation by cutting its excess and backward capacity, even though it has led to a number of problems in terms of short-term unemployment and the slowdown of economic growth. For instance, in 2017, China slashed its crude steel production capacity by more than 50 million tonnes, exceeding its annual target (F. Li, 2018). According to the state planner, "China has hit the halfway point towards meeting its target of cutting coal mining capacity by 800 million tonnes a year by the end of 2020" (South China Morning Post, 2017). By doing so, as the largest emerging power, China practised its exemplary leadership by phasing out its outdated production capacity; it also aims to reduce highly energy-wasting and highly polluting output and to contribute high-quality growth to the development of the world economy.

Third, from the policy perspective, under China's chairmanship, the Hangzhou G20 summit approved two significant policy documents. One is the *G20 Strategy for Global Trade Growth* that aims to reduce trade costs, promote trade and investment policy coordination, sponsor the development of trade in service, strengthen trade financing, support the development of e-commerce, and set an example in dealing with trade and development issues. Another is the

G20 Guiding Principles for Global Investment Policymaking that aims to create an open, transparent, and favorable global policy environment for investment and integrates the investment issue into the G20 agenda for the first time. On the basis of suggestions from and discussions between all parties, the Principles document was agreed by the members at the 2016 G20 Conference of Trade Ministers in Shanghai, and it became the first multilateral document on the formulation of investment policies on a global scale (X. Ren, 2016b). In addition, as the world's two largest economies and the top two greenhouse gas-emitting countries, the United States and China announced their ratification of the *Paris Climate Change Agreement* and submitted their ratification documents to the United Nations during the Hangzhou G20 summit. Given that China is still a developing country which has insisted on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" for a long time, its ratification of this agreement seems even more valuable. Against the backdrop of Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, China's role of exemplary leadership is further strengthened on the basis of the fact that China has vowed to defend the agreement.

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, China made an ideational contribution to the G20 in terms of its proposal of *Toward an Innovative, Invigorated, Interconnected and Inclusive World Economy* as the theme of the 2016 Hangzhou G20 summit. Specifically, (1) *innovation* emphasizes the innovation of a development mode and the exploration of new opportunities for driving growth. In the post-crisis era, the world is facing bottlenecks to economic development. Thus, innovation is a key factor for the revitalization of the world economy, and this includes policy innovation, technology innovation, and human capital innovation, etc.; (2) *invigorate* is a critical element for building a healthy, dynamic, and sustainable world economy. Trade and investment are two sources of the potential dynamics for economic growth. To this end, it is essential for the G20 members to reduce barriers to global trade and investment and construct a conducive environment for global trade and investment; (3) *interconnectedness* refers to the unprecedented interdependence between countries across the world. It not only obliges the major powers to coordinate their policies, but also it emphasizes the North-South Dialogue and South-South Cooperation. The G20 provides a platform for the major established powers and emerging powers to realize policy communication and coordination. The G20 members are responsible for contributing to the world economy by providing global public goods; (4) *inclusiveness* consists of inclusive institutions and inclusive development. The former fights against the side effects brought about by the exclusive, discriminatory, and non-neutral rules of the existing trade and investment system. The latter emphasizes the interests of the developing

countries. Developing countries will be significant players in the global community of the future. The G20's agenda-setting highlights the urgent need to address the development issues of the developing countries and to promote their sustainable development.

4.4. SUMMARY

4.4.1. THE GENERALIZATION OF THE ILCC IN THE G20

In the light of the above empirical analysis, the first section of the summary interprets the generalization of the ILCC in the G20 on the basis of the three stages of the G20.

During the first two stages detailed above – counter-crisis management (2008-2009) and consolidating cooperation (2010-2012) – the ILCC was mainly constructed and implemented by China in institutional, material, policy dimensions. From an institutional perspective, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by proposing several institutional arrangements and measures conducive to addressing the immediate effects of the crisis. From the material perspective, China actively practised its facilitative leadership by empowering the troubled European countries (as the major members of the G20) by purchasing their euro debt, and its exemplary leadership is highlighted in the light of the United States' absence from the US\$430 billion recapitalization of the IMF during that period. From the policy perspective, China also constructed and practised its facilitative leadership by consolidating the G20's achievements to counter the crisis and strengthen international cooperation between the G20 members in a collective manner. However, during these two stages, China did not make prominent ideational contributions to the G20 due to the nature of these stages and China's limited discourse power.

During the third stage of global steering (2013-2018), we can see the framework of the ILCC being constructed and implemented to a greater extent. This is attributed to two major causes: China has begun to adopt a more proactive foreign strategy, and China has obtained stronger discourse power by hosting the 2016 Hangzhou G20 summit. Unlike the two previous stages, at this stage, the ILCC is not only manifested in the institutional, material, and policy dimensions, but can also be viewed as being constructed and practised by China in the ideational dimension. Specifically, on the one hand, China exhibited and practised its facilitative leadership and constructive leadership by persuading the G20 members to obtain a number of institutional and policy achievements, such as the establishment of the G20 Trade & Investment Working Group (TIWG) and the G20 Network Working Group, strengthening the

G20's executive power, the proposition of the *G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and Least Developed Countries*, aimed to empower the capacity building of the least developed countries, and the approval of the *G20 Strategy for Global Trade Growth* the *G20* and the *Guiding Principles for Global Investment Policymaking*. On the other hand, by virtue of being the host of the Hangzhou G20 summit, China practised its constructive leadership and exemplary leadership by making ideational contributions to the development of the G20. For instance, China identified four key factors – innovation, invigorate, interconnectedness and inclusiveness – as the development trends and major driving forces of the G20.

Above all, this thesis argues that, in the G20, the relationship between China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC was generally consistent across the three stages during the post-crisis era, but it does not deny that there are still several deviations between China's NRC and NRP, and that these deviations were mainly caused by the multilevel and multidimensional challenges faced by the ILCC, as will be discussed in the final section of the summary. Moreover, China's construction and practice of facilitative leadership and constructive leadership in the G20 is more prominent than China's exemplary leadership, which has largely been constrained by the fact that the G20 is co-dominated by the established and emerging powers.

4.4.2. THE ILCC IN THE G20 AS A REFLECTION OF THE MAJOR FEATURES OF CHINA'S ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

This second and important section of the summary interprets the ILCC in the G20 as a reflection of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR.

First of all, China constructed and practised the ILCC in the G20 by promoting the complementary relationship between the established G8 countries and major representative emerging powers, which can be regarded as the most prominent reflection of the feature of relationality. Although the G20 has replaced the G8 as the most significant platform for international economic cooperation and governance, the existing global financial institutions are still dominated by the major developed countries, and the emerging powers do not yet have the capability and willingness to overthrow the existing Western-based international order. Against this backdrop, China has played an active role in bridging the existing and emerging powers in the G20 and it has also created opportunities for cooperation between the G20 and the G8. By managing the complex relations inside and outside the G20, China has helped to promote relational stability among the member states, maintain the operation of the G20, and preserve the legitimacy of the G20, even though the validity of this mechanism has been

challenged. These China's contributions are conducive to the preservation of the emerging countries' speaking rights and the construction of a favorable environment for China in global economic governance.

Second, China has practised its constructive leadership by promoting the reform of international economic order through its participation in the G20 and by proposing the idea of inclusive development at the 2016 G20 summit, which can be interpreted as a reflection of the feature of inclusiveness. In order to preserve the legitimacy and representativeness of the G20 in the world economy, China has devoted itself to leading the achievement of the inclusive trade and investment mechanism and policy under the G20 framework. For instance, China approved two milestone policy documents, the *G20 Strategy for Global Trade Growth* and the *G20 Guiding Principles for Global Investment Policymaking*, by accepting the different national conditions of the G20 members. The two documents are conducive to the participation of emerging powers in the process of contributing to the formation and development of trade and investment regimes under the G20 framework. In the context of the G20, China has also repeatedly emphasized the significance of inclusive development over the last decade, since China believes that (inclusive) development is the foundation stone for achieving stability within both its domestic and international society. The release of the *G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and Least Developed Countries* at Hangzhou G20 summit demonstrated that inclusive development has been gradually converted from an idea to reality.

Third, as mentioned above, through its participation in the G20, China has practised its constructive leadership by continuously striving for the reform of the international order of financial governance in a relatively moderate and processual manner, which can be considered as a reflection of the feature of processuality. The start of this process can be identified as the publication of Zhou Xiaochuan's article "Reform the International Monetary System" at the London G20 summit in 2009. In his article, Zhou pointed out the inherent weakness of the current international monetary system and made a public policy proposal that "called for a gradual move towards using IMF special drawing rights (SDRs) as a centrally managed global reserve currency" (Zhou, 2009). In the post-crisis era, characterized by the decreasing legitimacy and effectiveness of the existing international financial organizations, Zhou's proposal was in line with the existing trends in the development of international society. However, China has never sought to achieve radical reform, rather it looked for step-by-step reform, manifested in various stages. In the first stage, China practised its constructive leadership by strengthening the existing mechanisms in order to counter the immediate negative

effects of the global financial crisis, such as its contribution to the establishment of the G20's Financial Stability Board (FSB); during the second stage, China practised its facilitative leadership by assisting in the transfer of G20 hosting rights from the advanced member states to an emerging and Asian country – South Korea – for the first time, which enhanced the representativeness of the non-Western countries in the G20; during the third stage, by hosting the 2016 G20 summit, China played a larger role in the reform of international economic governance by virtue of having a G20 platform. For instance, China practised its constructive leadership by strengthening the effectiveness of the G20 by leading the establishment of a number of new working groups, such as the G20 Trade & Investment Working Group (TIWG) and the G20 Network Working Group; moreover, China started to shape the rules of the game by approving key documents in the fields of trade and investment under the G20 framework.

4.4.3. THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ILCC IN THE G20

Although the ILCC in the G20 has generated significant benefits through China's institutional, material, policy, and ideational contributions to the G20, it cannot be denied that the ILCC in the G20 is also facing a number of challenges, from multilevel and multidimensional perspectives, as follows.

At the global level, the United States, as the largest economy and the dominant power in the global political economy, has a major influence over the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the G20. Although the United States promoted the G20 as the most critical international cooperation mechanism, replacing the G7, in order to address the GFC, the United States is generally considered to be reluctant to take action under its policy of pragmatic diplomacy. With the gradual lessening of the influence of the financial crisis, the increase of the emerging powers' status in international society, and the decreasing ability of the United States' to shape the agenda of the G20, the United States has revealed a passive attitude towards the institutionalization processes of the G20. After winning the presidential election, under the slogan "America First", Donald Trump has released a number of protectionist policies in the fields of trade, exchange rates, and climate change, etc. These policies run counter to the fundamental principles of the G20 in terms of fighting against trade protectionism and preventing competitive currency devaluation. In June 2017, the Trump Administration officially withdrew from the Paris Agreement on climate change. This action has overturned the significant political achievement reached by China and the United States at the Hangzhou G20 summit in 2016. The United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement not only led to

widespread condemnation, but also it was also a big challenge to China's facilitative and constructive leadership.

Furthermore, the United States' "China containment policy" intensified the strategic competition between these two economic superpowers in the G20 and has limited the construction and implementation of the ILCC. Since 2015, with the promotion of the United States' strategy of "Pivot to Asia" and the upgrading of the maritime dispute in the South China Sea, the structural contradictions in the relationship between China and the United States have been highlighted. In April 2015, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) released a report of "Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China". The report suggests that "a long-term strategic rivalry between Beijing and Washington is high...thus making the need to balance its (China's) rising power important" (Blackwill & Tellis, 2015: 5). In addition, in August 2017, the Trump Administration launched an investigation into China's actions under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. The investigation aimed to "determine whether acts, policies, and practices of the Government of China related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce" (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2017). This investigation cast a shadow over the sound development of the China-U.S. trade relationship. On the basis of these events, it is predicted that the China-U.S. relationship will become ever more complicated, given the narrowing gap between the two countries' comprehensive national strengths. In this respect, it is not difficult to foresee that the G20, as the most significant international cooperation mechanism, will become one of the major arenas for China-U.S. strategic wrestling. The United States is unlikely to allow China and the other emerging powers to shape the institutional development of the G20 according to their wishes, and it will inevitably take all sorts of measures to preserve its influence and contain the ILCC in the G20.

At the regional level, China's construction and implementation of the ILCC in the G20 is challenged by a number of regional economic cooperation mechanisms. As a multilateral platform, the G20 "is being overshadowed by mega-regional deals such as TPP and TTIP, to which China's own initiatives on AIIB and One Belt, One Road might be seen as competing platforms" (Greenberg, 2016). More specifically, Greenberg identifies these mega-regional collaborations as posing a threat to the geopolitical system characterized by regulatory divergence, murky protectionism, and discrimination, etc.

At the domestic level, the ILCC also faces challenges from China itself in two aspects. On the one hand, China needs to deal with the arduous task of promoting its economic development in an innovative, balanced, inclusive, and sustainable way. As shown above, China's strengthening economic capability and its increasing influence in the global economy constitute a critical foundation for the ILCC in the G20. Although, since 2010, China has become the second largest economy, its economy still faces serious challenges in terms of multiple contradictions and latent risks. The realization of sustainable economic development requires that China does its best to transform its economic development pattern, optimize its industrial structure, and accelerate technology- and innovation-driven economic development, etc. On the other hand, China is clearly lacking in discourse content innovation and discourse representation experience. Although, in recent years, China has made a breakthrough in discourse innovation, it has not made substantial progress in breaking the Western discourse hegemony, which constrains China's discourse power in the G20. As a result, in the post-Hangzhou summit era, it is an important and pressing issue for Chinese leaders and elites to think seriously about ways of preserving and strengthening China's discourse power in relation to the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the G20.

Finally, the ILCC is constrained by the institutional character of the G20. As an informal mechanism, the G20 was not established on the basis of a formal legal structure, and its achievements are therefore not implemented by legally-binding institutions. This means that the G20 is highly flexible due to its informal character, helping member states to reach consensus without intervention from their domestic politics and laws. However, consensus, international agreements, and international commitments achieved under the G20 are not legally binding. Declarations, communiqués, and action plans can only play a guiding role, with no legal obligation to comply. This largely constrains the execution of decisions of the G20. The informality and weakness of decision implementation of the G20 implies that, although China practises the ILCC in terms of constructing common interests and achieving consensus and agreement with other G20 members, the efficacy of practising its achievements is largely limited (Lv, 2017: 82). In addition, the G20 has also faced a number of problems in terms of divergent internal interests, a lack of cohesion caused by its asymmetric power distribution, the expanding scope of its agenda, the increasing difficulties of policy coordination, etc. Moreover, the G20 summit is hosted in rotation by member states, and the host country may dominate certain key aspects of the summit in terms of issue selection, agenda shaping, and communique drafting, etc. In this respect, no one member state can exert continuous and direct influence on

the G20 on these aspects. As a result, the G20's institutional constraints would influence the realization of the ILCC.

CHAPTER 5. CASE II: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ILCC IN THE BRICS

5.1. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Since the beginning of the 21st century, a number of emerging powers, such as China and India, have demonstrated rapid economic development. In the meanwhile, Russia and Brazil have gradually strived to escape their economic woes of the 1990s, and they have progressively enjoyed an economic recovery. In addition, these four countries have 26% of the total land area of the world and 43% of the world population. In this respect, they show their enormous potential and bright prospects for trade, investment, and economic contributions to the rest of the world. Against this background, Jim O’Neill, the then Goldman Sachs economist, coined the term “BRIC” in 2001 to denote these four countries. This grouping was proposed as a business concept, aimed to explore potential investment destinations for investors. In 2003, Goldman Sachs published a research report *Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050* and predicted that the total GDP of the BRIC countries would account for over half the GDP of the G6 (United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy) by 2025 and their economies together would be larger than the G6 in US dollar terms (O’Neill, Lawson, & Pearson, 2003: 2).

In 2002, the BRIC countries established a number of new multilateral cooperative mechanisms, including the RIC Trilateral Meeting and IBSA Dialogue Forum. The former is a meeting of foreign ministers from Russia, India, and China and it focuses on the issues of regional security, counter-terror, the arms race, etc. The latter was formed as an international tripartite grouping, between India, Brazil, and South Africa, for promoting their international cooperation and South-South cooperation in a broader sense. Foreign ministers from China, Russia, India, and Brazil held their first meeting during the 2006 UN General Assembly, which is considered to be the beginning of cooperation between the BRICs. By 2008, the BRICs leaders had held multiple meetings by virtue of the North-South Dialogue under the framework of the G8 summit and the UN General Assembly.

The 2008 global financial crisis promoted a rethinking of the international economic order. As the most representative emerging powers, Brazil, Russia, India, and China had the greatest desire to reform the Western-based international economic order. In May 2008, foreign ministers from these four countries held a meeting in Yekaterinburg and determined to

cooperate with each other on the world stage. In November and December of that year, Russian President Medvedev visited Brazil and India and issued a joint statement with the two countries' presidents respectively. During the visits, they decided to hold the first BRICs summit in June 2009, aiming to exchange different viewpoints on several key issues to address the global financial crisis, to promote the reform of international financial system, and to deal with a number of non-traditional security problems such as food security, energy security, and climate change, etc.

Against this background, in June 2009, in order to jointly cope with the global financial crisis, leaders from China, Russia, India, and Brazil gathered at the first BRIC's summit in Yekaterinburg, transforming the loose concept into a leader-level cooperation mechanism. In April 2011, at the third BRIC's summit held in China, South Africa became a new member of this consortium, and the BRICS came into being. In April 2014, with the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA), the BRICS group has enhanced its level of institutionalization and become a cooperative grouping of emerging powers with significant regional and global influence. Since then, it has begun to play more important role in changing the pattern of global institutional and discourse power in terms of enhancing the voice and representativeness of the emerging powers in global governance. In this respect, the BRICS group is seen as a major challenge to the United States' hegemony and Western-based international order.

On the basis of the above evidence, a number of scholars have pointed out the major impetus and major implications of the BRICS' cooperation and development as follows: (1) the common international strategic consideration is a huge driving force for cooperation between the BRICS members. All five BRICS countries are great regional powers and leaders, and they also aspire to become critical global players. They hope to establish a global governance structure, based on the multipolar principle, which can reflect new world political and economic development. As Quiliconi and Kingah argue, the BRICS countries have shown their willingness to be unified to exert greater global impact by "following the established rules in traditional institutions to push reforms on one hand, and building their own intra-BRICS' dynamic in the BRICS summits on the other hand" (Quiliconi & Kingah 2016: 252). As a consequence, although there are many discrepancies between BRICS members, they have fully acknowledged that "the collaborative efforts of the BRICS nations will likely have a significant and enduring impact on global governance and economics" (Petropoulos, 2013); (2) the common tasks of economic development and the complementarity of economic structures give the BRICS countries great

potential for achieving economic cooperation. As major emerging countries, BRICS members generally face the common task of developing their economies. In the process of seeking economic development, due to the high isomorphism of their economic growth models and economic structures, the BRICS countries' economic development has shown strong coordinated features. In the meanwhile, the uneven distribution of productive factors between BRICS members has also produced significant complementarities and comparative advantages in their economic relationships (Tang, Ouyang and Huang, 2014). In this respect, the BRICS countries have great potential for cooperation in the field of economics; (3) the achievements made in the construction of the cooperation mechanism have further promoted cooperation between the BRICS countries. Since the first BRICS foreign ministry meeting held in 2006, cooperation between the BRICS countries has progressed smoothly and the areas and levels of cooperation have continued to expand for more than a decade. In recent years, the BRICS countries have made great efforts to participate in the process of political multipolarization, and their influence and discourse power have continued to rise on major issues such as global trade liberalization, greenhouse gas emissions, and anti-terrorism. At the same time, the establishment of the BRICS cooperation mechanism and network relations have been steadily advancing, and cross-sector cooperation mechanisms in the areas of security and law enforcement, and humanitarian and economic development have been continuously established and improved. Notably, the BRICS New Development Bank and contingent reserve arrangements have been established. Institutionalized cooperation has helped the BRICS countries to continue to deepen their strategic partnership in a series of issue-areas (Sadiki, 2016); (4) the formation of the BRICS consensus has become an important boost to the cooperation between the BRICS countries. "BRICS" has been transformed from an exogenous identity label to an endogenous consensus (Ren and Yin, 2015). In particular, BRICS members have gradually formulated a shared vision of a new global order (Coning, Mandrup and Odgaard, 2014), which contributes to the further solidarity and cooperation between the BRICS countries. The solidarity demonstrated by the BRICS countries in the Ukrainian events of 2014 indicates that the group has a strong sense of political alliance.

More specifically, as the largest economy and emerging power among the member states, China is naturally seen as the major driving force behind the development of the BRICS. Thus, in order to better conduct an historical analysis of the BRICS, it is essential to interpret China's motivations for being involved in this emerging power consortium from international and domestic perspectives (Gao, 2015).

On the one hand, from the perspective of the international environment, since the reform and opening-up period began, China has been increasingly engaged with and benefitted from the existing international order. However, for a long time, the major Western powers (especially the United States) have been reluctant to promote the reform of the existing mechanisms. Thus, China has little discourse power, which is not equal to its contribution to the world economy, and it cannot play its due role in terms of implementing innovative practice, shaping institutional rules, and influencing the distribution of rights and obligations within these organizations. This awkward situation not only fails to reflect China's growing status as a major power in the international system, but it has also greatly restricted China's room for seeking further development. Therefore, China urgently needs to find a new path to building its international governance mechanism in a timely manner. Against this background, China has paid a lot of attention to the concept of BRICS and has devoted itself to transforming this concept into a substantial cooperation mechanism based on the emerging powers through a series of innovative practices.

On the other hand, China also has solid domestic foundations for its involvement in the BRICS, which can be observed in two aspects. First, China has the institutional advantage of being able to concentrate relevant domestic forces on accomplishing specific major issues. In this respect, China provides sufficient domestic resources to unify the BRICS members and to promote the construction of the BRICS mechanism. Second, China's involvement in the BRICS also favors the implementation of its peaceful development strategy, the promotion of coordinated cooperation between BRICS members, and the enhancement of its international status. In this regard, China's proactive engagement in the BRICS is in compliance with China's national interests and is quite readily accepted by its domestic audience. In addition, through its participation in the establishment of the BRICS, China can ensure compatibility between its domestic norms and the norms of the BRICS mechanism. By doing so, it can facilitate China's internalization of the BRICS norms. In sum, China has the necessary domestic dynamics for constructing the BRICS cooperation mechanism.

Based on interpretations of China's motivations and implications regarding the BRICS, the nexus between China and the BRICS has triggered extensive debate in political and academic circles. Most pundits and observers have recognized China's critical role in the BRICS in terms of trade, investment, and global governance. Assessing China's role in promoting the emergence and development of the BRICs, David Rothkopf argued, "without China, the BRICs are just the BRI, a bland, soft cheese that is primarily known for the whine that goes with it"

(Rothkopf, 2009). Examining the trade and investment relationships between China and other BRICS countries, Kenneth Rapoza went even further, noting that China has already deployed the BRICS as its own political tool, as he contended that “China totally owns the BRICS and South Africa, Russia and Brazil are particularly at its mercy” (Rapoza, 2017). However, there are also some relatively moderate voices. According to Li Jinzhang, in addition to enhancing their strategic partnership, China and Brazil are “playing a guiding role in the development of the BRICS cooperative mechanism” (Jinzhang Li, 2017). Moreover, according to Sun Yun’s analysis, China has always been willing to “strengthen its identity as an emerging economy and a developing country by enhancing its contribution to the BRICS nations and their international status” (Sun, 2013).

Having reviewed the debate regarding the relationship between China and the BRICS, this thesis argues that China has indeed played a significant role in promoting the development of the BRICS. Seemingly, China has no intention or requirement to become the sole hegemon in this club. Therefore, the ILCC is considered as an appropriate concept for interpreting China’s role in the BRICS. According to the research design (see chapter 2), China’s NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC can be analyzed to be correlated with the division of stage of the development of the BRICS that is identified as the establishment of an emerging power platform (2009-2010), the expansion of the political center (2011-2012), and the deepening institutionalization of the governance mechanism (2013-2018). These three stages are discussed in more detail in the following section.

5.2. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA’S NRC EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE BRICS

5.2.1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMERGING POWER GROUP (2009-2010)

One significant landmark of this stage was the first BRICs leaders’ summit held by Russia in 2009. Since then, the BRICS group has transformed from an economic concept to “the epicenter of world politics”. As Oliver Stuenkel argues, this summit’s timing occurred “at the high point of a general sense of crisis in the United States, and with it of global order in general” and “it was thus an important part of its success at institutionalizing an emerging power platform” (Stuenkel, 2015: 30). In this respect, by examining Chinese decision-makers’ speeches and Chinese policy-related articles, it is possible to interpret China’s NRC embedded in the ILCC in shaping and strengthening this new platform as follows.

At the beginning of his speech at the first BRIC summit in 2009, the then Chinese President Hu Jintao made a comprehensive analysis of the then international situation from two perspectives. First, he described the general trend in international relations as “a multi-polar world and economic globalization is gaining momentum. Enhanced dialogue and deeper cooperation for win-win progress has become the main approach in handling international affairs” [世界多极化和经济全球化深入发展，加强对话、深化合作、实现共赢已成为处理国际事务的主旋律] (Hu, 2009d). Second, Hu also pointed out a number of pressing problems such as “the international financial crisis is still spreading and deepening, protectionism of various kinds is on the rise, the world economy has slid into recession, and the North-South gap is widening” [国际金融危机仍在蔓延深化，形形色色的保护主义抬头，世界经济陷入衰退，南北差距持续扩大] (Hu, 2009d). On the basis of this judgment, Hu emphasized the significance of the BRIC countries in the world economy and was aware of the urgency of promoting cooperation between emerging powers in terms of identifying common targets and addressing emerging issues in a collective manner. As he said:

As major emerging markets, BRIC countries account for 42% of the world’s population, 14.6% of the world’s GDP and 12.8% of global trade. Our combined contribution in PPP terms to world economic growth exceeds 50%. The four countries have different national conditions, but we all shoulder the important mission of maintaining world peace and jointly managing traditional and non-traditional security threats. We all have the heavy responsibility of accelerating economic and social development and improving people’s livelihood. And we all face the major task of safeguarding the rights and interests of developing countries and advancing reform of international financial system.

