

The Globalization of Chinese Economic Interests and Chinese Foreign Policy: The Principle of Noninterference, Revisited.

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Abstract

The principle of noninterference is a foundational tenet of Chinese foreign policy which stems from the normative understanding of sovereignty and the narrative of victimization and foreign aggression during the century of humiliation. In times where China's global presence was limited, the strict application of the principle was not problematic. However, China's economic expansion has made the protection of Chinese citizens and interests beyond the country's border a priority. I will argue that this unprecedented imperative is linked to the emergence of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests. I will posit this norm has had domestic actors such as bureaucratic actors and grassroots pressures as its main drivers.

The contribution this thesis intends to make to the literature is to illustrate that there is a clash between the long-held norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protection of Chinese Nationals and interests which emerged upon the globalization of Chinese economic interests. I will argue that this normative clash is problematic for the ruling Chinese Communist Party since it is inextricably connected to the imperative of government legitimacy and regime security. If the CCP derived its legitimacy from the protection of Chinese sovereignty against foreign aggression, securing its citizens and interests overseas has become a new source of legitimacy.

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Finally, as the old chinese adage says, when you drink water, remember who built the well(饮水思源). Therefore I would like to my deepest gratitude to the late Mr. Antonio Fernández Arce, Peruvian journalist, China expert and dear friend, with whom I had compelling dialogues during the years I lived in Beijing. His more than 50 years of life in China and his remarkable stories further sparked my interest on China.

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Introduction

China has risen as the second world power and it is poised to become the biggest economy. However, this is not quite an exceptional change in world history, since China held that position until the early 19th century. In nearly 4 decades, China has become the world's second economy and will likely become the world's largest economic power in the coming years. The so called Chinese economic miracle is seen as an exceptional historical shift; however, China had held the position as the world's largest economy until mid-19th century. Since Deng Xiaoping launched the Reform and Opening Up policy in 1978, the country has gone through a deep economic and social transformation that has had profound ramifications beyond its shores. Over the past 4 decades China's GDP has grown 34-fold while its foreign trade volume has increased 234-fold.¹ This growth has been translated into the international expansion of Chinese economic interests, through trade and investments and accompanied by the migration of Chinese nationals to the recipient countries.

Therefore, the globalization of the presence of Chinese interests and citizens has created unprecedented normative challenges for Chinese foreign policy, that have been expressed in the application of the principle of noninterference, a foundational principle of Chinese foreign policy.² The principle of non-interference arose from the normative understanding of sovereignty, which was institutionalized in the Chinese Foreign Policy discourse due to the narrative of victimization and foreign aggression during the century of humiliation. Upon the foundation of The People's Republic of China, the norm of sovereignty was further internalized giving way to the

¹ Miaojie Yu (2018) China's international trade development and opening up policy design over the past four decades, *China Economic Journal*, 11:3:301.

² Parello-Plesner, Jonas; Duchâtel, Mathieu. (2015) *China's strong arm: protecting citizens and assets abroad*. Abingdon, Oxon: P-10

government's role identity as defender of national sovereignty against foreign aggression and interference. The normative prescription of this role identity was two-fold, on the one hand China prevented any breach of its territorial integrity and internal affairs and on the other hand it was expected to equally respect the sovereignty of other states.

Therefore, this thesis investigates how has the Chinese government's economic internationalization strategy has affected its role identity and its performance of sovereignty. It examines how has the clash between the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests translated into foreign policy decisions. Furthermore, it analyzes how the internalization of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests is connected to the Chinese government's regime security and legitimacy.

The contribution this thesis intends to make to the literature is to illustrate that there is a clash between the long-held norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protection of Chinese Nationals and interests which emerged upon the globalization of Chinese economic interests. I will argue that this normative clash is problematic for the ruling Chinese Communist Party since it is inextricably connected to the imperative of government legitimacy and regime security. I will posit that upholding the strict notion of the principle of noninterference and the corresponding identity of defender of national sovereignty was not problematic in a context where China's global reach was limited. Nevertheless, in circumstances where China's economic expansion and the increasing presence of its nationals, worldwide, have created domestic pressures which have led to the emergence of a new norm, the norm of protection of Chinese Citizens and interests abroad.³ Hence, the norm to protect Chinese Citizens and interests has clashed with the

³ Weining Ai & Weiqing Song (2019) China and the European Union's Participation in Conflict Resolution: Norm Dynamics, Convergence and Divergence in Foreign Policy, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28:116. :279

strict sovereignty infused approach of the principle of non-interference. Furthermore, I will link the development of these norms to the imperative of regime security, noting that norms can emerge out of instrumental reasons and unintended consequences, however once they are established, the logic of appropriateness takes hold, making it difficult to disregard them.

In the first chapter I will explain the theoretical framework I have chosen, analyze the literature related to the topic and explain the methodology I have used for my research. In the second Chapter I will illustrate how the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference emerged as a product of China's narrative of aggression at the hands of foreign powers. In the third chapter I will focus on how the protection of Chinese interests and nationals arose as a norm embraced by China and how the country assumed the corresponding role identity of defender of the security of Chinese nationals and overseas interests. In the fourth Chapter I will elaborate on how the clash between these competing norms has been translated into practice. To that end, I will analyze three case studies in which China had to act to protect its nationals and investments beyond its borders, adopting a more flexible understanding of the principle of non-interference.

Chapter 1

Theoretical framework

1.1 *Constructivism*

Since the central debate of my thesis falls within the scope of norms, the theoretical framework I will use to guide my work is the Constructivist Theory of International Relations, focusing on the work of Alexander Wendt. Constructivist scholars focus on how meanings are socially constructed. As Wendt posits, “a fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them”.⁴ In the perspective of constructivism, structures are constituted by collective meanings and orient the actions of the actors of the International System. In other words, the ideas that shape international relations are intersubjective and institutionalized therefore cannot be attributed to a single individual. According to Wendt, structures are often codified through rules and norms that are a product of intersubjective understandings product of collective learning, which have a cognitive nature, since they exist by virtue of the actor’s assumption about how the world works.⁵ Consequently, he posits that by participating in the collective meanings, actors acquire identities, which he describes as relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self.⁶

In Social Theory of International Politics, Wendt distinguishes between four kinds of identities, nevertheless, in this thesis I will focus on the concept of role identity. As Ai and Song argue, role identities emerge as a by-product of the interaction between the self and the other, and centers

⁴ Alexander Wendt, 1992: Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics, in: International Organization 46(2): 391-425. :397

⁵ Alexander Wendt, 1992:.. P-399

⁶ Alexander Wendt, 1992:.. P-397

focuses on the relative positions the actors occupy within a social structure. An identity cannot explain action by itself, in order to uphold an identity; actors need to assume practices, rhetorical devices and techniques which correspond to their identity.⁷

Nevertheless, an actor is not fixed in role one identity, and can have multiple role identities according to the institutional roles it is expected to perform. Furthermore, even if these socially constructed meanings and norms can remain unaltered for long periods of time, they are always subject to contestation and evolution. In this context, a significant source for the evolution of normative understandings is the exposure to new circumstances. Consequently, when actors face situations that are unprecedented in their experience, they tend to construct their meaning either by analogy or creating them *de novo*.⁸ Therefore, major shifts in foreign policy can take place when a state internalizes norms that it previously disregarded.⁹ In other words, in the process of internalization of the new norms, the actor can acquire new role identities which will consequently shape its interests and its behavior in the realm of foreign policy.

A traditional debate between the constructivists and the rationalists has focused on the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences, aiming to determine which one better explains the decisions of the actors of the international system. In the Constructivist discourse, the logic of appropriateness implies that actors act in accordance to their identity, which the product is intersubjectively constituted structures such as norms and rules. On the other hand, aligned with the theoretical explanations of Realism, the logic of consequences assumes the actor's behavior is

⁷ Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Norms, identity and culture in national security', in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 58–62.

⁸ Alexander Wendt, 1992:398.

⁹ Weining Ai & Weiqing Song (2019) China and the European Union's Participation in Conflict Resolution: Norm Dynamics, Convergence and Divergence in Foreign Policy, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28:116, 277-292. :278.

driven by rational choice, which entails calculating the potential outcomes of decisions based on interests and preferences that are exogenous.¹⁰ Hence, the logic of consequences characterizes the actor as a self-interested value maximizer. On the contrary, Constructivism challenges the notion of interests being exogenously pre-given, considering that they are shaped by identities that are a result of the internalization of norms. As Finnemore posits, the interests held by international actors are defined within the social context of international norms in the same way the understanding of what interests are appropriate and beneficial and what actors ultimately want.¹¹ Therefore, if an actor's behavior responds to the maximization of their interests, these interests emerge from a normative understanding of the actor's identity. Consequently, according to Constructivism the logic of consequences is subsumed by the logic of appropriateness.

Role identities are constituted by internal and external structures, consequently, Wendt argues that states are corporate and intentional actors whose identities are to a great extent determined by domestic politics rather than exclusively by the international system structures.¹² In this thesis, I will illustrate how internal political factors such as bureaucratic entities and grassroots actors play a role in upholding norms and shaping the country's identity in Foreign Policy.

Another fundamental element in my research is the norm of sovereignty. In Wendt's understanding, sovereignty is an institution, the basis of which is a mutual recognition of one's another's right to exercise exclusive political authority within its territory.¹³ From his perspective, there are two types of sovereignty: internal and external. Internal sovereignty is related to the social recognition

¹⁰ Weining Ai & Weiqing Song (2019): 279.

¹¹ Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996, : 2–3.

¹² Alexander Wendt. (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.: 246.

¹³ Alexander Wendt, (1999) :280.

the state enjoys for exercising its authority within its territorial domain.¹⁴ While external sovereignty entails the absence of a higher external authority to the state; for instance: other states, international law or entities.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Wendt posits that in a context of greater interdependence, the capacity of states to act faces greater constraints, creating a gap between their right to act according to their preferences (related to their authority) and their ability to do so in practice (related to the constraints created by the power or influence of other states).¹⁶

Another key element in this research is the concept legitimacy. For Wendt, legitimacy resides on the perception of those subject to power, who perceive the existence and operation of said power as right.¹⁷ For Benjamin and Duvall, the constitutive elements of legitimacy are one hand, a structure of political authority which empowers some people to enforce the rules while obliging the rest to obey.¹⁸ For Hurd, legitimacy is rooted on the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed; therefore he characterizes it as a subjective quality, relational between actor and institution, and defined by the actor's perception of the institution.¹⁹ Therefore legitimacy has a normative content which reinforces political authority and strengthens sovereignty.

