A Social Identity Analysis of the Discrepancy in China's Foreign Policy:

Three heads of the dragon but the same animal.

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Master's thesis

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Abstract

China has become more powerful over the last decades, and exerts a lot of influence in international society. This results in the necessity of a profound and differentiated account of China's foreign policy and the motives affecting Chinese policy choices. Neorealism and neoliberalism deem China's foreign policy to be ambivalent due to the diverging directions of its policy components. The English School sharply differentiates itself from the rationalist approaches, and demonstrates that group thinking and comparison among states affect their foreign policy. Subsequently, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides insight in how status concerns exert influence on a state's policy choices. This study analyzes China's foreign policy by means of an illustrative case study, which comprises of three sub-cases, namely China's foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. The conditions affecting a state's policy choices are revised in order to align them with the English School's tenets and SIT's focus on establishing the state's perceptions through an insiders perspective. This interpretive research shows that China's foreign policy components are illustrative of SIT, and are part of a comprehensive strategy to increase China's status in international society. China's perceptions concerning whether higher-status groups will accept China as a member, its willingness to join this group, and its abilities are the paramount factors affecting the foreign policy of China. In order to account for the policy of status-seeking states, it is key to understand their context, identity, perceptions and desires.

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In front of you lies the result of the inspiring journey. It would be wonderful if you enjoy the read, and pick up some meaningful lessons along the way.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ASEAN	:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRICS	:	Association of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
EU	:	European Union
FOCAC	:	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
G20	:	Group of 20
GATT	:	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	:	Gross domestic product
IGOs	:	Intergovernmental organizations
IOSCPRC	:	Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China
IR	:	International relations
LDCs	:	Least Developed Countries
MFAPRC	:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
PCA	:	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PLA	:	People's Liberation Army
PMS	:	Preparation for military struggle
RCT	:	Realistic conflict theory
RMB	:	Chinese yuan
SIT	:	Social identity theory
SCO	:	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN	:	United Nations
UNCLOS	:	United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	:	United States
WTO	:	World Trade Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Xi Jinping is the first Chinese president to visit the World Economic Forum in Davos (Riley, 2017). Moreover, he was accompanied by the largest delegation of Chinese officials since China first participated in the annual conference, which shows that China seeks to increase its influence (Ahmed, 2017). In Davos, Xi (2017) opened the meeting's plenary session on Tuesday by emphasizing the importance of economic integration, and expressing China's commitment to free trade and investment. Moreover, China opens itself up to the global economy and strives for win-win cooperation with other states. The symbolism of being the first Chinese president to visit as well as the message conveyed by Xi show that China wants to belong to the elite group of powerful economies, and, therefore, embraces a neoliberal economic ideology focused on cooperation.

While China's foreign economic policy aims to establish economic growth through cooperation and openness, its security policy rather aims to safeguard China's territorial and maritime sovereignty by means of fierce military competition and assertive border protection. Instead of aiming to join the group of militarily powerful states led by the United States (US), China desires to compete. The competitive stance is reflected by China's military expenditures, which accounted for twenty percent of the global military expenditures in 2014 (Perlo-Freezeman, Fleurant, Wezeman & Wezeman, 2015, pp. 1 & 3), and keep on rising rapidly. In order to protect its territorial and maritime sovereignty, China has constructed artificial islands in the South China Sea on which military facilities are built (Watkins, 2016; Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Larik, 2016; Glaser, 2012). In reaction to China's military activity, the Philippines started an inter-state arbitration case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA, 2016), which concerns the competing territorial claims in the South China Sea and Chinese artificial islands. The PCA ordered China to adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS). President Xi addressed the verdict at a meeting with European leaders by judging it as invalid and unacceptable (Perlez, 2016). China has subsequently continued its military activity in the contested sea.

On the contrary, China's humanitarian aid policy does not aim at cooperation nor competition, but rather advocates China's distinctiveness through stressing its unique principles and contributions. The European Union (EU) deploys the conventional aid model which uses providing aid as a one-way instrument to improve political governance in recipient states (Jin, 2010). China's creative model, however, deviates by offering two-way cooperation. At the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit, president Xi (2015) expressed that China will accomplish the UN's post-2015 development agenda by means of its creative development model, and urged other members of the international community to adopt China's model.

The aforementioned paragraphs demonstrate that China's foreign policy components manifest diverging directions. China's foreign economic policy is aimed at economic cooperation and openness, its security policy focuses on military competition and protection of China's sovereignty, whereas its humanitarian aid policy advocates China's distinctive principles and capabilities. In result, these foreign policy components seemingly not adhere to a grand strategy, and, thus, at first glance seem contradictory. China's growing status in international society results in the necessity for foreign policy makers and international relations (IR) scholars to establish a profound understanding of China's foreign policy as well as the underlying motives that affect Chinese policy choices. The problem, however, is that the dominant theoretical approaches in IR cannot provide a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy due to their inability to grasp these seemingly contradictions. Besides the academic community, the broader public debate also deems China's foreign policy to be incomprehensible. The New York Times for instance views China's foreign policy components as ambivalent and incoherent (Wang, 2013).

Chinese mythology centers on the dragon, which is viewed as a symbol of strength, power and good luck. In Chinese mythological tales, dragons often have several heads, which each represent a personality trait. Although these heads of the dragon exhibit different traits, they belong to the same animal. The message of these mythological tales is that people can behave differently due to their circumstances, thereby causing confusion among outsiders. However, whenever the person is understood from within its own perspective, it becomes clear to outsiders that this person has acted in accordance with its personality and motives all along.

This Chinese wisdom serves as this research's common thread and informs the key proposition of this study. This research argues that although there seems to be a discrepancy at first glance, whenever China's foreign policy is understood from within it becomes evident that each component deploys a different mechanism but simultaneously adheres to China's grand strategy. In order to substantiate this claim, this research's analysis focuses on three key components of China's foreign policy, namely its foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. The English School literature and the Social Identity Theory (SIT) enable researchers to explain China's foreign policy from within. By means of these perspectives, the seemingly contradictory foreign policy components can be understood as a comprehensive approach to reposition China in the international society.

1.2 Puzzle and research aim

As mentioned before, the dominant theoretical approaches in IR have a hard time explaining the foreign policy of rising powers such as China, since these approaches largely overlook the concerns of states about their relative status in international society (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, p. 66 & 93). Scientists from the neorealist approach like Waltz (1979) and Walt (1985) focus

mainly on material components of power. Neoliberalist scholars such as Keohane (1984) are oriented towards economic interdependence, norms and institutions. Realism provides a rather structuralist account of IR by claiming that the structure of the state system causes the behavior of states (Waltz, 1979, p. 88). The approach views IR as synonymous to power politics, since states only adapt their policies to structural factors such as their relative power position (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 51). Liberalism on the other hand, gives more weight to agency and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), thereby stressing the state's ability to define policies based on its own preferences. According to this theoretical approach, states can constrain the risks of conflict through cooperation, thereby accomplishing progress and peace (Russett, 2016, p. 69). Moreover, IGOs help with overcoming the problems of the anarchic structure of the state system (Sterling-Folker, 2016, pp. 89-90), and enhance cooperation (ibid., p. 94). The claim that both approaches cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy will be substantiated below by means of the three Chinese foreign policy components. A more extensive demonstration is provided in the following chapter.

China's security policy conforms to realism's expectations concerning military might and the balance of power. In addition, realism provides a partial explanation for China's humanitarian aid policy, which is more beneficial for China's interests than the conventional model. Realism is, however, incapable of understanding China's foreign economic policy, since it would expect China to embrace mercantilist reasoning instead of a neoliberal economic ideology. Liberalism on the other hand, would expect China to embrace the neoliberal economic ideology in order to secure China's interests and increase economic interdependence. Furthermore, liberalism is able to account for China's humanitarian aid policy, since it shows China's commitment to norm changing in the UN. China's security policy, however, does not align with liberalism. Liberalism would expect China to adhere to regulations of IGOs such as the UNCLOS, and to comply with verdicts of international tribunals like the PCA. Realism as well as liberalism can only account for two components. Both theoretical approaches are thereby incapable of providing a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy. In result, this research must turn to the English School and SIT to provide a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy.

The English School occupies the middle ground in IR (Dunne, 2008, p. 1; ibid., 2016, p. 108), and offers a synthesis of different theories and concepts, thereby avoiding the eternal framing of a debate between realism and idealism, and also avoiding the explanatory versus interpretive dichotomy. It purports to offer an account of IR by combining structure and agency, thereby including the realist perspective as well as the liberalist perspective on international politics. In result, the English School is able to fill up the void in realist and liberalist explanations, thereby providing a meaningful, comprehensive understanding of international politics. This research's analysis of China's foreign policy will be conducted by means of the English School,

since it is capable of delivering a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy, whereas the dominant theories in IR are unable.

While certainly realism and liberalism to some extent, view states as billiard balls which independently operate in the system, the English School conceptualizes states as groups by stressing the existence of an international society (Bull, 1995, p. 13; Dunne, 2016, p. 114). States can only become members whenever they share a mutual identity with the members of the society. The English School and realism overlap in the sense that these theoretical approaches both assume that states should rely on self-help (Dunne, 2016, p. 116; Alderson & Hurrel, 2000, p. 7). The English School, however, differs from realism in the sense that it assumes that order can be maintained in the pluralist international society by means of rules (Dunne, 2016, p. 116). Moreover, in a solidarist international society order is still upheld through rules, but shared identities result in the enforcement of universal values (ibid., pp. 116-117). The English School emphasizes the existence of an international society, and stresses that group thinking affects the behavior of states. The English School, thus, provides the motives which cause states to compare vis-à-vis others, and thereby influence their foreign policy.

In order to provide a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy, this research must turn to a theory, which explicates how these motives by means of certain mechanisms are translated into actual foreign policy. SIT delivers insights into the role of a state's concerns for its relative status in international society, and how these concerns affect the type of foreign policy employed by states (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, p. 66). SIT originates from psychological theories on intergroup relations. Applied to international relations, SIT assumes that a state deploys different strategies to improve its status relative to higher status groups whenever its in-group identity and status is no longer favorable (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to SIT, states can deploy three different strategies, namely social mobility, social competition and social creativity (ibid., pp. 43-44; Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, pp. 66-67). A foreign policy based on social mobility adheres to the values and regulations of the higher-status group in order to gain admission into the elite club. A social competitively driven foreign policy is aimed at beating the dominant group in the dimension from which the dominant group derives its superior status, which could for instance be military power. A foreign policy conducted through the strategy of social creativity would entail behavior aimed at seeking prestige through redefining the social value of a state's negative attribute or stressing its superiority in a new dimension.

This research should be viewed as an illustrative case study of SIT, which entails a single case analysis of China's foreign policy. The single case is comprised of three sub-cases, namely China's foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. This research assumes that each policy component respectively is defined by social mobility, social competition

and social creativity. SIT would thus account for China's foreign policy if each of the cases is illustrative of the related strategy.

SIT originates from the field of psychology, and is, therefore, barely used in IR. SIT is, however, recently gaining prominence in IR due to a few promising studies that apply its theoretical insights. Mercer (1995) has demonstrated that the theoretical approach can be applied to IR. In his research, Mercer (ibid.) demonstrates that SIT can be used to provide a social psychological explanation for state identity, which results in the conclusion that SIT provides theoretical support for intergroup comparison and competition, which ultimately results in the self-help world wherein states operate. Mercer, thus, does not conduct research into the strategies stipulated by SIT, but is mainly interested in SIT's propositions on intergroup comparison. Curley (2009) has used SIT in a similar way. His research has established that national identity in relation to the European Union (EU) is the most paramount factor affecting a state's choice to support or oppose the expansion of the EU by accepting applicant states. The previously mentioned authors have not used SIT to its full potential. Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2003), however, have explicitly focused on the application of the three strategies. Their research has proven that SIT can account for policy shifts in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which has, therefore, been termed a status-seeking state. In addition, both authors have conducted another study, which shows that SIT provides a meaningful way of interpreting foreign policies of rising powers such as China and Russia (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). Furthermore, Hymans (2002) argues that SIT cannot be readily applied to IR. This study, however, presumes that Hyman's claim is debunked by Welch Larson and Shevchenko, since these authors convincingly demonstrate that states constantly compare themselves towards other states as well as that states strive to achieve status by means of the strategy of social mobility, social competition and social creativity.

Especially the last study by Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010) is possibly ground-breaking. It, however, cannot withstand showing its limitations according to this research. Therefore, this research reveals two major criticisms concerning the study. Firstly, their study supposes that status-seeking states only deploy a single strategy at a time. However, previous parts of this research show that China's foreign policy components manifest diverging directions, and seemingly align with different strategies. This research, thus, argues that states deploy different strategies simultaneously. Secondly and more importantly, this research presumes that SIT is applied to IR by Welch Larson and Shevchenko in an unsound way. Their definition and analysis of conditions which affect a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy is problematic due to two crucial matters. Firstly, it contradicts with the English School's ontological and epistemological presuppositions. Welch Larson and Shevchenko have formulated and analyzed their conditions by means of a positivist approach to science which aims to explain. Contrarily, the English School aims to understand by explicitly relying on the exercise of judgment, thereby

sharply differentiating from the positivist approach to science (Bull, 1996; 2000, p. 25). Secondly, the formulation and analysis of these conditions by Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010) is based on an outsider perspective, thereby deviating from SIT's original purpose in psychology. The paramount focus of SIT is placed on establishing the perceptions of the individual through an internal perspective. Therefore, this research desires to revise the conditions affecting a state's policy choices, which are stipulated by Welch Larson and Shevchenko. In result of the aforementioned points, this research will, thus, aim to answer the following research questions:

Research question: *To what extent can the Social Identity Theory provide a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy?*

Sub-research question: *Under which conditions is China expected to deploy which strategy?*

1.3 Academic and societal relevance

This research derives its academic relevance from three matters. First, analyzing China's foreign policy by means of SIT will solve the theoretical puzzle which cannot be done by means of the dominant theories in IR. The study will, thus, prove that SIT can be used to meaningfully interpret the foreign policy of a status-seeker. Furthermore, it will prove that a state can deploy different strategies at the same time. Lastly, this research will revise the conditions affecting a state's policy choices, which were stipulated by Welch Larson and Shevchenko, in order to bring the formulation and analysis of these conditions in accordance with the English School's interpretive view on science and aim to understand as well as SIT's insiders perspective and focus on perceptions.

China is acquiring more and more power and influence, which results in the need for a coherent and differentiated explanation of China's policy. Such an explanation is societal relevant, since policymakers need a profound understanding of the motives and conditions affecting China's policy choices in order to define a substantiated foreign policy, which sustains a friendly relationship with China, and simultaneously addresses the consequences of its rising power.

1.4 Structure

This research begins by explicating a literature review and addressing SIT's theoretical framework. Thereafter, the methodological chapter will be used to outline the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of this research. In addition, this research's expectations will be formulated, and subsequently tested in the empirical chapter. The conclusion will answer the research questions, reflect upon the expectations and identify the consequences for SIT as a theory. Moreover, this chapter will assess the limitations of this research, and discuss the possibilities for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework for the empirical research, which follows in chapter four. First, a concise overview of the rational-choice theory and the related dominant theoretical approaches in IR, neorealism and neoliberalism, will be presented. This overview will provide the ontological and epistemological backgrounds and basic assumptions of both schools, where after will be demonstrated why these theories observe a seeming discrepancy, and, thus, cannot provide a comprehensive understanding in the case of China's foreign policy. Next, a segment will be dedicated to the English School, which is a rival of the dominant approaches in IR, and purports to offer a comprehensive account of international politics by means of a synthesis of different theories and concepts. This synopsis of the English School will lay the theoretical foundation, which is needed to prove that there is an international society wherein states compare themselves vis-à-vis other states. After demonstrating the notion of group thinking among states, SIT can be properly introduced. The subsequent sections will therefore be dedicated to an extensive elaboration of the psychological foundations of SIT, and SIT's assumptions, which can be applied in IR. Furthermore, a section will outline the revision of the conditions, which affect the policy choices of states. Lastly, a concise overview of this chapter will be provided.

2.1 Rational-choice theory in International Relations

IR as a discipline has witnessed several paradigm wars, which are termed the Great Debates. The consensus is that four Great Debates have played a prominent role in shaping the discipline (Wæver, 1996), while this is debated by some scholars whom make a threefold distinction (Lapid, 1989). Until the fourth Great Debate, which was a standoff between the proponents of positivism and postpositivism, the positivist view of science reigned in IR. The discipline, thus, adhered to the three key positivist suppositions. First, science ought to be based on rigorous guidelines concerning methodological techniques and criteria, which determine the validity of knowledge. Next, data generated by means of systemic and repeated observations show regularities, which reflects the working of general laws. Third, no external world independently exists of humanity, and non-observable entities such as social structures should, thus, be viewed in instrumental terms (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 21). Especially the last assumption is in stark contrast with postpositivist suppositions.

Neorealism and neoliberalism are the dominant theoretical approaches in IR, which aim at explaining. Although there is an extensive debate on the applicability of these labels, scholars agree that both approaches share a core set of suppositions. The core set of assumptions on which neorealism and neoliberalism agree are the so-called rationalist assumptions. These are derived from the rational-choice theory, which in essence is a methodology based on a positivist account

of social science (ibid., p. 22). The rational-choice theory has four key assumptions (Abell, 1992). The first assumption is based upon methodological individualism, and reads that only individuals – or, in the case of IR, states – act. This does not mean that structural factors are ignored, but social phenomena should be viewed as resulting from the actions of individual actors (ibid., pp. 190). Secondly, the actions of individuals or states are optimally chosen. This indicates that actors opt for a certain course of action, because this option is the most beneficial in comparison to the other available options. Thirdly, actors are purely rational egoists who serve only their own interests, and, therefore, only act in conformity with their self-regard (ibid., p. 199). Lastly, rational-choice theory sets the bar by means of the paradigmatic privilege assumption. This theory provides a point of reference to which alternative approaches could be compared (ibid., p. 203).

This section has outlined the assumptions of the rational-choice theory to which neorealism as well as neoliberalism adhere. The next section will provide the basic assumptions related to neorealism, and demonstrate that this school is incapable of giving a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy. Where after the following segment will conduct a similar procedure for neoliberalism.

2.1.1 Realism in International Relations

The realist tradition has a lengthy history and can be traced back to antiquity, including authors like Thucydides, Hobbes and Machiavelli. Morgenthau is viewed as the foremost promotor of classical realism since the Second World War (Lebow, 2016, p. 35). In 1948, Morgenthau (1973) published his book 'Politics Among Nations', wherein he emphasized that the drive for power is inherent to human nature, resulting in power politics between states. Classical realism was dethroned in IR by Waltz (1979) after the publication of 'Theory of International Politics', wherein Waltz stipulated neorealism. This version of realism gives more weight to the structure of the state system, assuming that the structure is the paramount factor that affects the behavior of states. The theoretical approach became, therefore, also known as structural realism.

Realists view international politics as synonymous to power politics, since states only care about their relative power position, which determines their room to maneuver (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 51). Neorealism manifests five key assumptions. The first assumption reads that great powers are the only important actors in international politics (ibid., p. 53; Waltz, 1979). Moreover, due to the absence of a world government (Fox, 1959), states operate in a system which is characterized by an anarchic ordering principle (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 53; Waltz, 1979). Secondly, all states obtain a certain degree of offensive military capabilities, which varies among states and obviously could change over time. Thirdly, states remain constantly uncertain about the benevolent or malicious intentions of others. Fourthly, the paramount goal of states is to secure their survival. Lastly, states should be viewed as rational, unitary actors, which define sound strategies to maximize their prospects of survival.