[作为主要新兴市场国家，“金砖国家”人口占世界总人口的 42%，国内生产总值占世界总量的 14.6%，贸易额占全球贸易额的 12.8%，按购买力平价计算对世界经济增长的贡献率超过 50%。我们四国国情不同，但都肩负着维护世界和平、携手应对传统和非传统安全威胁的重大使命，都承载着加快经济社会发展、提高人民生活水平的重大责任，都面临和维护发展中国家权益、推动国际金融体系改革的重大课题] (Hu, 2009d)

As a consequence, China contributed to the establishment of the BRIC as “a new international cooperation platform and an important force in the international community” [一个新的国际合作平台，国际社会一支重要力量] (Hu, 2009d). In this respect, it is argued that this

upgrading of the BRIC reflects the development of China's constructive leadership through Chinese leaders' rhetoric. Specifically, China's constructive leadership is also constructed through China's concrete propositions for strengthening this newly-established platform in terms of "enhancing political mutual trust, deepening economic cooperation, intensifying people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and promoting mutual learning of experience" [增强政治互信, 深化经济合作, 推进人文交流, 提倡经验互鉴] (Hu, 2009d).

In addition, China constructed its facilitative leadership in terms of inclusively bridging the BRIC and other mechanisms. For instance, China encouraged the BRIC members to promote the effective implementation of the achievements gained under the G20 and UN framework. To this end, Hu made several propositions, such as "we should be committed to an early recovery of the world economy; we should be committed to reform of the international financial system; we should be committed to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); we should be committed to food security, energy and resource security, and public health security" [致力于推动世界经济尽快复苏; 致力于推动国际金融体系改革; 致力于落实联合国千年发展目标; 致力于确保粮食安全、能源资源安全、公共卫生安全] (Hu, 2009d).

In addition to making concrete propositions regarding the BRIC's functions and targets, with the purpose of strengthening this nascent emerging power platform, China's facilitative leadership is likewise constructed through its emphasis on shaping collective identity and mutual recognition among the BRIC countries. Thus, Chinese decision-makers continuously stressed the significance of lessening the differences and strengthening the common ground between the BRIC countries as follows:

Despite the differences in political systems, development modes, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions, our four countries have become good friends and good partners, which fully proves that countries with different social systems can be mutually inclusive, countries with different modes of development can cooperate with each other, countries with different histories and civilizations can learn from each other, and countries with different cultural traditions can interact with each other.

[我们四国政治体制、发展方式、宗教信仰、文化传统不尽相同, 却能成为好朋友、好伙伴, 这充分证明了不同社会制度可以相互包容, 不同发展模式可以相互合作, 不同历史文明可以相互借鉴, 不同文化传统可以互相交流] (Hu, 2010c).

To achieve the above targets, China strives to construct its exemplary leadership through its morally-oriented definition of its development as “peaceful development, open and win-win development, and responsible development” [和平发展, 开放共赢发展, 负责任的发展] (Hu, 2010c). Specifically, on the basis of its experience of the “Century of Humiliation”, China has consistently insisted on its old aphorism of “one should not impose on others what he himself does not desire” [己所不欲、勿施于人], and this belief largely contributes to China’s understanding and pursuance of peaceful development. In this respect, China has always sought a peaceful and harmonious way of dealing with the relationship between itself and other countries. In terms of its open and win-win development, China repeatedly stresses the significance of its reforming and opening-up policy. As Hu argues, “China pursues an opening-up strategy featuring mutual benefit and win-win results, and always seeks common development through mutually beneficial cooperation” [中国奉行互利共赢的开放战略, 始终通过互利合作促进各国共同发展] (Hu, 2010c). In terms of its responsible development, as the largest emerging power with a huge economic volume, China’s influence is felt in every corner of the world and its development and policy are closely associated with other economies. China constructed its exemplary leadership by attaching great importance to “maintaining steady and robust economic development as the primary task” [坚持把保持经济平稳较快发展作为经济工作的首要任务] (Hu, 2010c) as a significant means of transforming itself into the stabilizer and driver of the world economy. In addition, China’s empowering leadership is also constructed through adopting several essential measures in terms of “promoting the coordinated growth among consumption, export, and investment, providing more opportunities for foreign products and services, and maintaining the stability of the RMB exchange rate, etc.” [推动消费、出口、投资协调增长；为外国产品和服务提供了大量机遇；保持了人民币汇率基本稳定] (Hu, 2010c).

5.2.2. THE EXPANSION OF THE POLITICAL CENTER (2011-2013)

The most critical event marking this stage is the inclusion of South Africa in the BRICS group at the end of 2010. In April 2011, the then South African President Jacob Zuma attended the third BRICS summit for the first time. The inclusion of South Africa indicated the group’s formal transformation from the BRIC to the BRICS. According to Stuenkel Oliver, South Africa’s inclusion “fundamentally altered the nature of the BRICS group and gave it a more global structure” (Oliver, 2013: 310). Since then, the BRICS has become more representative

of the emerging powers and developing countries, covering the three continents of “Asia, Africa, Latin America” (亚非拉). In Mao’s era, the three continents were collectively regarded as a political, ideological, and diplomatic union in world politics.

The inclusion of South Africa and the expansion of the BRICS was largely attributed to China’s influence when, as the then rotating chair of the BRIC, China constructed its constructive leadership by expanding this grouping by inviting South Africa to participate in the BRICS. According to the then Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi, “we believe that the inclusion of the South Africa is conducive to the development of the BRICS mechanism and promotes the cooperation among emerging markets and emerging countries” [我们相信，南非的加入将有利于金砖国家合作机制的发展，促进新兴市场国家之间的合作] (China News, 2010).

The first summit of this stage was held in Sanya, China in April 2011, and it was the first BRICS summit under China’s presidency. At that summit, the then Chinese President Hu made a speech of “Broad Vision, Share Prosperity” and presented a detailed plan for the development of the expanded BRICS. First, China constructed its facilitative leadership through its emphasis on empowerment of the five members. As Hu argued, “we should respect the sovereignty of all countries and their right to choose their development paths and models in keeping with the principle of seeking common ground while shelving differences” [我们应当本着求同存异的原则，尊重各国主权和选择发展道路和发展模式的权利] (Hu, 2011a). Second, China’s constructive leadership is shaped by its perception and strong advocacy of “establishing fair, just, inclusive and well-managed international monetary and financial systems to support global economic development and increasing the say and representation of emerging markets and developing countries in these systems” [建设公平、公正、包容、有序的国际货币金融体系，支持全球经济发展，增加新兴市场国家和发展中国家在国际货币金融体系中的发言权和代表权] (Hu, 2011a). Third, China also devoted itself to building its constructive leadership, manifested in its interest, identity, and vision construction, by stressing the significance of the BRICS partnership in terms of “sticking to the basic principles of solidarity, mutual trust, openness, transparency and common development, and enhancing mutual trust through cooperation and always be good friends and good partners.” [我们应该立足当前、着眼长远，坚持团结互信、开放透明、共谋发展的基本原则，通过合作加强互信，永远做好朋友、好伙伴] (Hu, 2011a). Finally, China showed its great willingness to construct its

exemplary leadership by demonstrating that “we will share development opportunities with other countries, promote the regional and global development by developing China’s economy, and share prosperity with people around the world” [中国欢迎世界各国参与中国发展、分享中国发展机遇，以自己的发展促进地区和世界发展，同世界各国人民共享繁荣] (Hu, 2011a).

The hosting of the 2013 BRICS summit by South Africa further confirmed the expansion of this political consortium, and that was the first BRICS summit held in the African continent. Therefore, the issue of development in Africa was a focus at that summit. Against this backdrop, by analyzing Chinese President Xi’s speech, we can see that China actively constructed its facilitative leadership by demonstrating that “we should jointly support Africa’s efforts in seeking robust growth, speeding up integration and realizing industrialization” [我们要共同支持非洲在谋求强劲增长、加快一体化、实现工业化方面作出的努力，促进非洲经济成为世界经济的新亮点] (Xi, 2013c).

Another significant issue at the Durban BRICS summit was the final decision to set up the New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). Originally, the consensus to establish the NDB and CRA had been reached at the fourth BRICS summit in New Delhi. In Durban, China exhibited its role conception of constructive leadership by appealing that “we should convert our consensus into concrete actions in terms of actively pushing ahead with the establishment of the BRICS Development and Contingent Reserve Arrangement and accelerating practical cooperation in various fields” [我们要把各国的政治共识转化为具体行动，积极推进金砖国家开发银行、外汇储备库等项目，加快各领域务实合作] (Xi, 2013c).

5.2.3. THE DEEPENING INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE GOVERNANCE MECHANISM (2014-2018)

Having been initiated at the New Delhi summit in 2012 and set up at the Durban summit in 2013, the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) was formally established at the Fortaleza summit in 2014, and this event signals the beginning of the stage of the deepening institutionalization of the cooperation mechanism. China clearly recognized the significance of the establishment of the NDB, as Xi noted in his speech “New Departure, New Vision and New Impetus” at the Fortaleza summit:

With concerted efforts, we agreed on the establishment of the New BRICS Development Bank, an important outcome of far-reaching significance in the BRICS cooperation. It embodies the political will of BRICS for solidarity, cooperation and common development. It will not only help increase the voice of BRICS in international financial affairs, but more importantly, it will bring great benefit to the people of our countries and other developing countries. I appreciate your support in making Shanghai the headquarters of the bank. We stand ready to work with all parties to make every preparation for its early launch.

[在各方共同努力下，我们今天就建立金砖国家开发银行达成共识。这是金砖国家合作进程中具有重要和深远意义的成果，体现了金砖国家团结合作、共同发展的政治意愿，不但有助于提高金砖国家在国际金融事务中的话语权，而且更重要的是能够造福我们和发展中国家人民。感谢大家支持金砖国家开发银行落户中国上海。我们愿同各方密切合作，做好充分准备，确保银行尽快启动] (Xi, 2014e).

In addition to China's role conception of constructive leadership in the area of institutional construction, China also placed emphasis on interest construction. For instance, at the Ufa BRICS summit in 2015, Xi proposed that "the BRICS countries should build the community of common interest. We should build a more favorable economic partnership with the goal of constructing a benefit-sharing value chain and a large market with interest integration" [金砖国家要利益共同体，我们要以建设利益共享的价值链和利益融合的大市场为目标，共同构建更紧密经济伙伴关系] (Xi, 2015c). Moreover, at the same summit, China also constructed its facilitative leadership by encouraging the collective efforts of the BRICS members to achieve common targets and by emphasizing the empowerment of the developing and African countries, as Xi contended:

We need to stay committed to promoting common development and common prosperity of all developing nations. International development and climate change are among the top priorities of this year. The BRICS countries ought to step up their coordination and cooperation by upholding the common interest of emerging markets and developing countries on such major issues as the post-2015 development agenda and climate change, and by focusing on the difficulties and challenges of developing countries, African countries and the least developed countries in particular.

[我们要继续致力于促进发展中国家共同发展繁荣。今年是国际发展年和气候变化年，金砖国家应该加强协调和配合，在 2015 年后发展议程、气候变化等重大国际发展议题上，维护新兴市场国家和发展中国家共同利益，引导 2015 年后发展议程谈判重点关注解决发展中国家特别是非洲国家和最不发达国家面临的困难和挑战] (Xi, 2015c).

This thesis argues that China's hosting of the 2017 Xiamen BRICS summit was one of the most significant events for interpreting the construction of the ILCC through Chinese decision-makers' rhetoric during this stage. Specifically, at this summit, China's emphasis on a comprehensive BRICS partnership provides a lens for understanding China's role conception of the ILCC from the perspectives of deepening institutionalization, strengthening strategic coordination, the building of international order, and the promotion of people-to-people exchanges.

First of all, from the perspective of deepening institutionalization, China's role conception of constructive leadership was witnessed in China's confirmation and promotion of a number of the BRICS institutionalized arrangements. As Xi argued:

This year, we have formulated the *BRICS Trade in Services Cooperation Roadmap*, the *Outlines for BRICS Investment Facilitation*, the *BRICS E-Commerce Cooperation Initiative*, the *BRICS Action Plan for Innovation Cooperation* and the *Action Plan for Deepening Industrial Cooperation Among BRICS Countries*. We have launched the African Regional Center of the New Development Bank (NDB), decided to set up the BRICS Model E-Port Network and reached extensive agreement on taxation, e-commerce, local currency bond, public-private partnership, and the network of financial institutions and services. Our practical cooperation has become more institutionalized and substantive, and delivered more tangible results.

[今年，我们制定了《金砖国家服务贸易合作路线图》、《金砖国家投资便利化纲要》、《金砖国家电子商务合作倡议》、《金砖国家创新合作行动计划》、《金砖国家深化工业领域合作行动计划》，成立了新开发银行非洲区域中心，决定建立金砖国家示范电子口岸网络，在税收、电子商务、本币债券、政府和社会资本合作、金融机构和服务网络化布局等方面达成积极共识，各领域务实合作不断机制化、实心化，含金量不断提升] (Xi, 2017c).

Second, from the perspective of strengthening strategic coordination, China constructed its facilitative leadership by emphasizing the collective feature of the BRICS cooperation. More precisely, China proactively advocates that the BRICS countries should “act in the spirit of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, we need to identify those areas where our development policies and priorities converge” [本着共商、共建、共享原则，寻找发展政策和优先领域的契合点] (Xi, 2017c). Moreover, Xi also pointed out that “we should speak with one voice and jointly present our solutions to issues concerning international peace and development. This meets the expectation of the international community, and will help safeguard our common interests” [我们就事关国际和平发展的问题共同发声，共提方案，既符合国际社会期待，也有助于维护我们的共同利益] (Xi, 2017c).

Third, from the perspective of building international order, China’s role conception of facilitative leadership was also constructed by the stress it placed on the significance of the BRICS in building an inclusive international order, as Xi contended, “we need to make economic globalization open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all, build an open world economy, support the multilateral trading regime and oppose protectionism” [我们要推动开放、包容、普惠、平衡、共赢的经济全球化，建设开放型世界经济，支持多边贸易体制，反对保护主义] (Xi, 2017c). In the meanwhile, with respect to the issue of international order, China’s role conception of constructive leadership was also highlighted by its appeal to the other BRICS “to advance the reform of global economic governance, increase the representation and voice of emerging market and developing countries” [我们要推进全球经济治理改革，提高新兴市场国家和发展中国家的代表性和发言权] (Xi, 2017c).

Fourth, from the perspective of promoting people-to-people exchanges, China’s role conception of constructive leadership is embodied in the emphasis Chinese leaders placed on emotional construction in shaping the common interests and a common vision between the BRICS members. As Xi insisted, “amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. Only with intensive care can the tree of friendship and cooperation grow luxuriant” [国之交在于民相亲。只有深耕厚植，友谊与合作之树才能枝繁叶茂] (Xi, 2017c). Moreover, confirming a number of activities and outcomes achieved in the area of people-to-people exchanges between the BRICS members, Xi highlighted that “we hope that through our joint efforts, these activities will take place regularly and be institutionalized. We need to expand our outreach to get the public more involved and encourage more lively exchanges of

diverse cultures” [希望在我们共同关心和推动下，这些活动能够经常化、机制化，并努力深入基层，面向广大民众，营造百花齐放的生动局面] (Xi, 2017c).

5.3. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA’S NRP EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE BRICS

5.3.1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMERGING POWER GROUP (2009-2010)

As mentioned above, the first BRIC summit in 2009 transformed the group from a business notion into an entity in world politics and economies, and it signaled the launch of an emerging power group in the existing international system. Against this background, at this stage, China’s practice of ILCC can be interpreted from institutional, material, policy, and ideational perspectives.

First, from the institutional perspective, although the first BRIC summit was proposed and hosted by Russia, and was recognized as “the epicenter of world politics” (Stuenkel, 2015: 25) by the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, it cannot be denied that China played an equally critical role of constructive leadership in the development of the BRIC as an emerging power group. Since China was the largest developing country and the largest emerging power, its accession was seen as the great impetus to the formation of this political group. As Jagannath Panda noted, “the eagerness of clubbing themselves within the framework of BRIC is a developmental outcome of the constructive Chinese foreign policy patterns since many years” (Panda, 2011: 46).

Second, from the material perspective, although at this stage the four members’ investment and trade activities were greater with the non-BRIC countries than the intra-BRIC ones (Lye & Zhang, 2010: 59), China’s growing national strength gave it the material capability of being a facilitative leadership in the BRICs. China’s population and GDP were equivalent to the sum of those of Russia, India, and Brazil. The level of China’s foreign trade exceeded that of the three countries combined, and its foreign exchange reserves were three times theirs. More precisely, China practised its facilitative leadership by increasing its emphasis on the development of intra-BRIC economic relationships. For instance, at this stage, China’s trade with the other BRIC members witnessed a dramatic average increase of 40% , well above the 30% increase in China’s overall trade. As a result, China became the economic magnet within

the BRIC group: China was the third largest trade partner of Russia, and it was the largest trade partner of India and Brazil (Lin, 2009).

Against the backdrop of China's role as a central trade hub for the BRICs and the world's largest exporter, two competing viewpoints emerged regarding China's economic relationship with the other BRIC countries. On the one hand, some argued that "the BRIC was firmly in charge by China" (Anderlini, 2011); on the other hand, others contended that, since trade between China and the other BRIC members was mutually beneficial and complementary, China's position was not dominant within the framework of intra-BRIC economic exchanges (Ross, 2011). However, in sum, China's proactive involvement endowed the BRICs with great value in the world economy and allowed the BRICs to become an influential group with economic significance.

Third, from the policy perspective, China practised its facilitative leadership in promoting the BRIC members to act as a political group. For example, with the purpose of maximizing the BRIC's leverage before its engagement with the Western countries at the G20 Pittsburgh summit, China persuaded the member states to coordinate their positions and policies at the first BRIC summit in 2009 (Xue, 2009). As Lye and Zhang pointed out, "The BRIC members met separately and issued joint statements prior to the Pittsburgh G20 meetings so as to attempt to speak with one voice especially on economic and financial issues" (Lye & Zhang, 2010: 70). As a consequence, as a result of these joint appeals and substantial pressure from the BRICs and other developing countries, the joint communique of the Pittsburgh G20 summit was successfully revised from the initial draft to the final version that acknowledged that the emerging countries should be given more opportunities to have a greater voice and calling for the expansion of the Financial Stability Forum (FSF). As the then Russian Deputy Finance Minister Dmitry Pankin argued, the G20 summit showed that the BRICs could act in concert to have their voices heard (Glosny, 2010).

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, China exhibited its exemplary leadership in terms of shaping a common vision and strengthening a common identity for the BRICs as representative of emerging and developing countries. For instance, although it had achieved astonishing development and economic growth by 2009, China emphasized the self-restraint of its increasing power by officially refusing the concept of the G2 that had been advanced by a number of U.S.-based scholars and politicians, such as Fred Bergsten, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Niall Ferguson, and Robert Zoellick. In 2009, Zbigniew Brzezinski published an article entitled

The Group of Two that could Change the World, arguing that “the U.S. and Chinese leaders should meet informally on a regular schedule for personal in-depth discussions not just about our bilateral relations but about the world in general” (Brzezinski, 2009). Brzezinski’s proposal suggested that China should not be seen as an emerging power or a developing country and the world should be co-governed by the United States and China.

However, the then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Chinese scholars “criticized the concept of G2 as inappropriate and infeasible, arguing that it would harm China’s diplomacy and isolate it from the developing world” (Chu and Chen, 2009). In this respect, China was eager to be a significant member of a larger “developing” club and prevent itself from falling into the G2 trap. In other words, rather than a world led and managed by the G2, China’s leaders were inclined to maintain a world co-governed by the established and emerging powers. Thus, China continue to be “low profile as a developing country, cooperate with other emerging developing countries, and benefit from this cooperation while not being seen as confronting the United States” (Glosny, 2010: 129). As the then Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo expressed, “the BRIC countries need to come up with more initiatives to compel the global community to introduce adequate reform at the ground level” (Sun, 2009). Nevertheless, according to Panda, “neither China nor the other BRIC countries have any specific goal or vision to reconstruct the current world order; but the process is already started as far as the Chinese are concerned” (Panda, 2011: 48).

5.3.2. THE EXPANSION OF THE POLITICAL CENTER (2011-2013)

The inclusion of South Africa into the BRIC marked the official expansion of the political center to the African continent, which is characterized by a vast number of developing countries. Thus, this expansion enhanced the legitimacy of the group in world politics and the global economy. Since then, the transformation from the BRICs to the BRICS indicates that this emerging power group will be able to play a bigger role in coordinating regional and global affairs and in shaping a more representative vision for emerging powers and developing countries. During this stage, the ILCC was clearly observed in this expansion process and the strengthening of the BRICS as an indispensable power in economic development and global governance.

First, from the institutional perspective, with respect to the group’s expansion, China’s facilitative leadership (inclusiveness) and constructive leadership (institutional construction) were prominent manifestations of its implementation of the ILCC. In other words, China

practised its constructive leadership by inviting South Africa in the BRIC, which was seen as a landmark of the institutional construction of this group. As Oliver Stuenkel argued, “South Africa’s inclusion has been continuously described as a Chinese initiative, even though negotiators from Russia, India, and Brazil have always been supportive of the move” (Stuenkel, 2013: 315).

Moreover, the inclusiveness feature of the ILCC was also observed in China’s efforts to lead the BRICS “away from being a closed, inward-looking club designed to benefit only its members, into an outward-looking one oriented to assisting developing countries” (Kirton, 2013). In this respect, with the purpose of protecting the interests of developing countries, China’s invitation of South Africa into the BRIC could also be seen as its implementation of facilitative leadership in promoting adequate cooperation between BRIC and BASIC (Wang, 2010). From this evidence, it is argued that “there is also great interest within the Chinese strategic communities to merge together BRIC, IBSA and BASIC to have a greater view from the developing world for countering the Western and European supremacy in global politics” (Panda, 2011: 24).

Second, from the material perspective, China is seen as the *primus inter pares* power among the BRICS members. One significant evidence of China’s implementation of its facilitative leadership was its material empowerment of the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Agreement (CRA). As John Kirton argued, “China alone has the financial capacity in its foreign exchange reserves or elsewhere to determine if the BRICS bank will be launched with sufficient capital” (Kirton, 2013). In addition, the establishment of the CRA aims to construct a financial safety net for the BRICS, since the five countries agreed that the existing Western-based financial institutions cannot really protect the interests of the emerging powers. According to the agreement between the BRICS members, the total committed resources of the CRA are US\$100 billion, of which China decided to contribute US\$41 billion, as the largest portion (Huang, 2013: 21). In this respect, it is deemed that China’s abundant material capital ensured the successful founding of this key financial mechanism.

Third, from the policy perspective, since the inclusion of the South Africa, the BRICS countries have placed a great deal of emphasis on the economic development of the African countries. During the Durban summit, the BRICS countries held a dialogue with 12 African countries under the theme of “Unlocking Africa’s Potential: BRICS and Africa Cooperation on

Infrastructure” and achieved the “Multilateral Agreement on Cooperation and Co-financing for Sustainable Development”. In the *eThekweni Declaration*, the BRICS countries, under the *framework of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)*, committed to support the industrialization process of the African countries in terms of stimulating foreign direct investment (FDI), knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and diversification of imports from Africa (Huang, 2013: 22).

These policy achievements made at the Durban summit partly profited from China’s newly elected leadership under Xi Jinping. After he became the President of China at the end of 2012, Xi Jinping placed special emphasis on cooperation with Africa. For instance, with the exception of Russia, Xi decided to take his first trip abroad to Tanzania, South Africa, and the Republic of the Congo. During the visit, Xi argued that the BRICS was a significant force for promoting the development of African countries. The unprecedented level of emphasis the new Chinese leader attached to the cooperation between the BRICS and Africa reflected China’s constructive leadership in making the BRICS club more inclusive and representative.

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, by hosting the third BRICS summit in Sanya, China practised its constructive leadership in promoting the idea of “inclusive development”, which was to be agreed in the *Sanya Declaration* by the BRICS members. China’s advocacy of “inclusive development” aimed to provide impetus for shaping common value between the BRICS countries and explore a new path for BRICS members’ cooperation and development (Yang, 2011). In this respect, the construction of the idea of “inclusive development” is conducive to the institutionalization of international economic cooperation and a development model characterized by win-win cooperation and interest sharing.

5.3.3. THE DEEPENING INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE GOVERNANCE MECHANISM (2014-2018)

The formal establishment of the New Development Bank at the 2014 Fortaleza summit was a prominent symbol for the institutionalization of the BRICS and a substantial step for the BRICS to participate in global economic/financial governance. In other words, at this stage, the BRICS has gradually transformed from a loose political group to an important force in global governance. In this transformation, the most conspicuous implementation of the ILCC was manifested in China’s hosting of the Xiamen BRICS summit in 2017.

First, from the institutional perspective, at this stage, the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank has made substantial progress. In 2014, the BRICS countries signed the constituent agreements of the NDB; in July 2015, this first multilateral financial bank backed by the emerging powers officially opened. As the largest economy in the BRICS, China practised its facilitative leadership (collectiveness) by shaping the structure and code of conduct of the NDB. From the early establishment of the BRICS as an emerging power grouping, China had strongly advocated “democratic consultation” as the culture of the group and that was gradually assimilated into in the development of the BRICS. For instance, despite existing tensions between China and India – the two giants in the group – the BRICS countries followed the principle of “democratic consultation”, collectively coordinated their stances, and having “led to the finalization of the New Development Bank with its headquarters in Shanghai and its first president an Indian national, appeared to consolidate the club culture among the BRICS members” (Cooper, 2016: 84). Moreover, the NDB initial authorized capital of US\$100 billion was equally contributed by the five members, which also reflected their equality and the democratic nature of the BRICS.

In addition, China’s practice of constructive leadership in the institutionalization of the BRICS was also manifested in its promotion of cultural/people-to-people exchanges. During China’s presidency of BRICS in 2017, China hosted a large number of meaningful cultural/people-to-people exchange activities, including the BRICS International Film Festival, the Fifth Meeting of BRICS Education Ministers, the BRICS Political Parties, Think-tanks and Civil Society Organizations Forum, the BRICS Media Summit, the BRICS High-level Meeting on Traditional Medicine and the BRICS Health Ministers Meeting, etc. These activities aimed to “encourage people from all walks of life in BRICS countries to carry out friendly exchanges and promote cultural cooperation at a deeper and more concrete level. These efforts will consolidate public support and provide a strong impetus for the BRICS cooperation in every realm” (Jinzhang Li, 2017).

