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Master thesis

**Why Does China Want to Build A New Type of Major Power
Relations With the EU Against the Background of the EU's
Identification to China as A Systemic Rival?**

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Abstract

In 2019, the EU published a report on China that defined China as a systemic rival. The systemic rival illustrates that the EU will increase its competition with China. While China still intends to cooperate with the EU and wants to build a new type of major power relations with it according to the China policy paper on the EU. Therefore, the research question is why does China want to build a new type of major power relations with the EU against the background of the EU's identification of China as a systemic rival? For answering the question, the thesis will use the main standpoints of the neorealism theory, such as the national interests, the security dilemma, and the balance of power, and the viewpoints of social constructivism theory, like identity, and sociological structure and security community, to explain it. Therefore, the quantitative data will be collected to verify the neorealism theory and the qualitative data will be used to define China's identity. Also, the qualitative content analysis will be applied to this thesis. In conclusion, building a new type of power relations with the EU is not only determined by China's national identity, but also because a united, stable, and prosperous EU is in China's interests more than a fragile and divided one.

Key Words: China-EU Relations, Systemic Rival, Neorealism, Social Constructivism

List of Abbreviation:

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CoC	the Code of Conduct or the South China Sea
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAI	China-EU comprehensive Agreement on Investment
NRSCC	the National Remote Sensing Center of China
MOST	the Ministry of Science and Technology of China
ESA	European Space Agency
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
HSR	China's High-Speed Rail
ETCS	the European Train Control System
CRRC	the China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation

Table of Content

Abstract	2
List of Abbreviation:	3
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Background Introduction	5
1.2 Problem Formulation	9
1.3 Research Question	10
1.4 Aim of the Research	10
2. Methodology	10
2.1 Choice of Theory	11
2.1.1 Neorealism	11
2.1.2 Social Constructivism	12
2.2 Choice of Data	14
2.3 Qualitative Content Analysis	15
2.4 Limitations	16
2.5 Research Design	17
3. Theoretical Framework	17
3.1 Neorealism	18
3.1.1 National interests	19
3.1.2 Balance of Power	20
3.1.3 Security Dilemma	20
3.2 Social Constructivism	21
3.2.1 Sociological Structure	22
3.2.2 Interaction Between Actors and Structure	23
3.2.3 Identity, Interests and Behaviors	24
3.3 Theoretical Application	25
4. Analysis	28
4.1 China's National Interests and Identity	28
4.1.1 China's National Interests	28
4.1.2 China's Identity	32
4.2 Security Dilemma and Security Community	35
4.2.1 The Threat Level of the EU in the Eyes of China	36
4.2.2 The Common Knowledge Between China and the EU	39
4.3 The China-EU Relations and BRI	42
4.3.1 The Belt and Road Initiative	42
4.3.2 The Balance of Power and BRI	43
4.3.3 China Shapes International Structure and BRI	47
5. Conclusion	50
References	53

1. Introduction

In this chapter, a concisely background introduction to the EU's policy definition towards China and China's policy to the EU will be presented at first, which will further show how this situation raises the research question. Then it will present the aim of the research.

1.1 Background Introduction

Under the Guidelines of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, China's diplomacy has got great achievements, advance major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics to fulfill the mission of realizing national rejuvenation has become one of the Ten Insist on. Over years of enrichment, the new type of international relations has profound meanings, which includes major power relations, neighboring diplomacy, developing countries diplomacy and multilateral diplomacy. In the framework of major power relations, it contains three main aspects which are China-US relations, China-Russia relations, and China-EU relations. While the China-EU relations comprise of bilateral relations between China and the European Union, and the multilateral relations between China and the EU member state. China-EU pragmatic cooperation shows great potential, what is important is to keep to the overall direction of the comprehensive strategic partnership, properly manage differences and uphold the principle of win-win cooperation, as the President Xi said on the phone call with the Spanish Prime Minister Sanchez in 2021. However, the structure of international system is going through a great change, the EU adjust its global strategy that toward an independent and autonomy strategy. Most importantly, the EU define China as a systemic rival in promoting alternative models of governance¹.

The EU's identification to China has gone through an obviously change. In 2013, the EU's report "Towards a more competitive and efficient defence and security sector" mainly focus on enhancing EU's defence ability since the US's strategic focus

¹ European Commission. *EU-China: A Strategic Outlook*. 2019.

is moving to Asia and the report didn't mention China too many times². While with the deepen and broaden of the European integration, and the rising of China, the EU gradually attach importance to the relations with China. The EU's report named "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy" in 2016 not only does it expand the meaning of EU strategic autonomy to different area, such as economic, technology, energy, etc, but also declared that the EU will develop the relations with China based on the law, and stressed on the EU seeks to deepen trade and investment with China³. The report pointed out that the EU will protect global marine security, the South China Sea is also on the list. Though the EU have some issues with China in terms of trade, human right and marine security, there is no doubt China play a significant role globally, building a stable and sustainable relationship with China could promote the EU exert its influence internationally⁴. The EU still want to engage China and wish China could be a partner. From the report "Elements for a new EU strategy on China" released by the EU in 2016, the EU defines China as "a comprehensive strategic partner" and intend to cooperate with China on the problem of environment, economic and international aid, etc⁵. It reflects that the EU take China as a cooperator more than a competitor and cooperate with China becomes a part of the EU strategic autonomy during that time. Nevertheless, as the changing situation of international relations, such as the Trump administration went to the White House that deteriorate mutual trust between the EU and the US, or the Brexit decreased global influence of the EU which urges the EU become more independent in international platform, the relationship between the EU and China gradually towards to the cliff when "EU-China: A strategic outlook" first published in 2019. The EU defines China as "an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance"⁶. It uses "strategic competitor" instead of "strategic partner", which shows the EU increasingly

² European Commission. *Towards a More Competitive and Efficient Defence and Security Sector*. 2013.

³ European Commission. *A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*. 2016.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ European Commission. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for a New Eu Strategy on China*. 2016.

⁶ European Commission. *EU-China: A Strategic Outlook*. 2019.

concern about China and the inclination for the EU to compete with China. But still, the EU also use “a cooperation partner” to elucidate its similar objectives with China and “a negotiating partner” to discover the equilibrium benefits for both sides. Issues partner, economic competitor and systemic rival manifest the EU’s entanglement and its growing competitiveness with China. Those roles seems conflict each other, it divulged the EU’s ambivalent policy to China that entitled China with different roles in disparate aspects.

Almost at the same period, China presented its own foreign policy philosophy called “toward a new type of international relations”. Xi Jinping gave a speech when he attended the welcome luncheon hosted by the U.S. friendly groups on 15th Feb 2012⁷. He said we should strive to build China-US cooperative partnership as a new type of major country relations in 21 century. After a year, President Xi explained the China-US new type of major country relations at the meeting with the US President Obama in 2013, which includes the China-US new type of major country relations should be “no-conflict and no-confrontation”, “mutual respect” and “win-win cooperation”⁸. At that time, the new type of major country relations only refers to the China-US relations. With the changing situation of China’s domestic reform and international relations, the new type of major country relations, in other words, the new type of international relations, gradually becomes a part of Xi’s thought on diplomacy and has affluent connotation. After China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation planned the common objectives for two sides in manners of peace and security, prosperity, sustainable development and people-to-people exchanges in 2013, China proposed its second policy document to the EU that added the EU as an integral part of relations with major powers and a priority in China foreign policy in China’s Policy Paper on the EU from 2014⁹. It demonstrates that China treats the EU as one of the major power and manifests the EU’s strategic position in China’s foreign policy.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. *Xi Jinping’s speech in the welcome luncheon hosted by the U.S. friendly group*. 2012. In Chinese 中华人民共和国外交部. 习近平在美国友好团体欢迎午宴上的演讲. 2012.

⁸ Jinghan Zeng and Shaun Breslin. "China’s ‘New Type of Great Power Relations’: A G2 with Chinese Characteristics?". *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 773-794.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. *China’s Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Cooperation*. 2014.

Meanwhile, the Paper shown a great ambition to “build partnerships for peace, growth, reform and civilization and further increase the global impact of China-EU relations”. China developed its third policy paper on the EU at the 15th anniversary of the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the 20th anniversary of the China-EU Summit in 2018¹⁰. It specified the direction, principles and concrete measures how China and the EU will work together to deepen the strategic partnership, such as promote the cooperation in political, security and defense fields, and strengthen the cooperation in trade, investment, connectivity, fiscal and financial fields, etc. Furthermore, the Joint statement of the 21th China-EU Summit in 2019 reaffirmed the vitality of China-EU strategic partnership and the EU also reaffirmed its One-China policy¹¹. The two sides move forward to strength their bilateral relations, jointly tackle global challenges and governance, share the similar objectives of foreign and security policy in the joint statement. Besides, China and the EU agrees to hold the regular human right dialogue on the basis of equality and mutual respect the human rights. In the issue of the South China Sea, the EU denotes that it welcomes China and ASEAN countries can reach an effective agreement on the Code of Conduct (CoC) for the South China Sea. The official documents between China and the EU shows China is prefer cooperation rather than competition, but China won’t allow foreign countries interfere its domestic affairs, such as the Taiwan issue.

Above all, with the return of great power competition, especially between China and the US, the EU intends to defend its interests and values in the way of taking more pragmatic actions, which further lead to the changes of the EU’s strategy preference. The EU defines China as partner, competitor and rival, those three different roles reflects the EU’s intentions to compete with China and China’s contradictory strategic position in the eyes of the EU. By observing China’s policy paper on the EU, it shows that China continuously seeks to find the common interests for both sides without touching China’s domestic issues and stresses fairness competition in international platform. Win-win cooperation is still the theme of

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. *China’s Policy Paper on the European Union*. 2018.

¹¹ European Commission. *EU-China Summit Joint Statement*. 2019.

China's policy on the EU.

In order to better sort out China's policy documents on the EU and the EU's policy on China, the researcher made the following figure:

China		The European Union	
2012	Joint Press Communiqué of the 14th China-EU Summit	2012	
2013	China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation released at 16th China-EU Summit	2013	EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation
2014	China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation	2013	Towards a more competitive and efficient defence and security sector
		2014	
2015	Joint Statement Deepening the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for mutual benefit	2015	
		2016	Elements for a new EU strategy on China
2016	China and Europe: Working Together for New Progress In China-EU Relations	2016	Council conclusions EU Strategy on China
		2017	
2017	China-EU Summit joint statement The way forward after forty years of China-EU cooperation	2018	
		2019	EU-China – A strategic outlook
2018	China's Policy Paper on the European Union	2019	EU-China Summit Joint statement
2019	Joint statement of the 20th China-EU Summit	2019	Connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU Strategy
	The Dubrovnik Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries	2020	
		2021	Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on a new EU-China strategy

Figure 1: The China's and EU's Policy Documents (2012–2021)

1.2 Problem Formulation

Date back to the EU's identification to China, it can easily find that the EU mainly focus on enhancing its capability in terms of security and defence and strengthening its relationship with the US while less considering its policy to China at the early stage. Nevertheless, the great changes of the international system has given the word new content, which means the EU will be a player in the field of great power competition and exert its influence globally. This transformation has further brought the EU's policy to China into a complicated situation with more competitive. The EU not merely defines China as a competitor and rival, but also a partner, which reflects the ambiguous of the EU's policy to China. However, compare with China's policy to the EU, China has shown great continuity in its foreign policy to the EU. It rarely uses the word of competitor to describe China-EU relations. China points out China and the EU need to follow the principle of fairness competition on the basis of international laws. What China mentioned several times in its report is win-win cooperation for both sides without damage China's core interests.