Since great powers and other states operate in a violent, self-help world, they have to put their own interests ahead of the interests of others (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 54). Based upon this logic, great powers pursue to alter the balance of power in their favor, and prevent other states from gaining power. Walt has in some sense built upon Waltz's balance of power theory, and revised one important aspect. Walt (1985; 1988; 1989; 1991; 1992) assumes perceived threat, instead of power, to be the foremost factor, which influences a state's foreign policy. Schweller (1994, p. 76) views Walt's balance of threat theory as a persuasive and sound revision of the traditional balance of power theory. Despite of these points of disagreement, all advocates of neorealism agree that the tragedy of international politics is that great powers remain uncertain about the intentions of others. States are, therefore, inclined to improve their relative power position in order to survive in the gruesome and atrocious environment they operate in, resulting in perpetual competition for power.

The following sections will demonstrate that the realist perspective observes a discrepancy in China's foreign policy. Realism expects China to obtain relative gains, while trying to prevent other states from gaining power. In result, realism would not expect China to commit itself to an open economic ideology based on free trade and investment. Realist reasoning is more in line with the mercantilist view on economics, which stipulates that international economics is a zero-sum game, wherein relative gains by one state requires losses by others (Ekelund & Tollison, 1981). Due to this reasoning, mercantilism is termed the economic version of warfare (Spiegel, 1991). Similarly to realism, mercantilism assumes that states are purely motivated by their self-interest (London, 2013). Mercantilist policies, thus, entail protectionism. States should try to control the international market, subsidize exports and impose high taxes on imports (Gilpin, 2001, pp. 18-19). In sum, instead of embracing a neoliberal economic ideology entailing free trade and investment, realism would expect China to instate a protectionist, mercantilist foreign economic policy including subsidizing exports and setting up trade barriers for imports.

In the case of China's security policy, realism would expect China to increase its relative power position. Military competition and increasing military expenditures conform to these expectations. Moreover, China is constructing artificial islands in the South China Sea on which military facilities such as ports, runways and radar facilities are being built to secure China's survival (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). The PCA (2016) judged that China should bring its policy in conformity to the UNCLOS, and stop the construction of military defenses in the contested sea. In accordance with realism, China neglects the verdict and continues its military activity. The aforementioned points show that China is improving its relative power position, and only pursues its own survival, which completely aligns with realism's expectations.

Realism and humanitarian aid do not seem to go hand in hand at first glance. Again, states should only pursue their own interests, and prevent others from gaining power (Waltz, 1979). An

easy conclusion would, therefore, be that realism expects China to refrain from humanitarian aid. Aliyev (2011) rightly assumes that humanitarian aid policies are dependent on a state's interest instead of altruist motivations. Providing humanitarian aid should not be one of the foremost aims of states, but if realists accept that states sometimes provide aid, then they would urge states to only provide aid if it is beneficial for their own interests. Where the EU provides humanitarian aid on the condition that the political governance in the recipient state is improved, China advocates two-way co-operation (Jin, 2010). China is less interested in the domestic politics of recipient states, and, therefore, does not use humanitarian aid as an instrument to influence the internal affairs of these states (Yun, 2014). Contrarily to the EU, China is mainly interested in natural resources and, thus, uses its aid policy to gain access to Africa's natural resources and local markets, and create business opportunities for its own companies. Overall, China's humanitarian aid policy should certainly not be defined as altruistic, since there are many strings, which favor China's interests. China's development model favors its interests more, than the conventional model ever could. In result, China's humanitarian aid policy is explicable by means of realism.

Realism is a rather pessimistic school of thought, which barely has any attention for anything other than the balance of power. This section has outlined the key assumptions of realism and applied it to China's foreign policy. Realism is able to provide an explanation for China's security policy, and a partial explanation for China's humanitarian aid policy. China's foreign economic policy, however, does not conform to realism's view on IR. China's foreign economic policy does not maximize its prospects in terms of survival, and, therefore, violates several realist assumptions such as the rational actor assumption. In result, realism is incapable of providing a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy. The next section firstly outlines the key assumptions of liberalism in IR. Subsequently will be demonstrated that liberalism, similarly to realism, is incapable of providing a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy.

2.1.2 Liberalism in International Relations

Realism assumes that states can hardly overcome the perpetual competition for power, and is therefore very pessimistic about progress (Russett, 2016, p. 69). Liberalism is in comparison to realism far more optimistic. The origins of liberalism can be traced back to classical scholars such as Grotius, Locke and Kant. Especially Kant should be viewed as the founding father of contemporary liberalism. Kant was much more optimistic about the possibility to bring peace, which is why some realist scholars have branded liberalism as idealist in the traditional IR theoretical sense of the concept. The idealist term is a bit unfair, since liberalism does acknowledge that states must act prudent as well as that conflict always looms in the anarchic environment. Key liberal assumptions in Kant's perspective include strong beliefs in the rational qualities of mankind, the feasibility of progress, and most importantly the ability of humans, despite their own interests, to cooperate. Liberalism assumes that the risks of conflict can be

constrained by means of democracy, IGOs, and international trade (ibid., pp. 74-76). Democracies refrain from warfare against other democracies due to the shared belief in peacefully resolving conflicts, and the fact that leaders are held accountable through elections. Moreover, international trade results in economic interdependence and serves the economic interests of states, whereas violent conflict harms these interests. Lastly, IGOs such as the UN or the World Trade Organization (WTO) shape norms, mediate among conflicting members, reduce uncertainty about the intentions of others, and generate mutual identities. Hence, IGOs promote peace.

Keohane (1984) has become the foremost advocate of neoliberalism in IR after the publication of his book 'After Hegemony'. Although his book mainly should be viewed as a critique on realism, Keohane agrees with three neorealist assumptions. Firstly, the ordering principle of the international state system is anarchic (Sterling-Folker, 2016, p. 89-90). Moreover, neoliberalism conforms itself to the state-centric perspective of realism. Thirdly, states should be considered as unitary, rational, utility-maximizing actors. This last assumption clearly reflects that liberalism is heavily embedded in the rational-choice theory. There are, however, also a few substantial differences between both theoretical approaches. Contrarily to realism, liberalism assumes that states are mainly concerned with absolute gains instead of relative ones (Powell, 1991). Moreover, liberalism also views states as the main units-of-analysis, but assumes that institutional structures could help with overcoming the realist constrains on cooperation (Sterling-Folker, 2016, pp. 89-90). Due to the primary focus on absolute gains, the promise of progress, and the role given to IGOs in decreasing the risks of conflict, neoliberalism, thus, provides a more optimistic account of international politics, than neorealism does.

Neoliberalism supposes that IGOs may lift the realist constraints on cooperation, namely relative gains, uncertainty and the collective action problem (ibid., p. 94). Institutions have a fundamental part in reducing the barriers to cooperation. IGOs serve as platforms, which foster iteration through regular meetings between state leaders, which allow them to learn each other's preferences, and to find converging interests. Moreover, IGOs reduce uncertainty about each other's intentions, and are an instrument through which states could address concerns about free-riding behavior and transaction costs. In result, IGOs reshape the realist zero-sum game into a positive-sum game where all members strive to obtain absolute gains, and create win-win situations by means of enhanced cooperation.

In a sense, a failure to cooperate stems from the inefficient design of IGOs. The first difficulty related to the institutional design of an IGO is that it could play a role in international negotiations and bargaining (ibid., pp. 95-96). States need regularity in the rules and procedures for collective decision-making in order to be able to achieve collectively agreed decisions. Neoliberalist scholars agree with critics such as Mearsheimer (1994-1995) that powerful states have a larger stake in the outcome, but do not view IGOs as empty vessels, which only serve the

interests of great powers (Sterling-Folker, 2016, pp. 95-96). The second institutional design problem involves the issue of defection (ibid.). States may be discouraged to cooperate due to the fear that others do not adhere to mutual agreements through for instance free riding. The scope of this study does not allow for an in-depth overview of all the different compliance and enforcement mechanisms that could be incorporated in the institutional design of IGOs in order to decrease issue of defection. In short, IGOs enhance cooperation and reduce the risk of defection through the shared norms and values related to the IGO, fear for retaliation, iteration of meetings, fear for setting a precedent of defection, and fear for reputational damage (Keohane, 1984).

The previous sections have outlined the core assumptions of neoliberalism, and introduced the ways in which IGOs can improve the extent of cooperation between states. The following part will demonstrate that neoliberalism observes a discrepancy in China's foreign policy components. In the case of China's foreign economic policy, liberalism expects China to embrace a neoliberal economic ideology, including free trade and investment. IGOs like the WTO reshape the realist zero-sum game into cooperative win-win situation (Sterling-Folker, 2016, p. 94). States are rational, utility-maximizers that pursue absolute gains through cooperation (Powell, 1991; Smith, El-Anis & Farrands, 2013, p. 6). International trade increases economic interdependency and serves the economic interests of states (Russett, 2016, pp. 74-76). China is the highest ranked export country (WorldAtlas, 2017a) and second biggest importer (WorldAtlas, 2017b). To secure its economic interests, liberalism expects China to commit to an open economy based on free trade and investment. This conforms to China's policy, which denounces trade barriers and embraces a neoliberal economic ideology.

Liberalism would, however, not expect China to administer a security policy based on military competition. Rising military expenditures, increasing regional tensions, and military encounters at sea only increase the risks of violent conflict, thereby harming China's economic interests. Instead liberalism, would expect China to adhere to the regulations of IGOs (Sterling-Folker, 2016, pp. 95-96). IGOs increase the information about the intentions of others, thereby enhancing cooperation, advancing peaceful relations, and decreasing the risks of conflict. Not adhering to the regulations of the UNCLOS and the non-acceptance of the PCA's verdict, affect China's credibility. Keohane (1984) convincingly argued that states cooperate through IGOs due to the shared norms and value related to IGOs, fear for retaliation, iteration of meetings, fear for setting a precedent of defection, and fear of reputational damage. The UNCLOS is a binding treaty, and article 296 of the UNCLOS stipulates that the parties to the dispute need to comply with the PCA's verdict (Rothwell, 2016). A breach of this regulation, which is foundational to the international maritime commerce and non-compliance to the PCA's judgment, has strong reputational costs for China, especially since friendly relations with neighboring states are essential for China's rise (Goldenziel, 2015). Moreover, the ruling of the PCA has set a precedent,

which could be used by Vietnam and other member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to restrict China room to maneuver by means of arbitral proceedings (Rothwell, 2016). The tribunal cannot legally enforce the ruling through sanctions (Ku, 2016). Nevertheless, the PCA's verdict has harmful, long-lasting effects on China's reputation, created a precedent and decreased China's opportunities with regards to issue linkage due to its loss of credibility. Instead of this stance of non-acceptance and disobedience, liberalism would expect China to adhere to the UNCLOS and to comply with the PCA's verdict. The theoretical approach can, thus, not provide a meaningful account of China's security policy.

In the case of China's humanitarian aid policy, liberalism provides a meaningful account. IGOs such as the UN shape norms, thereby generating mutual identities (Russett, 2016, pp. 74-76). IGOs enhance cooperation and reduce the risks of the collective action problem (Sterling-Folker, 2016, p. 94). States can use these IGOs as instruments to address global problems like humanitarian crises and developmental concerns. Liberalism does not view IGOs as structures that simply reflect the interests of great power, but does assume that powerful states can exert more influence (ibid., pp. 95-96). Liberalism would, thus, expect China to commit to norm changing via its humanitarian aid policy and negotiations at the UN. Hereby, China would reshape the interests of the IGO in order to align them with its own interests. These liberalist expectations conform to China's advocacy of a new developmental model, and president Xi's remark at the UN about the necessity of a new way of providing humanitarian aid.

As has been demonstrated, liberalism is a more optimistic school of thought than realism, and emphasizes that by means of democracy, IGOs and international trade the risks of conflict between states can be minimized. The previous sections have outlined liberalism's key assumptions, and applied them to China's foreign policy components. Liberalism provides an explanation for China's foreign economic policy and humanitarian aid policy, whereas liberalism cannot account for China's security policy. Instead of China's stance of non-acceptance and disobedience, liberalism expects China to adhere to the UNCLOS and to comply with the PCA's verdict in order to prevent reputational damage and the creation of precedents. In result, liberalism is incapable of providing a comprehensive account for China's foreign policy.

2.1.3 Realism and liberalism and the observed discrepancy

As the previous sections show, realism and liberalism cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy. Table 2.1 shows the aforementioned findings in a sound manner. The table demonstrates that realism explains China's security policy as well as its humanitarian aid policy, while it is unable to account for China's foreign economic policy. Liberalism on the other hand, provides an explanation for China's foreign economic policy and its humanitarian aid policy, but cannot account for China's security policy. Besides the fact that both theories cannot explain one case, it is especially puzzling that both theories provide contradictory

explanations in the case of China's humanitarian aid policy. If both theories would hold similar explanations for this case, then the case would not need to be included in this research. Due to the contradictory explanations, however, the case needs to be incorporated in the analysis.

Theories Cases	Realism	Liberalism
Foreign economic policy	**X**	✔
Security policy	✔	**X**
Humanitarian aid policy	✔	✔
Result	**No comprehensive explanation**	**No comprehensive explanation**

Figure 2.1: Realism and liberalism applied to China's foreign policy

2.2 The English School in International Relations

2.2.1 History of the English School

The previous section demonstrates that the research question presented in the introduction cannot be adequately answered by the dominant schools of thought in IR. Therefore, a third theoretical approach in IR will be discussed, the English School, which serves as a convincing alternative to the above. IR scholars view the English School as the oldest and debatably the most significant rival to the dominant schools of thought (Dunne, 2008, p. 1; ibid., 2016, p. 108). The English School occupies the middle ground in IR alongside constructivism, and fits in between the conventional perspectives of neorealism and neoliberalism, and the rather radical theories such as poststructuralism and critical theory. The English School offers a synthesis of different theories and concepts, thereby avoiding the debate between realism and idealism as well as the explanatory versus interpretive dichotomy. It purports to offer an account of IR by combining theory and history, agency and structure, and morality and power. Due to this theoretical ambition, the boundaries of the English School often appear ambiguous. It is, therefore, necessary to consider some contextual issues such as the English School´s theoretical background, foremost advocates and contemporary influence in IR.

The emergence of the English school is observed in the works of post-Second World War scholars of the top universities of the United Kingdom (Dunne, 2016, pp. 107-108). The roots of the English School lie in the writings of pioneering academics such as Manning, who is the founder of the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Wight (1991), Manning's colleague, established an approach concerning the concept of international society, which drew on realism, the Grotian tradition, and revolutionism. Critics of the English School have long viewed the approach as conceptually underdeveloped (Dunne, 2016,

pp. 107-108; Hoffman, 1977, p. 37). While the seminal work of Bull (1995) concerning the international society has been widely praised in the 1960s, even by English School critics such as Hoffmann (1977, p. 37), the theoretical approach was left-out of the Great Debate in the 1970s between realism, pluralism and structuralism as well as the one in the 1980s between neorealism and its critics (Banks, 1984; Smith, 1987).

However, during the mid-1990s the feeling of a resurgent paradigm was fostered. Many influential IR textbooks included the English School as an alternative school of thought, placing it alongside realism, liberalism, and several critical approaches (Der Derian, 1995; Brown, 1997; Burchill et al., 1997; Jackson & Sørensen, 1999). Moreover, new contributions to the subject of international society have spread rapidly, all of which have taken the English School as their starting point (inter alia, Armstrong, 1993; Osiander, 1994; Welsh, 1995; Korman, 1996; Neumann, 1996; Buzan & Little, 2000; Jackson, 2000; Wheeler, 2000; Keene, 2002; ibid., 2004; De Almeida, 2003; Buzan, 2014; Clark, 2005; ibid., 2007; ibid., 2011; ibid., 2013; Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2005; Hall, 2006; Jeffery, 2006; Hurrell, 2007; Ralph, 2007; Navari, 2009; Buzan & Zhang, 2014). This new degree of interest was marked by two major publications. Firstly, Dunne (1998) published a book, which elaborates the history of the English School. Secondly, Buzan's (2001) agenda-setting paper forged a coherent research program from previously diverse strands of theory. The momentum of this interesting phase culminated in two paramount theoretical writings on the international and world society (Buzan, 2004; Linklater & Suganami 2006).

2.2.2 Ontology and epistemology of the English School

The distinctiveness, theoretical background, and contemporary value of the English School have been elaborated, making it possible to turn to the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of this approach. The English School sharply differentiates from the positivist, dominant approaches in IR. Bull (1996) has made a case against the rigid application of scientific methods, assuming that these methods would not generate significant knowledge. In stark contrast, Bull (2000, p. 25) established a classical approach, which explicitly relies on the exercise of judgment. First of all, IR should not focus on interstate relations. IR should rather define a body of propositions about the global political system (Bull, 2000). This global political system does include states, as well as regions, nongovernmental organizations, institutions, transnational- and subnational groups, and the community of mankind. By tracing the connection and patterns between actors, a new, interpretive form of theorizing was established. This interpretive approach is in stark contrast with the positivist devotion to formulating testable hypotheses (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). Moreover, Bull (2000) argues that historical understanding is of grave importance. Without historical depth, there would be no foundation for academic knowledge. Thirdly, values cannot be escaped, resulting in the necessity to be aware of one's

values and to subject them to critical scrutiny. Related to the former point Bull (ibid.) concluded that IR fundamentally is a normative enterprise.

Constructivist scholars have appreciated the convergences between their approach and the English school, such as the interpretive mode of science (Finnemore, 1996, p. 17; Wendt, 1999, p. 31). The works of Manning (1962) and Bull (1995) show some overlap with the writings of constructivists such as Ruggie and Wendt (Dunne, 1998). Both camps view the interstate order as an inherently social sphere, which constitutes states by socialization to follow rules and conventions. Secondly, both approaches assume that shared values and knowledge are expressed in norms and institutions. There are, however, also significant differences such as the view on the appropriate unit of analysis.

2.2.3 Theoretical assumptions of the English School

The following section will elaborate the key theoretical assumptions of the English School, thereby focusing on the notion of international society. The classical definition of the international society reads that international society is created whenever "a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, forms a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions" (Bull, 1995, p. 13). The first core element of international society is that membership is confined to sovereign states (Dunne, 2016, p. 114). It is important to consider that states claim sovereignty and recognize that other states have the same rights (Wight, 1977). Evidently, mutual recognition indicates that there is a social practice, since recognition is a fundamental factor in identity relationships, and should be viewed as the first step in the formation of an international society (Dunne, 2016, p. 114). The history of the international society is marked by shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (ibid.; Bull & Watson, 1984). China for instance was long excluded from membership (Gong, 1984) due to the absence of mutually shared institutions and values between China and the West (Dunne, 2016, p. 114). In addition, postcolonial states were often excluded from membership due to their incapability to maintain an effective government (ibid., p. 115; Jackson, 1990). Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasize that the element of mutual recognition is hugely important for the existence of an international society, but it is not sufficient (Dunne, 2016, p. 115). Besides mutual recognition, actors need to share a few minimal mutual interests such as trade, stability, freedom of travel, and so forth. The Westphalian era should be defined as the first period wherein minimal rules and institutions regulated international politics, thereby creating an international society.