¹⁴ Wendt(1999):206.

¹⁵ Ibid: 208.

¹⁶ Ibid: 208.

¹⁷ Alexander,Wendt. "Why a World State Is Inevitable." *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 504.

¹⁸ Benjamin Roger and Raymond Duvall (1985) 'The Capitalist State in Context', in Roger Benjamin (ed.) *The Democratic State*, pp. 19–57. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.

¹⁹ Ian Hurd, Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics. *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Spring, 1999), p-381.

1.2 Academic debates on the principle of noninterference

The expansion of Chinese economic interests at a global scale has fueled academic debates within and beyond China about its implications on China's approach to the norm of sovereignty and the principle non-interference. As I will point out, the larger part China of scholars consider the principle of noninterference ought to be preserved, understanding this does not imply failing to comply with China's responsibilities as a great power or protecting its citizens and interests. Chen considers that in circumstances where China has emerged as a great power, the international system has placed greater expectations about the country's responsibility to provide public security goods at the global level. He argues that Beijing has become more assertive in defending its overseas interests, by leveraging on its increasing bargaining power; however, he notes that this behavior does not entail a fundamental departure from the principle of noninterference.²⁰ Sorensen posits China's role as great power has created greater expectations in the international system about its role to defuse tensions and resolve crisis, enhancing international security and becoming a responsible stakeholder.²¹ Sorensen also considers that there are greater domestic pressures to protect China's core interests and that these domestic factors could result in a greater shift of the principle of noninterference, while in cases where these domestic pressures are not present, China would conform with the more normative notion of non-interference.²² Duchâtel and Parellon-Plesner argue that despite the fact the norm of sovereignty and non-interference is deeply ingrained

²⁰ Zheng Chen.2016. "China debates the non-interference principle." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9(3), 349–374. : 370.

²¹ Sorensen, Camila. That Is Not Intervention; That Is Interference with Chinese Characteristics: New Concepts, Distinctions and Approaches Developing in the Chinese Debate and Foreign and Security Policy Practice. *The China Quartely*. :6.

²²Sorensen, Camila:17.

in China's foreign policy, the country's economic expansion and the domestic and external pressures it has created, China has needed to adapt to new scenarios in which its economic interests and nationals face greater risks.²³ Moreover, they posit that in a context where Chinese interests have expanded, China's willingness and capacity to protect its citizens and interests abroad, has grown dramatically.²⁴

In the Chinese literature I have found a significant focus on the distinction between upholding the principle of noninterference at the strategic level and the need for a more flexible application at the tactical level. Su Changhe, posits that maintaining the principle of noninterference is in China's best interest; nevertheless, he considers China should find creative ways to apply the principle in practice. In his view, China should carefully evaluate the domestic situations of the countries it supports, while stressing that even if the aid provided is not based on criteria of conditionality, China can put into place mechanisms for supervising its implementation.²⁵ Liu Zhongmin, coincides with Su, arguing that China should continue to adhere to the principle of noninterference while adopting a more flexible understanding of it in its foreign policy.²⁶ Guo Peiqing, stresses that it is in China's best interest to uphold the principle of noninterference and a policy of non-conditionality in its international cooperation initiatives. However, he considers that at the tactical level, China should not constrain its dialogue with government agencies and increase its engagement in local matters by extending its contacts with civil society organizations.²⁷ The latter element is problematic according to the strict prescriptions of sovereignty and the principle of

²³ Parello-Plesner, Jonas; Duchâtel, Mathieu. (2015) *China's strong arm: protecting citizens and assets abroad*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

²⁴ Parello-Plesner, and Duchâtel.):9

²⁵ Changhe Su. 'New perspectives on the management of China's overseas interests, *Tansuo yu Zhengming*, no. 8 (2011), pp. 37–42.

²⁶ Liu Zhongming, 'Zhongguo zhongdong waijiao de de yu shi' ('The Gains and Losses of China's Diplomacy in the Middle East'), *Dongfang zaobao* (Oriental Morning Post), 5 January, 2012.

²⁷ Zheng.:356.

noninterference, however, as I will note in Chapter 4, China has increased its local engagement and diversified political contact beyond official channels.

I have also identified authors who have developed theoretical concepts that they consider the Chinese government should embrace in order to reshape its understanding of the principle of noninterference. Zhao Huasheng, a renowned expert on Central Asia, coined the concept of ‘constructive involvement’ (建设性介入 *jianshexing jieru*). According to this concept, China’s hands-off approach may damage its credibility as a reliable regional partner and reinforce the regional impression of China as a self-interested outsider.²⁸ This vision is aligned with China’s status as a great power, which implies the country should provide global goods according to its status. For Zhou, continuing to embrace the principle of noninterference does not imply China is barred from having a greater involvement at the tactical level. Another prominent expert is Wang Yizhou, who developed the notion of ‘creative involvement’ (创造性介入 *Chuanzaoxing jieru*), which considers that China should adjust its principle of non-interference. In Wang’s perspective, China should assume greater responsibilities corresponding to its status as great power, by providing global goods, otherwise its reputation would be negatively affected.²⁹ Furthermore, he stresses that hiding China’s power is not in line with the protection of its growing interests abroad and it hinders the country’s ability to set rules in international affairs.³⁰

28 Huasheng Zhao, -interference in internal affairs and constructive involvement—reflection on Chinese policy after the unrest in Kyrgyzstan], *Xinjiang Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Zhhexue Shehui Kexueban)*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Jan. 2011), pp. 23–29;

29 Yizhou Wang. 2012. “Creative involvement. A new direction in Chinese diplomacy.” In Marc Leonard (ed.), *China 3.0*. London: European Council on Foreign Relations:110.

30 Ibid.

As I have shown, the academic debate has been centered on the discrepancy between the need to uphold the principle of noninterference at the strategic level while embracing a more flexible application of the principle at the tactical level. Therefore, the discussion has not been framed as a clash between competing norms, more concretely, the tension between the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protecting citizens and interests. The contribution of this thesis is to fill this gap in the literature.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis provides a qualitative analysis of the principle of non-interference in the context of Chinese foreign policy, aiming to establish there is a clash between the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm to protect Chinese interests and nationals beyond China's borders. The sources I have analyzed to conduct my research are strategic documents, speeches from Chinese leaders, statistical data from international organizations and government entities, media coverage, films and secondary sources.

To analyze the magnitude of China's economic growth and the expansion of its inward and outward foreign direct investment, I will provide statistical data from UNCTAD, The World Bank and China's Ministry of Commerce. Finally, in order to disentangle how China has responded to the clash between the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad, I will analyze China's involvement through case studies. The cases I have chosen are a non-combatant evacuation operation in Libya, a law enforcement operation in South East Asia and a hostage crisis in Sudan.

Chapter 2

The emergence of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference

In order to provide a historical context of the emergence of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference, in this chapter I will illustrate how the transition from the Tianxia system to the Westphalian order changed the way China construed its position in the world. Secondly, I will elaborate on how the norm of sovereignty and a strict understanding of the principle of non-interference were institutionalized during the first years of China's Communist Party (CCP) rule, as a by-product of the victimization and foreign aggression suffered during the so-called century of humiliation.³¹ In the third place, I will analyze how this narrative led to the creation of the role identity of defender of national sovereignty against foreign aggression. Finally, I will illustrate how the policy of Reform and Opening Up marked the beginning of a period of economic prosperity, development and poverty reduction, laying the foundations for China's outward economic expansion.

2.1 The transition from the Tianxia system to the Westphalian order

Before its traumatic encounter with the west in the Opium Wars, China did not conform with the Westphalian norm of sovereignty and therefore denied the existence of equality among states.

³¹ Ai and Song:292

China considered itself to be the Middle Kingdom, the world's civilizational center of the Tianxia (天下), literally meaning all under heaven. In the Chinese perspective, the countries located on China's periphery, acted as cultural and political satellites which revolved around the Middle Kingdom.³² The Chinese civilization was governed by the emperor or son of heaven (天子 tianzi) who was the depositary of the mandate of heaven (天命 tianming). The preservation of the cosmic equilibrium was contingent upon the moral behavior and performance of the son of heaven. Therefore, when this equilibrium was broken, natural catastrophes such as floods and earthquakes were set to occur as a sign of the displeasure of heaven.³³ Consequently, these natural events were regarded as as sign of the need to remove the dynasty from power, catalyzing upheaval and protests among the population.

Within the framework of the Tianxia system, the Middle Kingdom served as a beacon of civilization which radiated its influence by way of its culture, philosophical doctrines and governance methods. Therefore, the peoples who were culturally and geographically distant from it, were considered to be barbarians. Hence, when Western powers intended to conclude treaties to open the Chinese market, the Chinese Empire was unwilling to treat them as equal partners. In the Westphalian thinking of Western powers, the Chinese imperial behavior breached the rules of diplomatic courtesy and most importantly, disregarded the notion of equal status of the states in the International System.³⁴ This clash between the Chinese Tianxia infused thinking and the Westphalian notions of Western powers increased the level of hostility. Moreover, besides the unwillingness of the Chinese Empire to engage the Western powers in terms of equality, the lack

³² Michael H. Hunt. *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1996. Pp. xiv,: 343.

³³ Judith F. Kornberg and John R. Faust. *China in World Politics: Policies, Processes, Prospects*, 2nd Edition.:9

³⁴ Kornberg and Faust:10

of will to conclude trade agreements, an increasing trade imbalance and the restrictions applied to the trade of opium resulted in armed retaliations from the British forces.