Therefore, the main problem is why China still want to cooperate or, in other

words, to build a new type of major power relations with the EU, especially against the background of the EU's identification to China as a systemic rival. The inclination of China to the EU's policy and the strategic changes of the EU will largely impact the future relations between China and the EU or the member states, which is an issue worth to research.

1.3 Research Question

In connection with the problem formulation, the thesis mainly concentrates on the internal and external factors that caused China has made a such foreign policies layout, and the changes of the EU's policy to China after its intention to define China as a rival, with the purpose to explain and analyze the following question:

Why does China want to build a new type of major power relations with the EU against the background of the EU's identification to China as a systemic rival?

1.4 Aim of the Research

Generally, the aim of this thesis is not to explain why the EU define China as a systemic rival, but to understand what has changed after this strategy turned for the EU in terms of its China policy. On the basis of understanding of above issues, the thesis intends to research what policy that China has adopted toward the EU and what China's domestic issues has influenced on its foreign policy to explain why China want to build a new type of major power relations with the EU.

Additionally, the thesis could provide some opinions for the future development of China-EU relationship through analyzing the opportunities and challenges that China faces against the background of the EU's identification to China as a systemic rival.

2. Methodology

This chapter will present the methodology of the research. In the first place, the choice of theory will provide a perspective of how the chosen theories can be used to

explained the research question. Then the choice of data will be shown to illustrate what kind of data suit for the research, further, the appropriate method to analyze the data can be found in the next. Moreover, it will present the limitations of the research. Finally, the research design can give a panoramic view of the research.

2.1 Choice of Theory

This part will give a brief to how the chosen theories relevant to the research question. Firstly, neorealism demonstrates why China wants to establish a new type of major power relationship with the EU in an anarchic system based on its national interests, as well as how domestic considerations impact China's foreign policy. Secondly, the social constructivism school will be discussed. Social constructivism may demonstrate how China-EU interaction impacts the international structure and how the structure influences China-EU interaction. Additionally, it also unfolds how a country's identity shapes its behavior which provides a broaden view how China defines its national interests.

2.1.1 Neorealism

Basically, the neorealism share the same assumptions with the classic realism but with more specific definitions. It stressed out that countries fights for increasing power to survive in an anarchy system due to the international society is a self-help system. This is the nature of international relations. So the distribution of the power decides the structure of the system, and the structure determine countries' behaviors. Moreover, domestic factors, such as the material resources, the procedure of decision-making and political leadership, can also shape its behaviors. What's more, the neorealism emphasis on distribution of the power is mainly among great powers which decide the stability of the system. Therefore, China's domestic interests are relevant for its foreign policy, which is complied with its national plan of reform and openness. It demonstrates that China take its national interests into consideration while building a new type of major power relations with the EU.

Furthermore, the neorealism is more focus on relative benefits rather than

absolute benefits, in other words, it focuses on who can gain more profits and advantages, not both side can benefits. So when countries are considering about their relative power position, some countries matter more than other¹².

Moreover, as a branch theory of neorealism, balance of power theory believes that the multipolar system is a stable structure, and a power balance system is a part of multipolar system. In this system, countries with similar strength can interact with each other to prevent any great power tipping the balance. It also can be the reason why China wants to build major power relations with the EU, since compared with the US hostility to China, the EU's thoughts to China are more conciliatory, China can recognize and utilize the power of the EU to gain advantages during its competition with the US.

2.1.2 Social Constructivism

Although the neorealism proposed that the activities of international actors facilitate the establishment of system structure, the structure is fixed as long as it has been established and it's an anarchy system. However, the social constructivism believes that the anarchy of international system is changeable which can be constructed, so the international system won't be like what Kenneth Waltz said is a structure of Hobbesian full of conflict and fight for their own, but has different forms which named the structure of Lockean culture, and Kantian culture by Alexander Wendt¹³, it can be competitive or cooperative. So the social constructivism questioned the ontology of the neorealism about anarchy and developed its own opinions about the international structure.

The social constructivism emphasizes the sense of identity, assuming that a country's identity is determined by the structure, the identity determines its interests, and the interests influence its behavior. In this structure, the fundamental factor is common knowledge, it means actors shared same perception and expectation in a

¹² Luis, Simon. "Neorealism, Security Cooperation, and Europe's Relative Gains Dilemma." *Security Studies* 26, no. 2 (2017): 185-212.

¹³ Wendt, Alexander. "Three Cultures of Anarchy." Chap. 6 In *Social Theory of International Politics*, 246-312. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

particular social environment where the common knowledge construct the identity and interests of actors¹⁴. In this regard, the EU and China shared the same attitude in terms of security. Considering the distant between China and the Europe, the EU doesn't treat China as their main security threat, while China also looked upon the EU as a non-security opponent.

Besides, the social constructivism highlights on the interaction between the actors and the structure. On the one hand is the effects of the actors to the structure, on the other is the functions of the structure to the actors. The meaning of interaction is two countries won't form common knowledge without association, once they start to interact with each other, the shared norms or perspectives will be formed and diffused, the culture also be produced. The EU defines China as partner, competitor and rival manifest that part of China is cooperative and the rest is competitive, at the same time, it shapes China's perception to the EU. China keep cooperation with the EU so China can gain the EU's support by China's development outcome, for example, huge domestic market and easy foreign investment environment. Consequently, China's norm can be accepted by the EU and diffused around the world, which leads to China's international influence rise.

In addition, the constructivist believes that their theory is evolved. One of the social constructivism assumptions is the international structure is variable. The national structure is constructed by different cultures, so the country with new idea can decompose the existing culture and construct a new one¹⁵. Hence, under the guidance of Xi Jinping thought on diplomacy, China's diplomacy come into a new era and China's new type major power relations gradually becomes a part of foreign policy, which creates a new way for China to interact with different countries.

As a result, the social constructivism can incorporate issues that the neorealism doesn't consider, meanwhile, explain how the common views between China and the EU has changed when the international environment has gone through a upheaval and

¹⁴ Wendt, Alexander. "The State and the Problem of Corporate Agency." Chap. 5 In *Social Theory of International Politics*, 220-45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

¹⁵ Wendt, Alexande. "Process and Structural Change." Chap. 7 In *Social Theory of International Politics*, 328-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

the EU's strategy has tended to be more independent. It will finally shape China's policy to the EU and their relationship.

2.2 Choice of Data

Considering that the research take China's policy to the EU as the departure of analysis, China's official documents to the EU, and the joint communique with the EU will be collected in order to illustrate China's perceptions to the EU. Moreover, as a party system that lead by the Communist Party of China (CPC), the party leader's thoughts are vital to China's foreign policy, therefore, the research will gather data from Xi Jinping's speeches and thoughts in the website of China's Diplomacy in New Era and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, as well as the discourse by foreign ministry spokesman. Also, the EU turns their strategy to autonomy and independent, it's necessary to collect data from the EU official website, such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, to understand what has changed for the EU's policy to China. Besides, the think tanks analysis, scholars comments, and specialist articles for both the EU and China also can help the researcher to have a better comprehension about the perception for both sides.

Additionally, with the economic growth and the politic weight has became increasingly important, China has made its new five years plan that take the new international situation into consideration, for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic, the great geopolitical power competition. So the national plan of China is a essential factor to understand what is important for China's national interests, and how will China take action to benefit the most. Consequently, Chinese government documents and reports will be collected.

What's more, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a proper example to illustrate China's policy to the EU and how it conform with China's interest. Therefore, the researcher will also collect data from the BRI, particularly its projects and bilateral trade data that consistent with China's regular standpoints while the EU would like to accept it.

This figure below shows the data consideration in the framework of theoretical application.

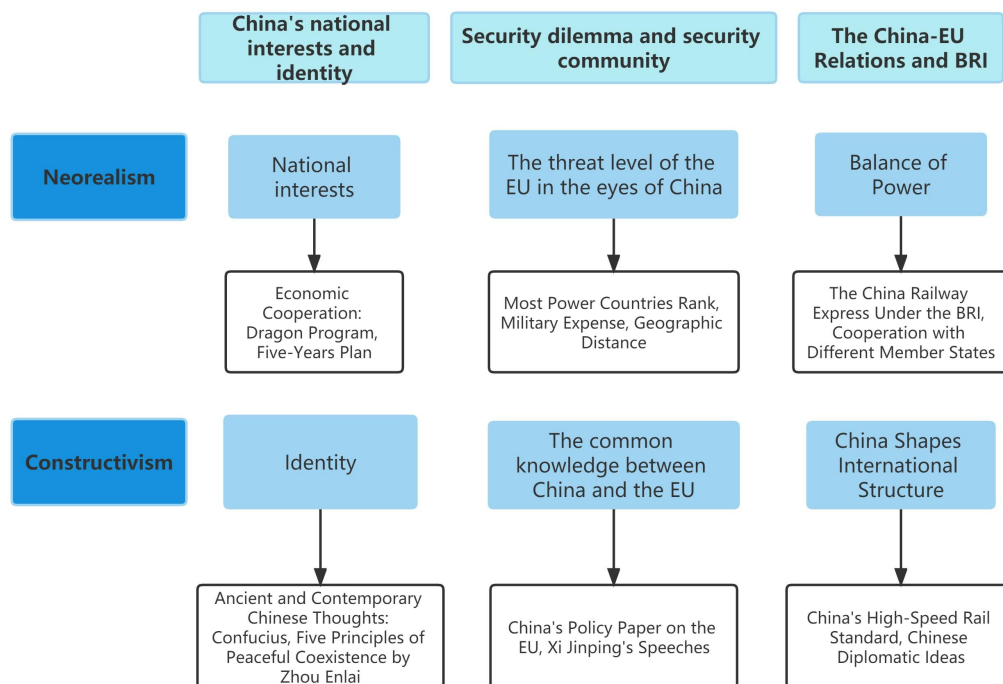


Figure 2: Data Consideration in the Framework of Theoretical Application

2.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is one of the classical procedures for analyzing textual material, which will be used in the analysis of the research. The QCA, as a research tool to observe certain theme, concepts, and even words in qualitative data, such as documents, newspapers, allows researcher to systemically describe the meaning of qualitative data¹⁶. It has three key features: firstly, it's reduces data which focus on selected aspects that related to the research questions. In that case, this research can focus on economic, political and culture factors that related to China's policy to the EU. Secondly, it's systemic that can lead to a panoramic view of the research question. Thirdly, it's flexible that can combine the concept-driven and

¹⁶ "Content Analysis Method and Examples." Columbia Public Health, 2022, accessed January 2, 2022, <<https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/population-health-methods/content-analysis>>.

data-driven categories within one coding frame¹⁷. It has two central approaches: inductive category development and deductive category development. The former is a data-driven way, and the latter is concept-driven way. The procedure of the inductive way is to formulate a criterion of definition first according to the research question and the chosen theories. The procedure of the deductive way is theoretical based definition of the aspects of analysis and coding rules¹⁸. The latter is obviously more suitable for the research. Therefore, the QCA method will be used within the analysis to gain a better understanding of China's policy to the EU by retrieving and analyzing texts.