The English School has defined different kinds of international societies (ibid.). Institutional arrangements that solely maintain order are situated at the minimal end of the spectrum. This minimal society predominantly exists in a world wherein members have vastly differing traditions and political systems. States opt for a minimal society due to the need for

stability and the anarchic ordering principle of the system. In this sense, the minimal society functions better than realism would expect, but operates not similarly to the desires of cosmopolitans (Linklater, 2005, p. 95). The minimal society is termed the pluralist international society, and aims to preserve order as well as the liberty of states (Dunne, 2016, p. 116). States comply with regulations, because compliance is rather cost-free and reaps vast collective benefits. A good example would be the rules concerning diplomatic privileges. Norms and rules related to the pluralist international society provide a meaningful structure of coexistence, wherein states are viewed as legally equal members, and have the possibility to achieve their own interests under minimal constraints (ibid.; Alderson & Hurrel, 2000, p. 7).

Advocates of the pluralist society presume that it holds contemporary relevance, since principles of equality among states are fundamental for international law such as the UN Charter (Dunne, 2016, p. 116). Interventionism is, therefore, regarded by them as a threat to mutual respect in international society (Welsh, 2012, p. 1201). Critics, however, argue that pluralism has not achieved its promise, since sovereignty norms have proven to be insufficient to prevent the occurrence of interstate wars throughout the previous century (Dunne, 2016, pp. 116-117). These critics are drawn to the solidarist international society in which universal norms such as human rights limit the room to maneuver of sovereign states. The solidarist international society differs in terms of the content of values and the nature of rules and institutions. According to this notion of international society, individuals are entitled to basic rights, and it is the duty of the members of international society to intervene if those rights are forfeited. Solidarism, thus, emphasizes the enforcement of universal values by IGOs and sovereign states, whereas pluralism does not focus on shared identities and merely aims to uphold order.

The second key element in the English School's perspective is the notion of a system, which exhibits several crucial roles. First, the distinction between system and society creates a benchmark, which can be used to address the extension of international society (Dunne, 2016, p. 118; Wight, 1991, p. 6). Moreover, by focusing on the creation of a system it becomes possible to discover mechanisms that affect international and world societies (Dunne, 2016, pp. 118-119). Third, the category of the system serves as a meaningful way to describe the fundamental material forces in international politics. The English School's notion of the international system reflects a big part of realisms' use of systems theory, but differs in the sense that the English School is primarily interested in the system to learn more about the history of international society (ibid., p. 119). Moreover, the idea of an interstate system is meaningful, since it reflects inclusion and exclusion. Lastly, the systemic lens helps to establish the ordering of the units, the distribution of power, and the interaction capacity of the system (ibid., p. 120). These factors are systemic, since they are not included in the institutional arrangement created by sovereign states to maintain order and promote justice.

The third key element in the English School's perspective on IR is the world society. This concept differs from the international society in the sense that it refers to mutual values and interests that link the complete human community (ibid.; Bull, 1995, p. 279). The world society refers to matters such as human rights whose moral concerns transcend the international society (Dunne, 2016, p. 120). An indicator of the formation of a world society would be the creation of international humanitarian law and the International Criminal Court. Some scholars have interpreted these trends as a shift from an international society to a world society (Armstrong, 1999, p. 549).

2.3 Social Identity Theory

The English School emphasizes the existence of an international society, and stresses that group thinking affects the behavior of states. The English School, thus, provides the motives which cause states to compare themselves vis-à-vis other states, and thereby influence their foreign policy. In order to provide a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy, this research must turn to SIT which explicates how these motives by means of certain mechanisms are translated into actual foreign policy. Before the application of SIT in IR can be elaborated, the psychological foundations of SIT need to be stipulated.

2.3.1 Social Identity Theory's psychological foundations

SIT is established as a psychological theory on intergroup cooperation and conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In time, it became a broader social psychological theory on the role of identity in group and intergroup phenomena in general (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). Tajfel developed SIT in the 1970s, after Tajfel linked his early writings on social perception and categorization with his passion to comprehend intergroup conflict in societies (Hogg, 2016, p. 1). Tajfel assumed that the dynamics of intergroup conflict should be viewed as group phenomena resulting from basic human motivations and cognitive processes, which were caused by people's ideas about themselves, society and social context (Abrams & Hogg, 2004; Billig, 1976). During the 1960s, the realistic conflict theory (RCT) articulated by Sherif (1966) was the dominant social psychological theory on intergroup conflict. Sherif assumed that if groups want to achieve a mutually exclusive goal, then this would result in fierce competition. Although Tajfel appreciated this hypothesis, he also wondered if a more fundamental factor would be sufficient to create differential in-group out-group behavior (Hogg, 2016, p. 5). Being categorized as a group member could possibly be enough to generate intergroup conflict. In order to test this proposition, the minimal group research paradigm was designed (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971). During a classic experiment, British schoolboys were divided completely random into two groups, while these boys were told that they were divided because of their liking of paintings by two artists. The results of the experiment showed that, although the boys only differed in their

preferences for the artists, the boys strongly favored their group over the other group. Subsequent experiments, wherein participants were again randomly categorized, but now were not told anything about the reason for the division, had the same results (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). By means of these experiments, it was proven that minimal intergroup categorization results in competitive intergroup behavior (Hogg, 2016, p. 6).

Now, the following parts will be devoted to a more extensive, in-depth overview of the RCT and SIT, which will be provided by means of a discussion of the work of Tajfel and Turner. Thereafter it will be possible to outline SIT's application in IR. Early works on the social psychology of intergroup relations focused mainly on patterns of discrimination and individual prejudice (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 33). Examples of this approach can be found in the theory of authoritarian personalities (Berkowitz, 1962; ibid., 1969, ibid., 1974). The alternative to this approach is RCT, which is defined by Sherif (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 33). This theory's central hypothesis reads that conflict of group interests causes conflicts between groups (Campbell, 1965, p. 287). According to Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 33), the hypothesis is simple but very convincing, and has resulted in strong empirical support (inter alia Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Harvey, 1956, Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1961; Blake & Mouton, 1961; ibid., 1962; Bass & Dunteman, 1963; Johnson, 1967; Diab, 1970).

The RCT provides a theoretical basis for the observation that opposed group interests in gaining scarce resources result in competition, while interdependent goals mainly facilitate cooperation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 33). Moreover, conflicts of interests increase the identification with and positive connection to one's in-group. Identification with the in-group is, however, largely neglected in the RCT, which results in inconsistencies between the theory and empirical data (ibid., p. 34). Tajfel and Turner subsequently turn to a discussion of the key assumptions of the RCT. This theory defines a distinction between two extremes of the social behavior continuum, namely interpersonal and intergroup behavior. The interaction between two or more individuals, which is fully constituted by their interpersonal relation and individual characteristics, thus, not affected by external factors such as social groups, should be defined as interpersonal. The latter extreme contains interactions between two or more individuals, which are completely determined by the individuals' membership of social groups, thus, not affected by the interpersonal relation. Intergroup conflict and converging interests affect the relationships between individuals. An intense intergroup conflict will for instance make it more likely that members of opposing groups determine their relationship based on the intergroup extreme.

The belief system of an individual about the nature and structure of relationships between social groups has a causal effect on the interpersonal-intergroup continuum. Again, there are two extremes. The social mobility belief system is based on the assumption that society is flexible and permeable, thereby making it possible for individuals to move to a higher group. The American

dream is a good example of this belief system. The other extreme is the social change belief system, which is based on the assumption that intergroup relations are characterized by marked stratification, thereby making it extremely difficult for individuals to escape their unsatisfactory group. The caste system in India is a striking example of this belief system. Individuals who possess the social change belief system will not interact as individuals, but as members of their groups. Moreover, this belief system is associated with intense intergroup conflicts (ibid., p. 35).

Besides the belief systems continuum, another continuum shifts the social behavior of individuals towards out-groups between the extremes of interpersonal and intergroup behavior. This is the continuum between variability and uniformity in the behavior and attitude of members of a certain group towards out-groups. The nearer group members are to the extreme of the social change belief system on the belief system continuum, and the intergroup extreme on the behavioral continuum, the more uniform their behavior towards members of relevant out-groups will be. Moreover, the nearer group members are to these extremes, the more they will treat members of relevant out-groups as undifferentiated individuals instead of focusing on their individual characteristics (ibid, p. 36).

There are certain implications of the conceptualization for intergroup relations in highly stratified societies. If stratification is based upon unequal divisions of scarce resources like power or prestige between groups, the social behavior between the over- and underprivileged groups will be characterized by ethnocentrism and out-group antagonism (Oberschall, 1973, p. 33). Research on ethnic group relations, however, does not support these claims. Deprived groups may for instance be positively oriented toward the depriving out-group, and simultaneously view themselves as inferior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 37). The RCT would suppose that whenever groups have opposing claims to scarce resources this would generate ethnocentrism and antagonism between these groups. The low status of subordinate groups should intensify this group's hostility versus relevant out-groups. The empirical evidence, however, demonstrates that whenever differences in the division of resources are institutionalized, justified and legitimized by means of a consensually accepted status system, there is less instead of more ethnocentrism. Hereby it is proven by Tajfel & Turner that the RCT does not fully account for the empirical evidence.

Tajfel and Turner conducted the previously mentioned classical experiments concerning social categorization and intergroup discrimination. These experiments demonstrated that minimal intergroup categorization results in competitive intergroup behavior. By means of the experiments, Tajfel and Turner define a theory concerning social identity and social comparison. Groups should be conceptualized as a collection of individuals, who view themselves as members of the same social category, share emotional involvement in their common definition, and obtain a certain degree of consensus on the evaluation of their group and their membership of this group

(Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). In result, any behavior of one or more individuals towards one or more others, which is based on the individuals' identification of themselves and the others as being members of different social categories, should be defined as intergroup behavior. Social groups, thus, systemize the social world and create a system for self-reference, thereby providing their members a social identity. This identity is highly relational and comparative, since identities can only be established in comparison to other groups (ibid.; Said, 1978).

By means of this concept of social identity Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 40) define a few general assumptions. Firstly, individuals strive to enhance their self-esteem. Moreover, social groups and the membership of these groups are associated with negative and positive value connotations, resulting in a negative or positive social identity. In addition, the evaluation of the in-group is determined in comparison to relevant out-groups, which can be negative or positive respectively resulting in low or high social status. From these assumptions, three theoretical principles can be derived. Firstly, individuals strive to maintain or achieve a positive social identity. Moreover, positive social identity is largely based on favorable comparisons between the in-group and relevant out-groups. Lastly, whenever social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will either leave their group and try to join a more positively distinct group or strive to make their own group more positively distinct. Based on the previously mentioned concept of social identity, general assumptions and theoretical principles, Tajfel and Turner have defined three different strategies which can be deployed by individuals to improve their social status, namely social mobility, social competition and social creativity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 43-46).

2.3.2 Social Identity Theory in International Relations

As has been outlined previously, the English School emphasizes the existence of an international society, and stresses that group thinking affects the behavior of states. The English School, thus, provides the motives which cause states to compare themselves vis-à-vis other states, and thereby influence their foreign policy. SIT explicates how these motives by means of certain mechanisms in the case of individuals are translated into social behavior.

Since this research focuses on the foreign policy of China, the application of SIT in IR will be discussed in the following part. States can deploy three different strategies, namely social mobility, social competition and social creativity (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, pp. 66-67; Hogg, 2016, pp. 7-8). A foreign policy based on social mobility adheres to the values and regulations of the higher-status group in order to gain admission into the elite club (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, pp. 71-72). This strategy is deployed whenever the boundaries of the higher-status group are permeable (ibid.; Tajfel, 1978; Ellemers, Knippenberg & Wilke, 1990). Indicators of this strategy include a state's emulation of the institutions, values or ideology of the elite group (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, pp. 71-72). A social competitively driven foreign policy is aimed at beating the dominant group in the dimension from which the dominant group derives

its superior status, which could for instance be military power (ibid., pp. 72-73). This strategy is deployed whenever boundaries of the higher-status group are impermeable to new states. Indicators of this strategy include arms racing, rivalry over spheres of influence, military demonstrations, and military interventions against smaller powers with the goal to influence others' perceptions instead of attaining security and power. Spoiler behavior, meaning saying no to initiatives of the dominant group, could also be defined as social competition. A foreign policy conducted by means of the strategy of social creativity would entail behavior aimed at seeking prestige through redefining the social value of a state's negative attribute or stressing its superiority in a new dimension (ibid., pp. 73-75). This strategy is deployed whenever the status hierarchy is perceived as legitimate or stable. Indicators of this strategy include advocacy of new international norms, regimes, institutions, or developmental models. The essence of this strategy is to establish a distinctive position by stressing the state's unique contributions and values.

2.3.3 Conditions affecting policy choices

SIT is currently underdeveloped and applied to IR in an unsound way. The willingness to use a strategy to improve one's social status originates from dissatisfaction with the current social status and the constraints imposed upon one's being due to the membership of a certain group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 34). In result, a certain strategy is deployed. Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010, pp. 70-76) proclaim that a state's choice for a certain strategy depends on the permeability of the higher-status group, the stability of the status hierarchy, and the legitimacy of the status hierarchy. In the way that both authors have defined and analyzed these conditions, the formulations and analyses have nothing to do with the state's perceptions. Welch Larson and Shevchenko try to explain policy choices by means of these conditions through an outside perspective based on a positivist view on science. Contrarily, the English School aims to understand by explicitly relying on the exercise of judgment, thereby sharply differentiating from the positivist approach to science (Bull, 1996; 2000, p. 25). Moreover, the essence of in-group out-group behavior as well as the paramount theoretical presumption of SIT in psychology is that the behavior of individuals is affected by their own perceptions. The strategy an individual could adopt to improve its status depends upon the individual's subjective believe structures, meaning the individual's perceptions about status and identity of the respective out-group to which the individual compares itself as well as the perceptions of the individual concerning the relationship between itself and the respective out-group (Hogg, 2016, p. 7). In conclusion, the way in which Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010) define and analyze the conditions affecting the choice to deploy a certain strategy deviates from the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of the English School, the essence of in-group out-group behavior and the paramount theoretical presumption of SIT in psychology. To apply SIT in a sound way to IR, this research must revise the conditions affecting policy choices in order to bring the definition and analysis of these conditions

in conformity to this research's goal, which is to conduct interpretive research aiming at understanding China's foreign policy by means of an internal perspective.

As mentioned before, status-seeking states are dissatisfied with their current social status in comparison to the status and identity of the higher-status groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 34). These states deploy a certain strategy in order to increase their status by means of joining the higher-status group, beating the higher-status group or establishing a positively distinctive identity in a new dimension. This research argues that a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy hinges on two types of perceptions of the state regarding the relationship between itself and the higher-status group, and a single type of perceptions of the state concerning the higher-status group. The single type of perceptions of the state concerning the higher-status group involves the state's view on the favorable or unfavorable status and identity of the higher-status group, whereby the state determines whether it is willing to join the higher-status group or not. The two types of perceptions regarding the relationship between the state and the higher-status group should be defined as acceptance and ability. The condition acceptance indicates whether a state's perception is that it would be accepted or would not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group. On the other hand, the condition ability revolves around the state's perception of its ability to deploy a policy that reflects its willingness. A state's choice to deploy a certain strategy is, thus, affected by three conditions, namely willingness, acceptance and ability. The condition acceptance is the first condition to affect a state's policy choices. After establishing the presumption whether it will be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, the state will establish whether it views the identity of the higher-status group as favorable. Based on the presumption concerning acceptance and this view, the state determines its willingness, namely whether the state wants to join the higher-status group, beat the higher-status group or create a positively distinctive identity in a new dimension. Hereafter, the third condition, ability, comes in. The state will, thus, consider whether it is able to deploy a policy that reflects its formerly established willingness.

Based on the above, this research argues that the state's perceptions concerning its acceptation, willingness and ability determine whether a state deploys the strategy of social mobility, social competition or social creativity. Firstly, whenever a state presumes to be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as that the state views the identity of the higher-status group as favorable, then the state becomes willing to be accepted as a member of the higher-status group in order to increase its own status. If the state also presumes that it is able to join the higher-status group due to the state's capabilities, then the state will deploy the strategy of social mobility. Contrarily, whenever a state presumes that it will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as that the state views the identity of the higher-status group as favorable, then the state becomes willing to beat the higher-status group in the dimension from

which this group derives its prestige. The state desires to beat this group in order to show that it can compete with or is even better than the higher-status group, thereby increasing its own status. If the state also presumes that it is able to beat the higher-status group in the dimension from which the group derives its power, then the state will deploy the strategy of social competition. Lastly, whenever the state presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member of the higher-status group as well as that the state views the identity of the higher-status group as unfavorable, then the state does not want to be accepted as a member of the higher-status group. If the state constantly feels as if the group does not appreciate the state, while the state simultaneously manifests different qualities or values, which the state deems to be positive and important, this will result in the state's desire to achieve status by showing that it is noteworthy and distinctive in other dimensions. If the state also presumes that it is able to define a positively distinctive position in a new dimension, then the state will deploy the strategy of social creativity.

2.4 Overview of theoretical framework

This chapter has become quite lengthy, resulting in possible ambiguities for the reader. Therefore, it is wise to summarize briefly the theoretical framework of SIT and the revision of conditions. The English School emphasizes the existence of an international society, and stresses that group thinking affects the behavior of states. The English School, thus, provides the motives which cause states to compare themselves vis-à-vis other states, and thereby influence their foreign policy. SIT indicates that some states such as emerging powers like China are dissatisfied with their current social status in the international society. Moreover, SIT explicates how these motives and perceptions are translated into actual policy. States can deploy three different strategies to improve their status, namely social mobility, social competition and social creativity. According to Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010), a state's choice for a certain strategy is affected by three conditions, namely permeability of the higher-status group, stability of the status hierarchy and legitimacy of the status hierarchy. This research has argued that both authors apply SIT in an unsound way to IR, since the conditions are measured by means of a positivist approach to science and an outsider perspective. This is contradictory to the English School's interpretive view on science, the essence of in-group out-group behavior and the paramount focus of SIT in psychology on establishing the individual's perceptions by means of an internal perspective. Therefore, this research has revised the conditions into acceptation, willingness and ability. The strategy of social mobility is deployed whenever a state presumes to be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, is willing to join this group, and perceives itself as able to join the group. Contrarily, the strategy of social competition is deployed whenever a state presumes to not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, is willing to beat this group, and perceives itself as able to beat the group. Lastly, the strategy of social creativity is deployed whenever a state presumes that

it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, is not willing to join the group, but is willing to create a positively distinctive position in a new dimension, and perceives itself as able to do so.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The theoretical chapter already alluded to the fourth Great Debate in IR, which was a stand-off between positivism and postpositivism. This stand-off has also been characterized as a debate between explaining and understanding (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 19). In essence, these terms broadly refer to the same thing, but it is important to note that there are some nuances which differentiate them. As the theoretical chapter has demonstrated, realism and liberalism derive their assumptions from the rational-choice theory, which is based on a positivist methodology (ibid., p. 22). Both strands of theory adhere to three key positivist suppositions, and aim to explain the empirical universe. In stark contrast, postpositivism is geared to understanding (ibid., 19). The English School explicitly relies on the exercise of judgment, and, thus, deploys an interpretive methodology aimed at understanding (Dunne, 2016, p. 110).

