



Factors determining the states' level of strategic activity

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ABSTRACT

This article is focused on the behaviours of states and what are the driving influences behind their actions. Analysing the concept of a power idea dichotomy in shaping a global agenda that forces strategic behaviours to rise above constructivism, liberalism, and realism models of international relations. It uses China as the perfect backdrop from which to shape this argument around a new global order that is fast evolving with the ever present threat of cold-war resurrection.

KEYWORDS: Constructivism, liberalism, and realism , hegemony, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

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Introduction. In this paper, an attempt is to answer a fundamental question regarding the strategic behaviours of nations. Specifically, as to whether power or ideas are more influential in the decision-making process. The building of a grand plan with the goals of securing access to resources, creating a market for goods, and achieving general security, which may include regional hegemony, is an example of strategic behaviours. This is a wide definition of strategic behaviours (Sloan, 2010, p. 5). It is argued that power is the primary determinant in the strategic behaviours of states, and that this assertion is supported by the theory of offensive realism, which serves as the framework for the discussion that follows. A brief overview of the scholarly literature on the various theories of international politics is analysed. It then uses a case study of China to demonstrate that offensive realism is the best theory to demonstrate how power is the primary factor in strategic behaviours, at least in the case of China.

Conceptual basis. When it comes to international politics, there are a lot of different theories that try to explain the strategic behaviours of different states. Constructivism, liberalism, and realism are the three that appear to be present in the body of published work the most frequently. It is a widely held belief within the constructivist school of thought that the behaviour of states can be influenced by non-material elements such as norms, identities, and ideas (Lantis, 2014: 166).

In general, liberalism emphasizes a firm conviction in international cooperation, which may also be accomplished through applicable institutions; yet it does not place an explicit emphasis on the connection between domestic and international affairs. Both constructivism and liberalism have emerged as the preeminent ideas in more contemporary writing to explain the strategic behaviours of certain nations (Iverson, 2002, p. 4). They believe that this is the case due to the fact that ideational elements are more important than systemic factors (Iverson, 2002, pp. 4-5). In Asia-Pacific research, publications that advocate for the use of these theories generally contend that countries, such as China, are able to increase their territorial expansion because other countries deem them to be 'peaceful rising powers' (i.e., from the constructivist perspective) or that they prefer a stable environment for economic prosperity (i.e., from the liberalist perspective). These arguments have value, and publications that advocate for the use of these theories in Asia-Pacific research generally argue that countries, such as China, are (Lantis, 2014, p. 167). Realist theory, and more specifically offensive realist theory, is the one that best describes the strategic behaviours of some states, such as China, despite the fact that these other theories do have some merit.

The concept of offensive realism was first proposed by John Mearsheimer as a reaction to the concept of defensive realism. Offensive realism contends that the international system is primarily to blame for the rise in the number of aggressive state behaviours that can be found within the realm of international politics. Realism is a school of thinking that belongs to the neorealist school of thought. It is distinct from constructivism and liberalism in that it places an emphasis on the structural effect that material power has on the behaviour of states (Snyder, 2002, p. 151).

Offensive realism can be broken down into five primary principles. These are the following:

1. There is always a degree of uncertainty regarding what other states will do.
2. Survival is the primary goal of all states.

3. States are rational actors, which means that they will make decisions to maximize their chances of survival.
4. The international system is anarchical, and the great powers comprise the main actors in world politics.
5. Offensive military capability exists in all states, to some extent.
6. There is always a degree of uncertainty regarding what other states will do.
7. There is always a degree of uncertainty regarding what other states will do (Mearsheimer, 2007).

Although it is generally accepted that there is a connection between offensive and defensive realism, an examination of the specific case of China (see below) demonstrates that offensive realism is the superior choice. This is because offensive realism places an emphasis on the growth of power that is necessary for a state to ensure its citizens' safety. Because it emphasizes the risk that exists as a result of state efforts to preserve the maximum possible level of safety, offensive realism adopts a perspective that is somewhat pessimistic with regard to the status of world affairs. This battle between states to maintain security has the potential to escalate to conflict and war, which suggests that strategic behaviour originates from the requirement for security.