2.4 Limitations

In terms of the chosen data, the limitation of this research is it put much weights on China's perceptions and expectations to the EU while the EU's viewpoints to China is rarely presented. Furthermore, the changing environment of international relations has become more unpredictable; there are some uncertainties, such as the COVID-19 and the Ukraine Crisis in 2022, which may have the potential to change China's views on the EU or its policy toward the EU, as a result, the researcher will disregard these outburst events.

Moreover, the EU is consisted of 27 different countries. Although the EU official definition on China is partner, competitor and rival, some member states may not think the same as the EU. Hence, the research mainly focuses on the EU level in order to get a general understanding of the EU on China, which may ignore some member states concerns.

Considering the chosen theories, neorealism and social constructivism are only used to explain the research question of this thesis and cannot be widely applied to other related problem areas, because some perspectives, such as power balance and threat level, are not applicable to other countries. As a consequence, when the balance of power is used to explain the research question, this thesis only analyzes China, and

¹⁷ Schreier, Margrit. "Qualitative Content Analysis." Chap. 12 In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* edited by Uwe Flick, 170-84. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013.

¹⁸ Ibid.

similarly, when analyzing the threat level of the EU, it only considers the EU as a whole, rather than using it to assess the US's threat level to China. Because in fact, China rarely officially regards a country as a security threat, but more emphasis on the competitive side with the country.

2.5 Research Design

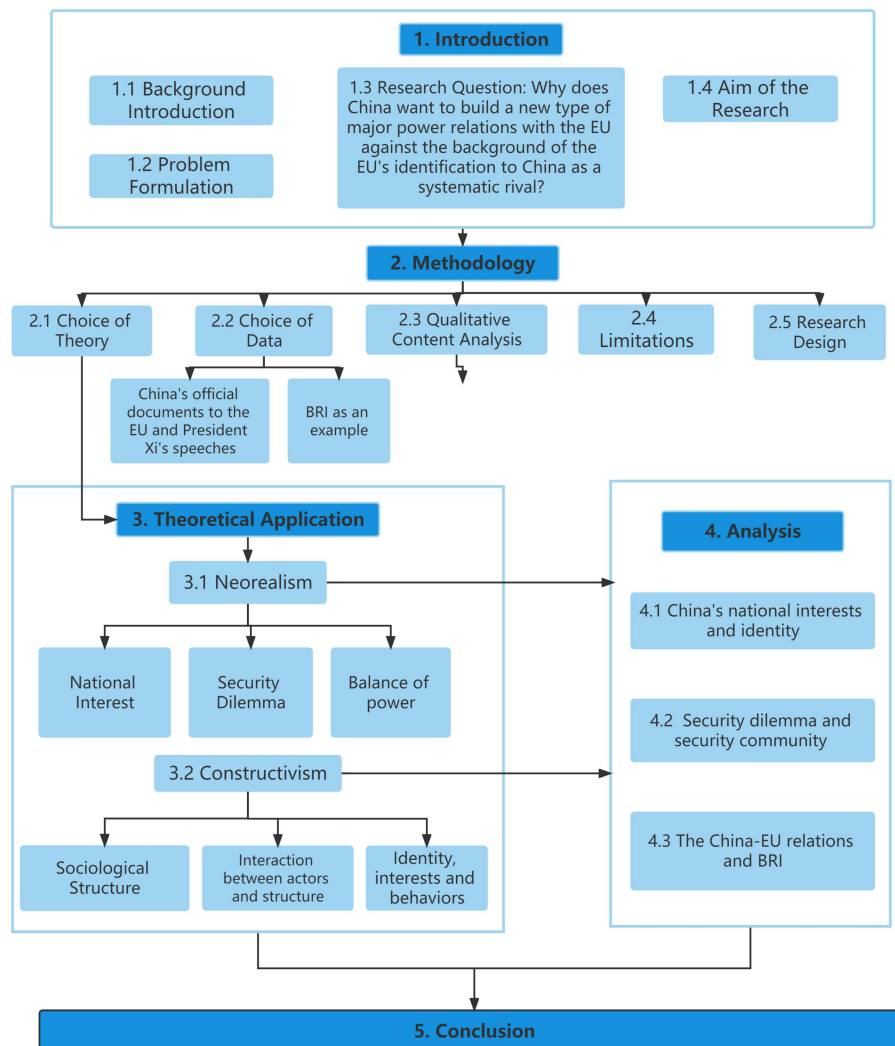


Figure 3: Research Design

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will first specify the main points of the neorealism which includes national interests, balance of power and security dilemma, then it will put up the social constructivism viewpoints, such as sociological structure, interaction between

actors and structure, and actors' identity, interests and behaviors. By observing the two theories, this chapter will also show how the neorealism and social constructivism are, to some degree, connected but different. Finally, it will indicate how the two theories can be applied to the research question.

3.1 Neorealism

The representative individuals of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz, published his third book in 1979 named *Theory of International Politics*, which made the realism theory more scientific. He established a new branch of realism called structural realism, also named neorealism. Many scholars like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt developed their own approaches on the basis of Waltz theory including offensive realism and defensive realism.

The neorealism believes that anarchy is the nature of international system, the nation states is the basic unit in this system, and the system structure is the most important factor that can effect on the system stability and nation states' behaviors¹⁹. Anarchy means there is no government in the international society and it's full of disorder and chaos²⁰. The conflict between nation states in an anarchy society cannot be solved because there is no international government or international police, and the international organizations are manipulate by the great powers, which are also a tool for great power to achieve their national goals. Therefore, the skirmish between nation states can only be settled by themselves. It decides the international system is a self-help system and the goal of nation states is to survive in it²¹.

Consequently, the states against each other to protect themselves and defense their national interests. The only way to survive in this chaos and self-help system is to strengthen power, which include two approaches. On the one hand, a country can focus on enhancing its domestic power to survive, such as economic and military

¹⁹ Thomas Diez, Ingvild Bode & Aleksandra Fernandes Da Costa. "Theory Concept: Realism and Neorealism." Chap. 33 In *Key Concepts in International Relations*, 179-87. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2011.

²⁰ Waltz, Kenneth N. "Acarchic Orders and Balances of Power." Chap. 6 In *Theory of International Politics*, 102-29. Illionis: Waveland Press Inc, 2010.

²¹ Akdag, Yavuz. "The Likelihood of Cyberwar between the United States and China: A Neorealism and Power Transition Theory Perspective." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 24, no. 2 (2018): 230-31.

power. On the other hand, it can strengthen its power with the help of external forces in order to prevent other countries from growing in power, like expand alliance or choose the strategy of balance of power. But a country enhancing its power can be seen as a threat to other countries because it means other countries' power is relatively declining. So other countries may feel fear of a country' power growing, then they will choose to enhance their power again. The security dilemma will arise.

As a result, the essential ideas of neorealism theory that relate each other are national interests, balance of power, and security dilemma.

3.1.1 National interests

All realists follow the same perception about the nation states. First is state-centric model. In an anarchy society, the state has to provide public goods, such as security and social welfare, to solve all kinds of conflict in society to guarantee justice and equality. Then the principle of sovereignty regulates the nation state has absolute authority for domestic affairs and other external authority cannot restrict it. All the transnational activities has to be approved by nation states.

Second is the unitary state. It believes that the states is an independent actor that can define its national interest and make decision properly. The national interest differs from the interest of a special social group, only the unified and holistic goals can be defined as national interests²². While the fundamental interest for nation states is to survive in the anarchy society which is beyond the limit of time and space.

Third is nation states are rational. It manifests that the state can make best decision in a particular situation for achieving the maximal national interests. The states can set national goal, and consider the possibility and consequence of potential policy, then choose the optimal policy or strategy than can achieve the national objectives best.

²² Krasner, Stephen D. "Defending the National Interest." Chap. 2 In *Power, the State, and Sovereignty: Essays on International Relations*, 42. London: Routledge, 2009.

3.1.2 Balance of Power

According to the neorealism, the states behavior of pursuing for power will cause concern and fear among other states, which will further disrupt the power distribution. Then the states will choose to balance. There are two ways that balancing behavior can occur: bandwagon and balancing coalition. It will depend on the structure of international system whether the actors choose the former or later.

Waltz uses political election as an example to illustrate different choice. For bandwagon, if a candidate of a party looks like to win or have high supportive rate in the election, other candidates in a same party will intend to bandwagon in order to achieve the goal of political party governance. For balancing coalition, when there is no candidates gain the great support from the party, they will compete with each other. Some candidates will form alliance to counterweight others²³.

It's also reflected in the international society. Once a country has fallen behind other countries, it will strive to enhance its national power or cooperate with other countries. The alliance will be formed, the alliance rival will also emerge. If one alliance win in the process of power competition, the weak side of the winning alliance will be controlled by the powerful partner. So the states are more willing to take balancing strategy and would like to join the weak side to against the powerful counterpart. Because the security is the first priority for a state in anarchy society. Only state's security is guaranteed, it can pursuit for power safely. Besides, Waltz believes that the anarchic structure constrains the behavior of states because "whatever aims individual states may have, the international structure pushes them to pursue policies that result in a balance of power and the reproduction of the system"²⁴.

3.1.3 Security Dilemma

As it mentioned above, the first priority for states is to survive in the anarchy society since there is no authority or international government in the society. Every

²³ Waltz, Kenneth N. "Acarchic Orders and Balances of Power." Chap. 6 In *Theory of International Politics*, 102-29. Illionis: Waveland Press Inc, 2010.

²⁴ Little, Richard. "Kenneth N. Waltz's Theory of International Politics." Chap. 6 In *The Balance of Power in International Relations*, 193, 2007.

states has to increase their power to protect itself, which leads to the international system is a self-help system. A state behavior of increasing power can give rise to fear for other states, which means, in other words, one state's efforts to increase its power are seen by others as a threat and insecurity. So other states also want to enhance its power that further cause threatening feelings among states. Because one state's benefit can be others' lose, but no one wants to make their benefit damage. Then every states are striving to increase their power that trapped in a endless circle of power competition where the security dilemma occurs.

In the process of security dilemma, the states always seek to expand their power and strength. They utilize both internal and external ways to protect themselves. To form an alliance, as one of the external ways to increase power, could become a proper choice. But "how do the great powers choose which states to protect, and how do weaker states decide whose protection to accept"²⁵. Stephen Walt, the representative individual of defensive realism, gives his answer.

He assumes that the states not only try to balance of power, but also balance of threat. That is to say "states tend to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat"²⁶. How does the state consider whether other states are a threat or not? Walt thinks that the level of threat depends on four factors which includes "aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions"²⁷. According to the level of threat, state may choose bandwagon or balancing. Walt believes that a state's perception is more aggressive, the others will more intend to balance it. Additionally, the weak side will bandwagon when the level of threat for other states is high²⁸.