This traumatic encounter revealed that despite its perceived moral and civilizational superiority, China's scientific progress and military might, considerably lagged behind those of its foreign aggressors. Consequently, after the country suffered humiliating defeats, China was compelled to sign the so called "unequal treaties". Through these forced agreements, China ceded the Island of Hong Kong to the British and granted the control of areas of its territory that came to be known as the treaty ports. In these territories, the foreign powers applied their laws, its citizens enjoyed extraterritoriality while Chinese nationals were persons of inferior status.

The violent clash with the Western powers opened the door to a process of modernization and socialization along the lines of western norms. In this context, some Qing Imperial high ranking officials such as Li Hongzhang, considered that the country would have to abide by the unequal treaties it had signed and use its provisions to prevent further concessions in favor of the Western powers. Li also regarded as crucial to procure modern weaponry and to create educational institutions where western law, foreign languages and science could be learned.³⁵ In Li's vision, China had the imperative to self-strengthen itself in order to prevail in a Westphalian world order. The supporters of self-strengthening considered that Chinese knowledge was the fundamental foundation of the country; however, western learning had a significant practical application. For them, western technological advances, weaponry, steamships and science were regarded as means to defend the Chinese Confucian system.³⁶ Nevertheless, modernizing China according to western prescriptions while maintaining Chinese traditional values and institutions became increasingly

³⁵ Hunt (1996) :26.

³⁶ John K Fairbank and Merle Goldman. *China New History second enlarged edition*. Harvard University Press. 2006.:217

challenging. The process of western modernization had a progressive nature that went from borrowing machinery to technology, from learning science to the rest of the fields of knowledge, from the tolerance of ideas to the reform of institutions and from constitutional reforms to a republican revolution.³⁷ This incremental process of development and socialization went beyond the acquisition of technological means, it implied a substantial departure from the way China construed its role in the world and how it internalized concepts such as modernity, international law and norms such as sovereignty.³⁸ As Wendt posits, a significant source for the evolution of normative understandings is the exposure to new circumstances, therefore when actors face situations that are unprecedented in their experience, they construct their meaning either by analogy or creating them de novo.³⁹ Since these circumstances were completely unprecedented in the Chinese experience, the country had to construct its meaning, de novo.

Nevertheless, although China modernized adopting Western patterns, this did not entail that Western powers ceased to be ruthless aggressors and became constructive actors with a civilizing mission. The serious effects of the Opium wars, the disadvantageous concessions made to the USSR at the Yalta convention, the waning leverage on its peripheral regions and the opprobious Japanese invasion created a strong sense of national humiliation.⁴⁰ Hence, the discourse of aggression became deeply ingrained in Chinese Foreign Policy.⁴¹ Consequently, the narrative of foreign victimization and the internalization of the prevailing Westphalian norms were instrumental in the emergence of a new role identity for the country.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Wendt, (1992):398.

³⁹ Wendt, (1992):398.

⁴⁰ Lowell Dittmer, (1991) "China's search for its place in the world" from Brantly Womack (ed.), *Contemporary Politics in historical perspective* pp.209-261, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. :209.

⁴¹ Hunt (1996): 17.

2.2 Communist Foreign Policy

China's conception about its standing in the international system was characterized by a perception of political incursion, economic abuse and armed aggression had weakened and humiliated the country.⁴² This notion of victimization was further internalized when the Chinese Communist Party defeated The Nationalist Party in the civil war. In Mao Zedong's view, the New China's revolution had a pivotal role to play in the broader world's revolution of the proletariat; hence he resented an increasing level of threats from forces of the international reaction which intended to undermine China's success in this endeavor.⁴³ Furthermore, before the normalization of its relations with the world, the People's Republic of China did not count with diplomatic recognition as the legal representative of China and was not a member of the United Nations, therefore Beijing's regime needed to reinforce a sovereignty which that was highly contested in the international sphere.⁴⁴ In this context, the heightened perception of potential foreign aggression was leveraged upon to strengthen its control over masses and mobilize them toward the political ends of the CCP. Consequently, the new China further stressed the importance of the norm of sovereignty and assumed the role identity of the defender of the nation against foreign aggression and interference. In line with Wendt's argument, the process China went through illustrates how major shifts in foreign policy can take place when a state internalizes norms that it previously disregarded and enacting role identities it did not assume before.⁴⁵

⁴² Jian Chen., *Mao's China and the Cold War*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 400 p. :12

⁴³ Chen.:13.

⁴⁴ Wendt (2003): 504.

⁴⁵ Ai and Song:278.

As Benjamin and Duvall note, the essential elements of legitimacy are a structure of political authority which empowers some people to enforce the rules while obliging the rest to obey. The CCP derived significant political legitimacy, on the grounds of its revolutionary victory and its role identity as defender of China against the threats of external powers. Nevertheless, the new China understood the need to expand its international ties. Therefore, in October 1949, in the Proclamation of the Central People's Government, Mao Zedong expressed the new government's willingness to establish diplomatic relations with foreign governments willing to observe the principles of equality, mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty and mutual benefit.⁴⁶ This proclamation lay the foundations of, the principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which became the cornerstones of Chinese foreign policy. These principles are Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, Mutual non-aggression, Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and Peaceful co-existence. These cardinal principles were first incorporated into the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in 1950.⁴⁷ Four years later, they were included in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet region of China and India, which was signed in 1954 to settle the territorial disputes China and India had over Tibet. The Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were further incorporated into the Ten principles of the final communiqué adopted at the Bandung Conference of African and Asian States held in 1955.⁴⁸ China's participation in this forum extended its foreign policy reach beyond the communist bloc and raised its diplomatic profile within the non-aligned

⁴⁶ "Proclamation of the Central People's Government of the PRC," October 01, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), October 2, 1949. English translation from Michael Y.M. Kau, ed., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976*, Volume I, September 1949-December 1955 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 10-11. Last accessed April 5th 2019.

⁴⁷ Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China. <http://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/docs/19500214.T1E.html> Accessed May 12th.

⁴⁸ China's Initiation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18053.shtml Accessed April 5th.

movement.⁴⁹ Further evidence of the cornerstone status of the five principles of peaceful co-existence in Chinese foreign policy is their inclusion in the preamble of the People's Republic of China's constitution.⁵⁰

As I have argued previously, the narrative of foreign aggression and the CCP's domestic imperatives made China embrace a strict understanding of sovereignty, consistent with the prescription of the norms upheld by the Westphalian order. In this order, the state is the fundamental actor of the system and it is vested with the greatest degree of power to resolve matters that lie within its territorial jurisdiction, leaving no place for foreign interference.⁵¹ Consequently, the principle of non-interference is an expression of the sovereignty of states, a concept that encompasses the defense of the state's territorial integrity and political autonomy, impeding third countries to interfere in matters that fall within the national sphere of competence.

At the domestic level, the norm of sovereignty and non-interference was embraced to mobilize the population behind the CCP's leadership. Consequently, In the PRC's political circumstances, beyond the discourse of foreign aggression, the principle of noninterference is inextricably linked to the CCP regime's security, since the party's ability to defend the nation against foreign powers has become a constitutive element of its legitimacy to govern China.

⁴⁹ Duchâtel, Bräuner and Zhou :1.

⁵⁰ Constitution of the People's Republic of China. http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/2007-11/15/content_1372962.htm

⁵¹ Derek Croxton (1999) The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Origins of Sovereignty, *The International History Review*, 21:3, 590.

2.3 The Reform and Opening up: Foundation of the economic miracle

The strict observance of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference emerged in a context where China did not have significant economic or security interests to protect beyond its borders.⁵² Therefore, when China's global economic involvement was limited, abiding by the strictest understanding of the principle of non-interference did not present significant normative challenges. However, after Mao Zedong's death and the subsequent end of the Cultural Revolution, communist orthodoxy ceded terrain to a more pragmatic understanding of social and economic policy making, leading to an unparalleled expansion of the Chinese economy.⁵³ This new political path was marked by Deng Xiaoping, the paramount figure of the second generation of CCP's leadership. In contrast to Mao's dogmatic rhetoric, Deng had a more pragmatic understanding of the reforms the country needed and stressed the need to seek truth from the facts.

Deng's reformist spirit was translated into policy when in the third Plenary Session of the CCP 11th Central Committee that took place in December 1978; he launched the Reform and Opening Up policy (改革开放 Gaige Kaifang). In his opening speech, Deng said: "On the basis of self-reliance, we should actively develop economic cooperation featuring equality and mutual benefits with other countries in the world and strive to adopt world class technologies and advanced equipment."

⁵⁴ This policy was launched having as backdrop a pilot initiative that started to be applied on 18 farms in the province of Anhui. This project allowed them to divide the farmland owned by the

⁵² Mathieu Duchâtel ; Oliver Bräuner, and Hang Zhou (2014). "Protecting China's Overseas Interests – The Slow Shift away from Non-interference." SIPRI Policy Paper No. 41, SIPRI, June 2014.: 2

⁵³ Richard Baum. *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping*. Princeton: University Press. 1994. Pp. xviii.; 16

⁵⁴ Yang Jiemian, China's Diplomatic Theory Construction in the Four Decades of Reform and Opening-up, 73 *China Int'l Stud.* 5 (2018) :3

commune into individual parcels. The agreement was contingent upon the ability of the farmers to provide a fixed amount of the production to the state and to the commune, enabling the, to keep the surplus and creating wealth. The success of this initiative of economic liberalization created the conditions for further liberalization of the economy. Therefore a more ambitious scheme led to the creation of four Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in 1980. These four SEZ were Shenzhen (facing Hong Kong), Xiamen (facing Taiwan) Zhuhai (facing Macau) and Shantou, a city with strong connections to Chinese communities in East Asia.⁵⁵ Hence, there were geographical and strategic considerations to select these cities. On the one hand, China intended to strengthen its economic ties in the dynamic East Asia and on the other hand, it expected to forge closer ties with Hong Kong and Macau and Taiwan, territories where it expected to regain political control.