Second, from the policy perspective, during this stage, the increasing institutionalization of the BRICS group was also manifested in the achievement of a vast number of policy agreements between the five countries. In July 2015, the BRICS countries launched the *Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership*, identifying eight major cooperation areas. In October 2016, the BRICS published the *BRICS Roadmap for Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation until 2020*, aiming to enhance levels of trade and investment. Against this backdrop, the BRICS countries also released the *BRICS Trade and Investment Facilitation Plan*, the *BRICS Guidelines for*

Intellectual Property Cooperation, and the *BRICS Framework for Trade and Investment Cooperation*, etc. These policy agreements reflected the BRICS' consensus to support a multilateral trade and investment system and to fight against the protectionism.

Moreover, during China's BRICS presidency in 2017, China identified several new economic growth points for the BRICS and practised its constructive leadership in achieving a number of relevant policy agreements. For instance, during the ninth BRICS summit in Xiamen, the BRICS leaders ratified the *BRICS Trade in Services Cooperation Roadmap* and the *Framework on Strengthening the Economic and Technical Cooperation for BRICS Countries*, indicating that the BRICS countries agreed to a code of conduct in the areas of trade in services and technological cooperation. In addition, with the growing e-commerce trade between the BRICS countries, in 2017, the Meeting of the BRICS Trade Ministers ratified the *BRICS E-Commerce Cooperation Initiative*, launching a comprehensive process of e-commerce cooperation. As the statistics show, in 2016, the number of netizens from the BRICS countries surpassed 1.46 billion, and the online retail sales of the BRICS was US\$876.1 billion, accounting for 47% of the global figure (Xu, 2018).

Third, from the material perspective, the last ten years have witnessed an increasing degree of economic and trade cooperation between the BRICS countries, and China's role of facilitative leadership can be observed in the coupling effects of China's trade with and investment in the other BRICS countries. In terms of trade, from January to October 2017, China's trade in goods with other BRICS countries (Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa) reached US\$235.79 billion, a rise of 22.5% on the previous year. The increasing rate was 11.7% higher than that of China's total trade in goods with the world. In terms of exports, China's exports to the BRICS countries accounted for US\$126.16 billion, up 16.9% over the same period in the previous year, and this increasing rate was 11.3% higher than that of China's total exports to the world. In terms of imports, China's imports from the BRICS countries was US\$109.62 billion, up 29.7% year on year, and this increasing rate was 11.6% higher than that of China's total imports from the rest of the world (Xu, 2018).

In addition to trade, China's investment in the other BRICS countries was another critical manifestation of their cooperation. By 2015, China's direct investment stock in Brazil amounted to US\$2.257 billion, which was 42 times greater than in 2003; its direct investment stock in Russia was US\$14.02 billion, which was 226 times greater than in 2003; and its direct investment stock in India was US\$3.77 billion, which was 3,926 times greater than in 2003. On

the basis of these statistics, Lin and Chen argued, although China's direct investments in the other BRICS countries were still limited, it shows a dramatic increase year on year, and there is still plenty of scope for them to cooperate. They also contended that China's direct investments had significant coupling effects on the other BRICS countries and had important implications for their economic development (L. Lin & Chen, 2017: 101).

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, another significant implementation of the ILCC in the institutionalization of the BRICS was China's proposition of the "BRICS Plus" idea during the Xiamen summit in 2017. The "BRICS Plus" idea is not limited to cooperation between the BRICS members, rather it is an attempt or exploration of how to construct a wider partnership between the developing countries and emerging powers (Ding, 2018). By inviting more non-BRICS countries to participate in the BRICS in terms of establishing bilateral, trilateral, multilateral, and regional cooperation, the "BRICS Plus" idea aims to make an innovative contribution to the new model and new norms of the BRICS mechanism. Specifically, the "BRICS Plus" idea provides intellectual guidance for the BRICS on how to (1) promote a dialogue mechanism with regional organizations and international mechanisms; (2) explore possible ways of strengthening coordination with the middle powers; (3) to safeguard the outcomes of global governance and consolidate cooperation between the BRICS and the G20. In sum, the "BRICS Plus" can not only provide dynamics for the long-term development of the BRICS, but also it is conducive to the new modality of international relations characterized by mutual respect, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation, etc.

In practice, China invited five countries – Tajikistan, Egypt, Kenya, Mexico, and Thailand – to attend the Xiamen summit. Although it was not the first time that a host country had invited other countries, the Chinese invitation gave rise to talk about a "BRICS plus" – that is, a bloc which could add new permanent members. Egypt and Tajikistan are important countries for China's New Silk Road megaproject – the *Belt and Road Initiative*. As for Mexico, its attendance at the summit took place in a context where the renegotiation of NAFTA threatens nearly 75% of its exports. In this respect, "diversifying its external economic links is a way of counteracting its overwhelming dependence on the US market" (Frenkel, 2017).

5.4. SUMMARY

5.4.1. THE GENERALIZATION OF THE ILCC IN THE BRICS

By conducting an empirical analysis of China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in the BRICS, the first section of the summary interprets the generalization of the ILCC in the BRICS through the above-mentioned three stages.

During the first two stages of the establishment of the BRIC (2009-2010) and the expansion of this group (2011-2013), the construction and implementation of the ILCC can be observed in institutional, material, policy, and ideational dimensions. First of all, under the framework of the ILCC, China's institutional contribution to the BRICS was manifested in the formation and expansion of this emerging power consortium, but not really displayed in the institutionalization of this group. Second, during the first two stages, one of the most significant events was China's proposal and ratification of the move to include South Africa in the BRICS by exhibiting its constructive leadership. As a result, through the inclusion of the most representative African country, the legitimacy and representativeness of the BRICS was accordingly enhanced. Since then, China has practised its facilitative leadership by shaping the BRICS to establish greater cooperation with Africa and provide more policy and material support to empower this continent. For instance, during the Durban summit, the BRICS and 12 other African countries achieved the "Multilateral Agreement on Cooperation and Co-financing for Sustainable Development". Third, unlike the ILCC in the G20, since the establishment of the BRIC, China has practised its constructive leadership by making ideational contributions to this group. Over the last decade, China has successfully injected the idea of "democratic consultation" into the BRICS, and this idea has influenced several critical BRICS events, such as the inclusion of South Africa and the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), etc.

During the third stage, China practised its facilitative leadership and constructive leadership by leading and supporting the BRICS to realize substantial progress by formally establishing the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), which verifies China's institutional contribution to the BRICS to a greater extent than that which occurred during the first two stages. According to the agreement made between the BRICS members, the total committed resources of the CRA are US\$100 billion, of which China decided to contribute US\$41 billion as the largest portion (Huang, 2013: 21). In this respect, it is deemed that China's abundant material capital ensured the successful founding of this key financial mechanism. Since then, the BRICS has no longer been regarded as a loose political group, rather it has obtained certain institutional discourse power and has played an indispensable role in global governance. Another significant manifestation of the ILCC was

China's ideational contribution of the "BRICS Plus", which provides the dynamics for the long-term development of the BRICS and is conducive to the new modality of international relations characterized by mutual respect, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation, etc.

Above all, this thesis argues that, in the BRICS, the relationship between China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC was generally consistent throughout the three stages in the post-crisis era. However, because of a number of challenges at different levels and dimensions, there are certain differences between the NRC and NRP. In addition, since China is seen as the primus inter pares power among the BRICS members and China is keen to promote the BRICS as a significant force in global governance, all of the three dimensions of the ILCC – facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership – are largely constructed and practised by China.

5.4.2. THE ILCC IN THE BRICS AS A REFLECTION OF THE MAJOR FEATURES OF CHINESE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

Having reviewed China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in the BRICS at the beginning of the summary, the ILCC in the BRICS can be interpreted as a reflection of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. First of all, since the establishment of the BRIC(S), China has continuously practised its constructive leadership by shaping a common identity among the BRICS members, which can be regarded as a reflection of the feature of relationality. In the post-crisis era, the rise of the BRICS, as a new epicenter of world politics, has helped the member states obtain their international reputations and recognition as representative of emerging powers. This recognition not only strengthened the political stability of the BRICS as an emerging power consortium, but it was also conducive to solidarity between the large number of developing countries. Moreover, as the largest economy of the five countries, China practised its facilitative leadership by leading the development of intra-BRICS trade and investment, which has strengthened economic cooperation between the BRICS members. Although the intra-BRICS trade and investment structure has been criticized as a sort of "dependency relationship" by a number of Western and Latin American scholars, the increasing level of intra-BRICS economic interdependency cannot be ignored, and it has played a significant role in shaping a close relational network between the five countries. However, although the BRICS is seen as representative of emerging powers and developing countries and is considered to be at the vanguard of appeals for the reform of the existing Western-based global governance system, China has no intention of shaping the BRICS as a rival group to the

established powers. Rather, in order to manage the complex relations in contemporary IR and preserve the stability of international order, China practised its constructive leadership by establishing cooperation between the BRICS and other existing mechanisms such as the G20 and the UN. This cooperation has provided opportunities for the BRICS members to engage with the Western countries on several key issues.

Second, as mentioned above, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by seeking common ground between the BRICS members while preserving their differences, which can be interpreted as a reflection of the feature of inclusiveness. Although there are a number of divergences between the five inter-continental members in terms of political systems, development modes, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions, Chinese decision-makers have repeatedly, at the BRICS summits, highlighted their common political and economic desire to reform the existing Western-based international order and to construct a more representative pattern of global governance. Given the increasing criticisms of the fading BRICS and the structural contradiction of the intra-BRICS trade, China's emphasis on common political and economic demands demonstrated its inclusive attitude towards this representative emerging power consortium, and this inclusiveness is conducive to the resilience and stability of the BRICS against the background of global economic stagnation. Moreover, China's proposal and approval of the inclusion of South Africa in the BRICS has also clearly displayed the feature of inclusiveness. The inclusion of South Africa in the BRICS marked the official expansion of the political center to the African continent, which is characterized by a vast number of developing countries, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and representativeness of the BRICS in world politics. In addition to the political implications, the inclusion of South Africa has also exerted significant economic implications on the development of Africa. In *eThekweni Declaration*, the BRICS countries, under the *framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*, committed to support the African countries' industrialization process in terms of stimulating foreign direct investment (FDI), knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and diversification of imports from Africa (Huang, 2013: 22). Moreover, the feature of inclusiveness was also observed in China's efforts to lead the BRICS "away from being a closed, inward-looking club designed to benefit only its members, into an outward-looking one oriented to assisting developing countries" (Kirton, 2013). For instance, China practised its constructive leadership by promoting adequate cooperation between the BRICS and BASIC and IBSA in order to have a more representative view from the developing world (Panda, 2011: 24).

Third, the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the BRICS can also be considered as a reflection of the feature of processuality of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. The feature of processuality is mainly verified in China's contribution to the development of the BRICS from a concept to a group to an institutionalized mechanism over the last decade. As mentioned above, although the first BRIC summit was proposed and hosted by Russia, it cannot be denied that China played an equally critical role of facilitative leadership in the emergence of the BRIC as an emerging power group. As Jagannath Panda argued, "the eagerness of clubbing themselves within the framework of BRIC is a developmental outcome of the constructive Chinese foreign policy patterns since many years" (Panda, 2011: 46). Since then, as the representative of the emerging powers and developing countries, the BRIC has transformed from an economic concept to a political group that has begun to play a critical role in international relations. This thesis contends that the BRIC's transformation followed the grand tendency (the rise of the emerging powers) of the international situation in the post-crisis era. Moreover, through its proactive participation in the BRICS, China has gradually injected the principle of "democratic consultation" into this emerging power grouping, and this principle has further evolved into the club culture (Cooper, 2016) of the BRICS. Guided by this club culture, the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) can be viewed as a manageable and balanced process. Following the initiative proposed at the Durban summit, the NDB has been established through a process of continuous coordination and on the basis of consensus achieved by member states. More importantly, given the existing tension between China and India – the two giants in the BRICS – the member states collectively coordinated their stances and, having "led to the finalization of the New Development Bank with its headquarters in Shanghai and its first president an Indian national, appeared to consolidate the club culture among the BRICS members" (Cooper, 2016: 84).

5.4.3. THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ILCC IN THE BRICS

This final section of the summary points out the major challenges faced by the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the BRICS. Specifically, the major challenges are identified in terms of the internal heterogeneity and competitiveness of the BRICS, the immature cooperation mechanism of the BRICS, the lack of a collective identity of the BRICS, and the unsustainable development model of the BRICS countries. (J. Lu, 2017).

First of all, the obvious heterogeneity of and competitiveness between the BRICS countries are regarded as a major hindrance to cooperation between them. A number of Western scholars

tend to routinely describe the BRICS countries as a “disparate quartet” (*The Economist*, 2009) or a “motley crew” (Saran and Sharan, 2012). The “BRICS” itself is a flawed concept, and the “BRICS member countries were too diverse to ever form a coherent group” (Wilson and Purushothaman, 2003). Potential conflict deriving from BRICS’ internal heterogeneity and competitiveness are concentrated in the following aspects. (1) The first consists of the ideological divergences and different political systems. On the one hand, China and Russia are authoritarian countries, and on the other hand, India, Brazil, and South Africa are immature democracies. As a result, for certain diplomatic issues, the latter three countries rely more on their tripartite forum – IBSA – to promote coordination and dialogue (Mottet, 2013). This could lead to the divisions between the BRICS members. (2) The second relates to the competitiveness embedded in their economic relationships. The BRICS countries are all at a similar development stage, which indicates that these countries share some common ground in terms of their production structure, trade structure, and their positions within international industrial chains. With a background of industrialization and economic transformation, the BRICS countries focus on the same targeted industries, and all of them are keen to take the initiative in when it comes to international competition. This situation will surely lead to internal trade competition within the BRICS (Lai and Wu, 2012). (3) The third aspect relates to bilateral mistrust, contradictions, and even potential policy conflicts. In particular, there is mutual distrust between China and Russia due to their historical interactions, and the potential conflicts between China and India on the Tibet-related issue and other border issues.

Second, the immature and imperfect BRICS cooperation mechanism has created an insufficient incentive for cooperation between BRICS members. The objectives and functions of the BRICS cooperation mechanism were not made sufficiently clear from its inception. The mechanism is more like a passive response to Western pressures or a temporary solution to specific issues. Moreover, political enthusiasm for the BRICS cooperation mechanism has waned since being hit by its members’ economic slowdown. The BRICS mechanism has always been embodied by a forum-style cooperation without being developed into a formal, hierarchical international organization. Although the forum-style cooperation mechanism is relatively flexible, due to the lack of programmatic and procedural systems documentation, the procedures, contents, and achievements of leaders’ meetings have failed to reflect the restrictive principle. This has resulted in a lack of stability in the cooperation between the BRICS, and it is only the leaders’ personal will that influences the process of cooperation. In addition, the BRICS members are also perplexed by problems such as functional overlap and an unclear division of labor between

the different BRICS cooperation mechanisms. Thus, it is a pressing issue for the BRICS countries to figure out ways of integrating BRICS cooperation mechanisms into a more coordinated and cooperative format.

Third, the lack of collective identity has hindered cooperation between the BRICS countries. The BRICS' internal heterogeneity and its lack of clear group standards mean that it faces the problem of a lack of collective identity. Although the BRICS is generally considered as an economic concept, with its two key indicators being economic performance and economic influence, it still lacks several organizational features for defining a specific group from an economic perspective. In terms of economic performance, it remains far-fetched to classify these five countries as one group. Their significant economic heterogeneity and their superficial economic complementarities do not give the group a stronger identity than other economic group (X. Pang, 2016, p. 17). Although there are political consistencies among the BRICS countries in terms of principles of national sovereignty and non-interference, their ideological divergences and different political systems have made it more difficult for BRICS members to form a collective identity (Jorgensen and Strube, 2014).

Finally, the unsustainable development model of the BRICS countries also has an adverse effect on cooperation within the group. In recent years, given their sluggish economies and decelerated growth, the BRICS concept, representing a group of emerging powers, has undergone a substantive change. Without sustained and considerable international economic contributions, a strong BRICS mechanism cannot truly exist.

CHAPTER 6. CASE III: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ILCC IN THE SCO

6.1. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a regional organization that was initiated by China and is characterized by comprehensive multilateral cooperation. The foundation of the SCO experienced transitional stages, such as the negotiations on the border issue between China and the former Soviet Union and the “Shanghai Five” summit. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – separated from the Soviet Union and became independent countries. Since these newly-independent countries are bordered by China, in order to resolve the border issue, China had to negotiate continuously and cooperate with the new Central Asian countries and Russia. At that time, the five countries’ major concern was the identification of their respective borders and the resolution of the security problems in the border areas. Since then, bilateral cooperation on the border issue between the five countries has deepened, and the issue of territorial boundaries between these countries was basically agreed by 1996. From 1996, the five countries started to hold the “Shanghai Five” summit annually.

It is worth noting that the Shanghai Five summit held in 1996 was a continuation of the settlement of territorial boundaries negotiations held since 1989. However, at the third Shanghai Five summit held in Almaty in 1998, the five countries raised new issues, from the previous military negotiations in the border areas to multilateral security cooperation based on regional security. Specifically, fighting against the “Three Evil Forces” of terrorism, separatism, and extremism became the main cooperation areas between the five countries. In other words, the third Shanghai Five summit created the possibility of multilateral cooperation and ultimately promoted the establishment of the SCO as a regional cooperation organization. Thus, the mechanism of the Shanghai Five summit was upgraded to be a multilevel, multi-disciplinary multilateral cooperation system between the five countries – the Shanghai Cooperation Organization – in 2001. This indicates that it was gradually institutionalized from a looser conference mechanism merely focused on security issues to a more positive and comprehensive cooperation organization.

More specifically, before the establishment of the SCO, during the period from 1989 to 2001, the nature of the cooperation between these countries underwent two major transformations.

First, in the official documents published during the period of the Shanghai Five summits, there was a change in the name given to the cooperative relationship. During the Shanghai Five summits held in 1996 and 1997, the official documents used “two parties” to describe the relationship between the five countries, i.e., China on one side of the relationship, and the other four countries on the other side. However, at the third Shanghai Five summit held in Almaty in 1998, the name of the cooperative relationship between the five countries shifted from “two parties” to “all parties”. This indicates that the leaders of the five countries recognized the nature of the Shanghai Five cooperation had changed from a bilateral to a multilateral cooperative relationship.

The second major change to the Shanghai Five cooperation before the construction of the SCO was the shift in the contents of the negotiations. During that period, the focus shifted from military cooperation in the border area to non-traditional cooperation in terms of fighting against terrorism, ethnic separatism, and religious extremism. In 2001, all parties issued the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization* and the *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism*. On the basis of the two documents, in 2002, all parties announced the *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization* in which they outlined their fundamental principles and goals as follows:

Development of multifaceted cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region; joint combating terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations; encouraging efficient regional cooperation in such areas as politics, trade and economy, etc.; facilitating comprehensive and balanced economic growth, social and cultural development in the region; and promoting enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, etc. (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2002).

Although the bilateral border issues were largely resolved during the first three Shanghai Five summits from 1996 to 1998, cooperation between the five countries did not come to an end. Rather, as shown above, the group experienced increasing institutionalization characterized by the establishment of the SCO in 2001. According to Lin Minjing and Liu Jiangyong’s (2009) analysis, this institutionalization was driven by three major factors. First, the historical evolution of cooperation between the countries and the benign interactions in the resolution of the border issues deepened mutual trust and established good relationships between the five countries; second, the five countries shared common security interests in terms of fighting against the three forces of terrorism, separatism, and extremism, and common economic

interests based on their economic complementarities; third, China–Russia had the great aspiration to jointly counter the US hegemony in the Post-Cold War era (M. Lin & Liu, 2009: 4-8).

Nowadays, the SCO is the world's largest and most populous comprehensive regional cooperation organization. All of the member states together account for 20% of the world's economy and 40% of the world's population. In addition to the member states, the SCO has four observer countries and six dialogue partners. It has also established extensive cooperative relations with other international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the IMF, and the World Bank, and its international influence has continuously increased. According to the prediction of the World Trade Organization Secretariat, China, Russia, and India, three of the SCO members, would account for 25% to 33% of the global economy by 2035, and become a critical force driving the development of the global economy. In this regard, it is argued that the SCO's member states, all of which are developing countries, are the most dynamic economies in the current pattern of global development and provide a strong impetus for boosting the global economy.

Moreover, the world is facing a number of global challenges, and global governance mechanisms and multilateral mechanisms are being challenged by unilateralism and protectionism. The SCO devotes itself to constructing a more balanced international order based on an equal, shared, comprehensive, and sustainable security. In this regard, it has made a significant contribution to global governance, especially in its critical role in regional security governance which is observed in the following two aspects.

First, the SCO member states have been working actively to put the new security concept into practice. The SCO is a new type of regional cooperation mechanism which emerged after the Cold War. Like its predecessor, the Shanghai Five, it is committed to eliminating the security risks left over from the Cold War period and establishing a new type of security thinking characterized by the promotion of security through cooperation and the resolution of disputes through dialogue between countries. The SCO has always adhered to the principles of openness, transparency, and not targeting any third party. It emphasizes that member states are not aligned with each other and do not seek to establish military and political alliances. In the past 17 years (2001 to 2018), the SCO resolutely opposed the Cold War mentality and power politics and became a significant force for maintaining regional stability. In this respect, the SCO provides

a new regional cooperation model characterized by joint advocacy, security first, and mutual benefit.

Second, the SCO member states have done their utmost to construct an efficient security cooperation platform. At one time, traditional and non-traditional security issues were interwoven in Central Asia. In this region, the three forces of terrorism, separatism, and extremism were rampant, and drug trafficking and transnational crime were extremely serious. In 2001, during the first SCO summit, the member states signed the *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism* in which they prioritized the combating of these three forces as one of the most important tasks of the SCO. In addition, the SCO member states agreed to establish a number of security meeting mechanisms such as the Defense Ministers' Meeting, the SCO security council secretaries' meeting, and Minister of Public Security Meeting, etc. The SCO is one of the first international organizations to define anti-terrorism measures. In 2004, the SCO's regional anti-terrorist agency was established in Tashkent, and member states conducted multiple exchanges of intelligence. In addition, since 2005, a joint military exercise, the "Peace Mission", has occurred at least ten times. It creates a powerful deterrent against terrorist forces and extremist organizations inside and outside the region.

Of the five SCO member states, China is an indispensable actor in the development of this regional cooperation mechanism. First of all, China was the primary initiator and a founding member of the SCO. As mentioned above, China has always played a leading role in the development of this mechanism since the negotiations that took place during the period of the Shanghai Five summit on the border issue to the establishment and increasing institutionalization of the SCO since the beginning of the 21st century. Second, China has made a great impact on regional economic cooperation. According to Duan Xiufang and Huang Xi, China is the largest economy of the SCO member states. In 2011, China's economic scale was around 3.5 times as large as the aggregation of the other member states (M. Lin & Liu, 2009: 26). On the basis of its material capabilities, China has become the active driver of the SCO's regional, practical cooperation in the areas of trade, finance, energy, transport, telecoms, and agriculture, etc. Specifically, China has played a leading role in the SCO in terms of jointly resisting the international financial crisis, addressing the challenges derived from globalization, and facilitating intra-regional trade and investment, etc.

Given China's critical role in the SCO, this chapter will conduct an empirical analysis of Chinese leaders' rhetoric and China's practice in relation to the SCO that verify the proposed framework of "international leadership with Chinese characteristics". As in the previous two cases, this chapter interprets China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in three stages: the stage of diversifying cooperative areas (2008-2012), the stage of steady progress and deepening cooperation (2013-2016), the stage of organizational expansion and increasing engagement with global governance (2017-2018).

6.2. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA'S NRC EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE SCO

6.2.1. THE DIVERSIFICATION OF COOPERATIVE AREAS (2008-2012)

The 2008 financial crisis that first occurred in the United States led to sluggish economic growth across the world. In addition, the Urumqi riots broke out on 5th July 2009, and there was an outbreak of clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 2010. These serious events threatened Central Asia's regional economic development and stability. Against this backdrop, the SCO member states strengthened their bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and since then, the SCO has shifted its focus onto the "two wheels" (security collaboration and economic cooperation) with an emphasis on diversified cooperative areas. By examining Chinese decision-makers' speeches delivered at the annual SCO summits from 2008 to 2012, it is clear that China's conceptional construction of the ILCC was prominent in this transformation.

First of all, by analyzing the speeches delivered by the then Chinese President Hu Jintao, we can see Chinese decision-makers' overall assessment of the international situation at this stage as "the international situation is experiencing unprecedentedly complex and profound changes, and the international financial crisis continues spreading, which has posed serious impact on the global economy" [国际形势正在经历着前所未有的复杂深刻变化, 国际金融危机仍在蔓延深化, 对全球经济冲击日益显现] (Hu, 2009c). In the meanwhile, Chinese elites also noticed the rise of a large number of non-traditional issues, as Hu noted, "food security, energy and resources safety and public health security remain serious, terrorism, drug production and traffic and cross-border organized crimes are rampant and pirates are still unscrupulous" [粮食安全、能源资源安全、公共卫生安全问题突出, 恐怖主义、毒品生产走私、跨国有组织犯罪猖獗, 海盗肆虐] (Hu, 2009c).

In addition, with respect to the regional situation in particular, Chinese decision-makers contended that “unstable and uncertain factors in this region are clearly on the rise. The negative effects of the international financial crisis are obvious, and the issues of ‘three evil forces’ (terrorism, separatism and extremism) and organized transnational crimes (drug trafficking) are prominent” [本地区形势中的不稳定不确定因素明显增多, 国际金融危机影响继续显现, “三股势力”、毒品走私等问题日益突出] (Hu, 2010a). On the basis of the above understanding of the regional and global situation, Chinese decision-makers constructed its ILCC by steering the direction of the SCO towards “tapping cooperation potential and deepening the cooperation in the issue-areas of transportation, communication, disaster relief, environmental protection, customs, agriculture, technology, and culture, etc.” [不断挖掘合作潜力, 深入开展交通、通信、救灾、环保、海关、农业、科技、文化等领域合作] (Hu, 2008b). From this statement, it could be argued that China was proactively promoting the transformation of the function of the SCO from “two wheels” to a more diversified range of issues.