3.2 Social Constructivism

Though the neorealism is widely used to explain international relations

²⁵ Walt, Stephen M. "Introduction." Chap. 1 In *The Origins of Alliances*, 1-16. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

²⁶ Walt, Stephen M. "Explaining Alliance Formation." Chap. 2 In *The Origins of Alliances*, 17-49. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

²⁷ Ibid p.20-22

²⁸ Ibid p.27-28

phenomenon, its basic assumptions were also criticized by different paradigms, like liberal institutionalism and social constructivism. Social constructivism fundamentally challenged the basic assumption of neorealism. The latter believes that the anarchy inherently exists in the international system, however, social constructivism assumes that “anarchy is what states make of it”²⁹. Social constructivism thinks that the anarchy is constructed by the actors in the process of interaction of social practice. The anarchy is a cultural structure and a factitious phenomenon. It is not like what neorealism believes remain unchanged, while is changeable. Furthermore, unlike what neorealists believe, anarchy is divided into many different sorts. Because anarchy is what states make it, they have a variety of options for how they engage with one another. As a result, depending on state perceptions, the neorealism security dilemma can become a security community.

On the basis of the critique of neorealism, Alexander Wendt, the epitomes of constructivism theory, absorb the viewpoints of social theory to develop social constructivism theory. Wendt's theory corresponds the framework of holism and idealism, it stressed out the importance of ideals, culture and identity. There are three main aspects of social constructivism theory includes sociological structure, interaction between actors and structure and the relations between identity, interests and behaviors. These three characteristics form the most important part of Wendt's theory.

3.2.1 Sociological Structure

The structure of constructivism is different from the structure of neorealism, the former is the sociological structure, which mainly refers to the distribution of ideas. While the latter means the distribution of capabilities³⁰.

The fundamental factor in the constructivism structure is shared ideas, which means the shared perception and expectation in a specific social environment. The

²⁹ Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425.

³⁰ Yaqing, Qin. *Power, Institutions, and Culture: Essays on International Relations Theory and Methodology*. 2 ed. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016. In Chinese 秦亚青. 权力制度文化: 国际关系理论与方法研究文集. 北京: 北京大学出版社. p.131

security dilemma is also a shared idea. When actors highly worry about other actors will increase their power to against each other and always assume the worst about their motivations, intentions and behaviors, one state's behavior of increase military power will consequently cause others insecurity, then the security dilemma occurs. However, "ideas are considered as malleable objects"³¹, if actors shared ideas make them trust each other, then the actors assume that they can solve interest conflict peacefully and finally security community show up.

What's more, constructivism regard structure contain material factors, for instance, nation's material resources. But Wendt insists that materials factors can only exert its influence on actors by social structure. Take Wendt's classic case as an example, the nuclear power is definitely material factors, both the UK and North Korea have nuclear power, but the US won't feel for the UK's nuclear weapon while feel threatening for North Korea nuclear weapon. Therefore, the material factors like nuclear power cannot fully explain the US government's policy to North Korea. The nuclear power can be meaningful only by the US government's perception and expectation to North Korea³².

3.2.2 Interaction Between Actors and Structure

The constructivism emphasis on the interaction between actors and structure. For one thing is the effect of the actors on the structure. For another is the effect of the structure on the actors. The interactions among actors construct the structure and the structure construct actors identity and interest, this means that actors cannot act in separation from their surroundings³³. The actors construct the structure is called "logic of reciprocity", the reciprocity means the practice among actors³⁴. There is no shared knowledge and no structure between two countries that have never communicated

³¹ Saurugger, Sabine. "Constructivism and Public Policy Approaches in the EU: From Ideas to Power Games." *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, no. 6 (2013): 897.

³² Wendt, Alexander. "Three Cultures of Anarchy." Chap. 6 In *Social Theory of International Politics*, 255-256. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

³³ Eleveld, Anja. "The Role of Ideas in Policy and Institutional Change: A Comparison of the Open Functional Approach, Constructivism and Discourse Theory." *Political Studies* 64, no. 1_suppl (2015): 73.

³⁴ Yaqing, Qin. *Power, Institutions, and Culture: Essays on International Relations Theory and Methodology*. 2 ed. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016. In Chinese 秦亚青. 权力制度文化: 国际关系理论与方法研究文集. 北京: 北京大学出版社. p.133

with each other. Once they begin to interact with each other, the original behaviors will generate and strengthen some ideas by the logic of reciprocity, and they start to share these ideas, the culture also come into being.

According to Wendt's theory, anarchy is a culture that is constructed in several manners. There exist three different anarchy culture in international system. Firstly, the Hobbesian anarchy culture is the "war all against all"³⁵. Everyone in this culture regards others as enemies, and they must be antagonistic to one another, even cutting one other's throats, in order to maintain security. If the purpose of states is to destroy and annex other states, and if they all want to change the situation while not maintain the status quo, it's finally result in Hobbesian anarchy culture. Secondly, the Lockean anarchy culture is also distinct. The states not take each other as enemy anymore, on the contrary, they recognize the right of property and survive, small states can thrive while great powers can get rid of the destiny of kill or killed³⁶. The rivals replace the logic of enmity. It means the aim of states is not to conquer and invade other states' territory even though the diversity of interest may still cause conflict, the states still want to maintain the status quo. Thirdly, the Kantian anarchy culture view states as friends³⁷. States won't take violence as way to solve conflict and will help each other without considering their losses and benefits when others is threaten by some states.

Wendt believes that the Lockean anarchy culture is in a dominate position, but the anarchy culture and the structure of international system are evolved. States with new ideas can reconstruct the anarchy culture and generate new one.

3.2.3 Identity, Interests and Behaviors

Rationalism presumes that actors have prescribed identity and interests, therefore, they are egoist and take actions in order to chase to maximal their self-interests. Nevertheless, the constructivist deems that actors' behaviors can only be described when its identity and interests confirmed, the identity is constructed by the structure,

³⁵ Wendt, Alexander. "Three Cultures of Anarchy." Chap. 6 In *Social Theory of International Politics*, 260. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

³⁶ Ibid p.279

³⁷ Ibid p.298

in other words, by culture. The goal of constructivists is to show that the practices and identities that people take for granted are the result of human social construction³⁸.

In Hobbesian anarchy culture, the identities of states are enemies. So enemies don't have to respect each other and can use violent limitlessly. Therefore, eliminating each other is in the national interest in order to expand their power and survive. To reach this goal, they need to dominate and conquer other states. In Lockean anarchy culture, the identities of states are rivals. Rivals means they allow others to exist and survive, and use violent limited. The identity of rival decide that states would rather seek to safety than power and conquer. In the Kantian anarchy culture, the identities of states are friends, they follow the principle of non-violent and mutual help, they can solve the conflict peacefully. The interests of friends are common security, so they prefer to help others to against the threat since it can be benefit to themself.

As a result, varying levels of anarchy determine state identities, whereas diversity of identities determines national interests.

3.3 Theoretical Application

The topic of China's new type of major powers relations with the EU can be studied using neorealism and social constructivism theories.

For the neorealism, firstly, the neorealism theory view of national interests can explain why China's policy to the EU correspond to China's national interests. States have to keep their national interests out of damaged and try to increase their benefits since maximal the national interests is the goal of every states in a self-help system. The economic relationship between China and the EU become increasingly important. The cooperation for both sides has been deepening year and year in many areas. For example, the EU is the biggest trade partner of China in 2021, the bilateral investment also increased remarkably. The technology cooperation between Chinese enterprises and the EU companies has been extending to many aspects, such as AI, mega-data, computer science, etc. China's economy has grown enormously by strengthening its

³⁸ Jung, Hoyoon. "The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present." *SAGE Open* 9, no. 1 (2019): 3.

economic ties with the EU. Therefore, cooperate with the EU contributes to China's national interests and correspond to China's national plan.

Secondly, the neorealism standpoint of balance of power can illustrate how China counterbalance the influence of the US by cooperate with the EU and support the EU's effort to chase strategic autonomy. Following Trump's election in 2016, he initiated a trade war with China, putting heavy tariffs on Chinese shipments to the United States. With China's once-excessive production capacity, the country has actively pursued international economic cooperation to relieve economic strain while guaranteeing domestic economic stability. As a result, the EU, as one of the world's most powerful economies, has played a key role in assisting China in balancing US pressure. China has actively promoted the BRI's alignment with the European Investment Initiative, and the BRI's China-EU investment fund has proven to be a valuable tool for enhancing financial cooperation between China and Europe. The CAI, like the BRI, is a good example of how China is counterbalancing the US with the EU's power. The CAI starts on January 2014 and finally reach on agreement in 2020, even though it was blocked by the European Parliament. The CAI is still a comprehensive agreement that China has made great concession on some articles, such as market access, liberalization of investment and financial service, which are not include in the China-US trade and investment agreement. It shows that China want to counterweight the US with the help the EU by deepening the economic relationship with the EU. The economic cooperation not only correspond to China's national interest, but also can help the EU enhance the independence of economic, the strategic autonomy and decrease the dependence to the US. It will consequently facilitate China to get a better position during the competition with the US.

Thirdly, the neorealism key concept of security dilemma can explain why does China treat the EU as a non-security threat. According to Walt's defensive realism, there are four factors that can decide the level of threat includes "aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions"³⁹. Aggregate power

³⁹ Walt, Stephen M. "Explaining Alliance Formation." Chap. 2 In *The Origins of Alliances*, 22-28. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

means a state's comprehensive power. The EU used to be the largest economic entity in the world, but it's the third-largest economic entity while China has become the world second-largest economic entity. About the geographic proximity and offensive power, China and the EU are far apart. It would be difficult for the EU to transfer troops to China from such a long distance, and the same is true for China, not to say the EU as an intergovernmental international organization only have limit military power that has to get permit for using it. Considering the history of the Europe, the world war leads the EU to the integration, so it has less aggressive intentions to invade other countries.

For the social constructivism, firstly, the social constructivism view of national interests can also explain why China's policy to the EU correspond to China's national interests. The identity of state decides the national interests and the national interests urge the states take actions. In Wendt's three anarchy culture, China's identity fits more closely with the definition of the Kantian anarchy culture. China not only take itself as a responsible great power that can offer public goods and bring benefits to the world, such as provide vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic and offer international aid to the developing counties, but also view the EU as a cooperator rather than competitor. China always emphasis on win-win cooperation and mutual benefit in its meeting with the EU officials, also try to solve the conflict of national interests on the basis of international law.

Secondly, social constructivism's emphasis on interaction between actors and structure can explain how does China shape the international structure. Because the Western world, led by the United States, dominates the current world economic order and standards, China's aspirations to develop its own are sometimes viewed as a challenge to the existing order. As the EU aspires to gradually lessen US influence in its affairs and move toward strategic autonomy, China's involvement with the EU can help China advance its own standards and norms in Europe. The BRI is a notable illustration of this, as China's high-speed railways and other infrastructure investments have helped to strengthen cooperation between Chinese and European companies by allowing European companies to comprehend and even adopt Chinese

norms.

Thirdly, shared ideas, the fundamental factor of the social constructivism structure, can also be used to give explanation on why didn't the security dilemma occur between China and the EU while there is a tendency to form security community between them. Since China-EU comprehensive strategy partnership has been established, both China and the EU want to cooperate with each other. Although the EU defines China as a systemic rival in recent year, the shared ideas still rest in China and the EU's perception, like the EU also defines China as a negotiation partner. Besides, China's diplomacy ideas, such as a community of shared future for mankind, also gain support from the EU.

4. Analysis

This section will combine the key concepts of neorealism and constructivism theory to analysis China's motivations to build a new type of major power relations with the EU, particularly in the background of the EU's identification to China as a systemic rival. By observing and collecting speeches, reports, and quantitative data, it concludes three main aspects that correspond to the theories. First, China's national interests and identity. Second, to use the BRI as an example to examine the concept of balance of power and how the actors construct the structure. Third, the security dilemma and security community between China and the EU.