According to Pearson, the economic reforms lacked a clear blueprint, were flexible and gradual, hence they were extended to other coastal regions only when the results they produced were deemed economically and politically acceptable.⁵⁶ Gradualism was connected to the political imperative of strengthening regime security, by creating greater loyalty in social groups, such as farmers, without antagonizing key stakeholders such as the workers of State-Owned Enterprises (SOE's).⁵⁷ In 1984, 14 cities located on the Chinese coast were granted the status of open cities to establish relations with the world, giving way to a further expansion of the reform and opening up policy along the Chinese coastal regions.

⁵⁵ Miaojie Yu (2018) China's international trade development and opening up policy design over the past four decades, *China Economic Journal*, 11:3:304.

⁵⁶ Margaret Pearson (2015) China's Foreign Economic Relations and Policies," in *Oxford Handbook on the International Relations of Asia*, edited by John Ravenhill, Rosemary Foot, and Saadia Pekkanen. Oxford University Press.:167.

⁵⁷ Ibid

The Reform and Opening Up intended to progressively liberalize the economy, attracting foreign investment and improving the life conditions within the country. However, while Deng Xiaoping gradually opened the Chinese economy and admitted the need to reform the economy and attract foreign investment, he was wary about the influence of foreign economic power within the country. Furthermore, China's understanding of the norms of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference remained unchanged under his leadership. Deng said: "China will never accept others' interference in its internal affairs. Our social system is determined by our own conditions and supported by the Chinese people, so how can we allow foreign interference to change it? The most important principle of the new order of international relations should be non-interference in the internal affairs and social system of other countries."⁵⁸ In the same line of thought, Deng consistently stressed the need to educate the country's youth about China's history of humiliation as the sick man of Asia and stressed the role of socialism to build a stronger country.⁵⁹ This reveals that beyond the narrative of victimization, the CCP's leadership found instrumental relevance in upholding the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference, since it reinforced the legitimacy of the CCP's led government and upheld its role identity as defender of the Chinese nation against foreign aggression and interference.

Moreover, beyond reducing poverty, attracting foreign investment, boosting production and trade, the policy of Reform and Opening Up strengthened the economic power of Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE's), opening the door to a future expansion of its operations beyond China's borders. Nevertheless, the process Reform and Opening Up also brought to the fore unprecedented social pressures. The uneven development, corruption and the pressures for political reforms led

⁵⁸ Deng Xiaoping. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol.3, Foreign Languages Press(Beijing China) (1994):359

⁵⁹ Deng Xiaoping speech. *WE MUST TELL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT CHINA'S HISTORY*. February 18, 1987. <https://dengxiaopingworks.wordpress.com/2013/03/18/we-must-tell-our-young-people-about-chinas-history/>.

to massive protests within the country. Hence, a decade after the reform process was launched, the Tiananmen Square protests and the use of force to end them put the CCP's rule to test. Consequently, China came under great pressure from foreign powers which interrupted high-level political conversations and implemented sanctions on the country.⁶⁰ In a context of adversity in China's external front, for Deng Xiaoping, China's priority lay within its borders, the country needed to strengthen its social and economic base.⁶¹ Hence, Deng embraced the 'Taoguang Yanghui' (韬光养晦) policy, which could be roughly translated as "hide and bide your time".⁶² This political orientation demanded the PRC's government to concentrate its efforts on China's economic challenges and adopting a low-profile involvement in international affairs.⁶³

In the Post-Tiananmen context, the Chinese government found significant instrumental reasons in invoking the norm of sovereignty and principle of non-interference, while the legitimacy of its rule was called into question and the shadows of the century of humiliation lingered.⁶⁴ Hence, upholding the norms of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference reinforced its role identity as defender of the nation from foreign aggression and protected regime security.

⁶⁰ Anna Michalski and Pan Zhongqi, 2017: "Role Dynamics in a Structured Relationship: The EU China Strategic Partnership, *JCMS* 55(3): 618.

⁶¹ Dingding Chen and Jianwei Wang.. 'Lying Low No More? China's New Thinking on the Tao Guang Yang Hui Strategy', *China: An International Journal* 9, 2 (2011): P-197.

⁶² ⁶² Xuetong Yan (2014); From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2014, :154.

⁶³ Jinghan Zeng(2019): Chinese views of global economic governance, *Third World Quarterly*,:5.

⁶⁴ *New directions in the study of China's foreign policy* / edited by Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross Stanford University Press (2006) P-218.

Chapter 3

The emergence of the norm of citizen and interest protection

In the previous chapter I illustrated how the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the role identity of defender against foreign aggression and interference emerged as a by-product of foreign aggression. I also explained how this norm was fundamental to protect the CCP's regime legitimacy, noting that it arose in a context where Chinese economic interests were not yet globalized.

In this chapter I will focus on how the protection of Chinese interests and nationals emerged as a norm embraced by China's government and how it assumed the corresponding role identity of defender Chinese citizens and interests abroad. I will argue that the Going Out policy launched in 1999 dramatically increased the globalization of Chinese economic interests, creating the unprecedented norm to protect Chinese nationals and investments beyond the country's borders. Also, I will illustrate how the emergence of this new norm and its corresponding role identity resulted mainly from the pressures exerted by domestic factors. At the domestic level the main drivers were bureaucratic entities within the party-state and the growing grassroots demands – a form of citizenship from below – correlated with the growing number of Chinese citizens living, working and traveling abroad.

Given the salience of the domestic drivers, I will illustrate how China's economic expansion increased the number of foreign policy actors, empowering State-Owned Enterprises and entangling the dynamic of bureaucratic politics. Furthermore, I will elaborate on how the use of a nationalist discourse has served as an enabler for a public opinion that demands a greater

involvement from its government to protect Chinese nationals and investments abroad. At the level of institutional reform, I will analyze how the emergence of the new norm made Chinese institutions incorporate the protection of Chinese citizens and investments into their priorities, procedures and operational guidelines. Finally, I will explain how the globalization of Chinese interests and the consequent imperative to protect them have clashed with the strict interpretation of the principle of non-interference.

3.1 The Global expansion of Chinese interests

Upon the normalization of China's ties with the world after the Tiananmen incidents, in a context where China's economy continued to grow steadily, a crucial economic and political shift occurred in 1999. On that year, the General Secretary of the CCP and State President, Jiang Zemin launched the Going Out policy. As Pearson argues, until the end of the 1990's, the pattern of China's international economic integration had been fundamentally outside-in; however the earnings derived from exports resulted in massive state-held foreign exchange reserves.⁶⁵ Therefore, the availability of resources accumulated by Chinese State-Owned Enterprises and the political decision to invest abroad encouraged Chinese enterprises to diversify their investments beyond the country's national borders, having a significant effect in outward FDI.⁶⁶ It is worth-noting that the rationale behind China's international economic integration was aligned with the Party-State's strategic imperatives. China's leaders intended to further modernize the country and acquire a comprehensive national power which had economic strength as one of its fundamental pillars.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Pearson. P-162.

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Pearson.P-166

In order to understand the evolution of China's economic growth and its inward and outward FDI, it is relevant to look at statistical data. According to the World Bank, China's gross domestic product grew (GDP) from 149 541 billion dollars in 1978 to 1.904 trillion in 1999 and in 2018 it was equivalent to 12.238 trillion dollars.⁶⁸ This growth of the GDP was a result of the economic policies and the greater inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country. According to statistical data from UNCTAD, China's inward FDI stock showed a significant growth from 186 189 dollars in 1999 to 1490 933 billion dollars in 2017.⁶⁹ However, within the same time frame, China's capacity to invest abroad also presented a significant increase. In 1999 China's outward Foreign Investment Stock equaled 26 852.6 billion US dollars, while in 2017 it amounted to 1482 020.5 billion dollars.⁷⁰ In terms of yearly FDI outflows, in 1999 China invested 1774.3 billion dollars and in 2017 it invested 124 630.0 billion dollars abroad.⁷¹ These figures reveal the extent of China's economic expansion.

In this context, a fundamental part of China's economic growth strategy was to guarantee energetic security; therefore, China's investment in the extractive sector become a logical progression in its overseas expansion. Consequently, the State Premier, Zhu Rongji, pushed Chinese SOE's to strengthen themselves to compete against multinational corporations in the international markets.⁷² In these new circumstances, the strengthened SOE's served as the frontrunners of China's global economic expansion. The developing world presented an unparalleled opportunity for investing in

⁶⁸ World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. World Bank.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN>

⁶⁹ World Investment Report: Annex Tables. FDI inward stock by region and economy
<https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/World%20Investment%20Report/Annex-Tables.aspx>

⁷⁰ World Investment Report: Annex Tables. FDI outward stock by region and economy, 1990-2017.
<https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/World%20Investment%20Report/Annex-Tables.aspx>

⁷¹ UNCTAD. World Investment Report: Annex Tables. FDI outflows by region and economy, 1990-2017.
<https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/World%20Investment%20Report/Annex-Tables.aspx>

⁷² Pearson. :166

the field of energy; hence China's expansion into developing countries became very significant. For instance, in 2016, China accumulated an investment stock of 40 billion dollars in Africa, positioning itself as the 4th largest investor in the continent.⁷³ On the same year, China became the top investor in the structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies, with an investment stock of 34 billion dollars.⁷⁴ Therefore, the dramatic growth of the outward FDI stock and yearly flows; represent a significant leap in terms of economic projection beyond China's borders. The statistical data also reveals that China has positioned itself as a leading investor in the least developed nations. These countries given their political instability face structural and institutional challenges that translate into insecure environments in which Chinese companies and their workers must operate. One of the reasons that explains China's economic incursion in some of these regions was the reluctance of other great powers to invest on the grounds of their political regimes, human rights records and the corresponding sanctions imposed on them. Initially, China, based on its strict understanding of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference, decided to invest in these troubled countries, despite the political nature of their regimes, since its internal political matters were beyond the sovereign competence of China.