Case Study. The constructivist and liberalist theories both give traditional explanations of state behaviour; nevertheless, neither theory provides the most convincing explanation about China's strategic behaviour. When analyzing China's strategic behaviour, it is vital to take into account the country's hegemonic position in the region. Over the course of the last few decades, China has significantly increased the amount of money it spends on its military, and this is consistent with the realist view that China is seeking relative power (Noguchi, 2011, p. 63). What is essential to keep in mind in this situation, in terms of offensive realism, is the possibility that China may not always prioritize military force over economic power. This is a characteristic of offensive realism, and it is crucial to keep this in mind. This demonstrates that while this essay argues that offensive realism is the most appropriate explanation for this case, it does not suggest that China exclusively fits within the 'box' of offensive realism. This is demonstrated by the fact that while this essay argues that offensive realism is the most appropriate explanation for this case, it does not suggest that offensive realism. Instead, the presumption is that countries like China may convert their riches into military strength in situations where other countries are unable to match such a move. This is the case when other nations are unable to match such a move. On the basis of this, China would have a tremendous incentive to increase their military expenditure and sacrifice part of their economic wealth if it became necessary to do so.

Yet constructivists and liberals agree that China does not satisfy this condition since the country places a higher priority on spending money on the military than it does on addressing economic problems. Although China has a sizable military, the majority of it is stationed inside the country's borders, and since the conclusion of the Cold War, China has not carried out any major military operations against the countries that are located in its immediate neighbourhood. In addition, China has not strengthened its military defences in preparation for the possibility of a nuclear buildup. Constructivists contend that if

the realism theory were applied to China, there would not be as large of a gap between the nuclear military capability of the United States and that of China. This would be the case if the realist theory were applied to China. Finally, constructivists and liberalists believe that when China does battle militarily with other nations, China takes steps to avoid an escalation of the conflict. This argument is supported by the fact that China has a history of doing so (Noguchi, 2011, p. 65). Scholars say that realism cannot be used to describe the case study of China, particularly with regard to China's military strategy, due to the aforementioned factors. It is imperative to take into consideration the five tenets of realism and to portray them in a way that applies specifically to China in order to demonstrate that realism is actually the theory that is best able to explain the strategic behaviour of China. This is necessary in order to show that realism is actually the theory that is best able to explain the strategic behaviour of China.

When taken together, the first and second tenets of offensive realism are able to provide an adequate explanation for the strategic behaviour of a country (Shiping, 2015). This combination can be characterized in a general sense as the manner that states will design a grand strategy in an effort to establish regional hegemony by increasing the amount of resources that are allocated to the military. Hegemony in a region is generally understood to refer to the political, economic, or military influence exerted by one independently powerful state on states in its immediate vicinity. Recent upheavals in Hong Kong have made it possible for realists to refer to specific states and explain how regional hegemony already exists. Constructivists and liberalists both argue that China has not built regional hegemony, or that China's attempts to do so have been fruitless. Chris Horton cites Cambodia as an example of a neighbouring country that is subject to China's influence in a recent news item. Horton uses Cambodia as an example. Because of China's extensive involvement in Cambodia, the country is now almost entirely dependent on China for its survival. This dependence gives China complete control over Cambodia in a number of contexts, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in which Cambodia effectively casts a vote in China's stead at ASEAN meetings (Horton, 2019).

This hegemony would be contested by China on the basis that the country's constitution prohibits hegemonism (known in Chinese as *baquanzhuyi*) (Noguchi, 2011). And if one were to completely think that the words in the Chinese constitution are accurate representations of reality, then constructivists and liberalists alike would be able to argue their claims as arguments against realism. However, what is more plausible is that strategic behaviour extends further than what is claimed to be law or what is reflected in language. In actuality, China has taken steps to solidify their regional hegemony, as demonstrated by the statement made in 2008 by a senior Chinese admiral who, in an effort to rid the Western Pacific of the influence of the United States, told the US Pacific Commander T. J. Keating that the United States could have the eastern part of the Pacific and China would have the western part of the Pacific. This statement demonstrates that China has taken steps to solidify their regional hegemony. This is just one example out of many that indicates China's intention to establish regional hegemony among its surrounding neighbours, and it is just one example among many.