4.1 China's National Interests and Identity

No matter from the perspective of neorealism theory or social constructivism theory, China's efforts to build new type of great power relations with the EU are complied with its national interests and demonstrated China's identity.

4.1.1 China's National Interests

The China-EU cooperation in economy and technology correspond China's national interests. China can gain benefit by cooperating with the EU to increase its

power and to ensure safety, at the same time, promote its competitive ability in the geopolitical competition. Additionally, the domestic factors, such as decision-making and national plan also regulate that cooperate with the EU is conform to the national interests.

The economic relationship between China and the EU is the foundation of China-EU bilateral relation, and it is vital for the both sides to strengthen the comprehensive strategy partnership. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, the bilateral trade and investment between China and the EU has increased yearly from 2016 to 2019. In 2020, the EU is China's second largest trading partner after the ASEAN, its bilateral import and export trade reached \$649.53 billion, of this, China's exports reached \$390.9 billion and imports reached \$258.5 billion with a surplus of \$132.4 billion⁴⁰. In the first two months of 2022, the EU become the largest trading partner of China. The main products exported from China to EU involved many different areas, from electrical machinery and optical equipment to furniture and clothing. Besides, the EU is also one of the largest foreign investment source of China. In 2020, the EU invested \$5.69 billion in China, making it China's third largest source of foreign investment. The 27 member states' investment on China is even higher that reached \$118.2 billion. In addition, the contracting projects and labor service cooperation between China and the EU also connected closely. Chinese companies signed 320 new contract projects in the EU in 2020. A total of 3,923 Chinese enterprises sent various types of labor to the EU, and 6,338 were working in the EU in 2020⁴¹. Furthermore, there are two overseas economic and trade cooperation zones set up by Chinese enterprises in Hungary. Not only it shows the EU have great demand to China, but also demonstrate that China can profit from the bilateral trade. Besides, the economic and trade cooperation between China and Europe is progressing faster compared to that between China and the United States. Take CAI as an example, although CAI did not pass the vote in

⁴⁰ Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. *Guide to the Country (Region) for Foreign Investment Cooperation: The European Union*. 2021. [online] Available at: <<http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/dl/gbdqzn/upload/oumeng.pdf>>. [Accessed March 16, 2022]. In Chinese 商务部国际贸易经济合作研究院. 对外投资合作国别（地区）指南：欧盟. 2021.

⁴¹ Ibid p.32

Europe Parliament in the end, CAI was launched in 2013, and the EU announced the completion of negotiations with China by December 2020. In contrast, the Sino-US Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) negotiations launched in 2008, the negotiations were terminated in 2017, and there has been no significant progress⁴².

In addition, Chinese investments in Europe, especially in energy, make cooperation with Europe necessary. According to data provided by The American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation on the China Global Investment Tracker, from 2016 to 2021, China's investment and construction in the European region accounts for 10% of China's total investment and construction abroad, while its investment in North America accounts for only 3.1%. Of this, China's energy and transportation investments and construction in Europe account for 14.5% and 21.4% of its total, respectively⁴³. Furthermore, China can get investment from Europe through energy cooperation with Europe, which will aid the development and transformation of China's energy industry. The EU and China agreed to establish the EU China Clean Energy Center in 2009, with the EU contributing ten million euros to help China develop clean energy. The center also collaborates with Tsinghua University, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and other institutions and schools to promote China's low-carbon transition, China's energy industry has benefited a lot from this project⁴⁴.

What's more, with the deepen cooperation on trade and investment, the technology and science communication between China and the EU will consequently strengthen. For instance, the Dragon Program that launched by the National Remote Sensing Center of China (NRSCC), under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of China and the European Space Agency (ESA) which is the largest international cooperation project in the field of remote sensing technology in China⁴⁵.

⁴² Zuokui, Liu. "Prospect of China-Eu Comprehensive Agreement on Investment and Policy Coordination of the United States and Europe to China." *Contemporary World*, no. 3 (2021): 28. In Chinese 刘作奎.《中欧全面投资协定》与美欧对华政策协调的前景.当代世界,2021,(03):28.

⁴³ "China Global Investment Tracker." The American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation, accessed May 21, 2022, <<https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/>>.

⁴⁴ Zhang, Chao. "The Eu-China Energy Cooperation: Toward a Reciprocal Partnership?". *Asia Europe Journal* 19, no. 2 (2021): 266.

⁴⁵ "The National Remote Sensing Center and Journal of Geodesy and Geoinformation Science Jointly Published the Achievements of the Dragon Project of China-EU Scientific and Technological Cooperation." National Remote

It has been 18 years since the Dragon Program had started in 2004 and it divided 5 stages for every four years. The year of 2020 is the last year of the Dragon-4 cooperation that aimed for stimulating scientific exchange in earth observation science and applications and the year of 2021 is the first year of the Dragon-5. According to the Dragon-4 Cooperation Executive Summary in 2020, the Dragon-4 projects across 8 themes including agriculture, ecosystem, urban, atmosphere and climate, hydrology and cryosphere, solid earth and disaster risk reduction, ocean and calibration, it bringing together 637 scientists and 230 European and Chinese research institutes, which generated many of innovative projects in authoritative journals, such as the Journal of Geodesy and Geoinformation Science used two issues to published the Dragon-4 mid-term achievements⁴⁶. Therefore, the China-EU technology collaboration can facilitate China's technology advance and enhance the competitive capability of technology in the world.

Furthermore, China-EU cooperation accord with China's national plan and interests. As it mentioned above, the Dragon Program has 5 stages, and the Dragon-5 project is from 2021 to 2024, which is also in the period of China's "14th Year Plan". In the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People Republic of China (The Outline), it pointed out that China will further opening-up for win-win cooperation. Regard this, China will establish a new open economy system by four measurements: First, accelerating institutional opening-up, China will set up a series supervise model and regulations that comply with the international trade, which will facilitate the fair competition both for domestic and foreign companies. Second, upgrading the opening-up platforms, China will promote to implement the "zero tariff" for trade in goods and "allow firms in and let them do business" for trade in service in order to achieve the goal of trade liberalization and facilitation. Third, improving the regional

Sensing Center of China, 2021, [online] Available at: <<https://nrsc.cn/p1/dtxwlb/20210203/217.html>>. [accessed January 21, 2022]. In Chinese 国家遥感中心与《Journal of Geodesy and Geoinformation Science》合作出版 中欧科技合作“龙计划”成果. 2021.

⁴⁶ "Dragon 4 Cooperation Executive Summary." National Remote Sensing Center of China and European Space Agency, 2020, [online] Available at: <<https://dragon4.esa.int/e brochure-executive-summary/#/>>. [Accessed March 16, 2022].

opening-up structure, one of the concrete measures for China is to support to build national first-class ports in land that can push them gain more opportunities in trade and investment. Fourth, improving the opening-up security system, it means China will build up risk reduction system in order to guarantee the safety of global supply chain⁴⁷.

Therefore, the EU, as the largest trade partner of China, is a vital economic and technology partner to China. China is implementing its national plan and maintain its national interests by enhancing the cooperation with the EU.

4.1.2 China's Identity

The social constructivism assumes that the identity of one state has decisive effect on its national interests, different identities have various national interests, once its national interest has been set up, the national interests will push the state take multiple actions that accord with its identity to maintain its national interests.

China's identity is more like a friend in Kantian culture while still exist characteristic of rival in Lockean culture. It demonstrates that China will more intend to solve the conflict in a peaceful and non-violent way, and seek to mutual benefit and win-win cooperation during the interaction with other states. Hence, China will take collaboration behaviors rather than competition actions, only the fairness and benign competition exist. However, the identity of rival still exist in China. China will take reciprocal countermeasures to against other states' unfair competition and improper sanctions for keeping its national interests. These behaviors are usually driven by other states passively, not actively. Therefore, China's identity as both a friend and a rival.

From the perspective of history, both ancient China and contemporary China have the tradition to solve the conflict peacefully and govern the people by moral rather regulations. Confucius, the ancient Chinese philosopher, said "govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisement, and they will flee

⁴⁷ The State Council, PRC. *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People Republic of China*. 2021. [online] Available at: <<https://www.fujian.gov.cn/english/>>. [Accessed March 16, 2022].

from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them moral force, keep order among them by ritual and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord”⁴⁸. He also said “Gentlemen seek harmony but not uniformity”⁴⁹. The utterance of Confucius manifests his proposition about how to use virtue and moral to govern the people and what kind of principle that individuals need to follow when interacting with people. Nevertheless, the ancient China also kept its own understanding on diplomacy, especially on how to interact with other states. In the Warring States Period, Fanju, the strategist of Qin, proposed his strategy for Qin to solve the chaotic situation, which is to be friending the distant states while be aware of the nearby states or competing with them. It shows the coexist identities of friend and rival in ancient China.

Even though Confucius’s assertions are usually applied to domestic issues, like how to govern the people or to cope with the civil war, it still has great influence on China’s foreign affairs. In 1953, Zhou Enlai, the former Prime Minister of PRC, proposed Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The five aspects are mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peacefully coexistence. It illustrates that China is of the view that countries with different social system should respect each other and to deal with divergence peacefully under the guidance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. President Xi said at a ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the release of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, that China will build new type of international relations and co-operate to establish a cooperative world follow the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence⁵⁰. It not merely shows that China will develop cooperation relationship with different countries friendly and would like to treat other countries as a friend without ideological bias, but manifests that China will add new

⁴⁸ Confucius. "The Analects." Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 1997. p.13. In Chinese 孔子. 论语. Arthur Waley 译. 北京: 外语教学与研究出版社.

⁴⁹ Ibid p.170

⁵⁰ "Xi Jinping's Speech at the 60th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." Xinhua News Agency, 2014, [online] Available at: <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-06/29/content_2709613.htm>. [Accessed March 17, 2022]. In Chinese 习近平在和平共处五项原则发表 60 周年纪念大会上的讲话. 新华社. 2014.

content to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence according to the new world situation.

There are two Chinese idioms named “The ocean is vast because it admits hundreds of rivers” and “Cross a river in the same boat”. It demonstrates China’s universal value and mutual-help principle. With the rising of China and the changing situation of world order, China increasingly acquire the ability to bear more international responsibility in order to help other countries and the world to develop, which reflects the connotation of the two Chinese idioms. In the Asia financial crisis in 1997, China announced to be a responsible major power, and admitted not to let the RMB depreciate in the risk of economic decrease. It’s the first time that China involve in the international cooperation as a role of responsible major power⁵¹.

As the development of China, China has grown into a country that is the world second-largest economic entity and have great influence on global governance. It continues to put the idea of responsible major country into practice. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has proved the world again China not only have the capability to control the pandemic effectively, but also can provide support to the world to cope with the virus. After China control the COVID-19 domestically in a relatively short period, the Europe has became the epicenter of the pandemic⁵². In response, China has been providing personal medical equipment, such as face mask and medical gloves to the European countries. “More than 10 flights containing millions of masks will be heading to the Czech Republic” at the early stage of the pandemic⁵³. Many entrepreneurs and Chinese transnational companies, such as Jack Ma, the former CEO of Alibaba, and Huawei, the mobile phone technology company, have provided millions of face masks to the European countries. Furthermore, when the world is endeavour to develop the vaccines, the President Xi said in the World

⁵¹ Shuang Liang. "China Is Becoming a Responsible Major Country." Global Times, 2013, [online] Available at: <<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJzGdM>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022]. In Chinese 环球网. 中国负责任大国形象日益确立. 2013.