The former chapter has demonstrated that it is necessary to establish China's perceptions concerning its position in the world, whether the higher-status group would accept China as a member, the favorable or unfavorable status and identity of the higher-status group, and its own capabilities. Merely explaining does not do the job, because this would only result in claiming that certain conditions have led to certain policy choices. Contrarily, this research's goal is to understand China's policy choices and the beliefs and ideas of Chinese policymakers. This research must, therefore, identify how China's underlying perceptions and motivations affect its policy choices, thereby focusing on contexts of action. This research, thus, aims to understand and applies an interpretive methodology.

In result of the distinction between the positivist and interpretive approach, it is of grave importance to outline the ontological and epistemological differences between both perspectives and strengths and weaknesses of the interpretive methodology as well as briefly alluding to the consequences resulting from applying such a view on science in this research. Subsequently, several expectations will be formulated by means of the previous chapters. In addition, this research's illustrative case study research design will be discussed, where after the case selection method will be addressed. The fourth section is devoted to outlining the types of data which will be analyzed and this research's method of data enquiry. Fifthly, it will be addressed how the data will be interpreted. Lastly, the concluding section will reflect upon the limitations of the interpretive methodology and the consequences of this research's methodological decisions.

3.1 Interpretive methodology

There exists a diverse range of non-positivist approaches. Many types draw inspiration from the interpretive view, but these types cannot be categorized into one single version of the interpretive view (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 21). The most important connection which unites all of these types

is their commitment to reject positivism as a valid approach to study social sciences. Moreover, some authors distinguish interpretivism from postpositivism (Guba & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 184; ibid., 2005a, pp. 193-194). This research also distinguishes interpretivism from postpositivism. The following parts will only address the interpretive approach, since outlining all types of postpositivism is beyond the scope of this research.

The distinction between explaining and understanding stems from Max Weber's writings (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 19). The distinction can also be described as a positivist approach versus an interpretive approach. The key metaphysical tenets of the positivist and interpretive approach revolve around their view on ontology, epistemology, methodology and accumulation of knowledge. Positivism relies on an ontology based on naïve realism, meaning that there is a real reality which is apprehensible (Guba & Lincoln, 2005a, pp. 193-194). In addition, positivism applies a dualist or objectivist epistemology, and its methodology is aimed at verification of hypotheses. Interpretivism on the other hand, deploys a relativist ontology, meaning that there exist several local and specific realities instead of a single reality, which is antithetical to positivism's focus on generalizable laws (ibid.; Yanow, 2003, p. 11). Furthermore, interpretivism uses a transactional or subjectivist epistemology, and a hermeneutical methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005a, pp. 193-194; ibid., 2005b, p. 184), thereby applying a context-specific lens (Yanow, 2003, p. 11). Advocates of positivism emulate the natural sciences, use scientific methods, view verified hypotheses as facts or laws, and suppose that these facts or laws are generalizable, thereby resulting in the accumulation of knowledge (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 19; Guba & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 194). In contrast, the interpretive approach aims to understand by means of reconstruction and interpretation, and presumes that comparisons between reconstructions and interpretations lead to more informed insights, thereby resulting in the accumulation of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 194).

The proponents of interpretivism aim to analyze internal meanings, reasons and beliefs of actors (Hollis & Smith, 1990). These proponents presume that social meanings, language and beliefs constitute the paramount aspects of social existence (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 19). Explanatory theorists assume that such objects cannot be incorporated into a scientific framework. In their view, scientifically substantiated claims need to be justified by empirical evidence, while meanings, beliefs and ideas cannot be validated, thus, resulting in mere speculation. Interpretive theorists on the other hand, argue that research should be guided by the most important factors affecting human behavior instead of an a priori commitment to science.

There are several types of meaning which cannot be established by means of the explanatory view. First, people derive meaning from their experience (Hollis & Smith, 1990, p. 68). In addition, linguistic meaning is one of the most crucial components of social life. Thirdly, action derives its meaning from context (ibid., p. 69). The context of action can never be

disassociated from the actor's understanding of this context. Lastly, what people mean by their actions depends upon their expectations of the actions of others. The interpretive understanding view has a central focus on meaning, thereby constructing a method peculiar to social behavior (ibid., p. 70). Action must always be understood from within, meaning that action can only be interpreted by looking at the perception of the actor concerning its actions (ibid., 72). To understand is to reproduce the perception of the actor, while to explain is simply to identify causes in a scientific manner (ibid., p. 87)

Yanow (2003, p. 10) beliefs that the term qualitative research increasingly is being used to refer not to studies which focus on meanings or lived experiences. Instead, contemporarily it is mainly used to refer to small-N studies which apply large-N tools. Such studies try to conform to reliability and validity criteria, which are essential in quantitative methodologies. This is very problematic, since quantitative methods are based on positivist presuppositions and their evaluative criteria are derived from these ontological and epistemological tenets, while traditional qualitative methods are based on interpretive presuppositions. Positivist scientists such as King, Keohane and Verba (1994) have called for an increase in the amount of observations in order to improve these small-N qualitative studies, but this is not the solution (Yanow, 2003, p. 10). The qualitative-quantitative taxonomy is a shorthand surrogate for the distinction between positivism and interpretivism. Instead, there exists a tripartite division between quantitative, positivist-qualitative and interpretive-qualitative methods.

Some scholars have suggested that the problem of contesting approaches could be resolved by simultaneously using a positivist and interpretive approach in one research design (ibid., p. 12). This would simply be not possible according to Yanow (2003, p. 12), since the two approaches are incompatible due to their contradictory ontological and epistemological presuppositions. The differences with regards to the knowledge of interest would lead to different formulations of the research question, thereby resulting in different proceedings in terms of the conduct of research. This study concurs with Yanow's view and will, therefore, only use a single approach. This research aims to understand China's foreign policy from within, and, thus, explicitly focuses on meanings, language and beliefs. In result, this study will conduct research by means of the interpretive approach.

3.2 Expectations

This section will outline the formulated expectations concerning the cases of interest. It is important to note that expectations cannot be formulated in a similar way as positivist hypotheses. These hypotheses are always formulated in a very technical manner due to the positivist presuppositions concerning ontology, epistemology and methodology. Interpretive expectations should be formulated in rather general terms, resulting in enough room to

maneuver. Researchers must reconstruct events by trying to understand action from within, meaning that action can only be explained by looking at the perception of the actor concerning its actions. Therefore, researchers must refrain from formulating very specific expectations. Such formulations would probably include the researcher's suppositions, thereby decreasing the open-mindedness of the researcher and decreasing the researcher's ability to put oneself in the position of the subject. In short, very technical and specific hypotheses do not allow the researcher to truly understand action from within its context, while this in essence is the goal of interpretive research.

The expectations are derived from the theoretical chapter, which outlines SIT's theoretical framework as well as the revision of the condition affecting a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy. These expectations will contribute to answering the research- and sub-research question. In recapitulation, these questions are formulated in the following manner:

Research question: *To what extent can the Social Identity Theory provide a comprehensive understanding of China's foreign policy?*

Sub-research question: *Under which conditions is China expected to deploy which strategy?*

The research question should be viewed as a why-question. Why would China deploy a foreign policy as it has done in the case of its foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy? By means of the English School it is established that states compare themselves vis-à-vis other states. Moreover, SIT indicates in line with the English School that some states such as emerging powers like China are dissatisfied with their current position in international society, and, therefore, wish to increase their status. Based on the English School and SIT, this research expects that China has compared itself to other states in the international society, and that it is dissatisfied with its current social status, resulting in China's desire to increase its social status. This research, thus, expects that China's foreign policy shows China's desire to increase its status. In essence, the analysis of each case should focus on China's perceptions about its position in the world.

The sub-research question should be viewed as a how-question. How is China's dissatisfaction with its current social status and its desire to increase this status shaped into actual foreign policy? SIT explicates how China's perceptions and desires are translated into foreign policy, namely through the strategy of social mobility, -competition and -creativity. As mentioned before, Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010) have defined and analysed conditions which affect China's choice to deploy a certain strategy. These conditions have been revised in order to apply SIT in a sound way. According to this research, China's choice to deploy a certain strategy is firstly affected by whether China presumes to be accepted as a member by the higher-status group. Hereafter, based on this perception and China's view of the identity of the higher-status group

China decides whether it is willing to join the higher-status group, beat the higher-status group or create a positively distinctive identity in a new dimension. Thirdly, China will consider whether it is able to deploy a policy, which reflects its formerly established willingness. The focus in this research's empirical analysis of each case should, thus, be placed on China's perceptions concerning its acceptation by the higher-status group, its willingness to join, to beat or define something new, and its ability to deploy a policy reflecting its willingness.

3.2.1 Strategy of social mobility

A foreign policy based on social mobility adheres to the values and regulations of the higher-status group in order to gain admission into the elite club. Indicators of this strategy include a state's emulation of the institutions, values or ideology of the elite group (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, pp. 71-72). This research views China's foreign economic policy as illustrative of the strategy of social mobility. By means of SIT's theoretical framework and the revision of conditions affecting a state's policy choices the following expectations are formulated. Firstly, China presumes to be accepted as a member by the higher-status group. Secondly, China is willing to become accepted as a member by the higher-status group. Thirdly, China presumes to be able to join the higher-status group. Lastly, China deploys the strategy of social mobility in the case of its foreign economic policy.

3.2.2 Strategy of social competition

A social competitively driven foreign policy is aimed at beating the dominant group in the dimension from which the dominant group derives its superior status, which could for instance be military power (ibid., pp. 72-73). Indicators of this strategy include arms racing, rivalry over spheres of influence, military demonstrations, and military interventions against smaller powers with the goal to influence others' perceptions instead of attaining security and power. This research views China's security policy as illustrative of the strategy of social competition. By means of SIT's theoretical framework and the revision of conditions affecting a state's policy choices the following expectations are formulated. First, China presumes to not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group. Secondly, China is willing to beat the higher-status group in the dimension from which the group derives its power. Thirdly, China presumes that it is able to beat the higher-status group in the dimension from which the group derives its power. Lastly, China deploys the strategy of social competition in the case of its security policy.

3.2.3 Strategy of social creativity

A foreign policy conducted by means of the strategy of social creativity would entail behaviour aimed at seeking prestige through redefining the social value of a state's negative attribute or stressing its superiority in a new dimension (ibid., pp. 73-75). Indicators of this strategy include advocacy of new international norms, regimes, institutions, or developmental models. The

essence of this strategy is to establish a distinctive position by stressing the state's unique contributions and values. This research views China's humanitarian aid policy as illustrative of the strategy of social creativity. By means of SIT's theoretical framework and the revision of conditions affecting a state's policy choices the following expectations are formulated. Firstly, China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member of the higher-status group. Secondly, China is not willing to become accepted as a member by the higher-status group, but willing to create a positively distinctive position in a new dimension. Thirdly, China presumes that it is able to define a positively distinctive position in a new dimension. Lastly, China deploys the strategy of social creativity in the case of its humanitarian aid policy.

3.3 Research design and case selection technique

In quantitative large-N research, cases are randomly selected and subsequently analyzed. In positivist-qualitative research, researches select cases on the basis of the cases' representativeness of the population at large as well as their causal leverage regarding the research question (Gerring, 2008). This research should, however, be defined as small-N, interpretive-qualitative research or traditional qualitative research (Yanow, 2003, p. 10).

This research deploys a single case study research design, and should be defined as an illustrative case study (Odell, 2001, p. 163). This research aims to demonstrate the theoretical idea of SIT by means of an analysis of a single case, which is deemed to be illustrative of SIT. China's foreign policy is viewed as illustrative of SIT, and is, therefore, selected as this research's case of interest. This single case comprises of three sub-cases, namely China's foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy.

This study will analyze China's foreign policy in these three seemingly contradictory policy fields by means of SIT in order to show that China's foreign policy is based on a comprehensive grand strategy, thereby proving that China's foreign policy is illustrative of SIT. In result, the research design is quite deductively informed. By means of SIT and the revised conditions that affect a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy several expectations are established, where after data will be collected in order to demonstrate that China's foreign policy is illustrative of SIT. This research, thus, assumes from the outset that its research question can be answered by means of SIT, and envisages shedding light on China's foreign policy under the logic of SIT.

3.4 Types of data and data collection

Spoken or written language is one of the types of data which can be analyzed by means of interpretive research (Yanow, 2003, p. 10). The most paramount sources of spoken or written language which will be used in this research are China's government white papers concerning its foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. These white papers are

produced by China's State Council, which is the chief administrative authority of China's government. The State Council is chaired by the Premier and includes the heads of all government departments and agencies. Subsequently, these white papers are published by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (IOSCPRC), which is the administrative office of the State Council, and publishes official documents in the name of the State Council. The white papers published by the IOSCPRC, thus, represent the actual policy and strategy of China's State Council, and, should, therefore, be viewed as the most relevant documents for the analysis of China's foreign policy.

This research's empirical analysis consists of four parts, which are based on the following sources. First, a section will establish some general observations concerning China's foreign policy as a whole by means of the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011c), which stipulates China's general strategy and worldview. Secondly, the sub-case concerning China's foreign economic policy will be analyzed by means of the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011b), which stipulates China's foreign trade policy. Thirdly, the sub-case concerning China's security policy will be analyzed by means of two white papers, namely the white paper concerning China's military strategy (IOSCPRC, 2015) and the white paper on the employment of China's armed forces (IOSCPRC, 2013). Moreover, this analysis will make use of a policy document concerning Asia-Pacific security cooperation, which is published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (MFAPRC, 2017). This policy document should not be viewed as an official white paper, since it only is produced by the MFAPRC instead of the State Council. The document, however, does reflect the policy of the MFAPRC. The analysis of China's security policy will, therefore, focus on the two official white papers (IOSCPRC, 2013; ibid., 2015) and use the paper by the MFAPRC (2017) as an auxiliary source. Fourthly, the sub-case concerning China's humanitarian aid policy will be analyzed by means of two white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011a; ibid., 2014), which both stipulate China's foreign aid policy. Besides the aforementioned white papers and paper, the analysis of each sub-case will use additional sources such as minutes of speeches by Chinese government officials as well as non-governmental sources like newspaper articles and scientific writings in order to further substantiate this research's findings.

This research will collect data by means of reading documents, which is one of the three methods of data collection in interpretive research (Yanow, 2003, p. 10). Therefore, the aforementioned white papers produced by the State Council, the paper produced by the MFAPRC, and additional sources of written language will be read. The positivist-qualitative method of data collection which is similar to reading documents is content analysis. This method of data collection essentially is an analysis of communicated material such as texts and films by means of the classification, tabulation and evaluation of key characteristics and themes in order to ascertain the content's meaning (Krippendorff, 2004). It is, thus, a fairly empirically grounded, systematic

method, which has the goal to derive inferences beyond the actual content. A variety of types of documents can be analyzed such as newspaper articles, party manifestos, parliamentary speeches, campaigning material and official reports (ibid.; Yin, 2002, pp. 85-86).

In addition to reading documents, interpretive research can collect data through interviewing (Yanow, 2003, p. 10). This research desired to conduct interviews with experts such as Chinese government officials. These interviews should have provided auxiliary information, while reading documents would serve as the main method of data enquiry. This research wanted to conduct semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which is the most fashionable manner to establish detailed information and to acquire the insider's perspective (Leech, 2002). Several interview invitations have been sent to for instance the Chinese embassy in The Hague and the Chinese International Press Office. Subsequently, reminders have been sent to follow-up on the invitation. Unfortunately however, nobody has agreed to grant an interview. In result, data enquiry through conducting interviews has been deemed infeasible.

Besides reading documents and conducting interviews there remains one method of data collection in interpretive research, which is observing and participating (Yanow, 2003, p. 10). Observing and participating is mainly used as a method of enquiry in cultural research. Although this research focuses on perceptions and could, thus, apply the method of observing and participating, this method of enquiry is not very suitable for this research. First, participating in the process of policy making is practically impossible, since the Chinese government will not allow researchers to be involved in such processes. Moreover, observing is also not feasible, since discussions on how to draft policy are strictly confidential, and researchers are, thus, not allowed to observe. Although the method of observing and participating cannot be applied in this research's empirical analysis, a thorough and comprehensive data enquiry method is applied in this research by reading the documents, which are the most relevant for this study.

3.5 Interpretation of data

As has been mentioned before, interpretive research relies on a subjectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005a, pp. 193-194) and a relativist ontology (ibid., Yanow, 2003, p. 11), thereby assuming that there exist several realities and that language has the potential to exhibit multiple meanings, resulting in the need to apply a context-specific lens. In result of the possibility of different meanings, a researcher cannot simply read documents, but should establish interpretations, which can be a difficult and ambiguous activity if conducted poorly.

There is a widespread view among scholars that there is nothing beyond understanding a text, than understanding the sentences that make up the text (Mantzavinos, 2016). This assumption is based on the principle of compositionality, which reads that the meaning of an expression should be fully determined by the meaning of its individual parts as well as its

structure (Szabó, 2013). The problem, however, is that while a sentence expresses one thought, a text exhibits a list of thoughts (Mantzavinos, 2016). The meaning of a single sentence can be grasped easily, whereas the meaning of a text as a whole requires a much more complex process.

Hermeneutics as a methodology of interpretation explicitly focuses on the problems arising during the interpretation of texts (ibid.). In order to understand and interpret the meaning of texts correctly, the concept of the hermeneutic circle has been established. This concept relates to the circularity of interpretation. Taylor (1985, p. 18) has demonstrated that expression only have meaning in relation to other expressions. The interpretation of expressions, thus, depends on the interpretations of other expressions, and ultimately of all expressions. More simply put, each individual part of a text should be understood in reference to the text as a whole, whereas the understanding of a text as whole can only be established through reference to its constituents. In essence, the hermeneutic circle is used to establish informed interpretation, whenever the meaning of a linguistic expression cannot be established automatically by the researcher (Mantzavinos, 2009). The hermeneutic circle is deemed to be the most appropriate tool to apply in the process of interpretation (ibid., 2016; Anderson, 2005; Danks, Bohn & Fears, 1983; Simon, 1986).

The concept of the hermeneutic circle refers to the way in which the meaning of a text affects the researcher's construction of reality, understanding and knowledge, thereby altering the way in which the reader will read or reread the text. Prasad (2002, p. 18) indicates that the concept of the hermeneutic circle should be used in order to establish an understanding of context. The researcher will firstly base itself on its preconceived knowledge and interpretation of reality when reading the text. However, due to reading the text the researcher's construction of reality, understanding and knowledge will be affected, thereby resulting in the possibility to establish a more informed interpretation when rereading the text. Researchers should always aspire to reach the highest level of interpretation of the meaning and context of a text. Researchers must, thus, reread texts several times in order to establish the most informed interpretations. This study aspires to understand China's foreign policy from within, and should, therefore, have a profound understanding of the meaning of the white papers as a whole, the constituents of these papers as well as their context. In result of this goal and the application of the concept of the hermeneutic circle, all white papers as well as auxiliary documents have been read and reread several times prior to the actual conduct of empirical research. Moreover, these sources have been reread and reinterpreted numerous times during the several steps of this research's empirical analysis.