Nevertheless, in this context of outward economic expansion, China came to face an unprecedented challenge, having investments abroad and a growing number of Chinese workers. The existence of nationals and interests created debates about the role China had to protect them and what this new imperative would mean for China's normative understanding of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference. Hence the clash between the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protection of citizens and interests abroad emerged,

⁷³ UNCTAD. Developing economies: Africa.

https://unctad.org/Sections/dite_dir/docs/WIR2018/WIR2018_FDI_Africa_en.pdf

⁷⁴ UNCTAD.

https://unctad.org/Sections/dite_dir/docs/WIR2018/WIR2018_FDI_Least_Developed_Countries_en.pdf

leading to an unprecedented normative contradiction with far-reaching ramifications for China's domestic and foreign policy. As I have noted before, Wendt argues that states are corporate and intentional actors whose identities are to a great extent determined by domestic politics rather than exclusively by the international system structures.⁷⁵ Hence, I will argue that the main drivers of the emergence of the norm of protection of citizens and interests abroad were the pressures from bureaucratic actors within the Party-State and the growing pressure of public opinion infused with a nationalistic discourse.

3.1 The pressures of the Party-State bureaucratic entities

China's global economic expansion by way of outward foreign investment created major challenges within China's party-state bureaucratic apparatus. As I have noted previously, China's immense economic growth strengthened the preoccupation for energy security. Hence, the powerful state-owned enterprises (SOE's) became the first actors to develop massive investment projects abroad. SOE's sought to increase their economic returns, often investing in countries with a precarious security situation, weak rule of law and frail institutions. On the other side of the bureaucratic spectrum, the SOE's risk-tolerant orientation raised concerns for a government that realized the extent to which presence in risky countries could create problems for Chinese foreign policy.⁷⁶ The governmental body which was more cautious about this expansion was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), since it is the institution charged with consular protection and diplomatic coordination, abroad.

⁷⁵ Wendt. (1999):246.

⁷⁶ Parello-Plesner; Duchâtel:51.

Given the intricacies of China's Party-State System, it is crucial to understand the complex interplay between CCP and State institutions. There are three main institutional actors in political coordination bodies in the Chinese political system. The first of them is part of the CCP's structure, the Central Committee, while the other two are part of the State structure: The State Council and the National People's Congress. In this intricate institutional setting, rank consciousness informs the way in which officials and agencies interact, and the party organs outrank all state structures.⁷⁷ According to Jacobson and Manuel, the status of the leader within the party hierarchy reflects the importance of the organization within the bureaucratic structures.⁷⁸ Hence, in circumstances where bureaucratic actors have different interests and competing priorities, their rank and the position of its leaders within the CCP hierarchy is pivotal to disentangle discrepancies in the decision-making process.

In this complicated bureaucratic interplay, the MFA has lost significant power. Sun argues there are four factors that have caused the weakening of the MFA in foreign policy decision making. The first one is that domestic agendas continue to trump external ones, secondly the ministers in charge of the MFA have not been granted access to the higher echelons of power in the CCP's hierarchy.⁷⁹ Thirdly, China's broadened international exposure has increased the number of stakeholders participating in foreign policy making, entities which have a greater degree of specialization in their functional areas and better defined and narrower agendas. Lastly, given its

⁷⁷ Linda Jakobson and Ryan Manuel. How are Foreign Policy Decisions Made in China? *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, P 103

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Jing Sun (2017) Growing Diplomacy, Retreating Diplomats – How the Chinese Foreign Ministry has been Marginalized in Foreign Policymaking, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 26:105,:427.

visibility and despite its reduced power, the MFA faces greater social pressures and a dramatic overstretch of its resources to respond to the increasing demands.⁸⁰

As Sun posits, the status of the Minister of Foreign Affairs within the Party hierarchy has decreased consistently.⁸¹ What further complicates the dynamics is that the low bureaucratic standing of the MFA does not grant it authority to give instructions to the SOE's, since the heads of these enterprises often hold senior positions in the CCP's hierarchy, who can have the same level of authority as a minister or even a position of greater power. Consequently, even if the MFA oversees the embassies and the consular protection work abroad and therefore is the most visible face of foreign policy toward the citizens, this government body is not in a position to give instructions to Chinese companies. A major complication derived from this situation is that over the past years, several enterprises from the private and public sector have failed to provide information regarding their activities and workers abroad; nevertheless, when there are security crises, they demand the government to swiftly respond to protect them.⁸² The increasing role of bureaucratic actors such as Ministries and SOE's, which advocate for an active protection of Chinese citizens and interests, reveals the extent to which the emergence of norms can emerge out of instrumental considerations. In this context, the new norm of protection of Chinese nationals and interested provides greater security guarantees to their operations in high-risk locations.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Jamestown Foundation. (2012) "Kidnappings Highlight Weakness in Chinese Security Posture Abroad." <https://jamestown.org/program/kidnappings-highlight-weakness-in-chinese-security-posture-abroad/> Accessed on May15th.

3.2 *Popular nationalism and grassroots pressure for active involvement*

In this section, I intend to illustrate how the emergence of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests also responds to bottom-up pressures from the grassroots, which are linked to the growing number of Chinese nationals that are living, working and travelling abroad. Currently, China is the world's top outbound tourism market in the world, in 2018.⁸³ According to the China Tourism Academy, 140 million Chinese nationals travelled abroad, marking a 13.5% raise from 2017, when 129 million Chinese citizens went beyond their country's borders.⁸⁴ According to China's Ministry of Commerce, by the end of August 2018 the number of Chinese workers dispatched overseas reached to work in projects amounted to 994,000.⁸⁵ On the other hand, the number of Chinese passport holders which lived abroad in 2015 was of about 5 million persons, without counting the approximately 50 million overseas Chinese who hold foreign passports.⁸⁶ These figures reflect the extent to which Chinese economic expansion has had an impact on the growing numbers of Chinese nationals beyond its borders. The increasing presence of Chinese nationals abroad has created significant pressures from the grassroots to protect them, which raise concerns for the CCP in terms of legitimacy and, consequently, regime security.

As Sorensen argues, nationalism can be considered as the most important glue between the party-state and the Chinese society.⁸⁷ Hence, the CCP has used the top-down narrative of nationalism to guarantee social and political stability, arguing that China only could regain its great power status

⁸³ China still No 1 outbound tourism market: Report. China Daily. March 13th 2019.

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201903/13/WS5c88f6aca3106c65c34ee74c.html>

⁸⁴ IN 2018, CHINESE TOURISTS TRAVELED IN GREATER NUMBERS. Tourism review news. Jan 14th 2019 <https://www.tourism-review.com/chinese-tourists-increasingly-travel-abroad-news10891>

⁸⁵ Brief Statistics on China's Overseas Labor Service Cooperation in January-August of 2018. China's Ministry of Commerce. September 26th 2018.

<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/statistic/foreigntradeoperation/201810/20181002794780.shtml>

⁸⁶ Parelló-Plesner and Duchâtel:26

⁸⁷ Sorensen:5

and defend from foreign forces which intend to weaken the country, as long as the CCP rules the country.⁸⁸ Consequently, the strength of the country and its ability to protect the interests of the homeland is contingent upon the sustainability of the rule of CCP.

However, the instrumentalization of the nationalist discourse has not been one-sided. In circumstances where Chinese investments and nationals encounter increased danger beyond its borders, China's domestic public has applied greater pressure on the party-state, making use of bottom-up nationalist infused tropes. This grassroots demand, in turn, fed into government-encouraged nationalist discourses as they were couched in nationalist vocabulary and fueled by nationalist passions, which made it difficult for the government to ignore or repress these unexpected grassroots side-effects of its economic globalization strategy.

Hence, the nationalist discourse has become an enabler for the citizens to criticize the party, lending weight to its demands and augmenting the pressure on it. In line with this argument, Shen posits that Chinese internet users have proven their ability to consolidate nationalistic sentiments within the country.⁸⁹ On the other hand, Zhao notes that the CCP's has shown greater responsiveness to popular nationalism when it comes to adopting firmer positions to defend national interests.⁹⁰ Therefore, the CCP's government is more wary of the pressure of its citizens when it comes to protecting its nationals in need of security. Consequently, China's protective diplomacy has gained greater public visibility in order to placate Chinese public, which expects to see concrete actions when Chinese citizens are in risk.⁹¹ Hence the use of a nationalist discourse

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Breslin, Shaun Ed. Simon Shen. Civil Society, diverse publics and internet in response to Chinese Diplomacy in *A Handbook of China's International Relations* Routledge. P 42.

⁹⁰ Zhao, Suisheng (2013) Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: the strident turn. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22:82, 535-553 P-553.

⁹¹ Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel:147.

as a strategy to strengthen the legitimacy of CCP's rule and as mechanism of social mobilization for guaranteeing regime security, has created unintended consequences for China's foreign and security policies.⁹²

As I will note in the empirical case section, in situations where Chinese citizens have been either affected or in risk, Chinese netizens have actively demanded the government to act with energy, and even resorting to the use of force, if necessary. These attitudes reveal that the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference are not regarded as absolute prescriptions at the grassroots levels. For instance, in 2012, the Global Times online website conducted an online survey where 54.6% of the respondents considered the Chinese government should change the principle of noninterference, while 37.9% voted for preserving it and 7.5% said it was unclear for them.⁹³

Nevertheless, the narratives of popular nationalism and its call for the protection of Chinese nationals and interests abroad have gone beyond Chinese social networks and transcended onto the film industry. An evidence of this is that two biggest grossing films in China's history are related to this normative imperative. *Wolf Warrior 2*, China's biggest blockbuster success, reveals the security risks Chinese citizens and investments face in politically and socially unstable African countries. The main character of the film is a discharged Chinese PLA special forces officer who offers himself as a volunteer to save a Chinese Physician in a fictional African country in which civil war breaks out. The movie is heavily charged with a nationalistic rhetoric. In a passage of the film where the movie's Chinese main character fights against a western mercenary, the latter tells him: "People like you always will be inferior to people like me" to which the former responds:

⁹² Sorensen, Camila :5.

⁹³ Huanqiu. Banshu wangyou renwei "bu ganshe neizheng" yuanze ying zuo chu gaibian chao banshu daibiao weiyuan yi biao zantong. March 14th 2012. http://mil.huanqiu.com/china/2012-03/2522502_4.html

“But that was in the past”.⁹⁴ This dialogue intends to reflect China on a position of strength, on which past foreign aggression and humiliation is not tolerated. The movie ends with the image of a Chinese passport in which the following message could be read: “Citizens of the People’s Republic of China: When you are in danger abroad, don’t give up, please remember, behind you, there is a great and strong motherland.”⁹⁵ This phrase reinforces the norm of protection of Chinese citizens beyond the country’s borders and stresses the role identity of the CCP’s government as a defender of the Chinese nationals abroad.