⁵² Nebehay Stephanie. "Europe Is Epicenter of Coronavirus Pandemic: Who." Reuters, 2020, [online] Available at: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-idUSKBN2102Q0>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁵³ Brian Wong. "China's Mask Diplomacy." The Diplomat, 2020, [online] Available at: <<https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/chinas-mask-diplomacy/>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

Health Assembly that China's vaccine will be the public goods as soon as it finished⁵⁴. It is a great contribution for China to prevent the spread of the virus around the world, this action will make the accessible and affordable, particularly for the developing countries which lack of enough science capability or medical facilities to do research for studying the vaccines. China has become the world largest supplier of vaccines until the first quarter in 2022, it has provider more than 2.1 billion doses of vaccines to more than 120 countries and IGOs. China also encouraged pharmaceutical companies sign agreements on joint production of vaccines with many developing countries, at present , the initial annual production capacity of vaccines has reached over 1 billion doses.

In all, China has the tradition of love peace, and it deeply effects on China's diplomacy at present. As a responsible major power, China bear the responsibility of facilitate to the development and offer many public goods to the world with its increasingly economic power and political weight. Therefore, the identity of China is mainly a friend, not like what Hobbesian culture has described as a enemy, which decides China's efforts is to chase peace and win-win cooperation rather violent and invasion, so cooperate with the EU is accord with China's identity.

4.2 Security Dilemma and Security Community

According to the neorealism theory, one state's behavior of chasing to increase power may cause other states' fear that will urge them to ensure security by enhancing their power, and it will finally leads to power competition, also named security dilemma. So it's important for states to assess state's level of threat to decide if it will increase power to keep safety or not. While the social constructivism theory assumes that whether the security dilemma or the security community occurs depend on the shared ideals between states. China didn't regard the EU as a security threat, both China and the EU even shared some ideas on some issues that may help to form the security community.

⁵⁴ Wheaton Sarah. "Chinese Vaccine Would Be 'Global Public Good,' Xi Says." Politico, 2020, [online] Available at: <<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/18/chinese-vaccine-would-be-global-public-good-xi-says-265039>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

The EU identifies China as a systematic competitor in its 2019 report, highlighting how the Chinese government's governance model departs from the EU's values. As a result, the EU has often accused China of violating human rights and labor norms, citing its state capitalism model and financial assistance for state-owned enterprises as examples of unfair market competition. As a result, it is apparent that systemic rivalry is more concerned with political security than with military security. On the one hand, this shows that the EU does not see China as a major military security threat, and neither does China; on the other hand, it demonstrates that the disagreements between China and the EU are more related to political security, and that China is stepping up its collaboration and discussion with the EU to ensure its own political security, in the process of which a consensus or shared idea is gradually forming between China and the EU.

4.2.1 The Threat Level of the EU in the Eyes of China

There are four aspects that influence the level of threat: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions. Take these four aspects as the starting point to measure the threat level of the EU in the eyes of China, it can be concluded that the EU's level of threat is low for China.

Firstly, the aggregate power. In the report of Most Powerful Countries released in 2022 by U.S. News and World Report, China takes the second position after the US, while in the top 10 most powerful countries, only France and Germany, as the EU member states, are on the list⁵⁵. According to this report, China's GDP is \$14.3 trillion in 2021, but both Germany and France GDP in total is \$6.62 trillion, only take account 46% of China's GDP. Not to mention the population, China has 1.41 billion population, while Germany and France have 150.3 million population in total⁵⁶. Therefore, there is no single country of the EU can exceed China's comprehensive power. It's hard for all the EU member states to surpass the aggregate power of China. For China, it is not necessary to worry about any single country belongs to the EU

⁵⁵ "Most Powerful Countries." U.S. News and World Report, 2022, [online] Available at: <<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/rankings/power>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁵⁶ Ibid.

will beyond China and become the world most powerful country.

Secondly, the geographic proximity. It means the size of the national strategic delivery capacity is related to the distance between countries⁵⁷. The greater the distance between the two countries, the greater the demand on the strategic delivery capacity of the state, and vice versa. As a result, countries are more likely to worry about neighbouring countries than distant ones, also, take the neighbouring countries as threat. If we take the Ural Mountains, the boundary of Eurasia, as the end of Europe, and Beijing, the capital of China, as the starting point, then the distance between China and Europe is 4476km, and if we set the end to the central Europe in general, the number is 7127km according to the Google Earth⁵⁸. Furthermore, if we need to travel from Beijing to Lisbon, located in the the far west of Europe, it will take more than 10 hours and the distance we'll be flying over 9200km⁵⁹. Apparently, the distance between the EU and China is great, it's a problem for the EU to send their rapid response force to China in a short time. What's more, there are many buffer zones between the EU and China that provide a plenty of time for China to military mobilization, and increase the time for the EU to send their troops to China's territory. It means, from the perspective of the geographic proximity, China have enough time to deploy its army and won't worry the EU will send their soldier in less time.

Thirdly, the offensive power. It relates with the aggregate power, but different from it. The offensive power means one state can threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost⁶⁰. In 2022, China's defense budget is more than 250 billion dollars, while France's defense budget is around 40 billion dollars⁶¹. The number of fighter aircraft in China is 1200, which is four times as many as France, and the number of armored vehicles, aircraft carries and

⁵⁷ Walt, Stephen M. "Explaining Alliance Formation." Chap. 2 In *The Origins of Alliances*, 21-22. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

⁵⁸ "Google Earth Map." Google Earth, 2022, [online] Available at: <<https://earth.google.com/web/>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Walt, Stephen M. "Explaining Alliance Formation." Chap. 2 In *The Origins of Alliances*, 21-22. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

⁶¹ "Comparison of China and France Military Strengths." Global Fire Power, 2022, [online] Available at: <<https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-comparison-detail.php?country1=china&country2=france>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

submarines also outnumber France⁶². Moreover, France is the only member states of the EU to possess nuclear weapons and it has 290 warheads while China possess around 350 warheads according to the data of the Arms Control Association⁶³. Additionally, under the principle of mutual assured destruction, neither country with nuclear weapons would dare to launch a nuclear war against the other because the other has the ability to strike a second time after a strike, and the result would be the destruction of both sides. Hence, China and Europe believe in keeping the peace between them, and there is no reason for China to treat the EU as a security threat since both it's difficult for the EU to surpass China and have the equivalent military power as China.

Lastly, the aggressive intentions. Countries with great intentions to intrude other countries are more likely to be seen as a threat⁶⁴. The lessons from the World War I and World War II taught the Europe that launched a war cannot solve the problem, only peace is the way for the European countries to recover and prosper from the war, which finally lead the European countries to the integration and established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The establishment of the ECSC fundamentally solved the problem of Germany as the source of war, and led Germany to the road of state normalization, promoted the continuous progress of European integration, and facilitated the economic development of European countries. It shows that the EU as a whole has no intention of aggression, so China won't take the EU as a security threat.

In all, China does not view the EU as a security challenge according to four factors that measure the threat, even though the EU keep trying to increase its autonomous power to protect itself, it won't stimulate China to develop military power to balance out the EU's efforts, not only it because the gap in military strength between China and the EU is obvious, and it is difficult for the EU to bridge it in a

⁶² "Comparison of China and France Military Strengths." Global Fire Power, 2022, accessed March 17, 2022, <<https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-comparison-detail.php?country1=china&country2=france>>.

⁶³ "Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance." Arms Control Association, 2022, [online] Available at: <<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁶⁴ Walt, Stephen M. "Explaining Alliance Formation." Chap. 2 In *The Origins of Alliances*, 21-22. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

short time, but also China realized gradually that the EU can be a helpful partner in the process of interaction, which will be further explained in the follow section.

4.2.2 The Common Knowledge Between China and the EU

One of the most important factors of the constructivism is common knowledge, also can be seen as culture, according to Wendt's definition. The common knowledge is an interaction-level phenomenon, it involves actors' beliefs about each other's rationality, strategies, preferences, and beliefs, as well as about actor's perception of the external world, any specific cultural forms, such as norms, rules and institutions, are constructed by common knowledge, in other words, only private knowledge exists until countries form shared knowledge through interaction⁶⁵. What's more, actors' common perceptions and expectations in a specific international environment construct actors' identity and interest. When actors' common knowledge makes them have a high degree of mutual trust, even the conflict of interest exist, they believe that it can be solved peacefully, and the result is the formation of security community. But security dilemma can arise when actors assume the worst of each other. However, whether the emergence of security dilemma or security community, the key factor lies in the common knowledge between actors.

Applied here, the interaction between China and the EU facilitate both sides to form common knowledge in some areas that they can strengthen cooperation and benefit from it. It has been almost twenty years since the establishment of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership in 2003, during that time, the China-EU relations have been developing steadily. China released its second policy paper on the EU in 2014, which focus on reaffirmed the importance of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership. It pointed out that the China-EU relations have entered a new era and therefore need to build partnership for peace, growth, reform and civilization⁶⁶. Consequently, the President Xi and the President of the European

⁶⁵ Wendt, Alexander. "Structure, Agency, and Culture." Chap. 4 In *Social Theory of International Politics*, 160. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. *China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Cooperation*. 2014.

Council, the President of the European Commission jointly released a statement said that both sides agreed to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the EU⁶⁷. In 2022, the President Xi said China and the EU share broad common interests and a solid foundation for cooperation, China's vision about building the "four partnership" has not changed, and it is all the more relevant under the current circumstances⁶⁸. This shows that China has repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of China-EU relations in its interactions with the EU, the common knowledge of China and the EU is to carry out bilateral and multilateral cooperation to promote the reform and development of both sides on the basis of abiding by international law and institutions and in the context of the return of geopolitical competition between major powers. That is to say the mutual trust that China and the EU have gradually built up over the course of their interactions, they believe that cooperation in certain areas, such as climate change, biodiversity, sustainable development, public health and other issues related with global governance or crisis management, can help both sides achieve greater benefits and contribute to their security, so it is easier to form a security community in such an environment. Take climate change as an example, as climate change poses more and more challenges to the world's natural environment, China and the EU are aware that the challenges brought by climate change cannot be met by one country alone. It's necessary to build a security community to cope with the climate change which "sharply reduces the risk of an unmanageable security environment, and helps manage the unavoidable consequences of climate change"⁶⁹. After the Trump administration announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, it brought about negative impacts on global climate governance and undermined the multilateral cooperation mechanism on climate change, while with China's growing international influence, not only the EU has realized the importance of China in the

⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. *Joint Statement Deepening the China-Eu Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit*. 2014.

⁶⁸ "Xi Jinping Met with European Council President Michel and European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen." *New Type of International Relations*, 2022, [online] Available at: <http://cn.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/node_8020224.shtml>. [Accessed March 17, 2022]. In Chinese 习近平会见欧洲理事会主席米歇尔和欧盟委员会主席冯德莱恩. 习近平外交思想和新时代中国外交-新型国际关系. 2022.