It was necessary for China to strengthen its armed forces before they could put this Chinese admiral's ideas into effect, therefore China has been working to do just that. In the years following the end of the Cold War, China has prioritized the growth of its armed forces by allocating a greater portion of their national budget toward this sector than they have to any other aspect of public welfare. When

looking at China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it has been observed that the growth rate of military spending is receiving a rising percentage of the GDP, despite the fact that China has not been facing any obvious external threats from other countries (Nabarun, 2013). The fact that China spends so much money on its military lends credence to the reasons offered by academics who advocate for offensive realism. This is due to the fact that, according to the precepts of realism, governments are always uncertain about what actions will be taken by other states and will continue to be dissatisfied until they acquire regional hegemony. In the case of China, this is an illustration of how they are clearly indicating that they place a higher priority on military might than economic power. By making this expenditure, China is proving that they are in a position of relative dominance, which, when viewed through the lens of offensive realism, is seen as positive.

China's expenditures on its military during the past two decades have been significantly higher than those of any other state immediately adjacent to China. According to liberalist theory, it is difficult to explain this fact because liberalists would argue that China wants the international environment to be peaceful in order to facilitate foreign trade and the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a means to sustain economic growth. However, this is not the case. If this were the case, it would imply that China has prioritized the expansion of its economic wealth over the upgrading of their armed forces. This is due to the fact that foreign countries are typically discouraged from making financial investments in countries that have large militaries (Toft, 2005). In spite of this, China has shown that it is willing to resort to the use of force even when there is a possibility that this may have a negative effect on their economic interests. This has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt by China on multiple occasions, initially with Taiwan and most recently with Hong Kong. China began conducting military drills against Taiwan in 1996 as part of the Taiwan Strait Crisis. This was done in an effort to prevent Tunghui Lee from being elected president (Noguchi, 2011, p. 79). In Hong Kong, the disproportionate military build-up in Hong Kong reveals that China's primary aim is not necessarily economic progress. This shows that China does not always have Hong Kong's best interests at heart. This is a clear indicator that the liberalist ideology that has been applied to China is not one that is actually suitable to the setting of China. This is a clear sign that the liberalist ideology that has been applied to China is not. In contrast, these outcomes generally align with the tenets of realism, and because power is at the forefront of this decision-making process, it reaffirms the notion that realism is the preferred explanation for China's strategic behaviour in the case of China's military spending. This is because power is at the forefront of this decision-making process. Case in point: China's military spending (Li, 2008).

The expansion of China's military budget is frequently defended by liberals on the grounds that it is related to domestic politics in China. According to these liberalists, China was domestically developing tax reform systems that allowed for a bigger expenditure in the military, implying that one justified the other. However, this assertion is not supported by the facts. In point of fact, increases in spending on the military had been on the rise for several years previous to any kind of adjustment being made to the tax system. Instead, China has prioritized the upkeep of strict civilian control and political stability, as was most recently displayed in Hong Kong. China has decided to pursue a policy aimed at establishing a more even distribution of power on the home front. Typically, this entails striking a balance between civilian and military leaders within the greater framework of the nation as a whole. Power, not ideas, is

what is driving China's strategic behaviour, which is why it is essential to acknowledge that despite the fact that domestic politics are also being considered in addition to those on the international level, it is power that is deciding China's strategic behaviour. In addition, this kind of behaviour gives the impression that liberalist ideologies are not the ones that should be used to describe China's strategic behaviour; rather, aggressive realist ideologies appear to be the ones that most appropriately explain the situation.

Conclusion. In this article, the subject of whether the foundation of a nation's strategic dominance is power or ideas was examined from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. It was determined that power was the most influential factor in the decision-making process of states based on the information that was presented, which examined the case of China, and more specifically its military spending, through the lens of offensive realism. In order to reach this conclusion, aspects of constructivism as well as liberalism were taken into consideration. However, as the question asked for only one theory to be chosen, it was explained that neither constructivism nor liberalism provided sufficient factual evidence to apply to the Chinese setting. On the other hand, using the five tenets of realism, China's decision-making strategies and its use of force in both Taiwan and Hong Kong provided key evidence to demonstrate that offensive realism was an applicable theory in this particular case. This evidence demonstrated that offensive realism was an applicable theory. Although it is generally accepted that China provides a clear illustration of how power is the key determinant in the strategic behaviour of states, it is possible that this is not always the case, especially in other circumstances where the examples may not be as plain and dry. When attempting to apply theory broadly to the subject of strategic behaviour, it is essential to take into consideration case studies that provide specific and helpful examples to represent the likely outcome. This is due to the fact that this is the reason why it is important to consider case studies.

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