There are a few more matters, which need to be discussed. This research strives to establish China's perceptions, and must, therefore, aim at grasping the intentions of the author. Skinner (1972; 1975) proclaims that it is possible to identify the author's intentions. This view is known as hermeneutic intentionalism (Mantzavinos, 2016). By focusing on authorial intention it

becomes possible to derive the author's nexus of meaning, thereby establishing a profound understanding of the message that China wishes to convey through its whitepapers. Applying the method of the hermeneutic circle and aiming at authorial intention is, however, not enough for establishing the most informed interpretation of a text. The researcher should also aim to appropriate the meaning of a text through viewing it in its larger context. The meaning of a text remains critically dependent on the text's context. Therefore, in order to completely understand the message and perceptions that China wishes to convey through its white papers, this research must focus on the context of these white papers. In result, statements derived from a single white paper will be compared to statements in other white papers in order to establish differences in terms of tone, content, and the actual message conveyed by these statements. In addition, this research previously established the process and context wherein China's whitepapers and policy documents are produced, thereby determining whether expressions in these texts are supported by individuals, a ministry or the State Council of China. In result, this research attaches different amounts of relevance to different types of sources. White papers are seen as more significant and relevant, than the policy document by the MFAPRC. Whereas remarks by government officials are viewed as more significant, than the proclaims of external observers due to this research's aim to understand from within and explicit focus on the perceptions of China itself.

Lastly, interpretive research, contrarily to positivist research, is based on the assumption that there does not exist one reality nor a single truth. The potential of texts to exhibit different meanings could reduce the trustworthiness and authenticity of the interpretations established by this research. This research must provide a description as thick as possible (Geertz, 1993) in order to demonstrate that the meaning of texts are interpreted in a sound manner. This research does not aspire to acquire the absolute truth, but does desire to convey its trustworthiness. Therefore, this research will be as thick as possible in the description of its interpretations by constantly addressing the individual steps leading to the interpretations.

3.6 Consequences and limitations

The previous sections already demonstrated the methodological distinctions between positivism and interpretivism, thereby touching upon the consequences of this research's methodological decisions. These consequences will be outlined more extensively in the following section. The paramount issue is that positivist research emulates the methodology used in the natural sciences (Hollis & Smith, 1990), whereas interpretive research rejects this a priori commitment to a scientific approach (Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 19). Positivist scholars proclaim that the interpretive approach is rather vague with regards to its methodological decisions and boundaries, does not adhere to clear-cut rules, and thereby is fairly arbitrary, rather speculative and less convincing. In line with interpretivism, this research argues that positivism adheres to methodological

presuppositions, which reduce the empirical universe and shape the way in which research should be conducted. These limiting presuppositions are also debatable at the least. Positivist researchers often stress that positivism relies on a clearer methodology due to all the technical rules, but neglect to acknowledge that these rules are based on arbitrary tenets. Moreover, these presuppositions diminish the possibility to conduct research on social context, which should be the primary focus of the social sciences. The growth of interpretive approaches and research generally stems from the dissatisfaction with positivist methods and procedures for establishing scientific knowledge (Sandberg, 2005, p. 41). These procedures and the positivist call for objective knowledge have vast theoretical limitations for advancing the understanding concerning humans and social phenomena (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; ibid., 2000; ibid., 2005; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Sandberg, 2001).

Social meanings, language and beliefs cannot be established by means of positivist research, since positivism deems these types of knowledge as unobservable, immeasurable and, thus, invalid scientific knowledge (ibid.; Hollis & Smith, 1990, p. 68). The interpretive approach refutes these presuppositions, and generally focuses on these aspects of social existence (Hollis & Smith, 1990, pp. 68-70; Kurki & Wight, 2016, p. 19). This research also explicitly focuses on meanings, language and beliefs. Deploying a positivist approach would make it impossible to understand China's foreign policy from within. An interpretive approach allows conducting research on such a topic, since it is a method which is peculiar to social context.

The consequence of deploying an interpretive approach is, however, that due to the relativist ontology and subjectivist ontology this research's findings cannot be readily translated to other cases or generalized in order to define universal laws. Interpretive research does not allow for universally rejecting or corroborating theories. According to proponents of positivism, this would be problematic. In line with proponents of interpretivism such as Yanow (2003, p.11), this research argues that it is not problematic at all, since this research is primarily interested in the context of action, which of course is never universal. Action can only be explained by looking at the perception of the actor concerning its actions (Hollis & smith, 1990, p. 72). This research's goal is to establish the underlying motivations of China's policymakers by means of their perceptions, which results in the necessity to understand action from within by conducting interpretive research. Applying a positivist methodology and, thus, not focusing on context would be plainly wrong, since this would surpass the actual goal of this research. Another consequence is that positivist quality criteria for research such as validity and reliability are incompatible with this research's methodological approach (Guba & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 194; Yanow, 2003, p. 11; Sandberg, 2005, p. 43). Therefore, this research must be to be as thick as possible (Geertz, 1993) in order to convey its audience of its trustworthiness and authenticity.

As mentioned before, some authors suggest to simultaneously apply a positivist and an interpretive methodology (Yanow, p. 12). In line with Yanow, this research argues that this would not only be simply impossible, but would also be unnecessary. Both approaches are incompatible with each other. Using a positivist approach as well as an interpretive approach would, again, not be in line with this research's goal.

The substantiations for an interpretive approach and the consequences of applying such an approach have been demonstrated. Now, the last part of the methodological chapter must turn to the limitations of this research's methods of data collection. Applying the method of reading documents, which is quite similar to its positivist counterpart content analysis, results in some pitfalls and limitations. The most common limitation is that no relevant documents can be found (Yin, 2002, p. 87). The second limitation is that the selection of documents can be influenced by a researcher's willingness to establish fruitful findings, which concur with the study's theoretical expectations. Both limitations, however, do not apply to this research, since this research explicitly aims to analyze China's foreign policy in the cases of interest by means of China's motivations and perspectives regarding these cases. China's white papers concerning its policy in each of the three cases stipulate the underlying perceptions and motivations behind China's foreign policy, and are, therefore, vastly relevant for this research. The necessary documents are, thus, already found, and the selection of documents is solely based on the goal to understand China's policy from within.

Another important limitation of reading documents is that this method is incapable of establishing first hand data. Analyzing cases by means of first hand data would possibly be better. To obtain first hand data, it would be necessary to conduct elite interviews by means of semi-structured interviews (Leech, 2002). As already is indicated, this research desired to conduct expert interviews with Chinese government officials, and has, therefore, sent several interview invitations, which were followed-up by reminders. However, no one has been willing to grant an interview. In result, it is deemed unfeasible to use this method of data enquiry.

Chapter 4: Empirical findings

The following chapter will conduct research into China's foreign policy by analyzing three foreign policy components, namely China's foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. This analysis will be conducted by means of the theoretical framework and expectations established in earlier chapters in order to demonstrate that SIT is able to provide a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy components as well as China's grand strategy to reposition itself in international society. The first section will outline some general observations in order to demonstrate that the theoretical expectations derived from the English School and SIT apply to China and its foreign policy in general. After that section, each of the cases of interests will be discussed in a separate section in order to assess that these cases can be explained by means of this research's theoretical framework. It is important to note that the elaborations on the findings concerning each sub-case are divided into four parts. The first part will address whether China presumes to be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as whether China is willing to join the higher-status group, beat the higher-status group or create a positively distinctive identity in a new dimension. Moreover, the second part discusses whether China presumes to be able to deploy a policy that reflects its willingness. Furthermore, the third part outlines all efforts made by China in terms of the strategy of social mobility, social competition or social creativity. Lastly, the fourth part assesses that the sub-case is indeed illustrative of one of the strategies. This part, thus, demonstrates that the sub-cases China's foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy, respectively, are illustrative of the strategy of social mobility, social competition and social creativity.

4.1 General observations

This section will illustrate firstly that China beliefs in the notion of international society and acts accordingly. Secondly, it will demonstrate that China compares itself vis-à-vis other states, and more importantly also reflects upon its position in international society. Lastly, the third part will assess that there exists a discrepancy between China's self-perception and how other states treat China. There is, thus, a divergence between China's actual position in international society and the position China presumes it should have, resulting in a desire to increase its status. In essence, this section demonstrates that the theoretical expectations derived from the English School and SIT apply to China and its foreign policy in general. The section will be primarily based on China's white paper on its peaceful development (IOSCPRC, 2011c). This white paper stipulates China's general strategy, its perceptions about its position, and its worldview. In addition, remarks by Chinese government officials and other sources are used to substantiate this research's claims.

4.1.1 Supporting international society

The classical definition of the international society and related elements are already extensively elaborated in the theoretical chapter. In brief, an international society exists when states share common interests or values and conceive themselves as to be bound by common rules (Bull, 1995, p. 13). Indicators of such a society are for example mutual recognition, mutual interest in stability and economic interdependence (Dunne, 2016, p. 115). The white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011c) on China's peaceful development and the speech of President Xi (2015) at the UN Sustainable Development Summit clearly demonstrate that China beliefs that there exists an international society. The document as well as the speech emphasize extensively that China wishes to pursue its own interests alongside the interests of mankind. Moreover, China beliefs that safeguarding a stable international environment should be achieved through mutually beneficial cooperation, which results in tackling global problems and realizing common development. In addition, it is constantly expressed throughout the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011c) that China is a responsible member of the international community, abides by international laws and principles, and eagerly fulfills its responsibilities. Especially the latter statement exemplifies in a sound manner that China beliefs that there exist common rules which govern international relations, and that China willingly honors these rules due to mutual interest in the preservation of these rules. Lastly, China calls on other states to recognize each other as equals, and to put their differences aside by cooperating based on mutual trust. In result, this research concludes that China believes in an international society and wishes to address common interests through cooperation based on common rules as well as mutual recognition.

4.1.2 Comparison and reflection upon position

The white paper indicates that China compares itself vis-à-vis other states on the basis of identity as well as economic capabilities. From the start, the section concerning the path of China's peaceful development explicitly notes that the Chinese society has the unique characteristic of being open, inclusive and enduring (IOSCPRC, 2011c), which is reiterated throughout the document. Moreover, it states numerous times that China has successfully defined a distinctive, socialist path of development, which conforms to China's characteristics and reality. In essence, this suggests that China's path of development and the characteristics of its society differ from the path of development and characteristics exhibited by other states. Inherent to establishing that one is distinctive in these matters is that one compares itself vis-à-vis others. It is impossible to claim such a position without comparison, since identities can only be established in comparison to others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40; Said, 1978).

Besides comparisons in terms of identity, the white paper also contains several indicators of comparison in terms of economic capabilities. For instance, the share of China's per capita income is compared to the global average (IOSCPRC, 2011c). In addition, the white paper stresses

that China has contributed more than other states to the global economic growth in the last decades, namely more than ten percent per year. Thirdly, the document reads that China is one of the highest-ranking states in terms of deposits of farmland and mineral resources. Moreover, China's domestic market will be the biggest in the world in a few years according to the white paper. Besides, it is also emphasized several times that China is the most populous country. The white paper, thus, implicitly suggests by proclaiming these matters that China exhibits more beneficial economic capabilities and indicators than other states. Statements concerning these matters predict a prosperous future for China, and simultaneously demonstrate that China compares its economic prospects vis-à-vis other states.

More importantly than the above established occurrence of comparison, the white paper shows that China explicitly reflects upon its position in international society. China views itself as one of the leading states, which is exemplified in the white paper (ibid.) by claims such as that China's economy is hugely important for the stability and growth of the global economy, it is the first developing state to implement a National Climate Program, and that it has made the best efforts in emission reduction and energy savings. More explicitly, the white paper declares that former rising powers would seek hegemony, whereas China has broken away from this pattern by embarking on a path of peaceful development. This path should be viewed as the most astonishing success story and serves as a bright example for others according to the white paper.

From the onset, the white paper tries to convey to its audience that China is a major power and that its rising status is observed closely by all other states. The preface immediately outlines that China is advancing rapidly, and that its development is the focus of the international society at large (ibid.). China, thus reflects upon its position in international society, and assesses that other states observe China's changing role. Moreover, the white paper stresses that China has made remarkable development achievements, and contributes enormously to the world's stability and prosperity. Furthermore, the previous section already established that China beliefs in the notion of international society and acts accordingly. The white paper (ibid.) explicitly stresses firstly that China is a leading state in the world due to its paramount role in safeguarding global peace and meeting international challenges. Secondly, China eagerly fulfills its new obligations and responsibilities resulting from being a new major power. Thirdly, China acts in accordance with its increasing strength, which has become similar as the strength of higher-status states. The crux of the matter, however, is that China feels as if its increasing strength and role in international society is not acknowledged by the higher-status states. Although China views itself as positively distinctive in terms of identity and economic capabilities, and presumes to be one of the leading states in international society, it does not receive due respect. Therefore, its self-perception does not align with how it is treated by other members of the international society. This discrepancy is the focus of the following part.

4.1.3 Desire to increase status

As previously demonstrated, China presumes that it has evolved from a developing state to a major power with a strength comparable to that of higher-status states, which should be acknowledged by other states. The problem here is that status of a rising state can only increases through recognition by higher-status states such as the US (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, p. 67). China perceives, thus, that it does not receive the respect and status it deems to be appropriate due to a lack of recognition. This is implicitly indicated by the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011c) through emphasizing several times that China wishes that states would treat each other as equal. According to the white paper, every state should be recognized as an equal member of the international society and receive due respect. By emphasizing such beliefs, it is implicitly indicated that China feels as if it is not treated as equal by the higher-status states. This interpretation is substantiated by the fact that the white paper proclaims several times that China opposes strong states oppressing the weak, and that it would not impose its will upon others. It is, thus, implicitly suggested that China holds the perception that higher-status states do impose their will upon lower-status states such as China. These impositions result in the perception that higher-status states do not recognize China's rising status. These states, thus, do not treat China as equal, while the former part demonstrated that China presumes that this should be the case.

This discrepancy between China's self-perception and how it is being treated by higher-status states, results in an explicit call for recognition in the concluding part of the white paper (ibid.). The conclusion explicitly states that emerging economies and the Asian region are becoming stronger, and, thus, increase their influence on the world stage. Therefore, the trend towards a multipolar international system is irresistible. Moreover, China's success calls for support from others and the international society at large. In addition, it is expressed that China appreciates all states who have supported China's development. However, the white paper also emphasizes that China hopes to be appreciated more deeply by the international community. This community should respect China's peaceful development and support its path instead of obstruct it. The white paper finally concludes by stressing that China has become stronger, which is recognized by some states and neglected by others.

All in all, the white paper, thus, implicitly as well as explicitly indicates that China views itself as a new major power and demands due respect from the higher-status states, while these states seem not willing to recognize China's increased status nor treat the state as equal. The discrepancy between China's self-perception and the recognition it receives from higher-status states results in China's desire to increase its status. China, thus, wishes to increase its status in order to align its status in international society with its self-perception. This research's finding can be substantiated even further by means of auxiliary sources such as remarks of government officials and external observers. Welch Larson and Shevchenko (2010 proclaim that China should

be viewed as a status seeker, which is dissatisfied with its current status in international society, and, therefore wishes to increase its status. Volgy, Corbetta and Grant (2011) proclaim that China's status has caused embarrassment and discontent among Chinese policymakers. These scholars refer in their study to a Chinese senior policy advisor, who expressed that China wishes to achieve an equal status in comparison to Western states, and that China's desire to join the center of international politics is slowly being fulfilled. Wang Yi, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, has stressed similar desires during his speech at the Brookings Institute. Wang Yi (MFA, 2013) proclaimed, in line with President Xi's vision, that he wants to build a model for the major-states relationship between the US and China. This relationship should be based on mutual respect and equality. The statement indicates that Wang Yi supposes that the US currently does not recognize China as equal, and wishes to change this. Biba (2016) presumes that the relationship between China and the US is being harmed by the US' disrespectful attitude towards China's status claims. Moreover, Biba (ibid.) indicates that China continuously seeks to increase its status. Guo and Guo (2010) concur with these assumptions, and claim that China's status concerns could result in future clashes between China and other major powers. China is dissatisfied with its current status and wants to be recognized as equal by the US in order to reshape their relationship (Deng, 2008). In conclusion, not being recognized as equal by higher-status states such as the US results in China's perception that there is a divergence between its self-perception and its actual status in international society, resulting in China's desire to increase its status.

4.2 China's foreign economic policy

This section will demonstrate that China deploys the strategy of social mobility in the case of its foreign economic policy, resulting in the conclusion that the sub-case is illustrative of SIT as well as the confirmation of this research's expectations. The empirical analysis will be based on China's white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011b), which stipulates its foreign trade policy. A speech by President Xi will be used as auxiliary evidence. The following elaboration of the empirical analysis is divided into four sections. The first part will demonstrate that China presumes to be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as that China is willing to join the higher-status group. Hereafter, the second part will assess that China presumes to be able to deploy a policy, which enables China to join the higher-status group. The third part will discuss what China's policy actually does in terms of the strategy of social mobility. Lastly, a concluding part will judge that China deploys the strategy of social mobility in the case of its foreign economic policy. This part, thus, shows that the sub-case is indeed illustrative of the strategy of social mobility.

4.2.1 Presuming to be accepted and willing to join

Two matters serve as China's twofold argument that it should be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, namely that China is involved in dozens of IGOs and economic cooperation

mechanisms that propagate the values and regulations of the higher-status group, and China's vast economic capabilities. Due to China's identity and policy that seemingly align with the identity and policy associated with the higher-status group, and China's vast economic capabilities, China holds the strong belief that it will be accepted as a member. That China is involved in dozens of IGOs and economic cooperation mechanisms that propagate the values and regulations of the higher-status group also demonstrates that China views the identity of the higher-status group as favorable, and is, therefore, willing to join the higher-status group. Both claims will be substantiated below.

China has become a member of the WTO in 2001, brought its measures in accordance with the WTO's regulations, and adheres to its values (ibid.). The WTO has recognized these efforts. Besides the WTO, China also plays an active role in summits of the association of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). Moreover, China actively participates in Doha Round talks, the Group of 20 (G20), and other international cooperation mechanisms. Furthermore, China maintains high-level economic cooperation mechanisms with plenty members of the elite group such as the US, European states, and Japan. In addition, it actively participates in several Asian economic cooperation mechanisms, and has signed agreements on economic cooperation with more than 150 states and regions. China's active role on the economic world stage is further substantiated by the white paper through demonstrating that China has held fifteen rounds of negotiations concerning free trade and economic partnerships with more than twenty states and regions on five continents. Ten free agreements have been signed, while currently five agreement talks are being held. Overall, the white paper, thus, conveys to its audience that China's active role in propagating the values and regulations of the higher-status group, and its involvement in dozens of agreements on free trade and economic partnerships should result in China being accepted as a member by the higher-status group. Moreover, being involved in and constantly referring to such IGOs and cooperation mechanisms, which are based on and propagate the values and regulations of the higher-status group, demonstrates that China views this as a favorable identity and policy, and, therefore, is willing to propagate as well as adhere to these values and regulations. China's desire to manifest an identity and policy that are comparable to the higher-status group is a clear indicator of China's willingness to join the higher-status group, since the higher-status group would only accept China as a member, whenever China would exhibit an identity and policy that are comparable to the identity and policy of the higher-status group.

It is stressed throughout the document that China has vast economic capabilities, and that the prosperity and stability of the global economy cannot be maintained without China's participation (ibid.). China's imports and exports rates respectively have grown from 2000 to 2009 with fifteen and seventeen percent, which is much higher than the three percent global average. According to the white paper, China is the driving force behind the world's economic growth and, thus, should be accepted as a member of the elite group. The white paper emphasizes

several times that China has made the fastest recovery during the international financial crisis, thereby maintaining the global economic stability, which is acknowledged by the WTO. The white paper concludes by claiming that China will strengthen international cooperation and integrate its economy even more into the world economy, thereby underscoring its ongoing adherence to the values and regulations of the higher-status group. All the aforementioned points should be interpreted as if China perceives itself as the driving force behind the world economy due to its vast economic capabilities. Therefore, China presumes that it should and, more importantly, will be accepted as a member of the higher-status group of economically developed states.