Specifically, with the purpose of addressing the above-mentioned traditional and non-traditional security issues, during this stage, China’s constructive leadership was manifested in Chinese decision-makers’ proposal of the New Security Concept. According to Hu’s interpretation, in a written interview:

The New Security Concept aims to firmly safeguard the sovereignty, security and development interests of member states, to firmly support the member states to choose their own development path according to their national condition, and to firmly support the regional countries to be in charge of the regional issues. This concept emphasizes the opposition of all sorts of interventionism and the prevention of turbulent shocks outside the region. It ultimately attempts to build a conducive environment for the development of member states.

[上海合作组织倡导的新安全观, 就是要坚定维护成员国主权、安全、发展利益, 坚定支持成员国根据本国国情选择的发展道路, 坚定支持地区事务由地区各国作主, 反对形形色色的干涉主义, 防范区域外动荡冲击, 为成员国发展创造良好外部环境] (Hu, 2012a)

The China-proposed New Security Concept was conducive to the construction of the Comprehensive Security System. In this system, security cooperation is characterized by

“common and collective security” and “mutual benefit”, and it should be “diversified and open” and based on the principle of “equal consultation” (Jinfeng Li, 2017b). In addition, this thesis argues that China’s facilitative leadership (collectiveness and empowerment) was also constructed in line with the principles of the New Security Concept and the Comprehensive Security System.

Moreover, at this stage, China’s constructive leadership can also be observed in Chinese decision-makers’ efforts to explore cooperation potential and expanding cooperation areas among the SCO member states. Chinese decision-makers pointed out that “the SCO member states consist of economic great power, large grain-producing countries, energy-rich countries and countries with huge market. This diversified constituent provides conditions for deepening economic cooperation and preventing international economic fluctuations” [本组织内既有经济大国、产粮大国，也有能源资源富集国和巨大消费市场，深化经济合作、防范国际经济波动冲击的条件得天独厚] (Hu, 2008b). Based on this understanding, at the 11th SCO summit in Astana, the then Chinese President Hu emphasized that “the SCO members should further expand economic cooperation, facilitate trade and investment, promote connectivity in transportation, energy and telecommunication infrastructure and construct the regional energy security, financial security and food security cooperation mechanisms” [我们应该拓展合作领域，推动贸易和投资便利化，推进域内交通、能源、通信基础设施互联互通，加快构建本地区能源安全、金融安全、粮食安全合作机制] (Hu, 2011c).

Last but not least, in addition to security and economic cooperation, during each summit that took place during this stage, Chinese decision-makers repeatedly emphasized the significance of people-to-people exchange. As Hu insisted, “the SCO members should expand people-to-people exchanges in such fields as culture, education, health and tourism, deepen mutual understanding between the peoples and thus consolidate public support for the SCO's future development” [我们应当坚持不懈扩大人文交流，拓宽民间和社会交流渠道，建设教育、医疗服务网络，开展旅游和体育合作，促进人民相互了解，夯实上海合作组织未来发展的社会基础] (Hu, 2011c). In other words, seen from the Chinese perspective, people-to-people exchange was the key factor in the interest construction and vision construction that were the fundamentals of the transformation and long-term development of the SCO.

6.2.2. THE STEADY PROGRESS AND DEEPENING COOPERATION (2013-2016)

With the election of the new Chinese leadership under President Xi, China adopted a more proactive strategy in international relations and paid more attention to the China-led SCO in particular. Having diversified the cooperative areas of the SCO during the last stage, the ILCC during this stage was constructed by strengthening the SCO mechanism and promoting it to play a larger role in regional and global governance.

First and foremost, by evaluating the then regional and international situations, Chinese decision-makers argued that “the SCO is entering a critical period of inheriting the past and ushering in the future. It is our common responsibility and mission to ensure that the SCO always develops along the established track and brings more security and greater well-being to its member states and their peoples” [上海合作组织发展正在进入继往开来的关键时期。确保本组织始终沿着既定轨道向前发展，为成员国和成员国人民带来更多安全、更大福祉，是我们肩负的共同责任和使命] (Xi, 2014d). Based on these perceptions, China’s constructive leadership was embodied by Chinese decision-makers’ emphasis on strengthening the mechanism of the SCO and consolidating the existing levels of cooperation between the member states. For instance, during the 13th SCO summit in Bishkek, Chinese President Xi proposed that:

The SCO members should strengthen cooperation in the financial sector, establish SCO Development Bank and SCO special account; set up energy club and establish stable supply-demand relationship to ensure energy security; establish food security cooperation mechanism, and strengthen cooperation in agricultural production, trade of agricultural products, food safety and other fields.

[上合组织各成员国应当加强金融领域合作，推动建立上海合作组织开发银行，尽快设立上海合作组织专门账户；成立能源俱乐部，协调本组织框架内能源合作，建立稳定供求关系，确保能源安全；建立粮食安全合作机制，在农业生产、农产品贸易、食品安全等领域加强合作，确保粮食安全] (Xi, 2013d).

Moreover, building on the inclusion of people-to-people exchanges as a cooperative area during the previous stage, Chinese decision-makers put more emphasis on this area and proposed two major concepts – “community of shared destiny” and “community of shared interests” – to

consolidate the SCO's outcomes and achievements. During the 14th SCO summit in Dushanbe, Xi argued that “we must see each other in a common endeavor and a community of shared destiny and interests. We must work together with sincerity and dedication to build the SCO into an organization of better institutions, comprehensive cooperation, seamless coordination and greater openness” [牢固树立同舟共济、荣辱与共的命运共同体、利益共同体意识, 凝心聚力, 精诚协作, 全力推动上海合作组织朝着机制更加完善、合作更加全面、协调更加顺畅、对外更加开放的方向发展] (Xi, 2014d).

During this stage, another significant manifestation of China's conceptional construction of the ILCC was to highlight the role of the China-proposed “Belt and Road Initiative” in the development of the SCO. In September 2013, during his visit to Kazakhstan, Chinese President Xi displayed the vision/idea of the “One Belt One Road” (the predecessor of the “Belt and Road Initiative”), which received a positive response from the SCO member states. With the progressive maturity of this vision/idea, during the 16th SCO summit in Tashkent, Xi proposed that “China will promote the SCO to play an active role in integrating the ‘Belt and Road initiative’ with the development strategies of all member states. China welcomes the member states concerned to keep promoting cooperation in production capacity, trade and investment facilitation” [中方大力推动“一带一路”建设同各国发展战略对接, 希望上海合作组织为此发挥积极作用并创造更多合作机遇。中方也愿同有关成员国继续推进产能合作以及贸易和投资便利化合作] (Xi, 2016b).

Last but not least, China constructed its facilitative leadership by announcing its material support to the SCO members. For instance, during the 14th SCO summit in Dushanbe, Chinese President Xi said that “with the purpose of consolidating and strengthening the SCO regional economic cooperation, China decided to provide \$5 billions loan to the SCO member states for financing the cooperative project” (Xi, 2014d). In addition, at the 15th SCO summit in Ufa, China also announced a “push for the completion of 4,000 kilometers of railway and over 10,000 kilometers of highway within the region, so that a layout of regional interconnected transportation will be basically in place” [推动建成 4000 公里铁路、超过 10000 公里公路, 基本形成区域内互联互通格局] (Xi, 2015b).

6.2.3. THE ORGANIZATIONAL EXPANSION AND ITS INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH GLOBAL GOVERNANCE (2017-2018)

On the 15th anniversary of the SCO, the inclusion of India and Pakistan, the first expansion of this organization, marked a new stage. It is widely perceived that the mutual trust between China and Russia was fundamental to this move. In other words, through cooperation with Russia, China constructed its facilitative leadership (collectiveness and inclusiveness) by including new member states. This organizational expansion reflected the inclusiveness and openness of the SCO, as Chinese President Xi emphasized, “openness and inclusiveness are the basic principles since the establishment of the SCO. China supports the SCO in carrying out cooperation with its observer states, dialogue partners and other countries” [开放包容是上合组织成立之初就确立的基本原则。中国支持上合组织同观察员国、对话伙伴以及其他国家开展多形式、宽领域合作] (Xi, 2017d).

There are, however, a number of risks inherent to the inclusion of these two major nations in the SCO. First and foremost, from a political perspective, the troubled relationship between India and Pakistan may bring uncertainty to and threaten the stability of the SCO. For instance, the conflict between the two new members may lead to divergence between China and Russia and even split the organization into two opposing sides. This situation might further challenge the principle of consultation-based consensus and lead to disagreements on some issues (Jinfeng Li, 2017a). Against this backdrop, during the 17th SCO summit in Astana, China constructed its facilitative leadership by emphasizing that the “‘Shanghai Spirit’ is the foundation of the SCO. All member states, old and new, should maintain the good tradition of solidarity and cooperation, deepen political mutual trust, increase mutual support, and build a community of shared destiny featuring equal treatment, mutual support, and sharing of wealth and woe as well as safety and danger” [“上海精神”产生的强大凝聚力是本组织发展的保证。我们要保持团结协作的良好传统，新老成员国密切融合，深化政治互信，加大相互支持，构建平等相待、守望相助、休戚与共、安危共担的命运共同体] (Xi, 2017d).

Second, from the security perspective, the simultaneous inclusion of India and Pakistan may endanger the operation of the SCO. Theoretically, India and Pakistan do not meet the requirement of membership to “have no armed conflict with another state or states” (SCO, 2002). Although both countries committed to the *Treaty of Long-term Good-neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation*

Organization, their long-standing security situation cannot be easily overcome. Under these circumstances, at the Astana summit, China constructed its exemplary leadership by stressing that “we should continue to give priority to the SCO’s commitment to maintain regional security and stability” [我们要一如既往将维护地区安全稳定作为上海合作组织工作的优先方向] (Xi, 2017d). Specifically, with the purpose of strengthening the coordination between member states and supporting the SCO by speaking with one voice, China exhibited its constructive leadership by calling for the SCO “to strengthen regional counter-terrorism institutional building. China is willing to host again the SCO joint counter-terrorism cyber exercise, and it proposes to hold a defense security forum” [中方主张加强地区反恐怖机制建设，愿再次主办上海合作组织网络反恐联合演习，倡议举办防务安全论坛] (Xi, 2017d). Moreover, at the 18th SCO summit in Qingdao, Chinese decision-makers advocated that the SCO member states “should pursue common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. We should reject the Cold War mentality and confrontation between blocs and oppose the practices of seeking absolute security of oneself at the expense of others” [我们要践行共同、综合、合作、可持续的安全观，摒弃冷战思维、集团对抗，反对以牺牲别国安全换取自身绝对安全的做法] (Xi, 2018).

Third, from the economic perspective, with the increasing number of members in the SCO, the demands for daily budget and project funds will also increase, given that, with the exception of China, the other SCO members are experiencing difficulties in their economic development. In addition, SCO-based regional economic integration will become harder to be achieved due to its expansion (Li and Zeng, 2017). To deal with the issue of development, China constructed its constructive leadership (interest construction) by proposing that “the SCO may well serve as an important platform for synergizing the Belt and Road Initiative with regional cooperation initiatives like the Eurasian Economic Union and national development strategies” [中方正和有关各方积极推动“一带一路”建设同欧亚经济联盟建设等区域合作倡议以及各国发展战略对接，上合组织可以为此发挥重要作用] (Xi, 2017d). In addition, Chinese President Xi suggested that the SCO members “should uphold innovative, coordinated, green, open and inclusive development, achieve coordinated social and economic progress of various countries and resolve issues caused by unbalanced development. We should bridge the gap in development and promote shared prosperity” [我们要提倡创新、协调、绿色、开放、共享

的发展观，实现各国经济社会协同进步，解决发展不平衡带来的问题，缩小发展差距，促进共同繁荣] (Xi, 2018).

Fourth, from the social perspective, the inclusion of new members may have negative effects on the collective identity of the SCO and lead to a decrease in the SCO's internal coherence. The inclusion of India and Pakistan may bring more diversified political and cultural factors to this Central Asia-based organization, diluting the (not so cohesive) collective identity of the SCO. Faced with these difficulties, China emphasized the significance of and constructed its constructive leadership (vision construction) by enhancing people-to-people bonds. As Xi said at the 17th SCO summit in Astana, "It is important for SCO countries to bring our people, youth in particular, closer to each other, so that the good-neighborliness and cooperation between us will be carried forward by the future generations" [我们要促进各国民众特别是青年一代心灵相通，使睦邻友好合作事业永葆活力] (Xi, 2017d). Furthermore, at the 18th SCO summit in Qingdao, with the purpose of dealing with the political and cultural diversity of the SCO after the expansion, China further suggested that "we should champion equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness between civilizations. It is important that we overcome cultural misunderstanding, clash and supremacy through exchanges, mutual learning and coexistence" [我们要树立平等、互鉴、对话、包容的文明观，以文明交流超越文明隔阂，以文明互鉴超越文明冲突，以文明共存超越文明优越] (Xi, 2018).

6.3. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA'S NRP EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE SCO

6.3.1. THE DIVERSIFICATION OF COOPERATIVE AREAS (2008-2012)

Since 2001, Shanghai Cooperation Organization has established a wide range of cooperative efforts in political, economic, and security areas, manifested in their fight against the "Three Evils"; transnational crimes, drugs, and arms trafficking. As cooperation between the SCO members deepened, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, they extended their efforts into the areas of trade, culture, technology, education, agriculture, environmental protection, transportation, and finance, etc. This diversification of cooperative areas not only helps the member states to achieve their separate comprehensive and balanced economic and social development, but it also enhances their populations' living standards and strengthens the communication between people and states. The following paragraphs interpret the

implementation of the ILCC in the diversification of cooperative areas from institutional, policy, material, and ideational perspectives.

First, from the institutional perspective, during this stage, China practised its constructive leadership in two aspects. On the one hand, as the major founding state, by virtue of its own diplomacy within the partnership, China and other SCO members promoted institutional innovation within the SCO and reached agreement over the Regulation on SCO Dialogue Partner Status in 2008, aiming to provide a platform for the states and international organizations that are interested in collaborating with the SCO. This agreement granted the SCO more space to increase its international communication and expand its cooperative areas (Xu, 2011). On the other hand, China practised its facilitative leadership (collectiveness and inclusiveness) in the institutional cooperation between the SCO and other competing regional organizations. For instance, the SCO, led by China, and the Eurasian Economic Community, dominated by Russia, objectively formed a competing relationship with each other in terms of member states, geography, and institutional functions. However, during this stage, the two organizations made more cooperative progress rather than establishing competing policies against each other. This situation was largely due to the collective leadership practised by China and Russia in this region (Wang and Wan, 2012). In other words, on the basis of the “Shanghai Spirit”, China’s facilitative leadership was practised by collectively cooperating with another regional great power – Russia – and its leading organizations, being conducive to a favorable environment for peace and the development of the SCO members and other regional states.

Second, from the policy perspective, under the *Outline for the Multilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation of the SCO Member States*, China practised its constructive leadership (interest construction) and facilitative leadership (collectiveness) in order to achieve policy agreement with other SCO members on several emerging issue-areas. For instance, in October 2008, the meeting between the Chinese and Russian prime ministers saw a breakthrough in their energy cooperation, involving policies for the construction of a Russian far eastern pipeline in China, the supply of natural gas, and exploitation and marketing cooperation between the two countries’ oil companies. These achievements in energy cooperation within the SCO provided opportunities for dialogue and coordination between the regional energy-producing, consuming and transiting countries (Yu and Dai, 2009). In October 2009, the Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Member States of the SCO released the *Joint Initiatives of the SCO Members in Strengthening Multilateral Economic Cooperation, Responding to the Global Financial Crisis, and Ensuring Sustainable Economic Development*, identifying 17 major

cooperation areas in terms of information exchange, customs facilitation, technology application, economic and trade cooperation, agricultural development, etc. (Sun and Zhang, 2011). Moreover, at the Beijing SCO summit in 2012, under China's leadership, the SCO granted Afghanistan with observer status, placing the issue of Afghanistan's reconstruction within the framework of the SCO. By releasing the *Declaration of the Heads of State of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Building a Region of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity*, the SCO, for the first time, officially announced its assistance in the reconstruction of this war-weary country (He, 2012).

Third, from the material perspective, China practised its facilitative leadership (empowerment) by helping the SCO members to address the 2008 financial crisis. In 2009, China agreed to respectively lend Russia and Kazakhstan US\$25 billion and US\$10 billion as an oil-for-loan. In the same year, via cooperation-for-loan, China lent US\$100 million to Tajikistan, and it also provided a concessional loan of \$200 million and an interest-free loan worth 80 million RMB to Kyrgyzstan. More importantly, China decided to provide \$10 billion credit to the SCO's bilateral and multilateral economic and technological cooperation projects. China's material support largely helped the SCO members to overcome the crisis (Gao, 2011). China's material contribution to the SCO was also evidenced in its trade with the SCO members. From 2001 to 2011, China's trade volume with the SCO members increased by almost 10 times, from US\$12.1 billion to US\$113.4 billion. This rate of increase was higher than that of China's total global trade volume. By 2011, China became Russia's largest trading partner, the second largest trading partner of Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, and the third largest trading partner of Uzbekistan. As an economic center, China's close economic ties with these SCO members shaped the organization's cohesiveness (Cheng, 2012). Moreover, in the area of people-to-people exchange, by the end of 2008, China had invested a lot in training over 1,500 experts and managers from the SCO members, and had devoted itself to collaborating with the SCO states in human resources. In addition to making institutional and policy contributions to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, in 2012, China announced free assistance of 150 million RMB to this troubled country, aiming to stabilize the Central Asian situation (He, 2012).

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, with the strongest economic capability among the SCO members, China was the active driver of the multilateral economic and trade cooperation of this organization. At this stage, China initiated the idea of the "Three Steps" that was recognized by other SCO member states. Specifically, the "Three Steps" is interpreted as: (1) to improve the cooperation environment by promoting trade and investment facilitation as the first step; (2) to

strengthen economic and technological cooperation to benefit the participants as the second step; and (3) to realize the regional free flows of goods, capital, technology, and services as the third step (Sun and Zhang, 2011). Moreover, at the SCO Beijing summit in 2012, leaders from the SCO member states issued the first political document with the theme of “constructing harmonious region”, indicating that the ideas proposed by China idea of a “Harmonious World”, characterized by lasting peace and common prosperity, was echoed and practised in the development of the SCO (Gao, 2012).

6.3.2. THE STEADY PROGRESS AND DEEPENING COOPERATION (2013-2016)

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has adjusted its peripheral diplomatic policies. In October 2013, Chinese newly-elected President Xi Jinping delivered a significant speech in China’s Periphery Diplomacy Work Forum that was the highest-level diplomatic meeting since 1949 and was the first special meeting on peripheral diplomacy held by the Central Committee of CPC. In this respect, it is argued that the new Chinese leadership attaches greater importance to China’s peripheral diplomacy than the previous leadership. As one of the most vital pillars underpinning China’s peripheral diplomacy, the SCO naturally attracted more attention and investment from China. At this stage, the ILCC was practised by China in terms of constructing the SCO mechanism, coordinating the relationship between the SCO and other regional organizations, setting an agenda for regional cooperation, and initiating ideas of regional order. Moreover, the China-proposed “Belt and Road Initiative” was seen as a boost for the development of the SCO at this stage.

First, from the institutional perspective, China practised its facilitative leadership in coordinating the relationship between the SCO and other regional and international organizations. Central Asia is an arena of great power politics: in this region, except for the China-led SCO, there exist a number of regional institutions, such as the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization and Eurasian Economic Union, the NATO-led Partnership for Peace, and the EU-led “Partnership and Cooperation Agreements”, etc. These institutions and organizations objectively pose great challenges to the development of the SCO (Ma, 2016). Against this background, the China-proposed “Belt and Road Initiative” played a positive role in managing the complicated situation. For instance, in December 2015, China and Russia signed the *Joint Communiqué of the 20th Regular Meeting between Chinese and Russian Prime Ministers*, indicating that both sides (China and Russia) saw the SCO as the most effective

platform to connect the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union. In this respect, the SCO was granted more institutional significance in regional bilateral and multilateral cooperation (Xin Li, 2016).

Moreover, at this stage, the SCO obtained certain achievements in promoting financial cooperation and constructing financial architecture. The SCO members agreed the *Medium-term Development Strategy of the SCO Interbank Consortium (2012-2016)*, identifying that the SCO priorities of “joint activities in the context of current economic development goals of the SCO member states, widen the scope of activities by involving the financial institutions of observer states and dialogue partners and monitor the implementation of joint regional investment projects” (SCO, 2017). In this regard, it is argued that the SCO Interbank Consortium (IBC), as a critical financing platform of the SCO, played an active role in providing funds to regional cooperation programs among the SCO members and put these programs into practice (Guo, 2015).

On the basis of the existing SCO financial cooperation represented by the SCO IBC, China practised its constructive leadership by deepening the SCO’s financial institutionalization. In December 2014, at the 13th Meeting of Council of Heads of Government of SCO Member States, Chinese Premier Minister Li Keqiang emphasized the necessity of promoting the establishment of the SCO Development Bank as a long-term stable financing platform. China insisted that the SCO Development Bank and the SCO Development Fund, if they could be successfully established, would bring positive implications for regional economic cooperation, regional infrastructure programs, trade facilitation, internationalization of Chinese RMB, and the institutionalization of financial crisis prevention (Jiang, 2016).

Second, from the policy perspective, by promoting the connection between the SCO and “Belt and Road Initiative”, China was proactively involved in the agenda setting of the SCO. China implemented its constructive leadership (interest construction) by setting and extending the SCO’s cooperation agenda from traditional and non-traditional security issues to economic and trade issue-areas. Guided by the *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road* issued in 2015, China enriched the cooperation agenda under the framework of the SCO. On the basis of economic, trade, and raw material cooperation between the SCO members, China further deepened cooperation within the SCO and extended the cooperative areas on infrastructure construction and interconnectivity (Ma, 2016).

For instance, in December 2015, at the 14th Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of SCO Member States in Zhengzhou, Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang highlighted regional economic cooperation by establishing a connection between the SCO's economic cooperation and the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt. According to the Joint Communiqué released at this meeting, the SCO member states confirmed their support for the Silk Road Economic Belt. They were convinced that the joint work of the SCO member states on the implementation framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative would promote gradual sustainable economic growth in the interests of keeping and supporting peace and stability in the region. In other words, by issuing the *Statement on Regional Economic Cooperation*, the SCO confirmed that the Silk Road Economic Belt conformed to the SCO's development objectives and would be conducive to regional infrastructure construction, capacity investment, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and the regional industrialization and modernization of the SCO countries. (Xin Li, 2016).

Third, from the material perspective, during this stage, the majority of emerging economies, including the SCO member states and observers, experienced an economic downturn. Consequently, the SCO members adopted measures to address this problem. For instance, in 2014 and 2015, Kazakhstan consecutively announced its Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, “Bright Road” Initiative, State Program for Industrial and Innovative Development (2015-2019), and the “100 Concrete Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms”. In 2014, Uzbekistan launched its long-term strategy, “Uzbekistan Towards 2030”, emphasizing the construction of transportation infrastructure and aiming to achieve a transition to a resource-efficient growth model and to improve the institutional conditions for social development. In 2016, Tajikistan released its National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030. By examining these countries' development strategies, we can see that they were seeking opportunities to connect their national development with the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt. Against this background, in March 2015, China and Kazakhstan signed the *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Strengthening Bilateral Production Capacity and Investment Cooperation* and more than 30 cooperation documents, amounting to funding of US\$23.6 billion. China-Kazakhstan cooperation was seen as a model of capacity cooperation between the Silk Road Economic Belt and the SCO (Xin Li, 2016).

In addition, since 2013, by virtue of its capacity advantages and economic capabilities, China practised its facilitative leadership (empowerment) by establishing a number of cooperation agreements with the other SCO member states. In September 2013, during Chinese President

Xi's visit to Central Asia, China signed a series of cooperation agreements with SCO countries, including China's US\$7.7 billion investment in Uzbekistan and its US\$3 billion of financing and investment in Kyrgyzstan for the development of bilateral investment programs. In May 2014, China and Kazakhstan signed several financing agreements. For instance, the Chinese and Kazakhstan Development Bank signed a US\$500 million general credit agreement that aimed to invest in Kazakhstan non-resources programs. In December 2014, during Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang's Eurasia trip, China signed several big business deals with the SCO members. For example, China and Kazakhstan signed a business deal worth US\$14 billion (Jiang, 2016).

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, since the establishment of the SCO, China has always advanced the idea of a win-win form of cooperation, indicating that the relationship between the SCO members was not built on enforcement and coercive power, rather it was based on the member states' consensus and shared interests. At this stage, with the launch of the "Belt and Road Initiative", China has devoted itself to promoting the "community of shared destiny", seen as a new comprehensive vision covering economic, political, security, and people-to-people cooperation. In addition, China also highlighted the ideas of "wide consultation, joint contribution, shared benefits" in promoting cooperation within the SCO. These ideas, to some extent, helped to neutralize the side effects of and relieve the anxiety caused by arguments of "overcapacity export" and "China Threat" (Ma, 2016).

One of the most prominent instances of China's implementation of constructive leadership (vision construction) was China's proposal of the "Asian Security Concept". In 2016, for the first time, China hosted the CICA Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Beijing and Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the "Asian Security Concept", which was characterized by common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. This idea was not only considered as a product of China's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" and "New Security Concept", but also it was regarded as an international extension of China's Overall National Security Concept in the domestic context. More significantly, the China-proposed "Asian Security Concept" received recognition from the SCO member states and shared common grounds with the SCO's core value – the "Shanghai Spirit" – in terms of the pattern of regional cooperation (Zheng, 2016).