Another relevant example is *Operation Red Sea*, the second biggest box office success in China’s film industry. This movie begins reflecting the operations of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLA-N) in the Gulf of Aden to secure the routes of Chinese ships from the attacks of pirates. In a context where, product of a civil war, the security worsens in a fictional country of the Middle East, the PLAN special forces were commissioned to evacuate hundreds of Chinese nationals out of the war-torn country. The film is heavily charged with scenes of combats, highlighting the prowess of the Chinese soldiers. Reportedly, this film received funding from the PLAN, what reveals the importance assigned to frame it as a competent and powerful force, able to operate in situations of crisis beyond its shores.⁹⁶

In these movies, protecting Chinese citizens and investments is assumed as a commitment honored by the party-state through the PLA. It is important to note that the PLA pre-dates the People’s Republic of China and it is officially the armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party China. Consequently, PLA’s forces are portrayed as the symbol of strong country, capable of defending

⁹⁴ Wu Jing (Director). *Wolf Warrior 2* (Film). 2017. Minute 151

⁹⁵ Ibid. Minute 151.

⁹⁶ Robert Farley. *Operation Red Sea: The Chinese Public's Introduction to Beijing's New Navy*. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/operation-red-sea-the-chinese-publics-introduction-to-beijings-new-navy/>

its citizens and projecting its military might thousands of miles away from its shores. It could be argued that cultural productions of this kind have their origins in private initiatives and therefore are not necessarily produced by the Chinese government or the CCP, however, in order to be showcased; they need to go through a process of vetting. Therefore, if they would go completely against the CCP's government sanctioned discourse, they would not be shown on the big screen. Nevertheless, the crucial element in both films is the way in which protecting Chinese nationals is embraced as a patriotic duty, what reveals a sense of logic of appropriateness which emanates from the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests.

In conclusion, nationalism emerged as a potent force, a catalyst of unity and an element to reaffirm the role identity of the CCP's government as the guarantor of the security of Chinese citizens and interests within and beyond its borders. The increasing participation of Chinese netizens in online debates and the prominence of the discourse of the protection of Chinese nationals are an unintended consequence of the nationalist discourse used by the CCP. In a context where this narrative is increasingly salient, the failure to deliver would severely harm the CCP's led government internal sovereignty and its legitimacy. Therefore, the growing expectations place greater pressures on China's party-state to uphold the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests, putting the principle of non-interference under greater strain.

3.3 Institutional response to the new reality

A significant shift occurred in 2004, when Hu Jintao coined the term diplomacy for the people (外交为民 *waijiao weimin*), which was in line with the CCP's slogan put the individual first (以人为本 *yiren weiben*).⁹⁷ This strategic orientation revealed the emergence of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests and had important repercussions in the procedures, regulations and policies of the Chinese government. In 2012 the protection of Chinese citizens abroad became a priority of China's security and foreign policy. In his report at the 18th Congress of the CCP, Hu Jintao, the then General Secretary and State President said, "We have staunchly protected China's interests and the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese nationals and legal persons overseas".⁹⁸

In 2004 the MFA created the Department for External Security Affairs, to assess threats to its nationals and interests abroad. The MFA also signed an agreement with China's mobile network companies that allowed Chinese citizens to receive text messages with useful information such as contact information of the nearest Chinese consulate and local police departments; as soon as they arrived into a foreign country.

The Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) has also played a fundamental role by issuing regulations for Chinese companies operating overseas. In 2004 the State Council, having the endorsement of the MOFCOM, the MFA and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission's (SASAC) issued a communication called 'Views on improving the protection of nationals and entities overseas'.⁹⁹ This document called upon Chinese enterprises to upgrade their

⁹⁷ Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel:39.

⁹⁸ Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/18th_CPC_National_Congress_Eng/t992917.htm

⁹⁹ Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel:47.

threat-assessment capacities and to enhance the education of their workers in the field of security. In 2010, the MOFCOM issued a document called ‘Provisions on the safety management of overseas Chinese-funded enterprises and personnel’.¹⁰⁰ This document had a binding nature and placed greater responsibilities on the shoulders of the companies who sent workers abroad, making them responsible for the security of their personnel.¹⁰¹ In 2012, the MOFCOM issued the ‘Regulations for the Management of Labour Service Cooperation’ which obliges companies engaged in foreign-labour service to deposit 3 million Renminbi (RMB) in a bank account for compensating potential damages, medical treatments or repatriation for workers.¹⁰²

In the process of aligning Chinese foreign policy with the protection of China’s nationals and interests abroad, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has consistently increased its capabilities to serve that purpose. As Char and Bit zinger argue, China’s economic projection has had an important impact on its military strategy.¹⁰³ Therefore, in 2013, in its Military Strategy document, China declared for the first time, its overseas interests as an integral component of the country’s national interests. In this document, China considers crucial the protection of its citizens, legal persons, and strategic lines of communication and resources.¹⁰⁴ The strategy also regards vessel protection at sea, evacuation of Chinese nationals abroad, and emergency rescue as crucial means for the PLA to safeguard national interests.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Notice of the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Development and Reform Commission on Issuing the Provisions on the Safety Management of Overseas Chinese-funded Enterprises, Institutions and Personnel. October 13th 2010. <http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=8309&CGid=>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China. Regulations on Management of Foreign Labor Service Cooperation. July 13th 2012. <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/policyrelease/bbb/201209/20120908366677.shtml>

¹⁰³ James Char and Richard. A. Bitzinger “A New Direction in the People’s Liberation Army’s Emergent Strategic Thinking, Roles and Missions”, *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 232 (December 2017): 856.

¹⁰⁴ “The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces Information Office of the State Council The People’s Republic of China” Information Office of the State Council. April 2013. <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2012.htm> Accessed April 28th.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

The institutional and legal changes which have been implemented reveal the great extent to which the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad has been internalized by highest levels of the CCP and governmental entities. Consequently, strategic documents, regulations and procedures have gone through a process of adaptation to meet higher standards of security and protection.

Chapter 4

The clash of the norms in practice: A more flexible understanding of the principle of non-interference

In the previous chapter I focused on how the global expansion of Chinese economic interests created domestic pressures which led to the emergence of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad. I also explained how this norm clashes with the long-upheld norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference. In this Chapter the focus is to illustrate how this clash between norms has operated in practice and the extent to which this predicament is linked to the legitimacy and regime security of the CCP.

To that end, I will analyze three case studies in which China embraced the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad, adopting a more flexible understanding of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. The three case studies I have chosen are a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation which brought to safety 35,860 Chinese nationals from the war-torn Libya, a law enforcement operation in the Golden Triangle to capture the murderers of 13 Chinese sailors killed on the Mekong River and finally a case where the Chinese government directly engaged the leaders of the SPLM-N, rebel group which held 29 Chinese workers as hostages in Sudan. These cases reveal an unprecedented involvement of China for safeguarding the lives of its citizens and serving justice far from its shores, in line with the norm of the protection of nationals and interests and its identity as guarantor of their security. Given China's domestic political imperatives the pressures of entities within the Party-State bureaucratic apparatus, the protection of Chinese citizens and interests has become a priority for the government led by the

CCP, therefore its response to this normative entanglement is inextricably connected to its legitimacy and regime security.¹⁰⁶

In these three cases, the national authorities had weak institutions, low capabilities or were in a situation in which the power of the state collapses, hindering their capacity to act in defense of the Chinese nationals and interests. These circumstances prompted the Chinese government to act in unprecedented ways, confirming the existence of a new norm which clashes with its strict understanding of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and which is actively promoted by entities of the Chinese Bureaucratic apparatus and the grassroots.

4.1 Law enforcement operation in the Golden Triangle

This case marks the first time China has conducted a law enforcement operation outside of its borders, therefore represents a major shift in China's security policy. Moreover, it illustrates how the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests has gained traction, side-lining the norm of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. As I have noted previously, the norm of sovereignty states exclusive competences and powers for the state within its territorial domains. The principle of noninterference entails that foreign powers should not take part in activities that are privative to another country's sovereign sphere. Hence, activities such as law enforcement, intelligence gathering and serving justice are exclusive competences of the state within its territorial domain. Nevertheless, in a context where the lives of Chinese citizens were affected by

¹⁰⁶ Duchâtel, Bräuner, and Zhou :2.

a criminal organization beyond China's borders, the country had to respond upholding the norm of protecting its interests and citizens abroad.

On October 5th, 2011, 13 PRC nationals were brutally murdered aboard two ships on the Mekong River, in an area called the Golden Triangle.¹⁰⁷ The Golden Triangle is an area shared by Laos, Myanmar and Thailand and has gained prominence due to the proliferation of drug trafficking, human exploitation and connected crimes. Allegedly, the man who orchestrated the attack was Naw Kham, a national of Myanmar who established a pervasive support structure, having the support of corrupt government authorities, the armed forces and the police. When the pictures of the corpses of the Chinese sailors became viral in Chinese social media, they created massive indignation within the country at the grassroots level, placing pressure on the government to act proactively.¹⁰⁸ An example of the following post from a Chinese netizen on Weibo, a social media platform similar to Twitter: 'The authorities owe justice to the people, especially to the killed people and their families'.¹⁰⁹

As I have previously noted, according to the prescriptions of the norm of sovereignty, the state is the ultimate responsible for enforcing law and serving justice within its territorial jurisdiction. Nevertheless, in this case, China acted, going beyond cooperation with the governments of Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. The Chinese government decided to create a special task force to capture the criminals involved in the murder of its nationals. This special investigative unit was composed of 200 agents and was led by Li Yuejin, who then served as Head of the Anti-narcotics Department

¹⁰⁷ How China Used Drones to Capture a Notorious Burmese Drug Lord. The daily beast. April 17th 2014. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-china-used-drones-to-capture-a-notorious-burmese-drug-lord>

¹⁰⁸ Parelló-Plesner and Duchâtel. (2015) P 93.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS).¹¹⁰ The task-force conducted surveillance, intelligence gathering and raids with the cooperation of local authorities. Usually these kinds of activities are exclusively carried out by the authorities of the state in whose territory the investigation is conducted, therefore, from a strict understanding of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference, the extent of China's participation can be regarded as problematic.