4.2.2 Economic capabilities enable to join

The white paper (ibid.) immediately conveys to its audience that China perceives its economic capabilities as huge, thereby suggesting that it is able to join the group of most important economic states. The foreword elaborates that foreign trade is one of China's fastest growing sectors, resulting in that China is being ranked as one of the largest trading states. This is substantiated by demonstrating that the value of China's import and export has increased rapidly, and that the total value of the import and export from 1978 until 2010 has increased 144 times. Moreover, it is stressed that China's import and export in 2010 respectively accounted for 9.1 percent and 10.4 percent of the global amount. China has been the largest exporter for several years. In addition, China's total services trade value has increased more than fivefold from 2001 until 2010, and China has moved from the tenth to the third place in terms of world services trade imports. According to the white paper, China's gross domestic product (GDP) has increased astonishingly fast. From 2001 to 2010, China's GDP has increased by 4.6 trillion US dollars, which represents 14.7 percent of the increase in the world's total amount. Moreover, China's GDP represents 9.3 percent of the world aggregate. The rise in terms of GDP is mainly caused by the growth rates of China's imports and exports, which respectively were 15 percent and 17 percent. According to the white paper, the growth rates demonstrate China's vast economic capabilities, since the annual growth rate of global trade in these years averaged around 3 percent. The development of China's foreign trade has provided opportunities to other states according to the document. China's imports have increased five times since 2001, resulting in the fact that China exhibits the largest export market for many economically developed states. In addition, China's trade with the US and the EU has increased steadily in recent years and will keep developing in the near future. These economic capabilities are increasingly being recognized by other states. In 2010, Japan has tested the quality of food imported from China, resulting in the conclusion that 99.74 percent of the food was up to standard. These results are according to the white paper even better, than the results of food imported from the US and the EU in the same period.

China's perception that it exhibits vast economic capabilities is not only indicated by means of numbers. The white paper (ibid.) also demonstrates this perception through listing the

improvements that were made in its economy. The white paper proclaims that China's competitiveness has been greatly enhanced, resulting in being ranked among the top of the world in terms of trade in services. In addition, it is proclaimed that China's competitive strength in foreign trade has accelerated its modernization and improved the living standards of the Chinese citizens. Moreover, China's economy stabilized faster after the international crisis, than the economies of the members of the higher-status group, thereby promoting the world's economy recovery, and proving that China's economic capabilities are even greater, than the capabilities of the elite states.

The aforementioned points already compile a quite lengthy list, which substantiates that China perceives its economic capabilities as comparable to or even better than the high-ranking economies. This list can be extended almost endlessly by means of the white paper (ibid.). This is, however, not necessary, since the previously mentioned empirical findings already prove that China presumes to be able to become a member of the higher-status group. Besides all of these explicit references, it is also implicitly suggested numerous times that China presumes that its economic capabilities are very high, and that these capabilities will even increase in the near future, resulting in the prediction that China will have the most paramount economy in the near future. The context of the white paper and general message is interpreted as if China views itself as an immensely strong and as a continuously improving economic power. China, thus, perceives itself to exhibit the economic capabilities that enable China to join the higher-status group. The following section will be devoted to discussing what China's policy actually does in terms of the strategy of social mobility.

4.2.3 Emulation of values and regulations

The white paper on China's foreign economic policy is issued on the tenth anniversary of China's accession to the WTO, which is also explicitly stated in the preface of the document (ibid.). This is an obvious indication that China desires to show all states that it adheres to the values and regulations of the higher-status group, and that China already is partially accepted by the dominant group. The white paper emphasizes extensively that China has opened-up its economy and has embraced a neoliberal foreign economic policy. An open economy and a neoliberal foreign economic policy are two of the most important characteristics exhibited by members of the elite club. The white paper, therefore, stresses that China emulates their values and regulations.

Besides this general message of the white paper (ibid.), the document also tries to convey to its audience that China is involved in dozens of economic cooperation mechanisms as well as that China is a responsible member of IGOs. These cooperation mechanisms and IGOs are based on and propagate the values and regulations of the higher-status group. China's adherence to these values and regulations is for instance exemplified by stressing that China has restored the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and has brought its internal and external trade

practices in conformity to the WTO's regulations. In result, China's open foreign trade system is compatible with multilateral trade rules, which are propagated by the higher-status group. A striking example of China's adherence would be that China has abolished all of its export subsidies.

The claim that China has opened-up its economy and emulates the values and regulations of the higher-status group is substantiated extensively in the white paper by means of its accession to the WTO. A very long list is presented which outlines all the economic sectors that are opened-up since the moment that China became a member of the WTO (ibid.). In addition, it is proclaimed that China has reviewed over 2.300 laws and regulations in order to bring its economic policy in accordance with the WTO's regulations. Two key examples are the revision of China's laws and regulations on intellectual property rights, and the lowering of import tariffs. China's efforts have resulted in the opening-up of 100 of the by the WTO's defined 160 sub-sectors of services trade according to the white paper. Moreover, China has worked hand in hand with other members of the WTO to oppose all types of trade protectionism, adhered to the regulations of the WTO and promoted fair competition. One of the most important claims in the white paper is that the majority of the WTO's members have commended China's efforts, thereby acknowledging that China's commitment to emulating and adhering to the values and regulations of the WTO has succeeded. In addition, China's role as a responsible member of the WTO is also acknowledged by the WTO itself. During the third review of China's trade policy, the WTO has emphasized that China has acted as a constructive member, who stimulated global demand during and in the aftermath of the financial crisis, thereby making significant contributions to the stability and growth of the global economy. In conclusion, it has been assessed that China's foreign economic policy has put tremendous effort in showing that China emulates the values and regulations of the higher-status group, thereby deploying the strategy of social mobility. The concluding part of this section will turn to judging that China deploys the strategy of social mobility in the case of its foreign economic policy.

4.2.4 Strategy of social mobility

The first part of this section has established that China presumes that it should and, more importantly, will be accepted as a member by the higher-status group on the basis of a twofold argument. First, China plays a very active role on the economic world stage, since it is involved in a dozen economic cooperation mechanisms and IGOs, which are based on and propagate the values and regulations of the higher-status group. Secondly, China perceives its economic capabilities as vast, and presumes to be the driving force behind the global economy. Besides, this part also established that China is willing to join the higher-status group. This finding is substantiated by the fact that China is involved in dozens of economic cooperation mechanisms and IGOs, which are based on and propagate the values and regulations of the higher-status group.

China, thus, views the identity and policy of the higher-status group as favorable, and is, therefore, willing to join the group.

The second part has assessed that China perceives its economic capabilities as comparable to or even better than the economies of the members of the higher-status group. Moreover, the context of the white paper (ibid.) and its general message is interpreted as if China perceives itself as the driving force behind the global economy, and, therefore, cannot be neglected by the higher-status group. China, thus, perceives itself to exhibit vast economic capabilities that enable China to join the higher-status group.

The third part starts by outlining that China is really trying to show that it emulates the values and regulations of the higher-status group by issuing its white paper on the tenth anniversary of its accession to the WTO. Moreover, it is judged that China has embraced a neoliberal economic ideology, and has put tremendous efforts in bringing its foreign economic policy in conformity to the values and regulations of the higher-status group. Members of the WTO as well as the WTO itself concur with China's perception that China is a constructive member of the international economy, which emulates these values and regulations.

The previous findings are illustrated in an elegant manner by the example provided in this research's introductory chapter, namely President Xi who has attended the World Economic Forum in Davos as the first Chinese president (Riley, 2017). His presence shows China's desire to join the higher-status group. Xi (2017) emphasized in his speech China's economic capabilities and that it embraces a neoliberal economic ideology that emulates the values of the higher-status group. In conclusion, China presumes to be accepted by the higher-status group, is willing to join said group, perceives to exhibit the economic capabilities which enable China to achieve this goal, and has put tremendous effort in emulating the values and regulations of the higher-status group. These findings align with the strategy of social mobility as well as this research's expectations concerning the revised conditions that affect a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy. In result, this research concludes that China indeed deploys the strategy of social mobility in the case of its foreign economic policy, and that this research's sub-case is, thus, illustrative of this strategy.

4.3 China's security policy

This section will establish that China deploys the strategy of social competition in the case of its security policy, resulting in the conclusion that the sub-case is illustrative of SIT as well as the confirmation of this research's expectations. The following empirical analysis will be primarily based on two of China's white papers concerning its security policy, namely the white paper concerning China's military strategy (IOSCPRC, 2015), and the white paper concerning the diversified employment of China's armed forces (ibid., 2013). The policy document on Asia-Pacific

security cooperation by the MFAPRC (2017) as well as remarks by government officials and non-governmental sources will be used as auxiliary sources.

The following elaboration of this research's empirical analysis is divided into four sections. The first part will demonstrate that China presumes to not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as that China is willing to beat the higher-status group. Hereafter, the second part will assess that China presumes to be able to deploy a policy, which enables China to beat the higher-status group. The third part will discuss all efforts made by China in terms of the strategy of social competition. Lastly, a concluding part will judge that China deploys the strategy of social competition in the case of its security policy. This part, thus, shows that the sub-case is indeed illustrative of the strategy of social competition.

4.3.1 Presuming to not be accepted and willing to beat

The white papers on China's military strategy and the employment of the PLA (IOSCPRC, 2015; ibid., 2013) stipulate that China observes several security threats in the Asia-Pacific region, and that China competes with the US, allies of the US such as Japan, and neighboring states over the regional sphere of influence. This animosity between China and the members of the higher-status group is an indicator of China's presumption that it will not be accepted as a member by the group. If China would presume to be accepted, then it would want to reduce tensions, since the group would never accept China if fierce animosity exists. Instead of deescalating the relations, China embarks on a path of competitiveness according to the white papers. Both papers outline extensively that China is willing to use its military capabilities to safeguard its sovereignty and interests, which is interpreted as firing up the animosity instead of de-escalation.

Moreover, the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2015) on China's military strategy contains none references to NATO, whereas the white paper (ibid., 2013) concerning the employment of the PLA refers just a few times to the military alliance of the higher-status group. Moreover, when the documents (ibid.; ibid., 2015) do refer to members of the higher-status group such as European states or the US, then these references are very technical and mainly involve statements on the tensions and China's security concerns. When reading between the lines it becomes apparent that these references indicate the existing animosity between China and the members of the higher-status group. The tone of the references as well as the low amount of these references indicate that China presumes to not be accepted by the group.

Contrarily to these negative remarks, both white papers (ibid.) contain plenty references to other states who are no member of the higher-status group such as Russia are very friendly and mainly involve statements on the necessity to strengthen and deepen military cooperation. The friendly ties between China and these states are extensively emphasized. For instance, Russia is referred to in a friendly manner several times, while references to Japan mainly focus on Japan's actions, which exacerbate the dispute over the Diaoyu Islands. The difference in amount and tone

of references is also observable in the policy document by the MFAPRC (2017) on Asia-Pacific security cooperation. This policy document for instance indicates that China and Russia are friends and have established the idea of their lasting friendship in legal form by means of the Good-Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The references to Japan, however, indicate that complex and sensitive factors remain to trouble the bilateral relations between China and Japan. In addition, it is stated that China's sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands should not be contested by Japan. Similarly, references to the US are rather unfriendly in tone. China's competitive, unfriendly relationship with the US for instance is demonstrated by the statement that China urges the US to stop the deployment of a new anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea. Again, the absence and tone of references to the members of the higher-status group indicates animosity, whereas the high amount and tone of references to other states demonstrates friendliness. By means of this matters it is, thus, asserted that the animosity between China and the higher-status group results in China's presumption that it will not be accepted as a member of the group.

This proposition is further substantiated by the main focus of both white papers (IOSCPR, 2013; ibid., 2015) on two matters. Firstly, China is strengthening its military cooperation with states who are no members of the higher-status group. Secondly, China is establishing its own military alliances and cooperation mechanisms as counterparts to the military alliance of the higher-status group, namely NATO. Establishing alliances and cooperation mechanisms, which are comparable to NATO, should be interpreted as that China perceives the identity and policy of the higher-status group as favorable. China would not want to create alliances and cooperation mechanisms, which exhibit an identity associated with military power, if it would view this identity as unfavorable. Based on these matters it is, thus, asserted that China is willing to beat the higher-status group in order to show that China can compete with this group. This would increase China's status, since its identity will be associated with superior military power.

In conclusion, the previous paragraphs prove that China presumes that it will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group due to animosity between both parties. This is demonstrated by means of the statements in both whitepapers (ibid.) on the tensions between them, the low amount of and negative tone of references to members of the higher-status group, the high amount and friendly tone of references to states who are no members of the higher-status group, the strengthened military cooperation between China and these states as well as China's efforts in establishing its own military alliances and cooperation mechanisms as counterparts to the military alliance of the higher-status group. Moreover, China's effort in the last matter shows that China perceives the group's identity, namely militarily powerful, as favorable. China, thus, desires to beat the higher-status group in order to obtain such an identity, thereby increasing its status. The following part will assess China presumes to be able to beat the higher-status group.

4.3.2 Military capabilities enable to beat

Each of the three white papers concerning China's security policy provides an extensive list of China's military capabilities. The list is too exhaustive for a complete overview. A discussion of the key points will serve as a strong substantiation for this research's claim that China perceives itself to exhibit the military capabilities that enable China to beat the higher-status group.

The preface of the white paper concerning China's military strategy (IOSCPRC, 2015) and the one concerning the employment of the PLA (ibid., 2013) indicate that China's government wishes to build a strong military, which is capable of safeguarding China's sovereignty and interests. In result of this goal, China's has increased its comprehensive national strength, thereby attaining a growing international status and influence. In order to achieve the Chinese Dream of being a powerful state in 2049 when the PRC marks its centenary, China desires to increase its military might, and employ its military forces and means to provide a solid guarantee for the state's interests. This vision is reflected by China's desire to innovate the strategic guidance and operational thoughts of the PLA to ensure its capabilities of fighting and winning.

The above discussed strategic tasks, proactive military strategy and the PLA's shifting focus also show that China beliefs that it has vast military capabilities. Inherent to formulating strategic tasks for the PLA such as safeguarding China's overseas interests is the basic belief that the PLA possesses sufficient capabilities to shoulder such a task. Moreover, the previous section also demonstrated that China is prone to win future wars. The claim in the white paper (ibid.) that the PLA's shifting focus will contribute to winning war indicates that China presumes that it at least has a chance in beating other states in terms of military power. In addition, the white paper (ibid., 2015) stipulates a strategic guideline for the PLA. This reads that the PLA should bring into full play the unique advantages of a people's war, which can be employed as an ace weapon to achieve triumph over China's enemies. Again, such a statement indicates that China has a tremendous belief in its military capabilities.

A rather extensive section of the white paper on China's military strategy (ibid.) elaborates China's efforts in the field of PMS, which enhance its overall capabilities in deterrence and warfighting. This section indicates that the PLA is capable to fight and win wars due to its capabilities as well as the overall PMS planning and PMS war games. In result, the PLA is constantly ready to engage in combat, remains vigilant and is prepared to meet wartime demands if necessary. These claims obviously are interpreted as if China presumes to possess sufficient military capabilities to conduct warfare and beating other states by winning wars.

In addition to these matters, the white paper on the employment of the PLA (ibid., 2013) also substantiates the claim that China has vast military capabilities by means of numbers. According to the paper, the PLA army's mobile operational units consists of 850.000 men. Moreover, the PLA navy has developed China's first aircraft carrier. In addition, the PLA air force

has a total strength of nearly 400.000 men. The PLA army, navy and air force maintain sound combat readiness and are capable of winning a war versus any opponent. These forces are also capable of protecting China's overseas interests. The Chinese navy has conducted massive escort operations in the Gulf of Aden, while the air force has conducted an escort mission evacuating 1.655 people out of this region.

The aforementioned points prove that China presumes that it possesses vast military capabilities, which enable the state to fight and win wars against neighboring states as well as major powers. Therefore, China beliefs that it is able to compete with and even beat the members of the higher-status group.

4.3.3 Competition with the higher-status group

This section is devoted to discussing all efforts made by China in terms of the strategy of social competition. Although China has not actually beat the members of the higher-status group in a war, there are plenty of efforts made by China. Firstly, China is preparing itself for competition. Secondly, China has an enduring rivalry over spheres of influence in the Asian-Pacific region. Moreover, China's competitive stance is reflected in the strategic tasks of its army and its turn to a more proactive military strategy. Furthermore, China is establishing its own military alliances and cooperation mechanisms to oppose the higher-status group. Lastly, China is performing military drills in order to demonstrate its military power. The aforementioned claims align with the indicators of the strategy of social competition. More importantly, these matters demonstrate that China is turning to a proactive, competitive military strategy, which aims at increasing China's influence in the Asian-Pacific region and improving China's status as a militarily powerful state. China thereby enhances its prospects in beating the members of the higher-status group in future wars. These claims will be substantiated below.

Although both white papers (IOSCPRC, 2013; ibid., 2015) and the policy document by the MFAPRC (2017) indicate a few times that China wishes to embark on a path of peaceful development, the documents also stress numerous times that China is willing to protect its interests by means of its military might. Moreover, it becomes evident when reading between the lines that China is preparing itself for competition with neighboring states, other major powers and the members of the higher-status group. The prefaces of both whitepapers (IOSCPRC, 2013; ibid., 2015) outline that China opposes hegemonism, and is building a strong military which is commensurate with China's international position in order to safeguard its sovereignty, national security goals and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This message is repeated throughout the documents, and demonstrates clearly that China is preparing itself for competition.

In the section on China's national security situation (IOSCPRC.; ibid., 2015), it is emphasized that China beliefs that there is a global trend towards a multipolar state system, which is manifested in the changing balance of power. In result, competition between states for the

redistribution of influence and power is intensifying. Moreover, both white papers proclaim that the US is rebalancing its strategic focus to the Asian-Pacific region due to the increasing significance of this region, resulting in enhancing its military presence in the region and strengthening its regional military alliances. In addition, Japan is also overhauling its military policy (IOSCPRC, 2015). Both observations cause grave concern to China and other regional powers according to the white paper. The white paper subsequently lists all of China's regional concerns such as China's sovereignty and maritime rights, the illegal occupation of reefs and islands by other states and the instability in the Korean Peninsula. The older white paper (ibid., 2013) goes even further by stating that one particular state has strengthened its alliances and military presence in the Asian-Pacific region, thereby raising regional tensions. This statement should be viewed as an implicit reference to the US, and the threat it poses to China's security and interests. This interpretation can be substantiated by the Obama Doctrine from 2011, which promotes the pivot to Asia in order to safeguard the economic interests of the US, and to respond to China's rising power (Hamzah, 2016, p.1; Lieberthal, 2011; Goldberg, 2016). Subsequently to the pivot to Asia, the US has strengthened its alliances in the region and increased its military presence. Moreover, the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2013) indicates that neighboring states are complicating the situation, and that Japan is creating trouble over the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. According to both white papers (ibid.; ibid., 2015), these matters show that China presumes that other states take provocative actions, desire to contain China's power and harm China's interests. China must meet these security concerns by applying more assertive military tactics and increasing its military might. In result, China has conducted maritime exercises and drills in the East China Sea to demonstrate its assertive strategy and military power.