6.3.3. THE ORGANIZATIONAL EXPANSION AND INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH GLOBAL GOVERNANCE (2017-2018)

During this stage, with the inclusion of India and Pakistan in 2017, the SCO expanded for the first time since its establishment. This act indicated that the diplomatic, economic, cultural, and security cooperation demonstrated by this Central Asia-based organization had extended its influence to South Asia, bringing about both opportunities and challenges for the SCO and its member states. Moreover, since 2016, the United States has withdrawn from a number of international organizations and treaties and abdicated its responsibility to the international community. Against this background, the implementation of the ILCC in the SCO, during this stage, was manifested in dealing with the expansion of the organization on the one hand and in promoting the SCO to play a more proactive role in global governance on the other hand. In this respect, the 2018 Qingdao SCO summit was seen as a platform for China to exhibit the ILCC.

First, from the institutional perspective, China practised its facilitative leadership (inclusiveness) by ratifying the inclusion of India and Pakistan into the SCO at the Astana SCO summit in 2017. China's decision showed that this China-led organization was "audacious and creative" and was seen as "a clear departure from the traditional reserve and caution of Chinese diplomacy" (Carrier, 2018). The SCO's institutional expansion was not only seen as a creative attempt that brought the political and military rivalries into one regional group, but also it enhanced the representativeness of the SCO in terms of its increased political, economic, military weight. After this expansion, the SCO member states represented 40% of the world's population and generated 20% of global GDP, and it now "stretches across a large part of the strategically critical Eurasia-South Asia landmass" (Carrier, 2018). In this respect, it is argued that China's implementation of the ILCC granted the SCO with greater capability and opportunities to influence regional affairs and global governance.

In addition, China practised its constructive leadership by advancing the institutional arrangements of regional economic cooperation. For instance, at the Astana summit in 2017, China suggested that the SCO members could begin by signing an SCO trade facilitation agreement. With the aim of building greater connectivity between the region's countries, China supported the opening of the cross-border routes on schedule as prescribed in the *Agreement between Governments of the Member States of the SCO on Creating Favorable Condition for International Road Transportation* and initiated the establishment of economic think-tanks

cooperation and e-commerce cooperation, promoting cooperation between small and medium sized companies from the SCO members.

At the Qingdao summit in 2018, with the aim of unifying existing and new members and preventing potential conflicts after the SCO's expansion, China promoted the signing of the *Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, reconfirming a constructive partnership characterized by non-alliance, non-confrontation, and non-targeting of any third party. This move was conducive to the consolidation of its institutional principles and in the spirit of the mechanism of the SCO. In the meanwhile, in the field of economics and trade, given the rise of protectionism and anti-globalization sentiments in the West, China practised its exemplary leadership by encouraging the member states to uphold the multilateral trade system featuring openness, inclusiveness, transparency, non-discrimination, and which was rule-based.

Moreover, with pressure from China, the SCO made a breakthrough in the area of global governance. At the Qingdao summit in 2018 – in addition to the participation of the UN delegate – senior representatives from the Eurasian Economic Alliance, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank were, for the first time, invited to participate in this event. The SCO Secretariat also signed a cooperation document with UNESCO, in sharp contrast to the United States' withdrawal from this organization in 2017. Institutional cooperation between the SCO and other significant international organizations not only endowed the SCO with greater recognition within the international community, but also it granted the SCO a broader platform on which to take an active role in contributing to global governance.

Second, from the policy perspective, with China's support, at the Qingdao summit the SCO jointly released several significant policy documents, notably the *Qingdao Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, the *Joint Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Trade Facilitation*, and China ratified a five-year outline for the implementation of the *Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, setting the direction for cooperation between the SCO members in the next phase and approving a host of resolutions and cooperation deals in a myriad of issue-areas.

Moreover, the implementation of the ILCC was also manifested in a number of achievements at the Qingdao summits hosted by China. In the security area, the SCO members ratified the

2019-2021 Program of Cooperation for Combating “Three Evil Forces”, developed measures for preventing the participation of youth in terrorist, extremist, and separatist organizations, improving the system fighting against the exchange of information between terrorists. In terms of the economy, the Qingdao summit issued several documents relating to practical economic cooperation, covering the themes of trade facilitation, international road transportation facilitation, food security, and customs coordination, etc. In the meanwhile, the China-proposed “Belt and Road Initiative” received increasing support and was good for regional economic cooperation. In the people-to-people exchange area, the Qingdao summit reached consensus on respect for cultural diversity and differing values and promoted cooperation in the areas of cultural communication, education, technology, health care, tourism, youth, women, media, and sport.

Third, from the material perspective, as the largest economy in the SCO, China has driven the dramatic growth of trade and investment among the SCO members. By 2017, the total trade volume of the SCO member states was US\$4.9 trillion compared to US\$672 billion in 2001, and it became US\$5.71 trillion following the inclusion of India and Pakistan. In the meanwhile, China’s total trade volumes with the other SCO members amounted to US\$217.6 billion, and it became the largest trading partner of Russia, Kyrgyzstan, India, and Pakistan and the second largest trading partner of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. By 2017, the total investments of the SCO members amounted to US\$178.9 billion, which was 2.8 times the amount recorded in 2003. China’s total investment in other SCO members was US\$83 billion, and it became the largest investment source country of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and the fourth largest investment source country of Russia and Kazakhstan. From these statistics, this thesis argues that China practised its facilitative leadership in driving the dramatic development of regional economic cooperation.

Moreover, in addition to bilateral cooperation with the SCO members, China also contributed a lot to multilateral cooperation under the framework of the SCO at this stage. At the Astana summit in 2017, China contributed 10 million RMB (US\$1.47 million) to the SCO Secretariat in order to facilitate its maintenance and operation. In addition, at the Qingdao summit in 2018, China established a 30 million RMB (US\$4.7 billion) equivalent special lending facility within the framework of the SCO Interbank Consortium (IBC). In the meanwhile, China also decided to provide human resources development training to 3,000 individuals from the SCO member states, aiming to enhance the understanding and recognition of the SCO as a unified body.

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, with the purpose of unifying the expanded SCO and contributing to global governance, on the basis of the “Shanghai Spirit”, China practised its constructive leadership (vision construction), at the Qingdao SCO summit, by innovatively proposing the common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable New Security Concept, the innovative, coordinated, green, open, and inclusive New Development Concept, the open, inclusive, and win-win New Cooperation Concept, and the New Civilization Concept featuring equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness. Moreover, China also developed a New Global Governance Concept characterized by the principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration and building a community with a shared future for humanity. These innovations not only laid the ideational foundations for the development trajectory of the expanded SCO, but they also provided guidelines for the SCO by which to engage in global governance.

6.4. SUMMARY

6.4.1. THE GENERALIZATION OF THE ILCC IN THE SCO

On the basis of the above empirical analysis of China’s NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in the SCO, the generalization of the ILCC in the SCO can be interpreted as follows.

During the first two stages described above – the diversification of cooperative areas of the SCO (2008-2012) and the steady progress of the SCO (2013-2016) – China made institutional, material, policy, and ideational contributions through its construction and implementation of the ILCC. During these two stages, with deepening cooperation between the member states, the most significant development of the SCO was its diversification of cooperative issue-areas, covering both its traditional cooperative areas of security and economy and its emerging cooperative areas of trade, culture, technology, education, agriculture, environmental protection, transportation, and finance. Since then, China has practised its facilitative leadership by establishing the SCO Interbank Consortium (IBC) with other member states and proposing the founding of the SCO Development Bank as a long-term stable financing platform. However, the functional diversification of the SCO has inevitably led to a competitive relationship between the SCO and other regional organizations. In this regard, by virtue of the China-proposed “Belt and Road Initiative”, China practised its facilitative leadership by promoting cooperation between the SCO and other regional institutions, such as the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union and the EU-led “Partnership and Cooperation Agreements”. Moreover, as with its role in the BRICS, China has practised its constructive leadership by shaping the

founding principle of the “Shanghai Spirit”, characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and aspiration for common development, in the establishment and development of the SCO. By sticking to this principle, the SCO member states, especially China and Russia, have had opportunities to resolve their differences, coordinate their policies, and preserve regional stability.

During the third stage of expansion and increasing engagement with global governance (2017-2018), the most significant event was the inclusion of India and Pakistan into the SCO. This act demonstrated that this China-led organization was “audacious and creative” (Carrier, 2018) by bringing political and military rivals into one regional group and then enhancing the representativeness of the SCO in terms of its increased population and political, economic, and military weight. However, it is worth noting that the inclusion of these countries was based on the founding principle of the “Shanghai Spirit”, as India and Pakistan agreed that they would not use the SCO as a third-party resolution platform for their bilateral conflicts. Moreover, during this stage, another momentous development was the SCO’s engagement with global governance. Against the backdrop of the United States’ withdrawal from UNESCO, China practised its facilitative leadership by persuading the SCO Secretariat to sign a cooperation document with this key international organization, and this endowed the SCO with greater recognition within the international community. China also practised its constructive leadership and exemplary leadership at the Qingdao summit by contributing several innovative concepts, such as the New Security Concept, the New Development Concept, the New Cooperation Concept, and the New Civilization Concept, which provided guidelines for the SCO to take part in global governance.

In sum, by generalizing the ILCC in the SCO during these three stages, this thesis argues that the relationship between China’s NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in the SCO was generally consistent, even though it cannot be denied that there were deviations between China’s NRC and NRP because of a number of challenges at various levels and dimensions. Similar to the situation in the BRICS, China and Russia are widely recognized as joint leaders in the SCO. In this regard, this thesis contends that the ILCC has been fully constructed and implemented by China in the SCO in the fields of security, economic development, and global governance.

6.4.2. THE ILCC IN THE SCO AS A REFLECTION OF THE MAJOR FEATURES OF CHINESE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

By interpreting the manifestation of the ILCC in the SCO, this thesis argues that the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the SCO generally reflects the three features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. First of all, the ILCC in the SCO can be interpreted as a reflection of the feature of relationality. As the first China-led multilateral security organization, the SCO has played a significant role in fighting against the “Three Evils” (terrorism, separatism, and extremism) and contributed a great deal to the regional stability of Central Asia, which has enhanced China’s reputation and recognition by the SCO members and the international anti-terrorism community. Moreover, Central Asia is seen as traditionally a Russian sphere of influence, and the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) are the key regional mechanisms that are considered as challengers to the development of the SCO. Thus, by insistently upholding the “Shanghai Spirit”, China has demonstrated its constructive leadership and devoted itself to managing the complex relations in order to maintain regional stability. For instance, in December 2015, China and Russia signed the *Joint Communique of the 20th Regular Meeting between Chinese and Russian Prime Ministers*, indicating that both sides (China and Russia) see the SCO as the most effective platform for connecting the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union. This joint communique demonstrated the common ground between the China-led and Russia-led EEU, remedying the tensions and disputes between the two regional powers and preserving social and political stability in Central Asia. As a result, it was conducive to a favorable environment for peace and the development of the SCO members and other regional states.

Second, China has constructed and practised its facilitative leadership and constructive leadership by shaping an open and inclusive SCO, being considered as a reflection of the feature of inclusiveness. The most prominent example demonstrating this feature was China’s ratification of the inclusion of new members – India and Pakistan – into the SCO. Given that the inclusion of India and Pakistan brings more diversified political and cultural aspects to this Central Asia-based organization, which could dilute the collective identity of the SCO, China has repeatedly emphasized the significance of the “Shanghai Spirit” as the fundamental principle of the SCO, in order to consolidate the outcome of the organization’s expansion. By complying with this principle, India and Pakistan have agreed that they will not bring their bilateral disputes into the SCO and will not seek to resolve their conflict through the SCO as a

third-party platform. In this respect, this act of expansion was seen as a creative and inclusive attempt that brought political and military rivalries into one regional group. Another example that displays the feature of inclusiveness of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR was China's invitation of a number of delegates from other international organizations to attend the Qingdao summit in 2018. In addition to the delegate from the UN, senior representatives of the Eurasian Economic Alliance, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank were, for the first time, invited to participate in this summit. Moreover, during the China-hosted Qingdao summit, the SCO Secretariat also signed a cooperation document with UNESCO, in sharp contrast to the United States' withdrawal from this organization in 2017. The institutional cooperation between the SCO and other significant international organizations not only endowed the SCO with a high profile in the international community, but it also granted the SCO a broader platform on which to take an active role in contributing to global governance.

Third, over the past decade, through its construction and implementation of the ILCC, China has played a critical role in promoting the development and diversifying the functions of the SCO during three major stages in the post-crisis era, which can be interpreted as a reflection of the feature of processuality. Against the background of the outbreak of the global financial crisis and the decreasing legitimacy of the existing international economic institutions, China has practised its constructive leadership by extending the major focus of the SCO from the issue-area of regional security to regional economic cooperation and development. Moreover, the inclusion of India and Pakistan has also strengthened the political, economic, and security weight of the SCO in international relations. This thesis argues that this functional diversification and organizational expansion followed the grand tendency of the post-crisis world economy, characterized by the increasing significance of the emerging powers and developing countries in governing the regional economy. However, the transformation of the SCO was not achieved in a radical manner, rather it was realized via a manageable and balanced process manifested in two major aspects. On the one hand, the organization's expansion, i.e. the inclusion of India and Pakistan, was achieved through a step-by-step process and was perceived as the outcome of mutual trust between China and Russia – the two major great powers of the SCO. On the other hand, the functional diversification of the SCO, mainly manifested in its economic function, has the potential to generate competition with other regional economic organizations. Consequently, China practised its facilitative leadership by promoting cooperation between the SCO and the Russia-led CSTO and EEU, shaping the

development of the SCO in a cautious manner, with respect for the interests of other member states in the region.

6.4.3. THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ILCC IN THE SCO

In the third example above, the summary points out the major challenges faced in the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the SCO. These challenges were examined from both the multilevel and multidimensional perspective, as designed in the case study process. Specifically, the challenges were as follows.

First, competition between China and Russia is a major challenge to the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the SCO. Although China and Russia are seen as joint drivers of the SCO, it cannot be denied that these two countries also have divergences in their geopolitical and economic concerns.

From the geopolitical perspective, Russia has, for a long time, considered Central Asia as its sphere of influence, and has always aimed to restore Russia to glory on the basis of this region. In the meanwhile, China has also invested a lot in this region, as a significant component of its neighborhood diplomacy. In this circumstance, the Central Asian countries are able to strike a balance between China and Russia. They intend to lose their excessive reliance on Russia and to use China to counterbalance the dominance of Russia in the region. This inevitably leads to Russian concerns about the growing influence of China in the Central Asian countries (Stronski and Ng, 2018). In addition, the Central Asian member states of the SCO are simultaneously members of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC). As a result, for Russia, the SCO is just seen as a supplement to these two institutions. Moreover, a number of supposed “China Threats”, such as the “the imbalance of power between China and Russia”, “Chinese immigrants in the Far East of Russia”, “China requests for territory from Russia”, have the potential to have a negative impact on the China-Russia relationship and to lead to a defensive Russian mentality towards China (Alexseev, 2018).

From the economic perspective, the SCO is China’s only multilateral mechanism in Central Asia. However, other SCO member states participate in the Russia-led multilateral mechanisms, such as the Eurasian Economic Community. Russia and other Central Asian countries have naturally inherited the economic relationships of the former Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union era, Russia was the leading country in the region and established extensive economic, industrial,

and trade relationships with the Central Asian countries. In other words, historically, the economic ties between Russia and the Central Asian countries were seen as a “core-periphery” relationship (Menon, 1995). For Russia, the SCO is merely one of its multilateral groupings in this region and it poses certain challenges for Russia by diluting its economic dominance in this region. Therefore, it is reasonable for Russia to pay more attention to the development of the Eurasian Economic Community and Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Area and to emphasize its leading role in regional economic cooperation rather than to the China-led SCO. As a consequence, this situation inevitably has an impact on the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the SCO and in Central Asia.

Second, following the expansion of the SCO, the inclusion of India and Pakistan may bring uncertainties to the development of the SCO and the ILCC. The most prominent uncertainty is the conflict between India and Pakistan. Although the two new members have stated that they will not bring their bilateral conflicts into the SCO and will not seek to resolve their conflict through a third-party platform (such as the SCO), their increasing engagement with the SCO will inevitably lead to disagreements between China and Russia and even, possibly, to the split of the SCO. The conflict between India and Pakistan may also threaten the SCO’s principle of “reaching consensus through consultation” and may weaken the organization’s ability to reach agreement and implement decisions. As a consequence, the construction and implementation of the ILCC will unquestionably be challenged.

Third, economic issues among the SCO member states also pose a great challenge to the ILCC. First, trade facilitation between the SCO members faces a number of barriers in terms of different customs procedures, divergent regulatory policies, and various business environments, etc. Second, varying development levels among the SCO member states lead to a divergence of interests. China, Russia, and India are the leading economies in the SCO, and the other five members are lagging behind in terms of economic development. Thus, it is not easy to make a unified plan for regional economic development and integration. Third, an imbalance between the cooperation areas of the member states can also provide a potential threat to the development of the SCO. For a long time, SCO members have focused on cooperation in the resources industry and have paid less attention to the agriculture and service industries. This situation impedes the further expansion of regional economic cooperation. Fourth, the co-existence of a number of overlapping economic cooperation mechanisms has a negative impact on the development of the ILCC in the SCO. In this region, in addition to the China-led SCO, the Eurasian Economic Community, Commonwealth of Independent States, and Central Asian

Cooperation Organization are also significant cooperation mechanisms. This situation predictably dilutes the ILCC in terms of regional economic cooperation.

Last but not least, since 9/11, the United States has increasingly engaged with the geopolitical and economic issues of Central Asia. The presence of the United States in this region applies great strategic pressure on the regional great powers – China and Russia. In the name of fighting against terrorism, the United States has extended its military force to Central Asia and has dramatically changed the geopolitical reality of this region. The presence of a U.S. military force in this region poses a challenge to China and has a huge impact on the role of the China-led SCO in regional security. The Central Asian countries seeking a security balance between China and the United States will certainly decrease the influence of China in this region.

CHAPTER 7. CASE IV: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ILCC IN THE BRI

7.1. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

In September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping respectively proposed the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” during his visit to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. Since then, the two initiatives have attracted enormous international attention in political, business, and academic circles. In November 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee approved the *Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform*, explicitly proposing that China will endeavor to build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in order to form a new pattern of all-round opening-up. In March 2015, with State Council authorization, China’s National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of People’s Republic of China jointly issued their *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*, identifying the principles, framework, cooperation priorities, and cooperation mechanisms for these projects and indicating the top-level design of the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI). In March 2016, in the *13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China (2016-2020)*, the BRI, identified as the major objective of this period, is projected to develop “a new picture of all-around opening up in which China is opened to the world through eastward and westward links and across land and sea” (NDRC, 2016). In this respect, the BRI was designed to unite China’s domestic development with international economic cooperation. In May 2017, China successfully hosted the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, during which a great deal of progress was made and significant consensus was reached among the participants.

Since it was first proposed, China’s motivations and the implications arising from the launch of the BRI have been extensively studied by a large number of scholars from multiple perspectives, as follows.

China’s motivations for proposing the BRI have been examined from historical and contemporary perspectives. From a historical perspective, historians and cultural scholars have interpreted the background and China’s motivations on the basis of the historical and cultural heritage of the ancient silk road, and they have argued that the ancient silk road laid solid

historical and cultural foundation for the form and development of the BRI in terms of following the ancient economic corridor and connecting diverse cultures – Chinese culture, Indian culture, Persian culture, Arabic culture, and the ancient Greek and Roman culture. In other words, according to the historians and cultural scholars, the BRI is regarded as the best example of inheriting the spirit of “peaceful cooperation” and “open and inclusive culture” embedded in the ancient silk road (Han, 2015).

From the contemporary perspective, economics and politicians have attributed the BRI initiative to two major motivations: internal and external. From the internal perspective, economic and political scientists have interpreted China’s motivations for proposing the BRI on the basis of the Chinese domestic economic situation characterized by the New Normal Economy, the middle-income trap threat, and the divergence in regional development. They argue that the construction and implementation of the BRI is an effective way of promoting domestic reform, achieving sustainable development, and coordinating development between the eastern and western regions (T. Wang, 2015; Zheng, 2015). From the external perspective, scholars of international relations and political science argue that China’s response to geopolitical factors is the motivation for China’s proposal of the BRI. They apply Nicholas John Spykma’s “Rimland Theory” (1942) and Halford John Mackinder’s “Heartland Theory” (1902) to interpret the Obama Administration’s proposal of the “Pivot to Asia Strategy” and “New Silk Road Strategy”, arguing that these strategies may dilute China’s influence in Asia and help the United States to build its dominance in this area. In the meantime, Russia launched the Eurasian Economic Union to consolidate its relationship with the other Commonwealth of Independent States. Influenced by these geopolitical factors, China proposed the BRI in order to maintain regional stability and achieve its peaceful development and cooperation with regional countries (J. Wang, 2015).

Moreover, scholars have also conducted extensive research on the implications of the BRI from economic, political, cultural, and international perspectives. (1) From the economic perspective, the implementation of the BRI promises great value for the achievement of the sustainable development of China’s national economy in terms of exploring emerging markets, relieving China’s excess capacity, and by promoting economic and trade cooperation between China and the countries along the routes. By strengthening the economic connections between China and other participants, China will be able to explore new strategic development spaces and construct China’s all-round opening-up in the new era. (2) From the political perspective, the launch of the BRI has positive implications for China’s political stability and the construction of a sound

international environment for China. One major objective of the BRI is to establish a community of shared destiny between China and other participants. In this respect, the implementation of the BRI laid a solid political foundation for realizing China's objective of "Two Centenaries". (3) From the cultural perspective, the BRI is seen as an important platform for strengthening cultural communication between China and the other participants. Both the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" contain rich cultural connotations. The promotion of the BRI will reinforce communication between diverse ideas and religions along the routes, paving the way for the peaceful co-existence of various cultures. The BRI appreciates the divergence of development models and strategies among different countries and emphasizes dialogue between various civilizations, exerting a positive influence on China's involvement in international communication and people-to-people exchanges. (4) From the international perspective, as a regional cooperation program, the BRI has a great deal of international significance. On the one hand, the BRI serves China's periphery diplomacy well, providing opportunities for the development of the SCO member states and the SCO as a China-led regional organization. On the other hand, more broadly, the BRI helps to demonstrate China's new ideas and new models for developing regional cooperation through constructing an economic corridor and providing foreign development assistance. By doing so, the BRI spells out China's plan for the achievement of regional development and the promotion of world peace.

In sum, having reviewed the research on China's multiple motivations for proposing the BRI and the multidimensional implications brought about by the BRI for China and its other participants, this thesis argues that the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the BRI can be interpreted through an examination of the development process of this China-initiated project. Unlike the previous three cases, the BRI was proposed and developed for five years only (2013-2018) and it is difficult to divide the development process of the BRI into specific stages. Thus, this chapter will not conduct an empirical analysis of the BRI on the basis of stages, unlike the cases of the G20, BRICS and SCO, rather it interprets China's NRC and NRP embedded in ILCC in the BRI from the perspective of regional cooperation and global governance.

7.2. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA’S NRC EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE BRI

7.2.1. CHINA’S CONSTRUCTION OF THE ILCC IN THE BRI FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

In September and October 2013, China constructed its constructive leadership (interest construction and vision construction) by respectively proposing the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” in Kazakhstan and Indonesia. With the purpose of raising the profile of the China-initiated “Belt” and “Road” by the target countries, in his speeches in Astana and Jakarta, Chinese President Xi Jinping started by recounting the cultural and historical legacies embedded in the centuries-old connection and cooperation between China and countries along the ancient (maritime) silk road. For instance, in his speech delivered in Nazarbayev University, Xi said that “Kazakhstan, sitting on the ancient Silk Road, has made an important contribution to the exchanges between the Eastern and Western civilizations and the interactions and cooperation between various nations and cultures” [哈萨克斯坦这片土地, 是古丝绸之路经过的地方, 曾经为沟通东西方文明, 促进不同民族、不同文化相互交流合作作出过重要贡献] (Xi, 2013f). In the same vein, one month after Xi’s speech in Astana, he delivered another speech at the People’s Representative Council of Indonesia and argued that “As early as the Han Dynasty in China about 2,000 years ago, the people of the two countries opened the door to each other despite the sea between them. Over the centuries, the vast oceans have served as the bond of friendship connecting the two peoples, not a barrier between them” [早在 2000 多年前的中国汉代, 两国人民就克服大海的阻隔, 打开了往来的大门。几百年来, 遥远浩瀚的大海没有成为两国人民交往的阻碍, 反而成为连接两国人民的友好纽带] (Xi, 2013e).

Moreover, in addition to its cultural and historical foundations, China’s proposals for the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Maritime Silk Road” were also based on Chinese decision-makers’ assessments of the opportunity to act. In Kazakhstan, the proposal of the “Belt” was in line with Chinese decision-makers’ perception that “both China and Central Asian countries are at a crucial stage of development with unprecedented opportunities and challenges. Our strategic goals are the same, which is to ensure sustained and stable economic development, build a prosperous and strong nation and achieve national revitalization” [中国和中亚国家都处在关键发展阶段, 面对前所未有的机遇和挑战。我们的战略目标是一致的, 那就是

确保经济长期稳定发展，实现国家繁荣富强和民族振兴] (Xi, 2013f). In Indonesia, China launched the “Road” initiative based on Chinese decision-makers’ understanding that “the growing mutual trust between the two countries has put our bilateral relations on a more solid political basis. Our practical cooperation has expanded from such traditional areas as economy, trade, finance, infrastructure, energy, resources and manufacturing to include new fields such as space and maritime affair” [我们两国互信不断加深，双边关系政治基础更加牢固。两国务实合作领域更加广泛，既有经贸、金融、基础设施、能源资源、制造业等传统领域，还拓展到航天、海上等新兴领域] (Xi, 2013e).