After four months of intensive search, the operation had not yet yielded the expected results and New Kham was still at large. Given the complexity of the operation and the absence of results, Li's team entertained an unorthodox alternative to strike the location in which Naw Kham was allegedly hiding. In an interview to the Chinese version of the Global Times, Li mentioned his team evaluated the possibility of using an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) loaded with explosives to bomb Naw Kham's position.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, given the instructions issued by Beijing authorities to bring him to justice, alive, the UAV strike option was discarded.¹¹² Even if the UAV attack alternative was not put into practice, the fact that Liu's task force even considered this kind alternative for eliminating an alleged foreign criminal on a location beyond China's borders, constitutes a shift from the more restrained discourse used by Chinese government representatives in critical circumstances and the strict respect of sovereign territorial integrity.

Finally, Naw Kham was captured by Liu's team in Laos, from where he was swiftly extradited to China. In China he stood trial with four of the members of his criminal organization, for the murder of the 13 Chinese sailors. The five men were finally condemned to death by a tribunal in the province of Guangxi and footage of the hours before the execution was aired on China's Central

¹¹⁰ Zhuan an zu zhang pilu zhua bu nuo kang jingguo: Ceng yu pai wu ren ji zhan. February 18th 2013. Global Times. <http://china.huanqiu.com/local/2013-02/3651930.html> Accessed on April 26th 2019.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

Television (CCTV).¹¹³ This unusual broadcast intended to express China's effectiveness and severity to prosecute those who harm its citizens, even beyond its borders. This situation can be analyzed through the prism of internal and external sovereignty. As I have mentioned in the first Chapter, for Wendt internal sovereignty is linked to the social recognition the state enjoys for exercising its authority within its territorial domain. On the other hand, External sovereignty entails the absence of a higher external authority to the state; for instance: other states, international law or entities.¹¹⁴ In this case, from the point of view of internal sovereignty, Chinese government lacked social recognition to exercise its authority abroad or to bring to trial foreign nationals who had committed crimes beyond its sovereign jurisdiction. However the norm of protection of citizens and interests created a new logic of appropriateness which superseded the strict prescriptions of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference.

The operation was openly praised by Chinese media. For instance, the China Youth Daily, official newspaper of the Youth Communist League, considered the operation was a 'successful example of protecting the legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese citizens' and considered that despite the tragic events occurred beyond Chinese borders, China had 'unquestionable jurisdiction to act'.¹¹⁵ Expressions of this sort represent the internalization of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad in the official discourse.

The Mekong's operation marks a relevant shift in Chinese history, since it was the first time in which a law enforcement operation was carried out of China's territorial jurisdiction and where China managed to submit to its judicial system persons who had committed criminal acts against

¹¹³ Naw Kham executed over murder of Chinese sailors; TV broadcast blasted. China Southern Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1167565/naw-kham-executed-over-murder-chinese-sailors-tv-broadcast-blasted>. Accessed May 10th.

¹¹⁴ Wendt, (1999): 208.

¹¹⁵ He Chunzhong, 'Let Justice be extended on behalf of the state'. China Youth Daily, March 1st 2013.

Chinese citizens in third countries.¹¹⁶ In this operation, China reaffirmed its readiness to guarantee the security of its nationals and to bring to justice those who attack them, demonstrated its capabilities to operate beyond its territory in a context where responsible states have reduced means of capacities to conduct operations. Moreover, in a major shift, it pondered launching an UAV attack to target a foreign national on foreign soil, which could have affected the territorial integrity of the host country. This case also speaks to the leverage China has in its neighboring states and the extent to which the demands of the domestic public opinion put pressure on China's party-state to defend its nationals, reaffirming the norm of protection of Chinese Citizens and interests beyond its borders.

4.2 Non-Combatant Evacuation in Libya

This case illustrates the clash between the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad, in a context of generalized violence and state power collapse. In 2011, long lasting dictatorial regimes began to collapse on the wake of massive protests held in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. This process, which came to be known as the Arab Spring, entailed severe institutional and social challenges for these countries, but also affected countries that had massive investments and a significant number of its nationals working there. Libya was the country where China had greater interests. The country had 75 enterprises in charge of executing 50 major projects that required an investment of 20 billion US dollars.¹¹⁷ As a general practice, China intends to develop friendly relations with the national authorities of the countries where it has investments, nevertheless, this approach becomes

¹¹⁶ Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel. P-102.

¹¹⁷ Shaio Zerba. China's Libya Evacuation Operation: a new diplomatic imperative—overseas citizen protection. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2014. Vol. 23, No. 90, 1093–1112. P 1094.

untenable when the power of the state collapses and the authorities lose effective control over the territory and its security situation.¹¹⁸

This is precisely what happened in Libya, while the power of Gaddafi's government collapsed, the widespread cases of Chinese workers and business facilities being attacked throughout the country by rebel groups, turned the alarms on in Beijing. In the city of Adjabiya, in northeastern Libya there were around 1000 Chinese construction workers from the Huafeng company were victims of robbery and were even expelled from their housing compound. In northern Libya, the China Communications Construction Company (CCC) had 5,000 Chinese workers involved in the construction of residential projects and infrastructure in the cities of Misrata and Beni Walid.¹¹⁹ When CCC's headquarters were attacked by armed irregular groups and the local police was unable to provide protection, the Chinese workers had to organize themselves to protect their premises on their own. These incidents caused great preoccupation in Beijing and were a vivid representation of the incapacity to respond on the part of a regime on the verge of collapse.

This violent events had a powerful impact on China's social media, in which Chinese nationals demanded a muscular response to safeguard the security of their compatriots in Libya.¹²⁰ On February 21st, amidst the crisis, a blogger who claimed to be a worker, posted several pictures and comments on the social network Sina Weibo. The user, known as Happy Xufeng mentioned raiders set fire to equipment and cars and harmed its colleagues in an attack on his work camp, he also posted pictures of the violent event and requested help, desperately.¹²¹ Later that day, Happy Xufeng wrote that companies in Libya were in a state of emergency, had no basic supplies,

118 Parelo-Plesner and Duchâtel: 109.

119 Ibid :110.

120 Josh Chin. China Vows to Protect Chinese in Libya. The Wall Street Journal. February 15th 2011. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703905404576164321645905718>.

¹²¹ Ibid

communications failed and violent attacks were constant.¹²² Bloggers like Happy Xufeng stirred drama, increasing media attention and public interest, significantly augmenting the pressure on the government to act.¹²³ From the side of the Chinese government, Ma Zhaoxu, Foreign Ministry spokesman, acknowledged that some Chinese companies in Libya “had their local camp sites raided by gangsters and some people got hurt.”¹²⁴

For Wang, The increasing social pressure due to the glare of the traditional media and Internet users forced China’s leaders to respond in order to enhance their ‘legitimacy and credibility’.¹²⁵ Therefore, amidst the popular outrage, on February 22nd, CCP’s General Secretary and China’s State President, Hu Jintao and the State Premier, Wen Jiabao ordered “all-out efforts to secure the life and property of Chinese citizens in Libya”.¹²⁶ This political statement upheld the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad, stressing the imperative of putting the people first (以人为本 yiren weiben).

The Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) faced significant challenges from the outset. For instance, the Chinese Embassy had 6,000 nationals in its consular registry; however, there were 35,860 Chinese citizens in need of protection.¹²⁷ The discrepancy between the official numbers and the real figures reveal that the Chinese companies based in Libya had not reported the larger part of its workers. As I noted on chapter 3, the low bureaucratic status of the MFA in

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Shaio Zerba.:1099.

¹²⁴ Chinese oil interests attacked in Libya. Financial Times. February 24th 2011.

<https://www.ft.com/content/eef58d52-3fe2-11e0-811f-00144feabdc0>

¹²⁵ China displays a bold face to world. South China Morning Post. March 21st 2011.

<https://www.scmp.com/article/741518/china-displays-bold-face-world>

¹²⁶ “Chinese President, Premier order “all-out efforts” to secure life, property of nationals in Libya.” Xinhua. February 8th 2012, http://www.gov.cn/misc/2011-02/22/content_1808180.htm . Accessed on April 27th.

¹²⁷ Lessons to learn from Libyan evacuation. South China Morning Post. March 5th 2011.

<https://www.scmp.com/article/739925/lessons-learn-libyan-evacuation>

the Party-States hierarchy constrains its ability to give directions to the SOE's which operate abroad. Therefore given the complexity of the situation and the time constraints, Beijing sent officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Public Security, the State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission and the People's Liberation Army. Understanding the competing interests and complex dynamic within the party-state bureaucratic apparatus, the leader of the joint task force needed to be a high-ranking CCP official with the power and authority to give orders to all the involved agencies, including the People's Liberation Army, under the direct control of the CCP. Therefore, Beijing appointed Zhang Dejiang, member of the CCP's Central Political Bureau's Standing Committee and State Vice-Premier.¹²⁸

The successful completion of the Non-combatant Evacuation Operation took 12 days, after which 35,860 persons were evacuated.¹²⁹ The larger number of Chinese citizens evacuated from Libya left the country aboard of merchant ships. The People's Liberation Army was directly involved in the inter-institutional coordination efforts and played four main roles in Libya: Surveillance, deterrence, escort and air evacuation.¹³⁰ These vessels were protected by the Xuzhou and Jiangkai II, two PLA-Navy ships which escorted them to Crete and Cyprus. In an emotional speech, the Commander of the Xuzhou, Wei Jianhua told the Chinese nationals who had just been evacuated 'The strong and prosperous motherland is together with you when you are in hardship'.¹³¹ The rest of Chinese nationals left Libya using chartered aircrafts (primarily from Tripoli), military aircrafts (from Sabha to Khartoum, Sudan), and buses to get to Tunisia and Egypt. China also deployed

¹²⁸ 35,860 Chinese nationals in Libya evacuated: FM. People's daily. March 3rd 2011. <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/7306385.html> Accessed May 20th.