The emphasis on China's competitive stance and its willingness to protect its interests by means of its military if necessary is reflected in the strategic tasks of China's armed forces. The key tasks of China's armed forces are as follows. First, safeguard the security and sovereignty of China's territorial land, sea and air (ibid.). Secondly, achieve the unification of the motherland (IOSCPRC, 2013). Thirdly, safeguard China's interests and security in new domains. Lastly, to specifically safeguard China's overseas interests. China's competitive military strategy is also reflected by the state's turn from an inherently defensive military strategy to a proactive strategy which is focused on deterring wars, preparation for military struggle (PMS), and winning local wars (ibid.; ibid., 2015). The key principles of this proactive strategy are as follows (IOSCPRC, 2015). First, strengthening PMS, deterrence and winning wars. Secondly, to safeguard China's territorial sovereignty, maritime rights, interests and stability along its periphery. Thirdly, concentrating superior forces and using all operational methods and means in an integrative manner. Fourthly, to adequately use the unique political advantages of China's armed forces. Fifthly, to give full play to the tremendous power of the concept of a people's war. Lastly, actively

expanding security and military cooperation with other states and establishing a regional framework for this cooperation.

The strategic tasks of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and new, proactive military strategy result in a redefined focus for China's military (ibid.). The PLA Army will reorient its focus on theater defense to trans-theater mobility (ibid.; ibid., 2013). In addition, the PLA Navy shifts its focus from offshore waters defense towards offshore waters defense and open seas protection (IOSCPRC, 2015). The traditional idea that land outweighs sea is abandoned by China, resulting in the paramount goal to attain the status of a maritime power. Moreover, the PLA Air Force will shift its focus from territorial air defense to defense as well as offense. Besides, the PLA Second Artillery Force endeavors to increase its military capabilities in nuclear counterattacks and strategic deterrence as well as its capabilities in carrying out medium- and long-range precision strikes. All these shifts in focus should increase China's prospects in winning future wars.

China also tries to increase its military might and prospects in beating the higher-status group through strengthening its military cooperation with states who are no members of the higher-status group, and establishing its own military alliances and cooperation mechanisms as counterparts to NATO (IOSCPRC, 2013; ibid., 2015). The main focus in the white papers (ibid.) lies on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to which China, Russia and several other states are a party (SCO, n.d.). The members have signed the Agreement on Border Defense Cooperation. Moreover, China promotes the deepening of security cooperation between these member states. According to experts, the SCO's purpose is to serve as a counterbalance to NATO, and should prevent the US from intervening in regions bordering China and Russia (Fels, 2009, pp. 23-27).

In addition, China wishes to intensify military exchanges and cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This desire is the general message conveyed by the policy document by the MFAPRC (2017) on Asia-Pacific security cooperation. Achieving this desire would result in stability in the Asia-Pacific region according to China. In order to build such a security framework, existing mechanisms should be improved. China for instance desires to deepen the defense cooperation by means of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus. In addition, China wishes to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and is, therefore, promoting cooperation in maritime security between China and the ASEAN members. China's enhanced focus on regional security cooperation should be interpreted as a way of increasing its regional influence, while simultaneously decreasing the influence of the US in the Asian-Pacific region where the US has a lot of allies. The aforementioned cooperative initiatives indicate that a rivalry over the regional sphere of influence between China and the US is taking place.

Moreover, China is not only strengthening its military alliance with the members of SCO, but has also conducted nine military exercises with them (IOSCPRC, 2013). In addition, China participated in the joint maritime exercises in 2007, 2009 and 2011 which were hosted by

Pakistan on the Arabian Sea. Besides, China and Russia held a maritime military drill in the Yellow Sea in 2012. Moreover, China's and Thailand's marine corps held two joint training exercises in 2010 and 2012. The PLA army participated in two joint anti-terrorism trainings with the Indian army, conducted a joint peacekeeping exercise with the Mongolian army, and held two military trainings with the Romanian army. Moreover, the PLA army also exercised once with the Turkish army, several times with their Indonesian and Pakistani counterparts as well as one time with the Colombian army, The PLA air force held several conducted several joint training sessions with the Belarusian army, one exercise with the Pakistani air force and one time with their Venezuelan counterparts. These drills should be interpreted as demonstrations of China's competitive strategy, a means to portray its military capabilities, and a way of showing to the world that it has created its own military alliances in order to beat the higher-status group in future wars.

4.3.4 Strategy of social competition

The first part of this section has established that China presumes that it will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group due to animosity between both parties. This is subsequently demonstrated by means of the statements in both whitepapers (IOSPRC, 2013; ibid., 2015) on the existing tensions, low amount of and negative tone of references to members of the higher-status group, high amount and friendly tone of remarks concerning states that are no members of this group, the strengthened military cooperation between China and theses states as well as China's efforts in establishing its own military alliances and cooperation mechanisms. Moreover, the last matter also shows that China perceives the identity of the higher-status group as favorable. China desires to obtain the identity of a militarily powerful state, and is, therefore, willing to beat the higher-status group in order to acquire more status.

The second part of this section has assessed that China perceives itself to exhibit sufficient military capabilities, which enable China to safeguard its interests and beat the higher-status group. This finding is substantiated firstly by means of China's perception that the PLA's capabilities ensure that China is able to win future wars (IOSCPRC, 2015). Moreover, the strategic tasks of the PLA, its newly defined, proactive military strategy, and its shifting focus will contribute to winning wars. Furthermore, the PLA has put plenty efforts in PMS, thereby enhancing its preparedness and ability to conduct warfare as well as win military battles. In addition, the white paper (ibid., 2013) lists the vast capabilities in numbers to substantiate that China is able to compete with the members of the higher-status group.

The third part of this section has discussed all efforts made by China in terms of the strategy of social competition. Firstly, China is preparing itself for competition. In addition, China has an enduring rivalry over spheres of influence in the Asian-Pacific region. Thirdly, China's competitive stance is demonstrated by the strategic tasks of the PLA, the PLA's shifting focus and newly defined proactive military strategy. Furthermore, China has establishes its own military

alliance, which is the SCO, and uses military cooperation with other states to compete with the higher-status group. Lastly, China is performing military drills to convey its impressive military power. These matters demonstrate that China is turning to a more proactive, competitive military strategy. China aims to increase its regional influence and improve its status through the identity of a militarily powerful state. China, thus, has put lots of effort into enhancing its prospects in beating the higher-status group, and seems determined to do so in the near future.

The example that has been discussed in this research's introductory chapter serves as a means to elegantly illustrate the previous findings. The construction of Chinese artificial islands in the South China Sea on which military facilities are built (Watkins, 2016; Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Larik, 2016; Glaser, 2012) shows that China lacks the desire to lower regional tensions and the animosity between China and the members of the higher-status group. This matter is substantiated even further by China's high military expenditures, which keep on rising rapidly (Perlo-Freezeman, Fleurant, Wezeman & Wezeman, 2015, pp. 1 & 3). The rising expenditures ensure that China exhibits vast military capabilities. Moreover, these expenditures show that China desires to acquire the identity of a militarily powerful state, and, thus, deems such an identity to be favorable. China's competitive stance and its perception that it exhibits vast military capabilities is reflected by President Xi, who has dared to neglect the verdict of the PCA (Perlez, 2016), which concerns the construction of Chinese artificial islands (PCA, 2016). Lastly, these islands soundly symbolize all efforts made by China to beat the higher-status group. These findings align with the strategy of social competition as well as this research's expectations concerning the revised conditions, which affect a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy. In result, this research concludes that China deploys the strategy of social competition in the case of its security policy, and that this research's sub-case is, thus, illustrative of this strategy.

4.4 China's humanitarian aid policy

This section will establish that China deploys the strategy of social creativity in the case of its humanitarian aid policy, resulting in the conclusion that the sub-case is illustrative of SIT as well as the confirmation of this research's expectations. The following empirical analysis will be primarily based on two Chinese white papers (IOSCPRC, 2011a; ibid., 2014) concerning China's foreign aid policy. A speech by President Xi as well as claims by external observers will be used as auxiliary evidence. The elaboration of the empirical analysis is divided into four sections. The first part will demonstrate that China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as that China is not willing to be accepted, but is willing to create a positively distinctive position in a new dimension. Hereafter, the second part will assess that China presumes to be able to deploy a policy, which enables China to define a positively distinctive position in the new dimension. The third part will discuss what China's policy actually does in

terms of the strategy of social creativity. Lastly, a concluding part will judge that China deploys the strategy of social creativity in the case of its humanitarian aid policy. This part, thus, shows that the sub-case is indeed illustrative of the strategy of social creativity.

4.4.1 Presuming to surely not be accepted and willing to be distinctive

This part will demonstrate that China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group and that China is not willing to be accepted as a member, but is willing to create a positively distinctive position. This part is based on the following propositions. China views itself as fairly distinctive from the higher-status group in the policy field of humanitarian aid. China, therefore, presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, since the higher-status group would only accept China as a member, whenever China's identity and policy would be comparable to the identity and policy of the higher-status group. China would, thus, only expect to be accepted as a member by the group if it would deploy the conventional humanitarian aid model, which is associated with the higher-status group. China, however, views the identity and policy of this group as unfavorable, resulting in its willingness to not be accepted as a member of the higher-status group. China is, thus, not willing to abandon its distinctive humanitarian aid policy, and embrace the conventional humanitarian aid model. Instead, China is willing to perpetuate its policy and establish an identity and policy, which China views as more favorable and positively distinctive. These claims will be substantiated below.

The white paper does not explicitly state that China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group. China, however, does explicitly stress by means of its white papers (ibid.) and the speech of President Xi (2015) that it deploys a unique, Chinese development model, which it perceives as distinctive from the humanitarian aid policy of other states. The white paper and speech both emphasize extensively all the distinctive characteristics of China's model, which are not incorporated in the humanitarian aid models of other states according to China. This should of course be interpreted as that China views its humanitarian aid policy as distinctive from that of others such as members of the higher-status group. In result, it is determined that China presumes that it will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group due to the differences between China's identity and policy and the identity and policy associated with the higher-status group. Moreover, the white paper and speech do not explicitly mention the conventional model, but do refer in a negative way to the features of the conventional model such as imposing political conditions. These negative references to features of the conventional model combined with the extensive list concerning the positive, distinctive features of China's humanitarian aid model, result in the assertion that China views the identity and policy of the higher-status group as unfavorable, whereas it perceives its distinctive identity and policy as favorable. Furthermore, the white paper and speech both express explicitly that China will shoulder the realization of the UN Millennium Development Goals by means of its distinctive

humanitarian aid model, and urge other states to adopt a similar model. These statements underscore that China is not willing to abandon its distinctive policy and embrace the conventional model. Instead, China is willing to perpetuate its policy, and to consolidate an identity and policy in the field of humanitarian aid, which China views as a positively distinctive position. In conclusion, China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as that China is not willing to be accepted as a member since it views the identity and policy of this group as less favorable, than its own distinctive identity and policy, and is, therefore, willing to create and propagate a positively distinctive position.

The previous proposition can be substantiated even further. The absence of references in the white paper (IOSCPRC, 2014) to the conventional model, members of the higher-status group or institutions that propagate the values of the higher status group, is an implicit indicator for China's willingness to not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group as well as its willingness to create a positively distinctive position. As has been demonstrated earlier, China's white paper on its foreign economic policy constantly refers to members of the higher-status group, their institutions and the values and regulations that are associated with the group. This should be interpreted as China's way of showing that China views the identity and policy of this group as favorable as well as demonstrating its willingness to join the group, thereby increasing its prospects in being accepted as a member. By refraining from such references in the case of its humanitarian aid policy, China shows that it views its own identity and policy as more favorable, and, thus, is not willing to be accepted as a member, but willing to define a positively distinctive position. Therefore, both white papers (ibid.; ibid., 2011a) concerning China's humanitarian aid policy emphasize in their preface China's focus on South-South cooperation (SSC), which is a humanitarian aid mechanism that is not used by the higher-status group. This Chinese focus on SSC is mentioned numerous times throughout both papers. Moreover, both papers outline that China has established its own institutions and cooperation mechanisms in order to provide aid to recipient states. The paramount emphasis on SSC and the institutions and cooperation mechanisms, which are established by China, will be demonstrated more extensively in the part concerning China's actual efforts in terms of the strategy of social creativity.

4.4.2 Humanitarian aid capabilities enable to be distinctive

The following part assesses that China perceives its humanitarian aid capabilities as fairly impressive, and, thus, presumes to be able to define a positively distinctive position. This will be demonstrated by outlining China's perceptions on its contributions and achievements in the field of foreign aid as well as the medals that recipient states have awarded to China for its efforts. In essence, the most recent white paper (IOSCPRC, 2014) is an enumeration of China's contributions and achievements through its distinctive humanitarian aid model from 2010 to 2012. The list is too long for a complete discussion. Therefore, only key points will be addressed below.

China has contributed 89.34 billion Chinese yuan (RMB) from 2010 to 2012 to foreign assistance (ibid.). This vast amount of money has been used to issue grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans. Moreover, during the period China has provided assistance to 121 states and several regional organizations such as the African Union. The provided assistance is composed of 580 complete projects, 424 batches of goods and materials, 171 technical cooperation projects, 1.951 training sessions for 49.148 citizens of developing states, 3.600 medical personnel that have treated almost seven million patients, 7.000 volunteers, RMB 1.5 billion worth of cash and materials assistance in emergency humanitarian aid and RMB 1.42 billion of grants due to relieving nine developing states of interest-free loans.

Subsequently, the white paper (ibid.) outlines the achievements of China's aid in promoting economic and social development. Firstly, China has assisted 49 agricultural projects, dispatched more than 1.000 agricultural experts, and trained almost 7.000 agricultural officials from recipient states. Secondly, China has tried to improve the level of education in recipient states through more than 80 educational facility projects, training more than 1.000 educational officials, and educating more than 75.000 African students via scholarships in China. Moreover, China assisted in 80 medical facility construction projects, dispatched 55 medical teams to work at 120 medical centers in recipient states, and decreased the incidence of malaria in the Comorian island of Moheli by ninety percent. Fourthly, China has undertook almost 30 water-supply and well-drilling projects, has built more than 600 wells, assisted in the construction of 86 public facilities, has assisted in 80 affordable housing projects, funded the construction of Gabon's national soccer stadium, and has constructed Senegal's Grand National Theatre. Furthermore, China has quickly responded to humanitarian crises by providing emergency relief materials and emergency food aid, respectively, with a total value of RMB 1.2 billion and RMB 440 million. In addition, China has helped building more than 150 economic infrastructure projects, and more than 70 transport projects. In accordance with the Chinese wisdom that one should be learned to fish instead of given a fish, China has held more than 1.500 seminars where almost 40.000 officials of recipient states were present. Lastly, China has offered zero tariff treatment to nearly 5.000 taxable categories, which are exported from the least developed states (LDCs) to China.

Besides substantiating China's capabilities and achievements in the field of foreign aid, the white paper (ibid.) also tries to convey that recipient states praise China for its contributions. It indicates for instance that from 2010 to 2012 more than 100 Chinese medical experts have been rewarded with medals by recipient states due to their outstanding achievements and contributions. Moreover, a Chinese volunteer in Liberia rescued a new-born, and was, therefore, awarded with the African Star medal according to the white paper. Noteworthy is that the white paper does not refer to the achievements or contributions of other states. The white paper

excludes this information, since including the achievements of others could reduce the convincingness of the argument that China has vast capabilities in the field of foreign aid.

The long list concerning the contributions and achievements that China has made by means of its distinctive humanitarian aid model demonstrates that China perceives its humanitarian aid capabilities as fairly impressive. Moreover, the statements concerning the medals are a means for China to convey the message that recipient states commend China for its efforts, and concur with China's perception. In conclusion, China, thus, perceives itself to exhibit impressive humanitarian aid capabilities that incorporate unique Chinese characteristics, thereby presuming to be able to deploy a policy, which enables China to define a positively distinctive position. This finding can also be established by means of the older white paper concerning China's humanitarian aid (ibid, 2011a). This is, however, not necessary, since the aforementioned points already serve as a strong substantiation.

4.4.3 Deploying and propagating a unique development model

This part is devoted to discussing all actual efforts made by China in terms of the strategy of social creativity. First, this part will demonstrate that China presumes to have defined and deployed an unique humanitarian aid model, thereby stressing China's superiority due to its contributions and values. Secondly, this perception will be confirmed by external observers. Both matters combined, thus, show that China has indeed established a distinctive position. Hereafter, will be asserted that China has established its own institutions and cooperation mechanisms in order to deploy its humanitarian aid model. Lastly, the part will address China's efforts in terms of propagating its distinctive model by urging other states to adopt a similar model, thereby stressing China's superiority in the field of humanitarian aid even further.

The first part concerning China's perceptions on the conditions acceptance and willingness already alluded to China's presumption that it has defined and deployed an unique humanitarian aid model. This will be demonstrated more extensively below in order to substantiate that China stresses its unique contributions and values by means of its humanitarian aid model. Although the key message that China's development model is distinctive, since it does not include political conditions can be derived from both white papers (ibid.; ibid., 2014), the older white paper will be used for this section due to its clarity and more elaborate demonstrations of the uniqueness of China's model. The older white paper (IOSCPRC, 2011a) starts by explicating in the preface that China wishes to provide aid without imposing political conditions on recipient states. In 1964, the Chinese government issued the Eight Principles for Economic Aid, which put emphasis on equality, no political conditions and mutual benefit. In result, China's humanitarian aid model exhibits distinctive, Chinese characteristics. The white paper states that this model is more suitable to China's conditions and the recipient states' needs. The conventional development model of the EU is not discussed although this model normally is the common point of reference.

Inherent to a claim of comparison such as that China's development model is more favorable is that this model is compared to the common point of reference. This claim, thus, implicitly refers to the development model of the EU. The presumption that China's model is distinctive is reiterated by stating that China's development model exhibits the distinct characteristics of the times, which align with Chinese characteristics, China's political conditions and the needs of states who receive aid. China's belief that aid should not include political conditions is repeated in the section on the basic features of China's foreign aid policy. This section of the white paper indicates that it upholds China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which stipulates firstly that China respects the right of recipient states to independently determine their path to development. Secondly, China presumes that states should define development paths, which are suitable to their conditions. Lastly, China never wishes to interfere in the internal affairs of recipient states. Again, the conventional model of the EU which includes political conditions, is not mentioned. It is, however, completely clear that China distinguishes its own humanitarian aid model from the EU's model. The concluding part of the white paper emphasizes the need to safeguard that recipient states determine their own path to development, thereby implicitly indicating that China beliefs that these goals should be achieved through China's development model, since this model urges recipient states to determine their own path. China, thus, stresses the uniqueness of its model and urges other states to deploy its model instead of the conventional model.

The aforementioned points show that China perceives its humanitarian aid model as distinctive from other models such as the conventional model of the EU. External observers concur with this perception of China, thereby endorsing that China has defined a positively distinctive position and, thus, has done a lot in terms of the strategy of social creativity. Jin (2010) indicates that the model of the EU is completely contradictory to the newly defined Chinese model. The EU deploys the conventional model, which is based on liberalist reasoning, and aims at promoting institution building and political governance. The EU uses its foreign aid as a one-way instrument in order to advance the recipient state's political governance. States only receive aid whenever they adhere to the imposed political conditions. China's aid policy on the other hand, does not entail political conditions and generally strives to achieve win-win cooperation, which means that the cooperation should be beneficial to both parties. The aim of this model is, therefore, not to pressure states to reshape their political governance, but only to achieve economic prosperity through convergences of interest. Contrarily to the EU, China does not cherish political governance (Yun, 2014), since it does not serve its economic interests. China's model is, thus, not based on values of the higher-status group. China is mainly interested in obtaining natural resources. Therefore, it uses its humanitarian aid model to ensure access to the recipient state's natural resources and local markets, and to create business opportunities for Chinese companies.