On the basis of the this assessment, Chinese decision-makers had officially proposed the “One Belt One Road” (the predecessor of the Belt and Road Initiative) and explicitly highlighted its significance for regional cooperation. On the one hand, Chinese decision-makers pointed out that the “Silk Road Economic Belt” could promote Asian regional cooperation and inter-regional cooperation between Asia and Europe, as Chinese President Xi argued in Kazakhstan that “to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’. We may start with work in individual areas and link them up over time to cover the whole region” [为了使我们欧亚各国经济联系更加紧密、相互合作更加深入、发展空间更加广阔，我们可以用创新的合作模式，共同建设“丝绸之路经济带”。以点带面，从线到片，逐步形成区域大合作] (Xi, 2013f). On the other hand, Chinese decision-makers identified that the “21st Maritime Silk Road” could bring positive impacts for regional development in Southeast Asia, especially regarding cooperation between China and ASEAN, the central player in regional cooperation. According to Xi, “China will strengthen maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries and jointly build the ‘21st Century Maritime Silk Road’. China is ready to expand its practical cooperation with ASEAN countries across the board” [中国愿同东盟国家加强海上合作，共同建设 21 世纪“海上丝绸之路”。中国愿通过扩大同东盟国家各领域务实合作，互通有无、优势互补] (Xi, 2013e).

To avoid the BRI becoming an empty talk-shop and in order to increase its operability, Chinese decision-makers further identified five issue-areas of the BRI for promoting regional cooperation, as Xi Jinping demonstrated as follows:

First, we need to step up policy communication. We should have full discussions on development strategies and policy response, work out plans and measures for advancing regional cooperation through consultation in the spirit of seeking common ground while reserving differences. Second, we need to improve road connectivity. We will actively discuss the best way to improve cross-border transportation infrastructure and work toward a transportation network connecting East Asia, West Asia and South Asia to facilitate economic development and travel in the region. Third, we need to promote unimpeded trade. We should discuss a proper arrangement for trade and investment facilitation, remove trade barriers, reduce trade and investment cost, increase the speed and quality of regional economic flows and achieve win-win progress in the region. Fourth, we need to enhance monetary circulation. If our region can realize local currency convertibility and settlement under current and capital accounts, it will significantly lower circulation cost, increase our ability to fend off financial risks and make our region more competitive economically in the world. Fifth, we need to increase understanding between our people. To have productive cooperation in the above-mentioned areas, we need the support of our people. We should encourage more friendly exchanges between our people to enhance mutual understanding and traditional friendship and build strong public support and a solid social foundation for regional cooperation.

[第一，加强政策沟通。各国可就经济发展战略和对策进行充分交流，本着求同存异原则，协商制定推进区域合作的规划和措施；第二，加强道路联通。各方积极探索完善跨境交通基础设施，逐步形成连接东亚、西亚、南亚的交通运输网络，为各国经济发展和人员往来提供便利；第三，加强贸易畅通。各方应该就贸易和投资便利化问题进行探讨并作出适当安排，消除贸易壁垒，降低贸易和投资成本，提高区域经济循环速度和质量，实现互利共赢；第四，加强货币流通。各国在经常项下和资本项下实现本币兑换和结算，就可以大大降低流通成本，增强抵御金融风险能力，提高本地区经济国际竞争力；第五，加强民心相通。搞好上述领域合作，必须得到各国人民支持，必须加强人民友好往来，增进相互了解和传统友谊，为开展区域合作奠定坚实民意基础和社会基础] (Xi, 2013f)

Xi's identification of the five major cooperative areas of the BRI provided an overall guideline for achieving regional cooperation in a comprehensive way. According to Wang Yin, the five areas had the potential to strengthen political trust, economic integration, and cultural compatibility between the participants of the BRI, and are conducive to the formation of a

regional community of common interests, a regional community of common responsibility, and a regional community of common destiny (Wang, 2017).

Furthermore, China constructed its facilitative leadership (inclusiveness) by not limiting the number of participants in the BRI and advocating the construction of open and inclusive regional cooperation, as Chinese President Xi argued: “Through implementing the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’, we will go for even broader, deeper and more sophisticated cooperation at the regional level and jointly foster a regional framework of open, inclusive, balanced and mutually beneficial cooperation” [通过“一带一路”建设，我们将开展更大范围、更高水平、更深层次的区域合作，共同打造开放、包容、均衡、普惠的区域合作架构] (Xi, 2015a). At the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in Beijing in May 2017, the idea of openness and inclusiveness was further strengthened by Xi’s speech during the opening ceremony. According to Xi, “In pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, we will not resort to outdated geopolitical maneuvering. What we hope to achieve is a new model of win-win cooperation. We have no intention to form a small group detrimental to stability, what we hope to create is a big family of harmonious co-existence” [我们推进“一带一路”建设不会重复地缘博弈的老套路，而将开创合作共赢的新模式；不会形成破坏稳定的小集团，而将建设和谐共存的大家庭] (Xi, 2017b).

In the meanwhile, in laying out the principles of constructing the BRI, China constructed its facilitative leadership from the collective perspective. The collectiveness of the BRI is not only manifested in the joint efforts between China and other participants, but also it is observed in the complementary relationship between the BRI and other regional cooperation mechanisms. As Xi contended, that “In promoting the BRI, China will follow the principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. It will be a real chorus comprising all countries along the routes, not a solo for China itself. The BRI is not to replace existing mechanisms or initiatives for regional cooperation. We will build on the existing basis to help countries align their development strategies and form complementarity” [“一带一路”建设秉持的是共商、共建、共享原则，不是封闭的，而是开放包容的；不是中国一家的独奏，而是沿线国家的合唱。“一带一路”建设不是要替代现有地区合作机制和倡议，而是要在已有基础上，推动沿线国家实现发展战略相互对接、优势互补] (Xi, 2015d).

China’s construction of its facilitative leadership in the BRI was also manifested in China’s empowerment of other participants’ domestic development and in the promotion of regional

cooperation. One of the most prominent examples was a series of material and financial programs announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in his speech at the 2017 Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing. First, China was committed to increasing its financial support for the construction of the BRI, “contributing an additional RMB 100 billion to the Silk Road Fund” [向丝路基金新增资金 1000 亿元人民币] and “the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China will set up special lending schemes respectively worth RMB 250 billion equivalent and RMB 130 billion equivalent to support Belt and Road cooperation on infrastructure, industrial capacity and financing” [中国国家开发银行、进出口银行将分别提供 2500 亿元和 1300 亿元等值人民币专项贷款，用于支持“一带一路”基础设施建设、产能、金融合作] (Xi, 2017b). Second, China decided to enhance cooperation on innovation with other participants along the routes, “offering 2,500 short-term research visits to China for young foreign scientists, training 5,000 foreign scientists, engineers and managers, setting up 50 joint laboratories in the coming five years” [我们将在未来 5 年内安排 2500 人次青年科学家来华从事短期科研工作，培训 5000 人次科学技术和管理人员，投入运行 50 家联合实验室] (Xi, 2017b). Third, China showed its great willingness to improve people’s living standards and strengthen the capacity building of other developing countries involved in the BRI, “providing assistance worth RMB 60 billion to developing countries and international organizations participating in the Belt and Road Initiative to launch more projects to improve people's well-being in the coming three years and providing emergency food aid worth RMB 2 billion to developing countries along the Belt and Road and make an additional contribution of \$1 billion to the Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation” [中国将在未来 3 年向参与“一带一路”建设的发展中国家和国际组织提供 600 亿元人民币援助，建设更多民生项目。我们将向“一带一路”沿线发展中国家提供 20 亿元人民币紧急粮食援助，向南南合作援助基金增资 10 亿美元] (Xi, 2017b).

7.2.2. CHINA’S CONSTRUCTION OF THE ILCC IN THE BRI FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

China’s construction of the ILCC in the BRI was manifested in Chinese decision-makers’ initiatives and contributions to the process and architecture of global governance. Chinese decision-makers believe that the promotion of the BRI is necessary and feasible for the improvement of the existing global governance. This perception is based on Chinese elites’ assessment of the international situation, which was clearly demonstrated by Chinese President

Xi Jinping's statement that "we find ourselves in a world fraught with challenges. Global growth requires new drivers, development needs to be more inclusive and balanced, and the gap between the rich and the poor needs to be narrowed. Hotspots in some regions are causing instability and terrorism is rampant. Deficit in peace, development and governance poses a daunting challenge to mankind" [我们正处在一个挑战频发的世界。世界经济增长需要新动力，发展需要更加普惠平衡，贫富差距鸿沟有待弥合。地区热点持续动荡，恐怖主义蔓延肆虐。和平赤字、发展赤字、治理赤字，是摆在全人类面前的严峻挑战] (Xi, 2017b). Premised on this assessment, as a representative power in world politics and the global economy, China initiated the "Belt and Road" initiative in order to address the above-mentioned deficits and constructed the ILCC in the process of promoting the BRI

First of all, by promoting the BRI, Chinese decision-makers constructed China's constructive leadership (interest construction and vision construction) by representing China's idea of global governance. In 2015, at the 27th Collective Study Session of the 18th CPC Politburo, Chinese President Xi Jinping highlighted China's core principle of global governance – wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefit [共商、共建、共享]. Since then, Chinese decision-makers have repeatedly emphasized and consolidated this principle in the process of promoting the BRI. As Xi said at the Opening Ceremony of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in 2014, "China and the Arab states are natural cooperative partners in jointly building the 'One Belt One Road'. The two sides should adhere to the principle of discussion, co-construction and sharing, and build a community of common interests and a community of common destiny" [中国同阿拉伯国家是共建“一带一路”的天然合作伙伴，中阿双方应该坚持共商、共建、共享原则，打造中阿利益共同体和命运共同体] (Xi, 2014a). In 2016, during a symposium on the Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing, Xi delivered a speech and proposed eight critical requirements for constructing the BRI. The primary requirement was "to adhere to wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit among participants, to pursue equality and mutual benefit, and to firmly grasp the development direction and focus on key regions, countries and projects" [坚持各国共商、共建、共享，追求平等和互利，把握重点方向，聚焦重点地区、重点国家、重点项目] (Xi, 2016c). In 2017, at the Leaders Roundtable of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, Xi Jinping once again emphasized that "in the framework of the BRI, countries should work together to address the challenges facing the world economy, create new opportunities for development and move towards a community of common destiny on the basis of wide

consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit” [在“一带一路”建设国际合作框架内，各方秉持共商、共建、共享原则，携手应对世界经济面临的挑战，开创发展新机遇，不断朝着人类命运共同体方向迈进] (Xi, 2017a). It is worth mentioning that this China-proposed idea/principle of global governance also helped China to construct its facilitative leadership, owing to the collectiveness and inclusiveness embedded in this idea/principle.

Second, in order to implement the goal of the BRI to improve regional development and financial governance, China constructed its constructive leadership (institutional construction) by initiating and establishing several financial mechanisms among which the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is the most prominent achievement. For a long time, weak infrastructure has been a major hindrance to Asian economic development. It is estimated that, during the period from 2010 to 2020, the total infrastructure investment demand of the Asian developing countries will be as high as US\$8 trillion, with an average annual investment of about US\$730 billion. However, the annual investment volume of the existing multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, is only US\$10 billion, being far from sufficient to meet the demand. Against this background, at the People's Representative Council of Indonesia in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping first initiated the construction of the AIIB in his speech, as he said, “China is committed to greater connectivity with ASEAN countries. China will propose the establishment of an Asian infrastructure investment bank that would give priority to ASEAN countries' needs” [中国致力于加强同东盟国家的互联互通建设。中国倡议筹建亚洲基础设施投资银行，愿支持本地区发展中国家包括东盟国家开展基础设施互联互通建设] (Xi, 2013e). In 2014, with the increasing popularity of the AIIB, at the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership in Beijing, Xi delivered a speech on *Connectivity Spearheads Development and Partnership Enables Cooperation* that constructed China's facilitative leadership by emphasizing the collective and inclusive relationship between the AIIB and the existing Western-based multilateral financial institutions. As Xi argued, “As a useful supplement to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other financial institutions, the AIIB will play a significant role in connectivity development in Asia” [亚洲基础设施投资银行对世界银行、亚洲开发银行等现有金融机构是有益补充，将在亚洲互联互通建设中扮演重要角色] (Xi, 2014b). In 2016, at the Inauguration Ceremony of the AIIB, Chinese President Xi Jinping once again highlighted the significance of the AIIB for the improvement of regional and global economic governance. According to Xi, “The founding and opening of the AIIB also means a great deal to the reform

of the global economic governance system. It is consistent with the evolving trend of the global economic landscape and will help make the global economic governance system more just, equitable and effective” [亚投行正式成立并开业，对全球经济治理体系改革完善具有重大意义，顺应了世界经济格局调整演变的趋势，有助于推动全球经济治理体系朝着更加公正合理有效的方向发展] (Xi, 2016a).

Third, through the process of consolidating the central role of the BRI in regional and global governance, Chinese decision-makers constructed China’s exemplary leadership by using its material power in a moral manner – sharing China’s development with other countries and providing public goods. In this respect, China’s facilitative leadership is also constructed through its empowerment of the developing countries in terms of strengthening their capacity building. In 2014, at the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership in Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that “The ‘Belt and Road initiative’ represents a joint undertaking by China and its Asian neighbors. China gives top priority to countries in the neighborhood in its foreign policy and pursues amity, sincerity, mutual-benefit and inclusiveness in growing relations with them. China is ready to provide more public goods to its Asian neighbors through connectivity development and welcomes them to get on board the train of China’s development” [“一带一路”是中国和亚洲邻国的共同事业，中国将周边国家作为外交政策的优先方向，践行亲、诚、惠、容的理念，愿意通过互联互通为亚洲邻国提供更多公共产品，欢迎大家搭乘中国发展的列车] (Xi, 2014b). In addition, with the opening of the AIIB, Chinese decision-makers also showed their great willingness to share China’s achievements with potential partners and to contribute to regional and global development. As Xi emphasized, “The door of China’s opening up will never shut and China welcomes all countries to ride on its development. China stands ready to work with other parties to make sure that the AIIB will start to operate and play its due role as soon as possible and contribute to economic growth and better livelihood in developing countries. And China continues to welcome AIIB and other international financial institutions to take part in the building of the ‘Belt and Road’” [中国开放的大门永远不会关上，欢迎各国搭乘中国发展的“顺风车”。中国愿意同各方一道，推动亚投行早日投入运营、发挥作用，为发展中国家经济增长和民生改善贡献力量。我们将继续欢迎包括亚投行在内的新老国际金融机构共同参与“一带一路”建设] (Xi, 2016a).

7.3. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINA’S NRP EMBEDDED IN THE ILCC IN THE BRI

7.3.1. CHINA’S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ILCC IN THE BRI FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

First, from the institutional perspective, China practised its constructive leadership (institutional construction) and facilitative leadership (collectiveness and inclusiveness) by promoting regional cooperation through establishing cooperation between the BRI and other significant international organizations and cooperation mechanisms along the routes, which laid an institutional foundation for regional cooperation. On the one hand, the “Silk Road Economic Belt” has established cooperative relationships with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF), the China-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Strategic Dialogue, the China-Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) Cooperation Forum (16+1 mechanism), and China-EU Summit, etc. On the other hand, the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” has been involved in developing cooperative relationships with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the China-ASEAN (10+1) Meeting, the ASEAN plus three (China, Japan and South Korea), the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation (GMS), the Pan-Beibu Gulf (PBG) Economic Cooperation Forum, the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). As a result of the above-mentioned inter-institutional cooperation, the BRI has received increasing recognition from international society and has been responsible for exerting China’s influence on regional cooperation.

As another China-led regional organization, the SCO has extensively engaged in the BRI in terms of promoting regional cooperation. Specifically, with the strengthening economic ties between the SCO members, the SCO has devoted itself to improving infrastructure construction and achieving interconnectivity in Central Asia, laying a realistic foundation for strategic alignment between the SCO and the BRI. Against this background, the AIIB, a major financing institution of the BRI, approved a number of loans for the projects in Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. In this respect, the SCO has gradually evolved into a critical platform for cooperation with the BRI and has helped to transform the BRI from idea to action and from initiative to reality.

Second, from the policy perspective, China practised its facilitative leadership (collectiveness) and constructive leadership (interest construction) by coordinating policies with other regional organizations and countries along the BRI. At the regional level, in the process of promoting the BRI, China has achieved alignment with a number of regional policies and development strategies such as the *Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025*, the *Investment Plan for Europe (the Juncker Plan)*, the *Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa*, and the *APEC Connectivity Blueprint*, etc. For instance, in May 2015, China and Russia signed a *Joint Declaration on the Connection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)* that was warmly received by the member states of the EEU and the SCO. In addition, the strategic alignment between the BRI and the ASEAN Community Blueprint has greatly enhanced the China-ASEAN relationship and been conducive to regional infrastructure development and economic growth in Southeast Asia.

Moreover, at the national level, with the promotion of the BRI, China has co-formulated cooperation plans with a number of countries along the routes, such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Poland, and Laos. For instance, in May 2015, during a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev, Xi commented that “we are ready to align the Silk Road Economic Belt to Kazakhstan’s new economic policy of the Bright Road, so as to achieve common development and prosperity on the basis of equality and reciprocity” (Rao, 2015). According to Kazakhstan’s Deputy Prime Minister Erbolat Dossaev, policy and strategy coordination between the BRI and Kazakhstan’s “Bright Road” strategy “will promote the economic and social development of Kazakhstan and provide participating countries and regions with broader opportunities for development” (Chinatax, 2018). In the same year, Chinese President Xi and Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj discussed the possibility of coordinating the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and Mongolia’s “Steppe Road” strategy, which is considered as “an indication of China’s efforts to promote the win-win nature of OBOR” (Grossman, 2017: 2).

Third, from the material perspective, on the basis of its huge economic volume, China practised its facilitative leadership by empowering countries along the routes and promoting regional economic growth through trade and investment. By June 2018, China’s trade with other participants had exceeded US\$5 trillion, with an annual growth rate of 1.1%, and China has become the largest trading partner of 25 countries along the routes. Since the proposition of the BRI, China’s foreign direct investment (FDI) in the participants has surpassed US\$70 billion, growing at 7.2% per year, and it has contracted foreign projects that are worth more than

US\$500 billion, with an annual growth rate of 19.2%. Moreover, in the last five years, China has also actively devoted itself to building overseas economic and trade cooperation zones (OETCZ) along the routes. By 2018, China had invested US\$28.9 billion in co-establishing more than 80 OETCZs with host countries and host companies. These OETCZs have accumulatively paid the host countries' taxes and fees of US\$2 billion and created over 244,000 jobs for local communities. In addition, China has signed and upgraded five free trade agreements (FTA) with 13 countries along the routes, and China has been working hard to build a high-standard network of free trade areas that is "based on neighboring regions, covering the Belt and Road and facing the whole world" (SCIO, 2018).

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, under the framework of the BRI, China practised its constructive leadership (vision construction) and exemplary leadership (intellectual guidance) by proposing a new pattern of development-oriented regional cooperation. In this new pattern, development does not refer to economic growth, but it emphasizes social and cultural development. In this respect, the China-proposed new pattern of development-oriented regional cooperation aims to promote the common development of regional countries, address the increasing regional inequality, and deal with environmental pollution, etc. Moreover, this China-initiated concept of regional cooperation also features "cooperative development" that advocates "wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits" between the regional countries. In this regard, under the framework of the BRI, the concept of "cooperative development" presents "a tremendous opportunity for fostering regulatory, economic and legal cooperation among regional countries" (Perera, 2018).

7.3.2. CHINA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ILCC IN THE BRI FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

First, from the institutional perspective, the "Belt and Road Initiative" is seen as an institutional public good. Generally speaking, the core of international public good is institutional and involves rule systems that regulates countries' behavior. The failure of the traditional governance mechanism to provide efficient public good mainly results from a mismatch between the traditional rule system and emerging global issues (Xue and Yu, 2015). Against this background, the ILCC is practised by China through its promotion and implementation of the BRI in terms of providing a more open and inclusive public good.

Under the framework of the BRI, China practised its constructive leadership (institutional construction) by setting up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road

Fund, which are considered to be China's major institutional practices in regional and global governance. As the primary financial institution of the BRI, the AIIB, opened in January 2016, was a prominent manifestation of China's contribution to the provision of an international public good and the improvement of the existing governance system. Nancy Birdsall and Scott Morris pointed out that the AIIB has contributed five institutional innovations to the Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) model, such as "(1) a single and singular focus on infrastructure; (2) a single governance structure with minimal use of special funds and funds directed by outside donors; (3) a single balance sheet; (4) a fresh experiment (for MDBs) in the challenge of what can be called good governance; (5) no graduation policy" (Birdsall and Morris, 2017). In addition, China also practised its facilitative leadership (collectiveness) by developing cooperative partnership between the AIIB and the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. From this perspective, China has adopted flexible economic statecraft and showed its willingness to set a status-seeking AIIB agenda, which can "boost the legitimacy of Chinese international leadership claims" (Wilson, 2017: 1).

The Silk Road Fund (SRF), established in December 2014, "follows a philosophy of openness, inclusiveness and mutual benefit and provides investment and financing support for trade and economic cooperation and connectivity under the framework of the BRI" (SRF, 2014). The inclusiveness and openness of the SRF is clearly manifested in its various inter-institutional relationships with other established and emerging financial organizations and mechanisms, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the World Bank, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the African Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the SCO Interbank Consortium (IBC), etc.

Second, from the policy perspective, China has actively practised its facilitative leadership (inclusiveness) and constructive leadership (interest construction) by coordinating and aligning policies and strategies between the BRI and a number of significant international organizations in the issue-areas of global development and economic governance, such as the G20, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), etc. Since its inception, the BRI has been committed to constructing an open world economy, which "echoes with the G20's endeavor to reinforce global economic governance" (Y. Yang, 2017).

Moreover, the BRI focuses on global development governance and it naturally aims to reach policy alignment with the *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* set by the UNDP. At

the high-level symposium on “Belt and Road Initiative and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in 2018, the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly Miroslav Lajčák pointed out that the BRI has the potential to bring about the kind of partnership needed for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and he also argued that the AIIB can “provide funding through its loan programme – which is another critical element for achieving our Goals” (Lajčák, 2018). In sum, the policy and strategy alignment between the BRI and the global initiative proposed by the existing global institutions is conducive to improvements in the established process and system of global development and economic governance.

Third, from the material perspective, in respect of the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund, China is deeply involved in regional development governance and practises its facilitative leadership by empowering the participants along the Belt and the Road in terms of providing credit to their domestic projects and strengthening their capacity building. By June 2018, the AIIB had lent a total of over US\$4.4 billion by approving nearly 30 projects in areas (countries) from North Africa (Egypt) to Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines, and Myanmar), from Central Asia (Turkey, Tajikistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) to South Asia (India and Pakistan), and from East Asia (China) to the Gulf (Oman).

These projects mainly focus on the improvement of infrastructure and the enhancement of people’s well-being in target countries and regions. For instance, in June 2016, the AIIB approved a loan of US\$100 million for a Pakistani project that intends to “achieve an efficient and safer transport corridor between Islamabad, Faisalabad, and Multan, ensuring enhanced connectivity between the various parts of Pakistan” (AIIB, 2016). In March 2017, the AIIB lent US\$125 million to an Indonesian project in terms of “increasing the safety and the functionality of the 63 short-listed prioritized large dams/reservoirs and developing the regulatory and administrative arrangements for dam and reservoir management and safety” (AIIB, 2017). In April 2018, the AIIB lent US\$140 million to an Indian project that aims to “improve rural accessibility through resilient infrastructure and the primary beneficiaries are villagers, especially women and children, who use the rural roads daily for social and economic activities” (AIIB, 2018).

Moreover, as another major financial institution in the framework of the BRI, the Silk Road Fund has approved 19 projects with the total value of US\$7.4 billion, covering the BRI’s key regions of Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, North Africa, and Central and East Europe. These projects are distributed across various fields, including energy, engineering machinery,

petrochemistry, communication network, shipbuilding, and financial cooperation. For instance, under the framework of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Karot Hydropower project was the first investment project to be funded by the Silk Road Fund. This project has power generating capacity up to 3,350 megawatts and will improve the power supply and benefit economic growth in Pakistan. In addition, the Silk Road Fund was involved in the Russian Yamal LNG project that was officially put into operation at the end of 2017. According to James Henderson, Director of the Natural Gas Programme at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES), “Yamal LNG is the key component in Russia’s North Sea Route and Arctic strategies, as it provides a commercial justification for new infrastructure development” (Humpert, 2017).

Fourth, from the ideational perspective, through the implementation of the BRI, China practised its constructive leadership (vision construction) and exemplary leadership (intellectual guidance) by cultivating a bottom-up model of global governance. Compared to the traditional “one-size-fits-all” model of global governance represented by the Washington Consensus, China’s implementation of the BRI does not seek to build a top-down governance model that imposes the so-called omnipotent prescription with conditionality. On the contrary, China advocates a bottom-up model of global governance characterized by the idea of “wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits”. Specifically, “wide consultation” denotes that countries should seek common ground while preserving their differences on the basis of mutual respect and mutual trust; “joint contribution” highlights that participants should be fully involved in the efficient allocation of resources in the framework of the BRI; and “shared benefits” refers to the spirit of win-win cooperation and inclusive development shared by the participants. In sum, wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefit are seen as key components of an organic mechanism of new-modality global governance conducive to the establishment of equal and inclusive partnerships and the formation of a community of common destiny.

With the impact of the BRI and China’s growing engagement in global governance, China-proposed ideas and visions of global governance have received increasing attention and been acknowledged by the international community. For instance, in September 2016, the 71st Session of UN General Assembly incorporated the idea of “wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits” into the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution of “United Nations in Global Economic Governance”. In the meanwhile, at the same session, all 193 UN members agreed to incorporate the “Belt and Road Initiative” into the

UNGA resolution. One year later, at the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2017, the Chinese-proposed concept of building a “community of shared future for mankind” was incorporated into the relevant UNGA resolutions. These examples demonstrate how China-initiated concepts of global governance in the framework of the BRI have been gradually translated into international consensus.

7.4. SUMMARY

7.4.1. THE GENERALIZATION OF THE ILCC IN THE BRI

As discussed above, given that the BRI has only been in operation for five years, there are no clear-cut stages into which it might be divided, unlike the other three cases. Thus, on the basis of the author’s interpretation of China’s NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC in the BRI, this section presents a generalization of the ILCC in the BRI from the perspectives of regional cooperation and global governance.