⁶⁹ Mabey, Nick. *What Does the Security Community Need from a Global Climate Regime?* : E3G, 2009. [online] Available at: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17866>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

field of climate change, but also China has seen the benefits that can be brought by participating in climate governance, such as the improvement of national image internationally. Therefore, at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2021, China committed to peak Co2 emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. It manifests that China and the EU share same ideas on climate change and want to take action collectively to decrease the security challenges brought by climate change.

To better understand how China is contributing to the formation of common knowledge in its interactions with the EU, the researcher collected statements from Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons for three months before and after this point in time, using the introduction of the EU-China Strategic Outlook in March 12, 2019 as a marker. In the March 13, 2019, the spokesperson, when asked how he or she viewed the document issued by the relevant EU defining the EU-China relationship as competitive, said that China always views and develops its relationship with the EU from a strategic and long-term perspective and hopes that the European side will view China's development objectively, rationally, and fairly. On April 10, when asked how he felt about the media portraying China and Europe as having many disparities and that a joint statement could not be reached, the spokesman responded that it was normal for China and Europe to have differing viewpoints on some issues, and that the publication of the joint statement demonstrated that those discrepancies could be properly resolved through dialogue and consultation. Asked on March 11 how he thought about the European Parliament's claim that China's increased technological presence in the EU posed a serious security threat, the spokesperson responded that "beggar-thy-neighbor approach (以邻为壑)" was not in line with the direction of globalization, let alone the inevitable direction of scientific and technological development, and that China would continue to provide a fair and equitable environment for China-EU cooperation in various fields, including scientific and

technological cooperation⁷⁰. In subsequent questions about technology, the spokesperson also repeatedly stated that China will continue to strengthen cooperation with the EU and further provide a more reliable, fair and transparent market environment. This shows that China has adopted a more moderate attitude when it comes to differences in the economic and technological fields. It is in the common interest of China and Europe to advocate a peaceful solution to disputes and to oppose unilateral behavior.

As a result, though the EU define China as systemic rival, the mutual trust built through interaction between China and the EU not only enables the two sides to share common views on certain issues and realize that they need each other's support on certain issues, but also enables China to perceive the need to establish a mutual trust mechanism with Europe to promote China-EU cooperation.

4.3 The China-EU Relations and BRI

This section take the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an example to give further explanation about the research question, which is how China use BRI as a way to deepen the relationship with the EU, at the same time, achieve its national goals. The section will firstly present a brief introduction about the BRI, then it will focus on two sides: how China uses the BRI as a way to balance power, and how China shapes international structure by the BRI.

4.3.1 The Belt and Road Initiative

With the rise of emerging countries, the Asia-Pacific region, or Indo-Pacific region, has gradually become the core region leading global economic growth, and China's growing economic power and political influence has made it the core country in the region. China became world's second largest economy in 2010 and became the greatest power in the global trade of goods in 2013, China's contribution to global growth is enormous, and its economic growth is increasingly dependent on foreign

⁷⁰ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Remarks." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019, [online] Available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/index_25.shtml>. [Accessed May 22, 2022].

trade and investment⁷¹. Moreover, as Obama came to power and put forward the “Asia-Pacific rebalancing” strategy, the national strategic focus of the United States gradually shifted to the Asia-Pacific region and tightened its containment of the region, especially China, at the same time, the external international environment facing China became increasingly severe.

Under the above background, China has taken a series of diplomatic actions to adapt to the changes in the international environment. Among them, the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013 is the most representative. The BRI is at the top of national cooperation initiative, mainly includes the “new silk road economic belt” and “Marine silk road in the 21st century”. The “new Eurasia land bridge”, one of the six major economic corridor of the new silk road economic belt, connects China and European countries, to promote China-EU economic cooperation. The first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in 2017. At the opening ceremony of the forum, President Xi Jinping said that “we should build the Belt and Road into a road of prosperity.”⁷². Since then, cooperation projects under the framework of the BRI have increased rapidly, benefiting many countries along the routes. Therefore, the BRI, as a part of China’s foreign policy, not only is a significant initiative for China’s economic growth, also a response to the change of international environment with Chinese characteristics.

4.3.2 The Balance of Power and BRI

The balance of power, as one of the most important core concepts of neorealism, follow the same premises of neorealism, which includes states are the main actors in international relations and its primary objective is obtain security. Therefore, states intend to enhance its strengths and powers to secure itself from external threats, or form alliances to balance other states’ power. Moreover, it’s vital for a state to choose

⁷¹ Haoguang Liang, Yaojun Zhang. "Arctic Shipping Routes: A “New Balance” Strategy for the Maritime Silk Road." Chap. 12 In *The Theoretical System of Belt and Road Initiative*, 63. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019.

⁷² "Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road by Xi Jinping." Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2017, [online] Available at: <<http://2017.beltandroadforum.org/english/n100/2018/0306/c25-1038.html>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

which way to balance the power between states. A state usually chooses a relatively weak side to against a powerful state through cooperation or alliance with them. Another reason why countries choose balance is that the goals of powerful state may conflict with other states that states need to find partners to offset its threat⁷³.

With the competition between China and the US become more and more fierce, China is no longer willing to accept a passive role in its relationship with the United States, but is seeking a new type of relationship with the US that is more equal⁷⁴, and China starts to pursue economic globalization and provide public good to the world in order to prevent emergence of a coalition in the current order⁷⁵, and against the repressive measures of the US, such as retaliate and economic sanctions. The BRI is a feasible way to carry out the goal. Because of its relative weakness, the EU has often been the arena of Sino-US competition. Since Obama came to power, the national strategic focus of the United States has gradually shifted to the Asia-Pacific region, making Europe doubt whether the United States has the ability and willingness to continue to provide security protection for Europe, and the transatlantic alliance has appeared cracks, which is more serious after Trump took office. Therefore, in this context, China sees through economic cooperation under the framework of BRI can bring benefit to the EU and gain the EU's support on some issues, meanwhile, it can alleviate China's strategic pressure when compete with the US, of course by BRI China can also reduce the pressure of domestic energy of excess capacity, to realize the steady development of economy.

For one thing, by establishing partnership under the framework of the BRI, the ties between China and the EU have been strengthened. Firstly, the economic cooperation between two sides has achieved considerable achievements. In 2013, the value of turnover fulfilled of contracted projects of the Belt and Road was about 13.71 million US dollars, and the figure reached 17.29 million US dollars in 2019. In terms

⁷³ Shiffrinson, Joshua. "The Rise of China, Balance of Power Theory and US National Security: Reasons for Optimism?". *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 2 (2018): 182.

⁷⁴ Huang, Yukon. "China's Impact on the Global Balance of Power." Chap. 9 In *Cracking the China Conundrum: Why Conventional Economic Wisdom Is Often Wrong*, 1-23. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

⁷⁵ Paul, T. V., and Zhen Han. "China's Rise and Balance of Power Politics." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 1 (2020): 9.

of the number of laborers overseas by end of year , there were 482611 in 2013 and 606102 in 2018⁷⁶. Secondly, the distance between China and the EU has been further narrowed⁷⁷. The China Railway Express, as the “steel camel” caravan along Belt and Road routes, have played an important role in strengthening the links between China and Europe, greatly reducing the time and cost for freight between China and Europe. In 2013, a total of 80 trips made by China Railway Express, and in 2020, the number reached 12,406. There were just two routes to Europe in 2013, and 23 by 2020. Of the 13 regular freight train services, nine travel to European countries, carrying goods ranging from clothing, drinks and toys to electronics, machinery parts and optical cables, etc. For example, the route named Yuxinou starts from Chongqing, China to Duisburg, Germany. It takes 16 days to transport laptops, machinery, auto parts and clothing to Europe. It will take more than a month to carry these items by ship to Germany, reducing the huge transportation cost for Chinese and European companies⁷⁸. Thirdly, the economy of western China has also been developed through international trade. The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region’s trade with countries along the Belt and Road is growing faster than the national level, according to 2017 data. In 2013, the total value of imports and exports of foreign-funded enterprises in Ningxia was \$3,49084,000, and in 2017 it was \$636,586,000⁷⁹. In terms of foreign trade, the imports and exports of operating units of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was \$2,21,6710,000, compared with \$5,03,9517,000 in 2017⁸⁰.

For another thing, since the EU is an intergovernmental international organization that consist of 27 member states, different member states have various national interests that decide some EU-level policy decisions cannot gain the full support of a majority of member states to take effect, so a member state’s policy preferences are particularly important. Therefore, by strengthening the cooperation

⁷⁶ "China's Statistics and International Statistics." Belt and Road Portal, 2022, [online] Available at: <<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/dsjym.htm>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁷⁷ Haoguang Liang, Yaojun Zhang. "Arctic Shipping Routes: A “New Balance” Strategy for the Maritime Silk Road." Chap. 12 In *The Theoretical System of Belt and Road Initiative*, 65. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019.

⁷⁸ "Trips Made by China Railway Express" Data Overview of China Railway Express Services, Belt and Road Portal, 2022, [online] Available at: <<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/numdata.htm>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁷⁹ "China's Statistics and International Statistics." Belt and Road Portal, 2022, accessed March 17, 2022, <<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/dsjym.htm>>.

⁸⁰ Ibid

with some specific EU member states through BRI, the support of the country can be obtained on some issues, so as to influence the formulation of EU's policy on China. Take Italy as an example, both economically and historically, Italy is closely linked with China. Historically, Italy was the end of the ancient Silk Road, and a large amount of porcelain was shipped to Italy from China. Economically, China has been taking active actions to establish close economic ties with Italy under the framework of BRI, "since 2013, when the BRI was established, China has signed 11 bilateral agreements with Italy"⁸¹. In 2019, Italy became the first EU member and G7 country to sign the memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the BRI⁸². In the MOU, both sides committed to strengthen cooperation in terms of trade, agriculture, environment and education, the Italy government also show its enthusiasm and ambitious "plan to develop its northern ports and the InvestItalia program and promote mutually beneficial cooperation in all fields"⁸³. As a core member states of the EU and G7, Italy's support to the BRI largely reflects the EU's changing attitude to BRI as a whole.

Through cooperation with the EU, on the one hand, China can promote the development of the EU and the process of the EU integration by bilateral trade and investment cooperation, which also means increase the power of the EU to counterbalance the US containment policy against China, at the same time, China can also benefit from bilateral cooperation with the EU to enhance its own strength. On the other hand, by providing economic benefits, China can also gain support from some EU member states on certain issues, and further influencing the EU's policy making on China. Therefore, although the EU defines China as a systemic rival which shows that the EU and China "continues to be too wide on geopolitics and trust for them to live up to their ambitious rhetoric on security cooperation"⁸⁴, China still

⁸¹ Paul, T. V., and Zhen Han. "China's Rise and Balance of Power Politics." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 1 (2020): 11.

⁸² Belt and Road Portal. "Joint Communiqué of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Italy on Strengthening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership." 2019, [online] Available at: <<https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/sbwj/83656.htm>>. [Accessed March 16, 2022].

⁸³ "Xi, Conte Hold Talks on Elevating China-Italy Ties into New Era." The State Council, PRC, 2019, [online] Available at: <http://english.www.gov.cn/news/top_news/2019/03/24/content_281476576831676.htm>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁸⁴ Barton, B. "The Belt-and-Road Initiative as a Paradigm Change for European Union-China Security

wants to build a new type of major power relations with the EU by economic cooperation.