As mentioned before, China has founded its own institutions and cooperation mechanisms in order to deploy its distinctive humanitarian aid model. This proposition is established by means of the most recent white paper (IOSCPRC, 2014), which mentions extensively all of the institutions and cooperation mechanisms founded by China. According to the white paper, China has established the China Program for Assisting LDCs' Accession to the WTO, and subsequently held eighteen seminars to promote WTO accession among developing states. Secondly, to promote SSC China has signed a treaty concerning climate change with nine developing states, and subsequently donated more than half a million energy-efficient lamps to these states. In addition, the cooperation mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) have been strengthened according to the white paper. In result, China established fourteen agricultural demonstration centers in Africa, plans to build another eight centers, trained more than 5.000 agricultural technicians in African states, and promised at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the FOCAC that China will strengthen the cooperation with African states even further in the near future. Fourthly, China, Egypt and Liberia jointly operate hospitals in Liberia. Moreover, China has established several forums in order to cooperate with other developing states. Examples are the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking states, China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum, China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum, the SCO and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. These forums generate important aid agreements between China and recipient states. The third China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum has resulted in additional concessional loans, whereas the forum between China and Pacific island states has led to the Pacific Plan which boosts regional cooperation. In addition, the white paper stresses that China has donated 20 million US dollars to establish the Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund at the Asian Development Bank. Moreover, China has established the China-Africa University President Forum to discuss enhancing the cooperation between Chinese and African universities. Besides, China has held workshops for five consecutive years concerning SSC. Lastly, China has funded and launched the UNESCO's Funds-in-Trust for China-Africa Multilateral Education Cooperation in order to promote investments in basic education in Africa.

In addition, China has made another remarkable effort to deploy its distinctive humanitarian aid policy, which is worth mentioning. This effort is not brought up in the publication of the most recent white paper (ibid.), since the effort took place just after the publication of the white paper. SSC has been constrained by the lack of a bank facilitating the availability of sufficient capital, thereby resulting in the necessity to turn to the banks used by the higher-status group, namely the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This problem has been resolved by China through establishing two banks, which fully support and explicitly focus on SSC. Firstly, together with the other members of BRICS, China has established the New

Development Bank (Gokhberg & Kuznetsova, 2016, p. 344). Secondly, under the guidance of China the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has been founded (ibid.; Cao, 2016, p. 621).

Lastly, this paragraph will show that China actively propagates its distinctive humanitarian aid model, and also urges other states to deploy this model. During the UN Sustainable Development Summit, President Xi (2015) delivered a speech wherein he urged all other UN member states to denounce the conventional model, and to deploy China's humanitarian aid model instead. In his speech, Xi emphasized that China has realized the Millennium Development Goals by lifting 439 million people out of poverty. This path to development is paved by Chinese characteristics, which according to Xi have resulted in the enormous success of China's development strategy. China deems it necessary to include Chinese characteristics in its development model, since these values have proven to be successful. In addition, Xi emphasized that China will shoulder the effort to fulfil the UN's post-2015 development agenda by means of advocating, spreading and implementing China's humanitarian aid model. By underscoring the Chinese values in his speech, President XI has successfully conveyed China's distinctive position concerning humanitarian aid. President Xi has, thus, advocated new norms and values in the EU by means of China's development model, and stressed China's superiority due to its unique contributions and values in comparison to for instance the EU. In conclusion, China has put a lot of effort in propagating its distinctive model by urging other states to adopt China's model, thereby stressing China's superiority in the field of humanitarian aid even further. The previous part discussed China's efforts in terms of the strategy of social creativity. The subsequent part will judge that China deploys this strategy in the case of its humanitarian aid policy.

4.4.4 Strategy of social creativity

The first part of this section has established that China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group due to differences between China's identity and policy and the identity and policy that China associates with the higher-status group. China extensively stresses the characteristics of its humanitarian aid model that it deems to be positively distinctive, and refers in a negative way to the features of the model of the higher-status group. China thereby indicates that it views its own identity and policy as more favorable. In result, China is not willing to be accepted as a member by the group, because it would, therefore, need to abandon its own identity and policy. Instead, China desires to create and propagate a positively distinctive position.

The second part has assessed that China perceives itself to exhibit fairly impressive humanitarian aid capabilities, and, thus, presumes to be able to deploy a policy that enables China to define and propagate a positively distinctive position. This proposition is established by means of the list concerning China's contributions and achievements in the field of humanitarian aid, and China's remarks concerning awarded medals. The general message conveyed through this list

should be interpreted as that China's views its capabilities as huge, whereas the remarks on awarded medals show that recipient states concur with this perception.

The third part has discussed all efforts made by China in terms of the strategy of social creativity. Firstly, China presumes to have defined and deployed a distinctive humanitarian aid model. The application of this model stresses China's superiority in the field of humanitarian aid due to its unique contributions and values. Moreover, this perception is confirmed by external observers, who judge China's model as positively distinctive from the conventional model. Furthermore, it has been asserted that China has established plenty of institutions and cooperation mechanisms in order to deploy its humanitarian aid model. These institutions and mechanisms are not used by the higher-status group, and explicitly focus on the application of China's model. Lastly, it has been shown that China has put a lot of effort in propagating its model.

The speech of President Xi (ibid.) has already been discussed in this research's introductory chapter, and serves as a striking example, which recapitulates the previous findings in a sound manner. The speech demonstrates that China differentiates its identity and policy from that of the higher-status group, and, thus, presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member. Secondly, the speech shows that China views its identity and policy as more favorable, than that of the higher-status group, thereby substantiating that China is not willing to become a member of the group, but is willing to create and propagate a positively distinctive position. Furthermore, the speech stresses China's superior contributions and values in the field of humanitarian aid as well as that China perceives its capabilities in this field as better, than that of other states. Moreover, the interpretation of the speech is that China actively propagates the successful model by urging other states to adopt the model. These findings align with the strategy of social creativity as well as this research's expectations concerning the revised conditions, which affect a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy. In result, this research concludes that China indeed deploys the strategy of social creativity in the case of its humanitarian aid policy, and that this research's sub-case is, thus, illustrative of this strategy.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The last chapter will firstly provide a discussion on the results of the theoretical and empirical work in this research. Hereafter a reflection on the theory and methodology will be presented. Thirdly, the limitations of this research will be discussed. Furthermore, recommendations for future research will be provided. Lastly, this research's societal implications will be addressed.

5.1 Discussion

This research's introduction set out by demonstrating that neorealism and neoliberalism are unable to provide a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy due to the diverging directions of China's foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. This research, however, argues that China's foreign policy does adhere to a grand strategy. When understood from within through an insiders perspective, it becomes evident that each component is part of China's comprehensive strategy to reposition itself in international society.

Subsequently, this research has turned to the English School, which serves as a convincing alternative school of thought, and sharply differentiates itself from the positivist, dominant approaches in IR. The English School conceptualizes states as groups by stressing the existence of an international society (Bull, 1995, p. 13; Dunne, 2016, p. 114), resulting in the proposition that group thinking affects the behavior of states. The English School, thus, addresses the motives, which spark comparison among states and the social influence of groups. This research has subsequently turned to SIT.

SIT delivers insights into the role of a state's concerns for its relative status in international society, and how these concerns through certain conditions affect the state's choice to deploy a strategy (Welch Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, p. 66). SIT presumes that a state deploys different strategies to improve its status relative to higher status groups, whenever the state perceives its in-group identity and status as unsatisfactory. States can deploy three different strategies to increase their status, namely social mobility, social competition and social creativity.

After convincingly and exhaustively debunking neorealism and neoliberalism, this research stipulated SIT's basic assumptions concerning the three strategies. Furthermore, this research has revealed two major criticisms concerning Welch Larson and Shevchenko's application of SIT. First, this research argues that states can deploy several strategies simultaneously instead of one at a time. This research has, therefore, envisaged to demonstrate by means of an illustrative case study of SIT that China deploys the strategy of social mobility, social competition and social creativity respectively in the case of its foreign economic policy, security policy and humanitarian aid policy. Secondly, this research argues that SIT is used in an unsound manner by Welch Larson and Shevchenko. Both authors have defined and analyzed the

conditions that affect a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy by means of a positivist approach as well as an outsiders perspective. This research has revised the conditions in order to align them with the English School's interpretive approach, and SIT's paramount aim to establish a state's perceptions through an internal perspective. This revision has resulted in the formulation of three conditions, namely acceptation, willingness and ability.

This research's empirical analysis has demonstrated that China acts in accordance with the notion of the international society, explicitly compares itself vis-à-vis other states, extensively reflects upon its position in international society, and desires to increase its status. It has, thus, been proven that the expectations of the English School apply to China. Subsequently, this research has turned to SIT to provide a comprehensive account of China's foreign policy. The analysis of China's foreign economic policy has demonstrated that the sub-case is illustrative of the strategy of social mobility. Moreover, it is confirmed that China presumes to be accepted as a member, is willing to join the higher-status group and perceives itself to be able to join. The second empirical analysis, which focused on China's security policy, has asserted that the sub-case is illustrative of the strategy of social competition. Furthermore, it is judged that China presumes that it will not be accepted as a member, is willing to beat the higher-status group, and perceives itself to be able to beat. The third empirical analysis, which focused on China's humanitarian aid policy, has demonstrated that the sub-case is illustrative of the strategy of social creativity. Besides, it has been shown that China presumes that it surely will not be accepted as a member by the higher-status group, is willing to create and propagate a distinctive position, and perceives itself to be able to do so. In conclusion, China's foreign policy components are illustrative of SIT, and this research's expectations have been confirmed.

This research's academic relevance is rather vast due to the following matters. This study has provided a coherent and differentiated account of China's foreign policy by means of the English School and SIT. Furthermore, it has solved the theoretical puzzle by answering both research questions. In addition, this research established that states can deploy several strategies simultaneously. More importantly, this study has successfully revised the conditions affecting a state's choice to deploy a certain strategy. Overall, it has provided a profound understanding of China's foreign policy and the motives behind its policy choices.

5.2 Reflection

The English School's emphasis concerning the influence of group thinking on the behavior of states as well as SIT's explicit focus on establishing the perceptions of the state through an insiders perspective have enabled this research to place itself in the position of Chinese policymakers. This research's key proposition reads that whenever a state or its policy is understood from within its own reality and perspective, it becomes clear to outsiders that an individual or state has acted in

accordance with its reality, characteristics and motives all along. This study has demonstrated that perceptions, worldviews and contexts can differ immensely among states. In a similar vein as Bull (2000), this research advices scholars and policymakers to put themselves in the position of their subject, and to place their own prejudices, assumptions and knowledge under scrutiny. At the moment, authors of plenty of scholarly writings and policy briefs neglect to ponder on the constraining influence of the tenets that construct their judgement from the onset, which sometimes leads to their inability to reckon with the subject's reality. Therefore, theoretical explanations or policy recommendations occasionally deviate from reality, resulting in the unsubstantiated claim that the subject acts in an irrational manner. The previous chapters have, sufficiently, demonstrated that such conclusions are plainly wrong, and would not be proposed if the researcher would inform himself or herself on the perceptions, worldview, and context of the subject. However, also this study cannot escape criticism. Although it has aimed to establish China's perceptions through a comprehensive interpretive method by means of the application of the concept of the hermeneutic circle, and a focus on author intentionalism and context, it could fall under attack from the postcolonial perspective. Is this research able to understand China's reality? To what extent is this research constrained by its almost inescapable, implicit Western bias? According to the proponents of postcolonialism such as Spivak (1994), the answers to these questions should be that this research, despite of all the efforts it has undertook to reduce the influence of preconceived ideas, would never be able to speak in behalf of the rising subaltern. This research argues that it has conducted a fairly impressive analysis. However, to repel the criticism of postcolonialism it should be proposed that the subaltern would conduct a similar study in order to substantiate this research's findings even further.

In addition, the previously mentioned criticisms concerning the positivist approach and its tenets demonstrate that the interpretive approach is the most appropriate way of conducting research in relation to this research's goal and subject of interest. The consequence of deploying an interpretive approach is, however, that due to the relativist ontology and subjectivist ontology this research's findings cannot be readily translated to other cases or generalized in order to define universal laws. According to proponents of positivism, this would be problematic. In line with proponents of interpretivism such as Yanow (2003, p.11), this research argues that it is not problematic at all, since this research is primarily interested in context, which of course is never universal. Applying a positivist methodology and, thus, not focusing on context would be plainly wrong, since this would surpass the actual goal of this research.

However, the aforementioned matters should not result in the conclusion that the positivist approach does not have any potential. A hardcore proponent of the interpretive approach would probably denounce all the matters that positivist-qualitative and positivist-quantitative research have to offer. Contrarily, this research argues that each approach exhibits

certain advantages and disadvantages. Positivist research is for instance inherently well-structured due to the predetermined laws and rules that need to be followed. Moreover, positivist evaluative criteria such as validity and reliability are more objective and less ambiguous criteria for establishing the value of a research, than their interpretive counterparts that remain in some sense less conclusive. However, this is refuted by some, who debate the conclusiveness of positivist research. Furthermore, positivist research is far more able to process data on a huge amount of cases and variables due to the absence of a focus on context. This merit results, however, in the disadvantage that positivist research would not be able to provide an in-depth understanding of China's foreign policy nor access different aspects of reality.

This research argues that the conduct of research should be guided by the most paramount factors affecting the social behavior of humans instead of an a priori commitment. However, this does not mean that positivist research holds no value at all. Proponents of both approaches have a similar goal, namely improving our knowledge of social phenomena. Whether both approaches can be reconciled remains to be determined. For now, this research argues in line with Yanow (2003) that applying positivism and interpretivism in one research design is currently impossible. However, interpretive research could be substantiated further by means of subsequent positivist research, and vice-versa. Both approaches shed light on our world from their own side of the coin, and are in result of their strength and weaknesses valuable in their own manner.

5.3 Limitations

This research has used reading documents as the method of data enquiry. It has been convincingly argued that the documents that are most relevant to this research's goal have been analyzed. Moreover, the method of interpretation applied in this research is extensively addressed. This research has put a lot of effort in applying the most appropriate method of interpretation as well as being as thick as possible in order to convey its trustworthiness. This research does not presume to offer the only possible interpretation. In result of this matter, its findings could be deemed inconclusive by other scholars. However, if this would be the case, then an appropriate conclusion would be that this research has touched upon China's foreign policy, which is not comprehensively investigated in earlier research, thereby paving the way for future research.

In addition, a significant limitation to this study is that the method of reading documents is incapable of establishing first hand data. In order to obtain such data it would be necessary to participate and observe or conduct expert interviews. Participation in the process of Chinese policy making is practically impossible, since the Chinese government does not allow Western researchers to be involved in these processes. This matter could be resolved by a study conducted by a Chinese researcher. Moreover, observation is infeasible for this research, since discussions on how to draft policy are strictly confidential. Furthermore, this research aspired to conduct

expert interviews, and has, therefore, sent numerous interview invitations and follow-up letters. Unfortunately however, no officials or representatives of the Chinese government have agreed to grant an interview. Data enquiry through conducting interviews has, thus, been deemed infeasible. This matter could be resolved by a researcher who is well-known or has the right contacts. Although the aforementioned methods of data enquire have not been employed, this research has envisage to apply a thorough and well-substantiated method of data enquiry.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

As has been mentioned before, findings derived from interpretive research cannot be readily translated into general laws due to the tenets of interpretive research. Moreover, interpretive research, or even research in general, is unable to provide the absolute truth. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to conduct further research concerning SIT's account of a state's status concerns, foreign policy strategies and factors which affect policy choices. This research's findings provide a powerful insight in how states determine their foreign policy, and could be used as a starting point for further research.

In addition, this research has, unfortunately, not been able to conduct expert interviews nor participate and observe in the process of Chinese policy making. Although China's white papers are deemed extremely relevant to analyze China's foreign policy components and the underlying motives, it would be wise to conduct future research, which includes data enquiry by means of interviews and participation and observation.

Furthermore, this research is unable to completely escape the subjection to the researcher's preconceived beliefs. As mentioned before, despite of this research's tremendous efforts to exclude certain biases from the process of interpretation, there could remain criticism concerning speaking on behalf of the subaltern. It would, thus, be wise if Chinese scholars would conduct a similar study in order to substantiate this research's findings even further.

Lastly, another avenue for future research should be proposed. This research is built upon the belief that different academic fields could and, more importantly, should enrich each other's propositions and understanding of the world. Therefore, SIT that originates from the field of psychology has been used to shed a refreshing light on IR. This study has revised the conditions, which affect the state's choice to deploy a certain strategy, and subsequently analyzed each sub-case by focusing on China's perceptions concerning its acceptation, willingness and ability. Psychology could, however, teach the field of IR plenty more. Social behavior is not entirely driven from within, since it is also affected by the outside world (Gleitman, Gross & Reisberg, 2011, pp. 519-527). Behavior could be influenced through three types of social influences resulting from pressure by other individuals or groups, namely conformity, obedience and compliance. The effect of each of these social influences is determined through sub-factors. The level of conformity with

members of a group in result of social pressure depends greatly on the presence of shared views and interpersonal bonds (Moghaddam, 1988) as well as whether the individual is situated in an individualistic or collectivist culture (Bond & Smith, 1996). Furthermore, individuals who exhibit an authoritarian personality or are situated in an authoritarian culture are more obedient to instructions or commands from other individuals (Adorno et al., 1950). Lastly, individuals comply more easily to an explicit request, whenever they feel obliged due to the norm of reciprocity (Cialdini, 1993; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini et al., 1975). Based on the aforementioned, it would be wise if future studies would conduct research into the effect of these social influences on the behavior of states. This would result in a more all-encompassing overview of all of the internal perceptions and outside influences that affect a state's choice to deploy a certain policy.

5.5 Societal implications

The academic relevance of this research is already exhaustively discussed. Besides, academic studies also manifest societal implications that are equally important. Research conducted and discussed in the ivory-tower of science does not hold any true value until it is stressed out how its findings play out in the daily life of mankind.

This research has offered a coherent and differentiated account of China's foreign policy. This account will contribute to the broader public debate concerning China's foreign policy, which civil society until now deems to be ambivalent. A more profound understanding of Chinese foreign policy will improve the way in which citizens, NGOs and other governments address China. Currently, NGOs repeatedly unleash harsh criticism on China's policy concerning humanitarian rights. Moreover, the US applies a carrots and sticks approach to reprimand states and persuade them to act in accordance with the beliefs held by the US. This study has revealed that constantly expressing criticism could backfire. China does not intend to reformulate its humanitarian aid model after endless calls for improvement. Instead, China has become even more determined to continue on its own path, and desires to deploy a policy based on the values it holds dear.

This research has demonstrated that the perceptions of states such as China concerning its identity, policy and ability are fairly important. Matters as whether a state is accepted by others only come into play whenever the state takes their view into account due to convergences in terms of identity. Moreover, the latter recommendations for future research shows that social influence from the outside world is greatly dependent on factors that are related to the internal characteristics of the state itself. It would be wise for NGOs and governments to consider how to address a state. This approach needs to be differentiated, context-specific and conform to the identity, values and characteristics of the state at which the approach is aimed. NGOs and policymakers need to ponder on these matters, which hopefully results in more profoundly substantiated and more fruitful approaches that fully take into account the reality of the recipient.

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