From the perspective of regional cooperation, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by proposing the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” that together provide a vision for building regional cooperation in the post-crisis era. Specifically, with the purpose of promoting regional cooperation, first, China practised its constructive leadership and facilitative leadership by promoting cooperation between the BRI and other significant international organizations and cooperation mechanisms along the routes; second, at the regional and national level, China practised its facilitative leadership by achieving a number of policy alignment and development strategy alignments with other regional mechanisms and countries; third, China practised its facilitative leadership by empowering countries along the routes and promoting regional economic growth through trade and investment, becoming the largest trading partner of 25 countries along the routes; fourth, China practised its constructive leadership (vision construction) and exemplary leadership (intellectual guidance) by proposing a new pattern of development-oriented regional cooperation that aims to promote the “cooperative development” of regional countries.

From the perspective of global governance, with the purpose of implementing the BRI, first, China practised its constructive leadership by leading the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund, which are considered as major institutional practices in regional and global governance; second, China has actively practised its facilitative leadership and constructive leadership by coordinating and aligning policies and

strategies between the BRI and a number of significant international organizations regarding the issue-areas of global economic governance and global development governance. For instance, the BRI has realized policy alignment with the *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* set by the UNDP; third, through the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund, China practised its facilitative leadership by empowering participants along the Belt and the Road in terms of providing credit to their domestic projects and strengthening their capacity building; fourth, China practised its constructive leadership and exemplary leadership by cultivating a bottom-up model of global governance that is characterized by the idea of “wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits”. This idea was incorporated into the UNGA resolution “United Nations in Global Economic Governance” during the 71st Session of UN General Assembly.

Above all, the ILCC in the BRI was mainly constructed and implemented by China in the two major areas of regional cooperation and global governance. As a China-initiated project, the BRI provides opportunities for China to inject its innovative ideas and visions into these two areas. According to Huang Rihan, executive director of the Belt and Road Institute at the Center for China and Globalization, the BRI, in the last five years, has achieved certain success in terms of strengthening diplomatic relationship, promoting economic cooperation, and shaping global academic agenda, etc.⁴ In other words, the thesis contends, during the first five years of the BRI, the ILCC – facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership – was largely constructed and implemented in institutional, policy, material, and ideational dimensions. However, there has been increasing criticism of the BRI; for example, remarking on the fact that the BRI is solely dominated by China, that China’s ambitions in promoting the BRI are unclear, and that the BRI may cause potential geopolitical conflict.

7.4.2. THE ILCC IN THE BRI AS A REFLECTION OF THE MAJOR FEATURES OF CHINESE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

On the basis of the above summary, the ILCC in the BRI can be interpreted as a reflection of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. First of all, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by proposing and promoting the major mission of the BRI, which became known as the “five connectivity” (policy communication, road connectivity, unimpeded trade, monetary circulation, and people-to-people exchange); this mission can be

⁴ Interview with Dr. Huang Rihan from the Belt and Road Institute at the Center for China and Globalization. Date: 24th May, 2018.

considered as a reflection of the feature of relationality. Since the BRI was designed as a grand inter-continental project that connects a vast number of countries and covers many areas with potential risks and conflicts, by advancing the “five connectivity”, China aims to manage complex regional and inter-regional relations under the framework of the BRI and construct a comprehensive relational network that is built upon institutional, material, and ideational foundations. Moreover, in order to assuage doubts from other participants and construct a favorable environment for the implementation of the BRI, China practised its facilitative leadership by establishing cooperation between the BRI and many other significant international organizations and cooperation mechanisms along the routes. For instance, the “Silk Road Economic Belt” now cooperates with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF), the China-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Strategic Dialogue, the China-Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) Cooperation Forum (16+1 mechanism), and the China-EU Summit. Similarly, the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” has been involved in cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the China-ASEAN (10+1) Meeting, the ASEAN plus three (China, Japan and South Korea), the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation (GMS), the Pan-Beibu Gulf (PBG) Economic Cooperation Forum, the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). As a result of the above-mentioned associations, the BRI has gradually received increasing recognition from international society.

Second, China constructed and practised its facilitative leadership by shaping open and inclusive regionalization and globalization through the BRI, which can be interpreted as a reflection of the feature of inclusiveness. Specifically, the feature of inclusiveness is mainly manifested in two aspects. On the one hand, during the early years, China’s government and Chinese scholars officially identified around 64 major participants along the Belt and Road routes. However, with the development of the BRI, China has explicitly stated that there is no limitation to the number of participants under the framework of the BRI, and China is keen to embrace any potential participant that wishes to be involved in the project. Although the United States and Japan have always been skeptical of and resistant to this China-led initiative, from China’s perspective, it is still possible for the United States and Japan to participate in and contribute to the BRI. Thus, it is argued that China’s BRI is fundamentally different from the post-war Marshall Plan that mainly served the U.S.’s geopolitical interests. On the other hand,

the feature of inclusiveness can also be observed in China's promotion of an alternative mode of governance through the BRI. Compared to the traditional "one-size-fits-all" model of global governance represented by the Washington Consensus, China does not seek, via the BRI, to build a top-down governance model by imposing a so-called omnipotent prescription with conditionality. Rather, it advocates a bottom-up model of global governance characterized by the idea of "wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits", which insists that countries seek common ground while preserving their differences on the basis of mutual respect and mutual trust. This also implies that participants are fully motivated to be involved in the efficient allocation of resources and encourages win-win cooperation between and inclusive development for participants. More importantly, in September 2016, the idea of "wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits" was incorporated into the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution of "United Nations in Global Economic Governance" during the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly, indicating the recognition of the idea by the international community.

Third, the construction and implementation of the ILCC can be regarded as a reflection of the feature of processuality of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR. Against the backdrop of global economic stagnation and the outbreak of a number of "Black Swan" events in the Western world, China's proposal of the BRI followed the grand tendency of fighting against protectionism and preserving globalization. On many international occasions, Chinese decision-makers have expressed their willingness to maintain the existing international system characterized by free trade and open economy, and the BRI is considered as the first Chinese strategy to proactively achieve this target. Over the last five years, China has actively constructed and practised its facilitative leadership and constructive leadership by gradually transforming the BRI from idea to action and from initiative to reality. One of the most representative examples of this was the establishment and operation of the AIIB – the major financing institution of the BRI – which focuses on infrastructure development in its participants. Unlike the traditional development mode, which emphasizes the significance of a type of shock therapy for transforming economic systems and achieving economic growth, China advocates that one country's economic development should follow a process in which its infrastructure development is one of the key components. In this regard, by June 2018, the AIIB had supported the implementation of the BRI by lending a total of over US\$4.4 billion, by approving nearly 30 projects along the routes, covering areas (countries) from North Africa (Egypt) to Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines, and Myanmar), from Central

Asia (Turkey, Tajikistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) to South Asia (India and Pakistan), and from East Asia (China) to the Gulf (Oman). Moreover, given its wide coverage and great ambition, the BRI is often marked with geopolitical tags and has attracted suspicion from other countries. Therefore, taking external feedback and expectations into account, Chinese decision-makers adopted a prudent attitude to implementing the BRI as a more manageable and balanced process. For instance, China recognizes the significance of coordination between the BRI and other major international institutions. Thus, under the framework of the BRI, China has achieved a number of coordinating and aligning policies and strategies, on the issue-areas of global development and economic governance, with the G20, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), etc.

7.4.3. THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ILCC IN THE BRI

In the previous section, the author pointed out the major challenges faced in the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the BRI from multilevel and multi-dimensional perspectives as follows.

In the first place, at the global level, since 2016, a series of “Black Swan” events occurred in the field of global politics and economy. Brexit, the election success of Donald Trump, and the rise of the right wing in Europe have together indicated a dramatic shift in the Western political ecology and the rise of populism, characterized by “the suspicion of and hostility toward elites, mainstream politics, and established institutions” (Zakaria, 2016). In the meantime, there has also been an upsurge of anti-globalization sentiments and policies in the economic issue-area. For example, the Trump Administration released its protectionist policy of “America First” and announced a presidential executive order to “Buy American and Hire American”. The great wave of anti-globalization and protectionism in the Western world will impact on the implementation of the BRI, which relies on open and inclusive regionalization and globalization.

Moreover, at the global level, the China–U.S. great power game also poses a significant challenge to the construction and implementation of the ILCC in the BRI. As the largest global power, in line with the concept of the “Thucydides Trap”, the United States has always held a vigilant attitude toward the world’s largest emerging power and the second largest economy – China. Over the last decade, China’s dramatic growth and the transformation of China’s diplomatic strategy has imposed great pressure on the United States. Thus, with the purpose of

suppressing China and maintaining its regional and global hegemonic status, the United States identified China as a revisionist power. Following the initiation and implementation of the BRI, the U.S. mainstream media frequently reported this China-initiated project in a negative manner and described it as “bleak”, and U.S. officials both explicitly and implicitly boycotted the BRI on several occasions. In 2014, when the AIIB was being established, the U.S.’ boycott of and dissatisfaction with the BRI became much more prominent. Against this backdrop, some U.S. scholars even claimed that the BRI and the AIIB intended to divide the Western world.

In the second place, at the regional level, the BRI faces several kinds of challenges as follows. First, the issue of the stability of political regimes may pose potential and unpredictable challenges to the implementation of the BRI. For many countries along the routes, their political systems are still not fully established and not in a stable condition. In these countries, complex relationships exist between the ruling party and opposition party and between central and local government. The rise of a new regime usually means that contracts and projects signed by the previous government are overturned. Second, social instability is another major factor that impedes the development of the BRI. Slow economic development, social inequality, government corruption, and external intervention often lead to social upheaval and even social revolution, such as the Arab Spring and the Color Revolution in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region. Third, the “Three Evils”, terrorism, extremism, and separatism, are bringing about negative effects on the implementation of the BRI, especially the Silk Road Economic Belt. For instance, driven by economic factors, terrorist groups may attack BRI projects and personnel. This can threaten the personal security of project employees, and it can also lead to economic loss by increasing a project’s operating costs.

In addition to the previous three regional challenges, the construction and implementation of the ILCC also faces challenges from other major regional powers, and India is one of the most prominent examples of this. Since the BRI was first proposed, India has always been reluctant to fully embrace this China-initiated regional project. India’s hesitation and misgivings about the BRI result from the following factors: (1) India has strong great power consciousness and cultural self-esteem. Sharing similar experiences with China in modern history and being an ancient civilization, India also has an unshakeable determination to achieve a national revival characterized by national development and an independent foreign policy. The pursuit of national glory has motivated India to launch an India-led project and to increase its discourse power in international relations; (2) India’s hesitation to embrace the BRI and its pursuit of strategic autonomy are also derived from its unique, self-contained geographic system. Its

regional geographic characteristics shape the unique historical, cultural, and transportation system of the country. Compared to Northeast Asia, geographically, India has much closer natural ties with Central Asia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia. By virtue of this geographic factor and its national strengths, India has shaped an independent, self-contained “connectivity” system in the region of the Indian Ocean Rim; (3) from the perspective of geopolitics, India’s reluctance to accept the BRI is also caused by its misgivings about China’s increasing influence in the region of the Indian Ocean Rim, which is seen as India’s traditional sphere of influence. There is reportedly a consensus among the Indian elites, “India is the center of the region, so the region is India, and it is our job to protect it from outside” (Gill, 1992: 58). Guided by this understanding, India has always held a vigilante attitude toward cooperation between regional countries and outside powers, and it has devoted itself to maintaining its dominant positions in this region. Above all, as Emilian Kavalski argued, in terms of BRI, the three elements of the ILCC can be observed in some regions (such as Southeast Asia and Middle East), but they are not really constructed and implemented in some other regions.⁵

⁵ Interview with Professor Emilian Kavalski from the University of Nottingham. Date: 13th September, 2018.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, the major function and significance of the conclusion is “to distill all the chapters into a single highly focused chapter...to tie up the ends from where they started...and to extract meaning from the research data” (Trafford & Leshem, 2008: 127-128). Inspired by Trafford and Leshem’s clarification, as shown in Figure 8.1 below, this chapter intends to summarize the conceptual conclusions of the ILCC, which are derived from the previous chapters, as shown in the upper half of the figure, and which consists of five major components, as shown in the bottom half of the figure.

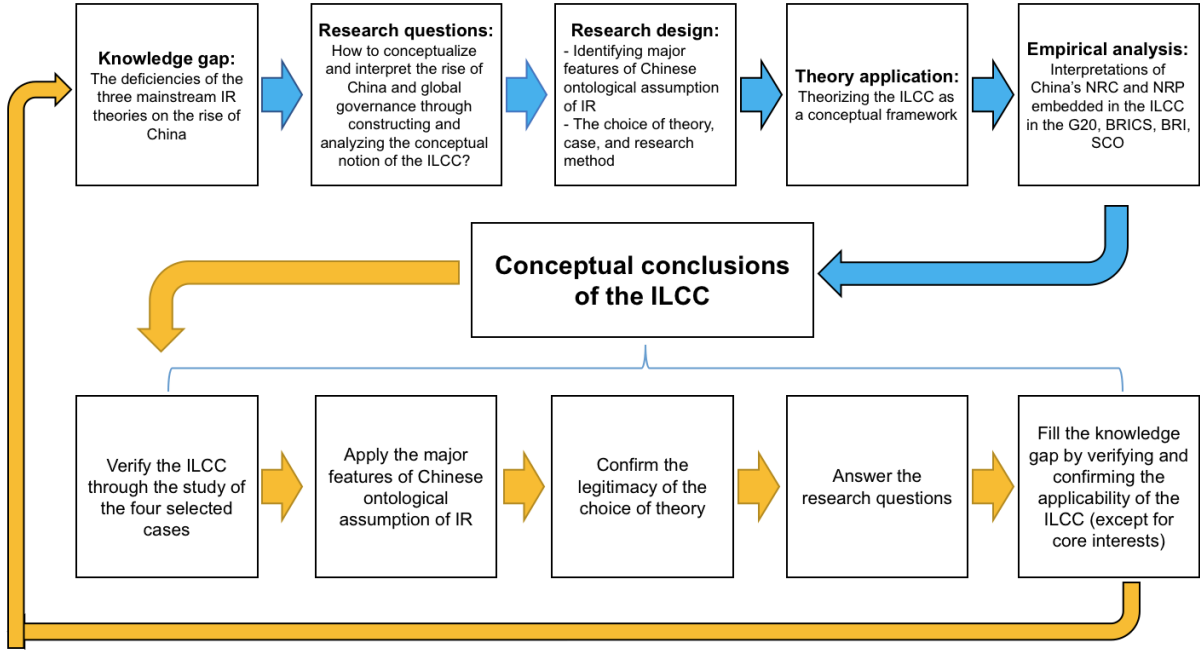


Figure 8.1 The conceptual conclusions of the ILCC

(source: the author’s compilation)

Specifically, this chapter generates the conceptual conclusions of the notion of the ILCC through a research process of ontological sources of reference, methodological design, theoretical construction of explanation, and empirical discussion and analysis. To summarize the thesis process in reverse order, it (1) empirically verifies the ILCC through the study of the four selected cases, (2) confirms the explanatory capacity of the chosen theories that are derived from Chinese ontological and epistemological sources of reference, (3) ontologically reflects the major features of Chinese culture and history that are heuristic in formulating concepts with Chinese characteristics, (4) answers the research questions, and (5) fills the knowledge gap by verifying and confirming the applicability of the ILCC. In addition to these five components,

the conclusion also identifies the limitations of the ILCC and proposes an agenda for further research.

8.1. THE EMPIRICAL VERIFICATION OF THE ILCC THROUGH THE STUDY OF THE FOUR SELECTED CASES

This section relates to the most important and foundational component of the conceptual conclusions of the ILCC, the empirical verification of the concept. In other words, the empirical verification of the ILCC, based on the empirical analysis of the four selected cases, is seen as critical for further discussion regarding the ontological, methodological, and theoretical considerations of the ILCC as a conceptual framework. The author suggests that the empirical verification of the ILCC can be observed in two major aspects: (1) the verification of ability-based leadership in the conceptualization of the ILCC, and (2) the empirical assessment and ranking of the extent to which the ILCC applies to the four selected cases (G20, BRICS, SCO, and BRI).

8.1.1. THE VERIFICATION OF THE ILCC AS ABILITY-BASED LEADERSHIP

By setting the four cases in the context of the ILCC, the thesis demonstrates that all cases show the ability-based leadership role to be a common feature, rather than the status-based leadership role, although the ability is manifested in different ways in different cases. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, according to Chinese historical and contemporary experience, the legitimacy of leadership is mainly derived from the ability to lead and is manifested in the Chinese idea of meritocracy. Meritocracy is rooted in performance legitimacy suggesting that “the government has an obligation to improve the people’s material well-being and intellectual/moral development is a central part of the Confucian tradition” (Coicaud, 2017: 26). In line with Chinese understanding, a leader can be identified according to what he/she did rather than what he/she said. This is in accord with the fact that Chinese decision-makers have never explicitly claimed that China is or would become an international leader, as the U.S. decision-makers claimed for the United States. Rather, China has objectively fulfilled its leadership role by promoting the institutionalization of governance mechanisms, shaping common vision on critical issues, and setting examples for other states to accept and follow.

Furthermore, the thesis verifies that an ability-based understanding of “leadership” helps to conceptualize the framework of the ILCC, which is applicable to conducting an empirical

analysis of China's involvement in global governance. By interpreting China's NRC embedded in the ILCC using Breuning's role theory model and China's NRP embedded in the ILCC from institutional, policy, material, and ideational perspectives, the major components of the ILCC – facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership – can be detected in Chinese decision-makers' rhetoric and Chinese foreign policies and practices. The ability-based Chinese political culture can be elaborated in line with the various components of the ILCC concept. The applicability of the ILCC is further manifested in the assessment and ranking of the extent to which the ILCC was found in the selected cases (see the following section).

8.1.2. A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS OF THE ILCC IN THE FOUR SELECTED CASES

This section includes an assessment of and ranks the extent to which the ILCC was manifested in the four selected cases. This empirical assessment and ranking help to further verify the applicability of the ILCC as a conceptual framework. In other words, it implies that the ILCC, manifested in its three major components (seen as facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, exemplary leadership) in different cases, has been constructed and practised by China in diverse ways, shaped by various opportunities and challenges, and has distinct implications for global governance as follows.

8.1.2.1 Facilitative leadership

By interpreting the three features of facilitative leadership – collectiveness, inclusiveness, and empowerment – through the empirical analysis of China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC, first of all, the thesis concludes that China's facilitative leadership is at its strongest in the SCO. In the SCO, the most prominent example showing China's facilitative leadership is the China-proposed principle of "Shanghai Spirit". Under this principle, the dual leadership exhibited by China and Russia in regional cooperation can be clearly detected. As the two major great powers in this region, while China and Russia share a number of common interests in terms of preserving regime security, fighting against terrorism, and promoting economic development, they also face several divergences including potential geopolitical and geoeconomic conflicts. However, the resilience of the SCO has been maintained and cooperation between the member states has been strengthened in the past few years. This situation benefitted from China and Russia's emphasis on collective leadership on several regional issues. For instance, although they have their own regional economic strategies, such as the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, they

have always proactively sought opportunities to align their projects and strategies through the platform of the SCO. In the meanwhile, in the SCO, China has also practised the inclusive feature of facilitative leadership in terms of inviting India and Pakistan, two political and military rivalries, into this regional organization. Their successful inclusion reflects the move by China's decision-makers to emphasize cooperation between the SCO member states while respecting each other's diverse political and economic systems. Moreover, in the past decade, as the largest economy in this organization, China actively promoted economic cooperation with the SCO member states in terms of signing financial agreements, reaching big business deals, and establishing economic parks, etc.

Second, the thesis contends that China's facilitative leadership in the BRI is weaker than in the SCO, and it ranks second out of the four cases on this basis. Inclusiveness is the most obvious feature of China's facilitative leadership in the BRI, since Chinese decision-makers have repeatedly stressed that there is no limitation to the number of participants in the BRI and the BRI is open to all potential participants. For instance, although Northern Europe is not typically considered as a region on the two routes of the BRI, China and the Nordic countries have also extensively discussed the "Polar Silk Road" strategy, which should have positive implications for Nordic-China relations. However, compared to the dual collective leadership by China and Russia observed in the SCO, the collective feature of China's facilitative leadership in the BRI is less obvious than the role it plays in the SCO, since China is the sole initiator and promotor of the BRI. Moreover, because of several geopolitical factors, economic cooperation and projects along the BRI have come up against challenges and limitations. In this respect, the empowerment feature of China's facilitative leadership was not as obvious as was expected.

Third, the thesis concludes that the extent of China's facilitative leadership in the BRICS is the second weakest among the four cases. Inclusiveness is the most prominent component of China's facilitative leadership in the BRICS, since China proposed and approved the inclusion of South Africa into this inter-regional emerging power consortium. This expansion helps this group to stretch out to the African continent and increases its representativeness among the developing countries and emerging powers. In this respect, the political implications of this inclusion are greater than its economic implications. The collective feature of China's facilitative leadership is mainly manifested in the process of the establishment and agenda setting of the New Development Bank. During the past decade, although economic cooperation between the BRICS member states has been strengthened in terms of the increasing levels of internal trade and investment of the group, the empowerment of China's facilitative leadership

was not fully practised due to the competitiveness embedded in the members' economic relationships. On the one hand, the five states are at a similar development stage in terms of production structure, trade structure, and their location in the international industrial chain; on the other hand, each of the BRICS members has stronger economic ties with the established powers (the United States and Europe) than with each other. This situation poses a major hindrance to the implementation of China's facilitative leadership.

Fourth, the thesis demonstrates that the extent of China's facilitative leadership in the G20 is the weakest in comparison to the previous three cases. Since the breakout of the global financial crisis in 2009, the collectiveness and inclusiveness of China's facilitative leadership has been observed in China's promotion of the G20, consisting of major established and emerging powers, as the most important platform for international economic cooperation. Chinese decision-makers have repeatedly welcomed the collective role of existing and emerging powers in the G20 in terms of addressing the financial crisis and reviving the world economy. Moreover, China also practised its facilitative leadership by empowering the European major G20 countries by purchasing their debts. However, the coexistence of emerging and existing powers has also challenged the construction and implementation of China's facilitative leadership in the G20. On the one hand, although the emerging countries have gained a certain number of speaking rights by being included in this mechanism, the existing powers still play a dominant role in terms of agenda-setting and shaping standards; on the other hand, given the gradual recovery of their economies and the reduced effects of the financial crisis in recent years, the US-led advanced countries began to disregard the significance of the G20 and turn their attention back to the traditional financial governance mechanism – the G7/8. Both of these two situations have largely restricted China's role of facilitative leadership in the G20.

8.1.2.2 Constructive leadership

By interpreting the three features of China's constructive leadership – institutional construction, vision construction, and interest construction – through the empirical analysis of China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC, in the first place, the thesis argues that China's constructive leadership was most prominently manifested in the BRI. In proposing the BRI, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by establishing formal organizations, providing long-term vision, and shaping a community of common interests, etc. As the major institutional pillar of the BRI, the China-led AIIB plays a significant role in promoting the development of the BRI in terms of providing credit to the participants' domestic projects and

regional development strategies. By 2018, the AIIB has lent a total of over US\$4.4 billion by approving nearly 30 projects in the relevant areas. Moreover, through the implementation of the BRI, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by proposing an innovative vision of “wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits” for global governance, which is called the “China Plan” by Chinese decision-makers. As a result of China’s proactive promotion, this vision has been gradually accepted internationally. For instance, in September 2016, the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly incorporated this vision into the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution of “United Nations in Global Economic Governance”. In addition, in line with the major principles of the BRI, China has actively constructed common interests between itself and other participants in terms of improving infrastructure connectivity, promoting capacity cooperation, and strengthening people-to-people exchanges, etc. On the basis of China’s proactive promotion and other participants’ great aspirations for taking up development opportunities, a large number of projects and cooperative relationships have been established in the last five years. However, more recently, China’s constructive leadership in the BRI has faced increasing challenges that are mainly derived from the rise of anti-globalization, regime change of some participating countries, geopolitical concerns of other regional great powers, and several specific technical issues.

In the second place, the thesis contends that China’s constructive leadership in the BRICS is weaker than in the BRI, ranking as second among the four cases. Institutional construction and vision construction are the two major manifestations of China’s constructive leadership in the BRICS. On the one hand, being similar to the case of the BRI, China constructed and practised its constructive leadership by leading the establishment of the NDB and contributing the largest portion (US\$ 41/100 billion) to the CRA. The former aims to provide financial support to the infrastructure construction and economic development of the BRICS member states, and the latter devotes itself to constructing a financial safety net for the BRICS. In addition, under China’s constructive leadership, institutional construction within the BRICS can also be observed in the achievement of a number of policy agreements between the five countries, such as the *Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership*, the *BRICS Roadmap for Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation until 2020*, the *BRICS Trade and Investment Facilitation Plan*, the *BRICS Guidelines for Intellectual Property Cooperation*, and the *BRICS Framework for Trade and Investment Cooperation*, etc. On the other hand, since the establishment of the BRICS, China has strongly advocated for and shaped the vision of “democratic consultation”, which is considered to be the group’s core principle or culture. This vision has been gradually recognized

and accepted by the BRICS member states through their interactions on several significant issues, such as the inclusion of South Africa into this emerging power consortium and the establishment of the NDB and CRA. Moreover, during the Xiamen BRICS summit in 2017, China proposed another landmark vision of “BRICS Plus”. This initiative aims to make innovative contributions to the new model and new normal of the BRICS mechanism in terms of promoting the dialogue mechanism between regional organizations and international mechanisms, exploring possible ways to strengthen coordination with the middle powers, and safeguarding the outcomes of global governance and strengthening cooperation between the BRICS and the G20. Nonetheless, interest construction is weak in the BRICS due to competition between its members.

In the third place, the thesis confirms that China’s constructive leadership in the SCO is the second weakest and just stronger than that found in the G20. Vision construction and interest construction are two major representations of China’s constructive leadership in the SCO. Since the establishment of the SCO, China has proposed the vision of “Shanghai Spirit”, which is seen as the core value/culture of this organization. With the development of the SCO, the member states have gradually recognized and accepted this vision, which has exerted a huge influence on the diversification of the cooperative areas of the SCO, the deepening of mutual trust and mutual respect among the member states, and the inclusion of new members, etc. Guided by this vision, although there are some potential geopolitical and geoeconomic conflicts in this organization, China has, to some extent, integrated the members’ interests by aligning China-based regional economic strategy with other members’ development projects. For instance, on the basis of the BRI, China has established a number of strategic synergies with other members’ development strategies, such as the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and its “Bright Road” Initiative, “Uzbekistan Towards 2030”, Tajikistan’s National Development Strategy, and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union. However, China’s constructive leadership was less visible in the institutional construction of the SCO. For instance, in the long term, China has spent a lot to support the operation and development of the Russia-initiated SCO Interbank Consortium (IBC). In 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China will set up a 30 billion Yuan equivalent special lending facility within the framework of the SCO IBC. However, although China has proposed the idea of establishing the SCO Development Bank, that has made little progress in the past few years.