¹²⁹ Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel. :110.

¹³⁰ Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel.:113.

¹³¹ China continues to evacuate nationals from Libya. March 1st 2011. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/photo/2011-03/01/content_12098245.htm Accessed May 20th.

military attaches that were posted in Europe and supported in the coordination task along the land borders and on the ships that transported the Chinese citizens. An operation of these characteristics reveals the dilemmas and challenges China has to confront to guarantee the life of its citizens in countries where state power collapses. Under these circumstances, Chinese has demonstrated its willingness and capacity to deploy military aircrafts, ships and dispatch civil personnel from different ministries on foreign soil to safeguard the lives of its nationals, upholding the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests abroad. Even if the involvement of the military was limited if compared with similar evacuations conducted by foreign powers, it speaks to the capabilities of the Chinese armed forces to project power and protect Chinese interests far from its shores.

A development that further illustrates the internalization of the norm of citizen and interest protection was the implementation of new policies implemented by China's Ministry's of Commerce. Given the high costs involved in evacuation operations, since 2012, Chinese foreign labor service cooperation companies operating abroad must make a risk deposit of 3 million RMB, in a bank, which operates as a guarantee to cover the costs in the event of emergencies, repatriation or the provision of medical services.¹³² These measures have placed a greater responsibility on the shoulders of Chinese companies operating abroad and the enterprises which provide services and workers to them. After the Libyan evacuation was conducted, the new principle informing evacuations is whoever sends personnel abroad is responsible (谁派出, 谁负责 Shei paichu, shei fuze).¹³³ This is indicative of the contingent development of procedures, rules and institutions to implement the new norm of protection of Chinese citizens and nationals beyond China's borders.

¹³² Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel:47.

¹³³ Duchâtel, Bräuner,Zhou.:60.

The case of Libya demonstrated that economic diplomacy and trade relations are not enough for securing interests and revealed the imperative to engage actors outside of the government and ruling party's spheres. Hence, events like this reveal the imperative to diversify political contact, particularly in regions rife with political instability. It also reflected the complex bureaucratic politics dynamics within the Party-State apparatus and the pivotal role played by senior party officials in the decision making process. Moreover, it reaffirmed the Chinese government upholds the norm of protection of its citizens and interests, which is reinforced by the pressures of bureaucratic actors and the wider public at grassroots and is pivotal in terms of legitimacy and regime security.

4.3 Sudan's hostage crisis

In its relations with foreign with the world, consistent with the norm of sovereignty and its respect for the principle of non-interference, China has privileged dialogue governments and ruling parties. However, in situations of institutional collapse, civil war and conflict, China has been forced to adopt a more flexible stance and have dialogues with opposition parties and even rebel groups. In these circumstances, Chinese government's respect of the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests has moderated its normative understanding of noninterference.

Sudan was one of the first countries where China invested in the 1990s. In January of 2012, rebels from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) attacked the camp of the China Construction Corporation (CCC), a Chinese enterprise which was constructing roads in the Sudanese state of South Kordofan. The SPLM-N rebels claimed the roads built by the Chinese company were going to be used by Sudan's government troops to intensify the attacks against

them.¹³⁴ When the rebels attacked CCC's camp, 47 workers were in the camp, 18 of whom managed to escape, while the remaining 29 were abducted. Among the workers who escaped, 17 of them were located and brought to safety by Sudan's army and one was declared dead after being reported missing for several days.¹³⁵

As soon as the Chinese government received reports about the hijacking of its nationals, in accordance with regular diplomatic practice, its Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Xie Hangsheng summoned Sudan's Charge d'Affaires in Beijing to transmit the Chinese government preoccupation about the situation of its nationals and ask its government to intensify its efforts to guarantee the security of the Chinese nationals and create conditions for a prompt liberation.¹³⁶ When the news about the hijacked Chinese workers made became known by the domestic public, Chinese netizens urged the government to assume a stronger stance to rescue their compatriots, even requesting a military intervention. "If it was the United States or Russia, they would have air dropped in special commandos by now".¹³⁷

In a stark departure from its policy of engaging governments and ruling parties, China held direct talks with the SPLM-N intending to secure the release of its citizens. Therefore, Xie Xiaoyan China's Ambassador to Ethiopia, had a dialogue with Malik Agar, leader of the SPLM-N. During the dialogue, Agar urged Beijing to press Khartoum to grant safe passage to humanitarian aid into South Kordofan, to investigate Khartoum regimes violations of human rights and to resettle

¹³⁴ Kidnappings of Workers Put Pressure on China. New York Times. Jan 31st 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/01/world/africa/china-says-29-workers-still-missing-in-sudan.html> Accessed on May 10th.

¹³⁵ "All 29 kidnapped Chinese workers in Sudan freed, arrive in Kenyan capital" Xinhua. February 8th 2012. http://www.gov.cn/misc/2012-02/08/content_2061193.htm . Accessed on April 27th.

¹³⁶ Vice Foreign Minister Xie Hangsheng Makes Urgent Representation to the Sudanese Embassy in China on the Attack of Sinohydro Project Crews in Sudan <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyw/t901168.htm> . Accessed April 6th 2019.

¹³⁷ Kidnappings of Workers Put Pressure on China. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/01/world/africa/china-says-29-workers-still-missing-in-sudan.html> Accessed April 10th.

Chinese nationals outside of the zone of conflict.¹³⁸ The SPLM-N provided assurance that the Chinese workers would be safe as long as Sudan's government troops did not try an armed rescue.

¹³⁹ Finally, the hostages were later liberated with the cooperation of the red cross and handed to the Chinese authorities.

The position assumed by the Chinese government reveals a departure from the stricter notions of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. If conducting diplomatic consultations and urging host governments to act is a standard diplomatic practice, holding direct talks with a rebel group clashes with the practice of engaging governments and ruling parties, undermining the strict understanding of the principle of non-interference.¹⁴⁰ These actions reflect how the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests is increasingly upheld in international crises. By responding to the greater demands of a more nationalist public opinion, the Chinese government shows how relevant this norm is for reaffirming its domestic legitimacy and connecting with the growing demands from the grassroots and bureaucratic actors.

¹³⁸ SPLM-N meets with Chinese delegation <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/v1/news/article/splm-n-meets-with-chinese-delegation> Accessed April 5th 2019.

¹³⁹ Kidnappings of Workers Put Pressure on China. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/01/world/africa/china-says-29-workers-still-missing-in-sudan.html> Accessed April 10th.

¹⁴⁰ Duchâtel, Bräuner, and Zhou.:1

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to illustrate the clash between the long-held norm the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference and the norm of protection of Chinese Citizens and interests overseas. I argued that the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference arose in a context where Chinese economic interests were not globalized; therefore, their application was not problematic. Nevertheless, the significant global expansion of Chinese economic interests led to the emergence of the norm to protect Chinese nationals and investments beyond the country's borders. I elaborated how the protection of Chinese interests and nationals emerged as a norm embraced by the Chinese government and how the country assumed the corresponding role identity of defender of the security of Chinese nationals and interests abroad. Therefore, if the norm of sovereignty and noninterference entailed safeguarding the nation from foreign aggression and interference, the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests implies protecting nationals wherever they are. The Chinese government's response to this normative entanglement makes evident how it is connected to its legitimacy and regime security.

In this research I have illustrated how the norm of protection of citizens and interests has been induced by domestic pressures which reveal how the logic of appropriateness is solidly embedded in the Chinese grassroots and in the bureaucratic sector. In circumstances where technology makes threats and aggression more visible, I have demonstrated how nationalist discourses have been instrumentalized by the public opinion to legitimize their criticism of the government and demand for a greater involvement from the Party-State to protect Chinese nationals and investments abroad. At the bureaucratic level, I have also illustrated how this norm has been translated into strategic

documents, regulations, procedures and guidelines with the purpose of protecting Chinese citizens and assets abroad.

In conclusion, China has developed an unstable equilibrium between competing norms, embracing a more flexible notion of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. To illustrate this argument, I have presented three cases in which China has upheld the norm of protection of Chinese citizens and interests beyond its shores, clashing with the most conservative notions of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference. As I have shown, China has conducted Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations, law enforcement operations and has diversified political contact by engaging with a rebel group which held Chinese citizens as hostages. These cases reveal an unprecedented involvement of Chinese government for safeguarding the lives of its citizens and serving justice far from its borders, in line with the norm of the protection of nationals and interests and its role identity as defender of their security. Therefore, in a context where the security of Chinese nationals or interests is at stake, the normative pressure to act for protecting them, trumps the strict prescriptions of the norm of sovereignty and the principle of noninterference.

Nevertheless, beyond the protection of Chinese nationals and interests abroad, new potential challenges to the norm of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference emerge in the horizon. In a context where China has provided massive loans to countries in the developing world, it is yet to be seen to what lengths would China go to guarantee the payment of the financial obligations in its favor. Therefore, in circumstances where misperformance jeopardizes the capacity of indebted countries to repay their debts, it remains to be seen if China will introduce policies of conditionality to guarantee the payments. Another crucial question to be raised is if the dynamics of increasing debt would compromise the internal political and institutional processes of the countries involved

or if their financial default will imply the transfer of assets by way of property rights cession or long leases. The case of Sri Lanka speaks to the salience of this questions. On the other side of the geographical spectrum, Venezuela is a case to be observed closely. The South American country, which has benefited from major oil-backed Chinese loans, is currently enmeshed in a serious political and financial crisis and will also be a testing ground for China's principle of noninterference. Furthermore, the Belt and Road Initiative, signature initiative of the President Xi Jinping will bring to the fore these questions in a broader number of countries around the globe. These growing questions should be a matter of further research, nevertheless, I consider that the strengthening of norm of protection of Chinese interests and citizens will translate into a further flexibilization of the principle of non-interference, if the matters at stake are salient for China's domestic actors and for the CCP's regime security.

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