4.3.3 China Shapes International Structure and BRI

Unlike neorealism, constructivism holds that anarchy is not fixed, but evolved. Actors follow the logic of reciprocity that practice among actors will promote the emergence of common knowledge and ideas, because common ideas won't be generated until the actor starts to interact with each other in international platform, and it will further lead to the emergence of anarchy culture. In that logic, anarchy culture is also evolved. According to Wendt's theory, there are three anarchy culture and Lockean anarchy culture is in the prime position, but states with new ideas can reconstruct the anarchy culture and generate new one.

In the process of development, China has put forward many new diplomatic concepts, such as the peaceful development, a community of shared future for mankind and the new type of major power relations, etc. The BRI puts these ideas into practice and gradually diffuses Chinese ideas to other countries. Therefore, as an essential partner of the BRI, the European countries also influenced by these ideas, which can be illustrated as follows:

Firstly, the BRI is bringing Chinese diplomatic ideas to Europe. With many years high-speed development, China has become the world second-biggest economy, its socialist economic development model with Chinese characteristics has attracted the attention of many European countries, especially under the background of the large gap in economic level between the "Old Europe" and the "New Europe" and the slow economic growth of European countries. Countries like Greece, Italy and the central and east European countries (CEEC) are willing to try different measures to promote its economic growth⁸⁵. The infrastructure building projects of the BRI and its ideas just correspond those countries needs. As one of the world biggest public goods the provided by China, the Belt and Road is a inclusive economic cooperation initiative

Cooperation? The Case of Central Asia." *Asia Eur J* (Apr 27 2021): 1.

⁸⁵ Vangelis, Anastas. "The Normative Foundations of the Belt and Road Initiative." Chap. 3 In *Normative Readings of the Belt and Road Initiative*, 59-66. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018.

that take consultation, contribution and shared benefits as the “golden principles”⁸⁶. Under the guidance of these three principles, the BRI sets five cooperation priorities includes Policy Coordination, Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade, Financial Integration and People-to-people Bond. Whether it is in policy formulation or the implementation of specific infrastructure projects, the BRI insists on cooperation with the consent of all the participants. It manifests that participants should cooperate with each other on the basis of equal and mutual benefits. In 2016, Xi Jinping pointed out that China will “cooperate closely to promote a closer integration of China-CEEC cooperation with the ‘Belt and Road’ construction”⁸⁷ when he attends the Opening Ceremony of Silk Road Forum and China-Poland Regional Cooperation and Business Forum. At the same time period, China and Poland agree to establish comprehensive strategic partnership. The President Andrzej Duda of Poland said under the framework of Poland-China comprehensive strategic partnership, Poland will promote the cooperation with China in terms of the BRI as well as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) , making Poland a portal to Europe for China⁸⁸. It manifests that China’s ideas, for example, participants should cooperate with each other on the basis of equal and mutual benefits, are widely accepted by European countries.

Secondly, the BRI can bring Chinese standards to Europe. China’s High-Speed Rail (HSR) have developed rapidly in recent years, from total rail mileage to maximum speed per single train, China has successfully made its HSR as competitive as France’s Alstom high-speed trains through independent innovation, research and development. While China is building high-speed rail at home, it is also actively promoting it to other countries by the BRI. The Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Rail Project is China’s first overseas high-speed rail project and the first in Southeast Asia with a maximum design speed of 350 km/h, and the De Karur station, as the terminate

⁸⁶ "The Daily Telegraph Publishes a Signed Article by Ambassador Liu Xiaoming Entitled Consultation, Contribution and Shared Benefits -- the Golden Principles of Bri." Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2018, [online] Available at: <<https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceuk/eng/ambassador/dsjhjcf/2018remarks/t1545549.htm>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁸⁷ "Xi Jinping's Speech in the Opening Ceremony of Silk Road Forum and China-Poland Regional Cooperation and Business Forum." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016, [online] Available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjfb_673085/zzjg_673183/xos_673625/index_30.shtml>. [Accessed March 17, 2022].

⁸⁸ Ibid.

station of the rail, is the only station constructed by a Chinese company⁸⁹. However, many developed countries have applied its own railway standard, particularly in the Europe. Due to the European integration, the European Train Control System (ETCS) has been established to coordinate different train control system among member states, so trains “equipped with different train control transponders could not operate in Europe without harmonizing the ETCS’ block system and train detection mechanism”⁹⁰. Its hamper China to diffuse its standard on HSR. To better promote Chinese HSR standard to the world, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of People’s Republic of China released Special Action Guide for Promoting Quality Upgrading of Equipment Manufacturing Industry in 2017. The document points out that new economic advantages with technology, standards and brands as the core should be formed by means of railway interconnection in neighboring areas, so as to promote international cooperation in production capacity and equipment manufacturing and further implement the BRI⁹¹. Therefore, with the support of national policy, China is strengthening cooperation with European countries on railway technical standards to varying degrees, despite facing high licensing fees and research and develop costs. For instance, the China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) outputs “standards related to track work, train operation and service provision on the Budapest-Belgrade HSR project” and set “research lab in Belgrade to work on the harmonization of Chinese trains”⁹².

Even though the European countries still have some issues with China on market access and technology standard, or define China as a systemic rival, China still wants to achieve win-win cooperation with European countries by providing global public

⁸⁹ "China's High-Speed Rail, to the World." ChinaDaily, 2021, [online] Available at: <<https://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202105/27/WS60af3691a3101e7ce9751f57.html>>. [Accessed March 17, 2022]. In Chinese 中国高铁, 走向世界. 中国日报中文网. 2021.

⁹⁰ Yan, Karl. "Rethinking China's Quest for Railway Standardization: Competition and Complementation." *Journal of Chinese Governance* 7, no. 1 (2020): 118.

⁹¹ Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of People’s Republic of China. *Special Action Guide for Promoting Quality Upgrading of Equipment Manufacturing Industry*. 2017. [online] Available at: <http://www.miit.gov.cn/ztzl/lstz/zgzz2025/wjfb/art/2020/art_a59f5419dbbb4bacb92f35af07ae8c49.html>. [Accessed March 16, 2022]. In Chinese 《促进装备制造业质量品牌提升专项行动指南》. 中华人民共和国工业和信息化部. 2017.

⁹² Yan, Karl. "Rethinking China's Quest for Railway Standardization: Competition and Complementation." *Journal of Chinese Governance* 7, no. 1 (2020): 124.

goods, such as the BRI. Because through the BRI, on the one hand, China can promote its own diplomatic ideas and, in practice, provide them to other countries that are suspicious of China. On the other hand, China can promote its own standards to enhance its international competitiveness and gain a greater advantage in economic cooperation.

5. Conclusion

To be concluded, building the new type of power relations with the EU is China's long-term foreign policy that won't change sharply because the EU defines China as a systemic rival or competitor. As a part of new type of power relations, the China-EU relations is based on China's objective judgment of European strength and positive outlook for the development of European integration and strategic autonomy, it also responds to the objective needs of China's diplomatic theory construction and development⁹³.

From the perspective of neorealism, cooperation with Europe is in China's national interest. First of all, the cooperation between China and Europe is a mutually beneficial and win-win situation. Whether in economy, trade, investment or scientific and technological cooperation, the development of relations with Europe is conducive to China's further reform and opening up, which is in line with China's development plan. Second, there is no fundamental conflict of security interests between China and the EU. China does not view Europe as a challenge to its national security because Europe poses a low level of security threat to China, both in terms of military strength and offensive intent. Finally, cooperation with Europe not only helps China pursue its Belt and Road initiative, but also allows China to leverage Europe as a counterweight to the United States. So even if Europe defines China as a systemic rival, China still sees Europe as an important strategic partner, especially in light of the deepening divisions in the transatlantic alliance in recent years, the EU is becoming aware of the

⁹³ Jing, Long. "The Development of the Concept of "New Type of Major-Country Relations" and China-EU Relations in Diplomatic Practice." Paper presented at the The fourteenth Annual Conference of Shanghai Social Science, Shanghai, 2016. p.544-548. In Chinese 龙静. "新型大国关系"理念发展与外交实践中的中欧关系". 治国理政: 新理念·新思想·新战略——上海市社会科学界第十四届学术年会文集 (2016 年度).

importance of reducing the influence of the US factor in European affairs and the need to move toward strategic autonomy.

In the eyes of constructivism, China's national identity determines its national interests and influences its behavior. First, China's identity is closer to that of a Friend in Kantian culture, but also of a rival in Lockean culture. Traditional Chinese cultural ideas, such as harmonious development and moral governance, have profoundly influenced China's foreign policy. In its foreign relations, China has always adhered to an equal, friendly and cooperative attitude in developing relations with other countries, hoping to solve problems in a peaceful and non-conflict way and promote prosperity and stability of the world. But in the face of other countries' oppression, China has also taken corresponding measures to counter it, showing the "rival" side of China's identity. In particular, when faced with other countries' interference in China's internal affairs, such as the Hong Kong and Taiwan issues, China takes a tougher stance, resolutely opposes other countries' interference in China's internal affairs, and firmly defends China's sovereignty and national interests. Second, a series of common ideas and knowledge emerged in the process of interaction between China and the EU. Both sides hope to strengthen the China-EU strategic partnership and promote peace, growth, reform and civilization between China and the EU. Finally, China is also shaping the international structure and spreading its own diplomatic ideas in its foreign relations. Through the BRI, China has strengthened policy consultation and financial investment with European countries. For example, the Piraeus port in Greece has become an important BRI project⁹⁴, and China has increased scientific research, development and investment in Europe, thus promoting the application of Chinese technical standards in Europe.

Therefore, no matter how the international landscape changes or the EU defines China as a systemic rival and competitor, China is always willing to develop relations with Europe and always supports the European integration process and Europe's efforts to seek strategic autonomy. Although there may be differences in values

⁹⁴ Liu, Chunrong. "Framing China–Eu Sub-Regional Cooperation: The Elusive Pursuit of Normative Resonance?". Chap. 3 In *One Belt, One Road, One Story*, 49. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

between China and Europe on some issues in this process, or influence from third-party forces, such as the United States⁹⁵. China still hope that a healthy relationship with the EU will balance American power and promote China to increase its influence in Europe and internationally. This is not only determined by China's national identity, but also because a united, stable and prosperous EU is in China's interests more than a fragile and divided one. As President Xi Jinping stated, China and Europe are the world's two great civilizations, and while differences between civilizations are natural, they should not be a barrier to the growth of China-EU ties⁹⁶. China and EU should respect one another, explore common ground while keeping differences in collaboration, expand discussion and exchange, and foster healthy bilateral ties.

⁹⁵ Da, Yang. "The Construction of a New Type of "Asymmetric" Major-Country Relationship between China and Europe under the Transformation of European Development." *Guizhou Social Sciences* 315, no. 3 (2020): 54-56. In Chinese 杨达. 欧洲发展转型下的中欧“非对称性”新型大国关系构建. 贵州社会科学. 2020.

⁹⁶ Yinhua, Rao. "Analysis of Xi Jinping's Important Assertions on the Development of a New Type of Major Power Relations. Study Monthly." *Study Monthly* 664, no. 12 (2016): 20-21. In Chinese 饶银华. 习近平发展新型大国关系重要论断解析. 学习月刊. 2016.

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