In the fourth place, the thesis confirms that China’s constructive leadership in the G20 was the weakest among the four cases. As mentioned above, since the G20 is comprised of both major

established and emerging powers, the political and economic divergences within this mechanism are even greater than in the other three. This situation has led to constraints on China's implementation of its constructive leadership. With respect to the dimension of institutional construction, China has contributed far less to the institutionalization of the G20 than it did in the case of the BRI and the BRICS. China's most obvious contribution was its proposal to establish new working groups, such as the G20 Trade & Investment Working Group (TIWG) and the G20 Network Working Group, which supplement the existing groups. In terms of the dimension of vision construction, by hosting the 2016 G20 summit, China demonstrated its understanding of world development trends, characterized by four major keywords – innovative, invigorated, interconnected, and inclusive. These four keywords also convey China's vision of the future of the G20. However, with the rise of anti-globalization and protectionism, it is clear that China's vision for the G20 will inevitably face a great number of challenges in the upcoming years. Regarding the dimension of interest construction, in 2016, under the G20 framework, China and the United States practised collective leadership by successfully concluding the Paris Agreement, which shapes the common interests of the parties to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. In addition, during the 2016 Hangzhou G20 summit, China also practised its constructive leadership by approving the G20 Strategy for Global Trade Growth and the G20 Guiding Principles for Global Investment Policymaking, which are considered as the milestone documents in the G20. However, the unilateral foreign policy adopted by the Trump Administration and the United States' withdrawal from the multilateral cooperation mechanism have since damaged China's role of constructive leadership in the G20.

8.1.2.3 Exemplary leadership

By interpreting the three features of China's exemplary leadership – moral orientation, intellectual guidance, and transformative function – through the empirical analysis of China's NRC and NRP embedded in the ILCC, first and foremost, the thesis confirms that China's exemplary leadership was at its strongest in the BRI. Being different from the other three cases, China was the exclusive initiator of the BRI and provided the intellectual guidance for other potential participants. Through the release of the *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*, China extensively illustrated the major targets, principles, and means of constructing the BRI. By doing so, China provided a full picture of how the BRI would be implemented and how other participants could be involved in this project. Inspired by China's idea, in the past five years, a large number of countries have

showed their great enthusiasm for taking part in this China-led project. China's intellectual guidance not only inspires the countries that adjoin the routes, but also it attracts countries outside the traditional region defined by the BRI. The most prominent example is the Nordic countries. In recent years (2015-2018), a number of workshops and conferences on the BRI were held in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Oslo, during which scholars and politicians demonstrated their interest in understanding and interpreting the BRI. Currently, governments on both sides are assessing the possibilities and prospects for the cooperation between the Northern Europe-based "Amber Road" and the China-initiated Silk Road Economic Belt. Unlike the traditional one-size-fits-all pattern of global governance and its logic of appropriateness, through its promotion of the BRI, China strongly advocates a new pattern of "wide consultation, joint build and shared benefits" that emphasizes the logic of relationality, which demonstrates the moral orientation of China's exemplary leadership. The third dimension of China's exemplary leadership is the transformative function that is demonstrated by China and CEE 16+1 Cooperation, a major component of the Silk Road Economic Belt. According to the research done by Anastas Vangeli, China has symbolic power over the CEE countries as a product of their cooperation, and "a growing number of actors may at least start thinking and behaving more like China, or the way China inspires them to think and behave, or in a way that legitimizes China and its claims, its values, its economic model and practices" (Vangeli, 2018: 686). However, some European countries have also complained that China's symbolic power over the CEE has explicitly and implicitly challenged the unification of the EU. This kind of criticism would inevitably exert negative effects on China's exemplary leadership in the BRI.

Secondly, the thesis contends that China's exemplary leadership in the SCO was weaker than in the BRI and ranks in second position among the four cases. China contributed its intellectual guidance by proposing the "Shanghai Spirit", which played a significant role in the establishment and development of the SCO. With the development of the SCO, this idea has been absorbed by the member states in terms of dealing with regional issues. More specifically, as mentioned above, this idea has exerted great influence on the preservation of regional stability, the diversification of cooperative areas of the SCO, and the inclusion of new members into this regional organization. Moreover, the idea of "Shanghai Spirit" has also displayed the transformative function of China's exemplary leadership. For instance, two new members, India and Pakistan, have promised to comply with the major principles of the "Shanghai Spirit" and the code of conduct of the SCO and not to seek to solve their bilateral conflicts through the

regional multilateral platform. However, given the deep contradiction embedded in the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, the thesis supposes that this complicated bilateral relationship will add uncertainties in the further development of the SCO and questions the persistence of the “Shanghai Spirit” as the core culture of the group.

Thirdly, the thesis confirms that China’s exemplary leadership in the BRICS was the second weakest of all the cases. As with the SCO, in the BRICS, China has provided intellectual guidance, which is known as the “democratic consultation” – the core culture of the emerging power consortium, and this idea has had a positive influence on the establishment of the NDB and the inclusion of a new member (South Africa) into the group. However, given the divergent political systems and competitive economic structures of the five member states, the transformative function of China’s exemplary leadership was not as strong as in the two previous cases.

Fourthly, the thesis confirms that China’s exemplary leadership in the G20 was the weakest compared to the previous three cases. Although the G20 consists of the major emerging powers, which have gained increasing speaking rights, its agenda-setting and rules have been consistently dominated by the major US-led Western bloc. China, as the second largest economy, did not obtain the right to host the G20 until 2016 – the 11th summit after the financial crisis. Therefore, China has not had much opportunity to provide intellectual guidance to the G20, let alone exert its transformative influence on other G20 members.

In sum, by assessing the comparative strengths and weaknesses in the various extents to which roles were played by each major component – facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership – of the ILCC in the four selected cases, as shown in Figure 8.2 below, the final ranking of the ILCC of the four cases can be stated as “BRI>SCO>BRICS>G20”. This ranking verifies the applicability of the conceptual framework of the ILCC in understanding and interpreting China’s foreign policy and practices in global governance.

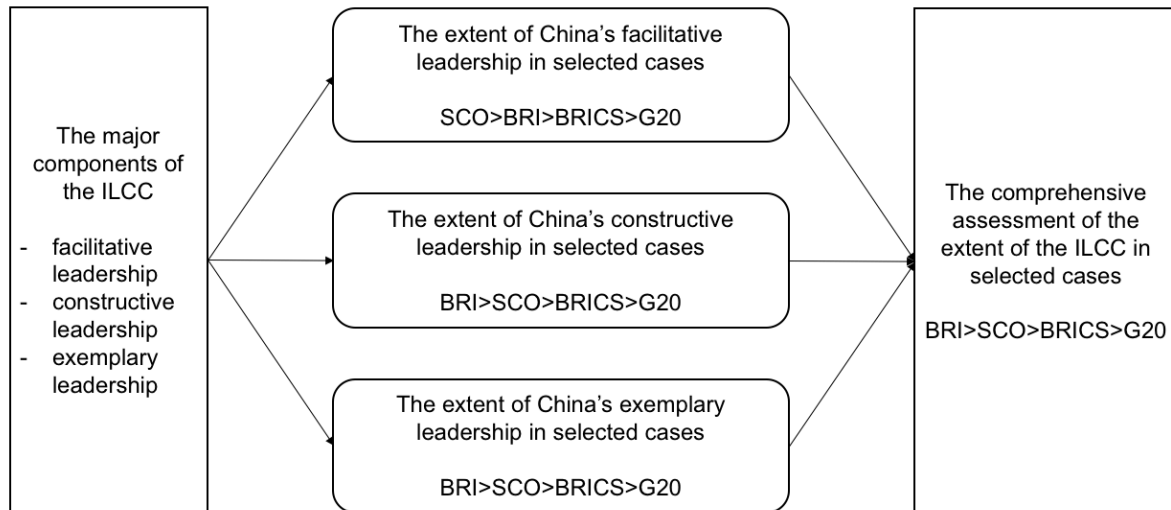


Figure 8.2 The assessment of the ILCC in the four selected cases

(source: the author's compilation)

8.2. CONFIRMATION OF THEORETICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

On the basis of verifying the applicability of the ILCC to the interpretation of China's role in global governance in the previous section (8.1), the thesis summarizes that this empirical verification of the ILCC confirms the legitimacy of the author's theory selection and application and further confirms an ontological source of reference in the construction of the ILCC. This confirmation is considered as another significant component of the conceptual conclusions of the ILCC.

8.2.1. CONFIRMATION OF THE LEGITIMACY OF THEORY SELECTION AND APPLICATION

As discussed in the methodological section (see 2.3), on the one hand, relational theory was selected on the basis of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR that are derived from three Chinese IR-related philosophical ideas and streams of political thought – Tianxia, Humane Authority, and the State of Equilibrium and Harmony. By reviewing a number of literatures on relational theory, the logic of relationality was identified as the core element of the theory. The logic of relationality was further applied to defining the concepts of relational power, relational interest, and relational vision and conceptualizing the framework of the ILCC, which consists of facilitative leadership, constructive leadership, and exemplary leadership. On the other hand, role theory, as an empirical theory, was applied to the empirical analysis of China's NRC and NRP under the conceptual framework of the ILCC.

By summarizing the empirical analysis of the ILCC in Chapters 4 to 7, it is possible to conclude that the empirical analysis has, to various extents, reflected a combination of relational theory and role theory. This can also be observed in the assessment and ranking of the extent to which ILCC applies in the four cases. Moreover, as shown in the following section (see 8.2.2), the confirmation of the legitimacy of theory selection and application further ratify the ILCC's reflection of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR.

8.2.2. REFLECTION OF THE MAJOR FEATURES OF CHINESE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF IR

In this section, the thesis contends that the ILCC reflects the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR – relationality, processuality, and inclusiveness. With respect to the feature of relationality, (1) in the case of the G20, China helps to promote relational stability among the diverse member states and plays an active role in bridging the existing and emerging powers. (2) In the case of the BRICS, China focuses on strengthening the internal relational ties between the member states in terms of shaping collective identity and increasing the degree of economic interdependency; it also proactively maintains the relational circle between the emerging powers and the established powers in terms of establishing cooperation between the BRICS and other Western-based existing mechanisms. (3) In the case of the SCO, China has gradually injected the idea of “Shanghai Spirit”, characterized by mutual respect and mutual trust, into this regional organization in order to maintain the relational circle between the member states, remedying the geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions and contradictions between China and Russia and preserving social and political stability in Central Asia. (4) In the case of the BRI, the feature of relationality is clearly observed in the China-proposed principles of the BRI – the “five connectivity”. In line with the “five connectivity”, China aims to establish a grand open market and inter-regional cooperative system that contains a large number of countries and regional mechanisms, such as China-CEEC 16+1 Cooperation, China-GCC Strategic Dialogue, and China-ASEAN meeting.

Concerning the feature of inclusiveness, (1) in the case of the BRI, China has explicitly stated that there is no limitation on the number of participants under the framework of the BRI and China has shown great willingness to embrace any potential participants in the project. In addition, China sees the promotion of the BRI as an opportunity to model a bottom-up inclusive pattern of global governance that is characterized by the idea of “wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits”. (2) In the case of the SCO, China's ratification of the

inclusion of India and Pakistan, two regional military and political rivalries, into this China-led regional organization is considered to be a prominent example of the feature of inclusiveness. Moreover, during the Qingdao SCO summit in 2018, China invited a number of delegates from other international organizations, which also displayed the inclusive feature of the ILCC. (3) In the case of the G20, China has devoted itself to leading the achievement of the inclusive trade and investment mechanism and policy under the G20 framework and it has also repeatedly emphasized the significance of inclusive development among the member states over the past decade. (4) In the case of the BRICS, given the criticism regarding its divergent political systems and competitive economic structures, China's emphasis on collective identity among the member states demonstrated its inclusive attitude towards this representative emerging power consortium, and this inclusiveness is conducive to the resilience and stability of the BRICS against the background of global economic stagnation. In addition, China's proposal and approval to include South Africa into the BRICS has also clearly displayed the feature of inclusiveness.

Regarding the feature of processuality, (1) in the case of the BRI, by regarding the BRI as a long-term inter-regional project that includes a vast range of countries and regions, Chinese decision-makers adopted a prudent attitude toward implementing the BRI as a more manageable and balanced process by fully taking into consideration other participants' expectations and their national conditions. (2) In the case of the SCO, the organizational expansion of the SCO – the inclusion of India and Pakistan – was an achievement obtained by China and Russia, two regional powers, in a manageable and negotiated process that gave consideration to the interests of all parties. (3) In the case of the G20, through its participation in the G20, China has practised its constructive leadership by continuously striving for the reform of the international order of financial governance in a relatively moderate and processual manner. (4) In the case of the BRICS, the feature of processuality is mainly exhibited in China's contribution to the development of the BRICS from a concept to a group to an institutionalized mechanism over the past decade. In the process of its participation in the BRICS, China has gradually shaped a club culture of “democratic consultation” which has promoted the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) in a manageable and balanced process.

In sum, the above discussion of the ILCC's reflection of theoretical and ontological considerations has further verified the consistency and coherence of the research design of the

thesis. In this respect, it demonstrates the legitimacy and reliability of the choice of theory, the choice of research materials, and the choice of research methods.

8.3. KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Based on the above interpretive and conceptual conclusions, the thesis proposes that the conceptualization and empirical analysis of the ILCC have made a number of contributions to filling current knowledge gaps. As identified in the introductory chapter, the major knowledge gap related to deficiencies of the mainstream IR theories – synchronicity, objectivity, simplicity – in interpreting the relationship between the rise of China and the existing U.S.-based international order/global governance.

First and foremost, by identifying the ability-based leadership deriving from the Chinese political culture of meritocracy and verifying the ILCC's reflection of the major features of Chinese ontological assumptions of IR – relationality, processuality, and inclusiveness – the thesis confirms that the conceptualization of the ILCC is closely associated with Chinese traditional culture and political thought. In this respect, the thesis makes a contribution by filling the knowledge gap in mainstream IR theories that neglect the role of Chinese history in shaping Chinese decision-makers' perceptions of international relations and China's foreign policies and practices based on those perceptions. In the meanwhile, this kind of ontological reflection is a response to the first sub-research questions of how do Chinese IR-related political thought and cultural heritage impact Chinese (decision-makers and elites) ontological assumptions/worldview of contemporary international relations and how do Chinese decision-makers and elites, on the basis of their worldview, construct and implement the ILCC through China's involvement in a myriad of issue-areas/mechanisms in global governance.

Second, by conceptualizing and undertaking an empirical analysis of the ILCC, the thesis contributes to the establishment of a paradigm that interprets China's role in global governance by accounting for the respective ontological, methodological, theoretical, and empirical considerations. This paradigm fills the knowledge gap of and supplements the existing research paradigms – the three mainstream IR theories – on the rise of China in terms of providing a more holistic pattern that consists of structure-agency and material-ideational perspectives. This paradigm mainly benefits from the application of Breuning's role theory model to analyzing China's NRC embedded in the ILCC and the four-dimensional (institutional, policy, material, ideational) interpretation of China's NRP embedded in the ILCC. Moreover, the

construction and application of the paradigm is a response to the major research question of how to conceptualize and interpret the rise of China in global governance through constructing and analyzing the conceptual notion of the ILCC.

Third, for a long time, China's role in global governance has been criticized as unclear and unable to be understood through a clear conceptual framework. Against this background, the thesis proposes that the conceptualization of the ILCC, as an analytical framework, fills this knowledge gap and makes a contribution in providing a conceptual framework for understanding China's role in different issue-areas of global governance. In other words, the conceptualization of the ILCC has, to some extent, enriched the ways of interpreting China's decision-making and behavior in international relations. Applying this framework to interpreting China's NRC and NRP in the four selected cases is also conducive to the answer of another sub-research question, which is what are the implications of "international leadership with Chinese characteristics" (ILCC) for world politics and global governance, and what opportunities and challenges are faced in the construction and implementation of the ILCC.

8.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE ILCC

As shown in the previous chapters, since the ILCC is conceptualized through the logic of relationality – the core component of relational theory – it demonstrates the flexible and negotiable nature of China's foreign policy and practice as manifested in the empirical analysis of the ILCC in the four selected cases (G20, BRICS, SCO, BRI). For instance, with the purpose of sustaining a favorable relational circle and maintaining the coherence of the BRICS group, at the G20 Seoul summit, China abnegated part of its rightful IMF quota share to India and Brazil. This abnegation shows that China strives to shape the sense of collectiveness among emerging powers (facilitative leadership), construct common interests and vision (constructive leadership), and use its material power in a relational and morality-oriented manner (exemplary leadership). Thus, it approves that the conceptualization and empirical analysis have contributed to the verification of the ILCC as a conceptual framework.

However, the thesis contends that the framework of the ILCC is not omnipotent and cannot be used to analyze all of Chinese foreign policy-making and external practice. The major limitation of the ILCC is manifested in its inability to explain and interpret China's decision-making and behavior that are closely associated with China's core national interests, since China's core interests represent "the non-negotiable bottom lines of Chinese foreign policy" (Zeng, Xiao, & Breslin, 2015: 245). Since the first decade of the twenty-first century, with its increasing

material capability and deepening engagement with international society, Chinese decision-makers and scholars have noted the importance of defining and elaborating on the connotations and extensions of China's core national interests. As Chinese President Xi Jinping argues, "we will stick to the road of peaceful development, but will never give up our legitimate rights and will never sacrifice our national core interests" (Xi, 2013a). Xi further clarifies China's core interests as China's sovereignty, security, and development interests. In addition, Shi Yinong, one of the most representative Chinese IR scholars, has also contended that "China should never give in while defending its core interests. Only when it comes to non-core interests should it make some compromise in order to ease the pressure on other big powers" (Shi, 2010). From this perspective, the thesis confirms that the conceptual framework of the ILCC is not compatible with the non-negotiable and non-compromising core interests of China.

As shown in Figure 8.3 below, in 2011, the State Council of the People's Republic of China published the white paper entitled *China's Peaceful Development* in which China's core interests are clearly defined as "state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, China's political system established by the Constitution and overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development" (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). More specifically, in line with the clarification and categorization provided in the white paper, China's core national interests are further identified by Chinese decision-makers as the Taiwan Issue, the political and social stability of Xinjiang and Tibet provinces, the South China Sea and the Diaoyu Island Dispute. Thus, the thesis is unable to use the conceptual framework of the ILCC in interpreting these particular issues.

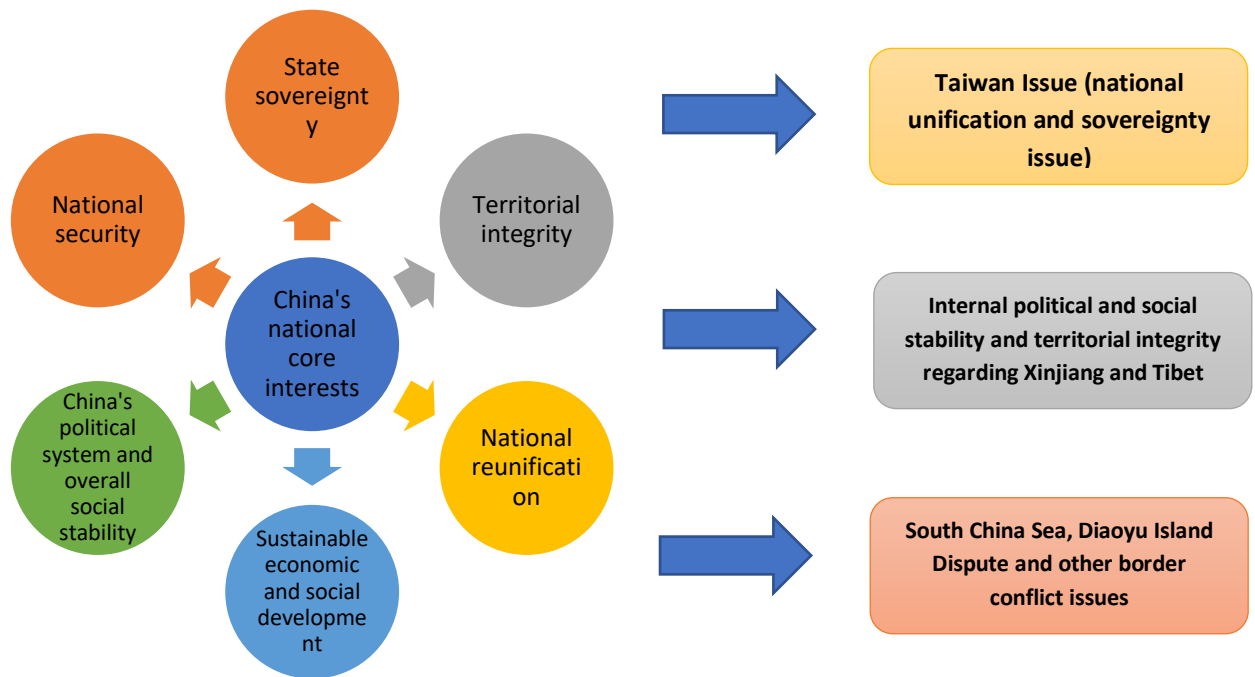


Figure 8. 3 China's core national interests

(source: the author's compilation)

8.5. AGENDA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This final section of the concluding chapter demonstrates how this thesis' efforts to conceptualize and interpret "international leadership with Chinese characteristics" (ILCC) can be seen as a part of the ongoing debate and attempt by a group of prominent Chinese scholars to construct a Chinese IR theory. For instance, Ren Xiao has interpreted the inevitability of the emergence of a Chinese IR theory from five perspectives: (1) as a great power, China has greater degree of intellectual and theoretical autonomy; (2) indigenization or sinicization is prominently manifested in the rising self-consciousness found in a large number of fields (e.g. philosophy, economics, sociology) in Chinese social science; (3) the rise of China and the dynamics of China's relationship with international society calls for theory building of Chinese IR; (4) IR theory is indeed emerging in China today; (5) China's experience is providing IR theory with a new empirical foundation (Ren, 2016: 47-50). These facts have created the context for Chinese IR scholars to hotly argue for the construction of a Chinese school of IR. In reviewing the evolution of the debate, this thesis identified one main bone of contention that is observed between "IR theory with Chinese characteristics" and "Chinese IR theory". According to Zhang Yongjin and Chang Teng-chi, "Naming' is indeed central to the debates

among Chinese scholars on the construction of a Chinese School of IR” (Zhang & Chang, 2016: 9).

On the one hand, one group of Chinese scholars, who support “IR theory with Chinese characteristics”, argue that “the ‘Chinese characteristics’ require self-esteem, self-confidence, self-accomplishment in the disciplinary construction of IR and give it a Chinese imprint. This shall not be an average Chinese imprint but rather distinguished and innovative contributions” (Liang & Hong, 2000: 33-34). Moreover, as Li Xing analyzed, at the current stage, the concept of “IR theory with Chinese characteristics” is more plausible and applicable than the concept of “Chinese IR theory” in consideration of the following features of “uniqueness” applicable to the rise of China:

- China’s cultural-historical legacy and intellectual tradition have an indispensable impact on the construction of “IR theory with Chinese characteristics”;
- China’s economic success has been achieved within the existing capitalist world order through a good combination of the internal “embedded” development and the external capitalist systems of law of value;
- China’s Sinicizing does not aim to provide an alternative hegemony with universal norms and values;
- The Chinese economy is simultaneously occupying multiple positions and playing multiple roles in all three stratifications of the capitalist world economy;
- The rise of China is not creating an independent hegemony, rather, it is shaping a world order with intertwined/interdependent hegemony (X. Li, 2018).

On the other hand, another group of Chinese scholars, who favor the construction of “Chinese IR theory”, hold different viewpoints than the former group. First, they believe that “IR theory with Chinese characteristics” is problematic as it can be regarded as “a replica of the political discourse of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’” (Ren, 2016: 36; B. Shi, 2006). This group of scholars has reached a consensus that “IR theory should be developed within China, and that this should be independent from government ideology and related to wider pursuit of theory in IR globally” (Wang & Buzan, 2016: 122). Second, this group insists that “as part of social sciences and general theory, IR theory should seek universality, generality, and contents, rather than speciality, individuality, and form” (Song, 2001: 68-69). In other words, they argue that Chinese IR theory should provide a broad frame of reference for academic and political circles. But until now, there has been no concrete IR theoretical framework which presents two sides

of same coin, i.e., with Chinese theoretical assumptions/premises at the core on one side and theoretical broad reference on the other side.

Inspired by the above debate between “IR theory with Chinese characteristics” and “Chinese IR theory”, a new extension of this thesis, given more time and opportunity, might be developed, for which I would like to propose a further research agenda, as follows.

First of all, by placing the construction of Chinese IR theory within his conceptual framework of “interdependent hegemony” (Li, 2014; Li and Agustin, 2014; Xing Li, 2016) , Li Xing has largely reduced the political sinicization of “IR theory with Chinese characteristics”. In the same vein, the extension of the proposed research agenda should combine the ILCC with the concept of “interdependent hegemony” and explore the implications brought about by the ILCC on the world order in a broader sense, rather than interpreting the ILCC in the selected four cases. In a similar attempt and effort, the thesis might be extended by doing further research into whether the norm diffusion of Chinese ideas and practices that have been conceptualized, analyzed, and verified by this thesis, can be further developed in to CIL, namely from “international leadership with Chinese characteristics” (ILCC) to “Chinese international leadership” (CIL). This further development is parallelly related to the debate mentioned above between “IR theory with Chinese characteristics” and “Chinese IR theory”. The theoretical argument of the CIL relies on the premise of China being able to maintain its economic growth and being actively engaged in global governance by shouldering more responsibilities, making it plausible for CIL to be accepted as a broadly applicable mode of governance and mode of value in the future.

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