We are the same: the invisible source of china's popularity in developing countries

Ian Tsung-yen Chen
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Abstract

In its competition to garner cooperation and support from developing countries, China has not been less exploitive compared to other great powers. It isn't more technologically advanced and economically abundant or more generous in providing assistance, neither does it possess more management experience compared to former colonisers. Despite its disadvantages, however, China's popularity has risen over the past two decades, and rationalist theories on common threats or the correction of market failure do not offer the full picture of why this is. In this paper, I argue that China's popularity can be explained through the lens of self-categorization theory (SCT), which delineates an invisible line for developing countries to recognise China as an ingroup member. Five social categories are identified for group cohesiveness. They are a country's development level, colonial history, regime type, geographical location, and culture. Quantitative evidence shows that while dealing with global affairs, solidarity between China and developing countries is more likely to occur when there are qualitative similarities on the development level, colonial history, and regime type.

Introduction

China's engagement in developing countries over the past decade has seen progress in garnering support on international issues (Gowan and Brantner, 2008) as it secures more natural resources from abroad (Lai, 2007) and exports overpopulated Chinese labor and manufactured goods. Beijing's success is exemplified with the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 and their holding the Beijing summit of Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2006, which drew the attendance of 35 heads of state or heads of government, and state representatives from 48 African countries. Moreover, according to several public pools and surveys conducted by the media or research institutions, Beijing's international image and reputation among developing countries are improving, and in several aspects, they even outperform the United States (BBC, 2006; Xie and Page, 2013). For example, in a cross-national survey conducted in Africa, Sautman and Hairong (2009) found that 61.1% of the African respondents considered China, as a rising power, potentially beneficial to Africa, and 71.1% respondents considered China's policies in Africa more beneficial, if not equally beneficial, than Western countries. In the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project in 2013, about 59% of people living in the developing world hold a favorable view toward China while 53% favor the United States; 54% respondents see China as a partner while only 48% consider the United States the same way; 11% people see China as an enemy and 22% consider the United States an enemy. The trend over the past decade in general has reflected China's rising popularity in the developing world.[1]

In competing with its Western counterparts to tap into developing countries, China's surging popularity among developing countries remains a question, especially when taking into account its approach, which does not seem to be more benign. In addition, China is not more technologically advanced and economically abundant or more generous in providing assistance, neither does it possess better development or management experience compared to former colonisers. From this aspect, it is puzzling why China continues to enjoy more material resources and improve its image. Rational calculations are not the only factors influencing the perception of China in the developing world. An alternative explanation may be that China appeals to developing countries with its qualitative sameness, an invisible weapon adopted to elevate its social network. This is a key to maintaining *guanxi*, a strategy that puts emphasis on common traits and what the Chinese are adept in using to manage personal relationships (Gold et al., 2002). During the first Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) ministerial

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[1] The poll data comes from Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project regarding opinion of China and the United States. All data is available at http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/overview/.

conference in 2000 in Beijing, then Chinese president Jiang Zemin noted in his opening remark that 'China is the largest developing country in the world and Africa is the continent with the largest number of developing countries. At the turn of the millennium and century, China and Africa are faced with both historical opportunities for greater development and unprecedented challenges' (Jiang, 2000). Dai Bingguo, an important figure in initiating Chinese foreign policy under the Hu Jintao administration, said in December 2010 that 'even if China becomes stronger, it will remain a member of the developing world and will continue to stand by the developing countries and work in unity with them for common development' (Dai, 2013). In a speech at a UN occasion in 2013, Wang Min, Deputy Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the United Nations said that 'China is still a developing country. We still have over 100 million people who are still living under the poverty line by international standards' (Wang, 2013). As a rapidly-rising power, we see more often that China rejects coercive rhetoric and behavior but instead puts emphasis on its inferior developmental status. Is this the signal China intends to send to reassure others of its rise, or is it a strategy to create commonality? Is this rhetorical strategy working? If it is working, how does it work?

This research investigates the effect of national qualitative similarity on states behaviors. Unlike most extant literatures that attribute China's popularity to rational incentives provided to developing countries, I introduce self-categorization theory (SCT) in the field of social psychology to this research and propose that China's popularity is a function of common qualitative properties. In applying SCT, I investigate the relationship between group distinctiveness and states' subsequent behaviors. I argue that countries' external behaviors can be explained by how categorically similar they perceive themselves with other countries. Developing countries are more likely to act in favor of, or in tandem with, those with whom they share greater inherent similarity as they categorise themselves within the same ingroup. In comparing qualitative features of developing countries with China, there are more commonalities than a comparison between developing countries and developed countries; China is therefore perceived in a more positive way. On the other hand, developing countries would have a less favorable view toward advanced or developed countries due to their greater social categorical distance. Beijing's rising popularity thus stems from such invisible psychological perception. In this paper, I identify five social categories that matter to developing countries and that often form different international or regional organizations. They are the level of development, colonial history, regime type, geographical location, and culture. Using an ordinary least squares (OLS) model, I test whether these social categories have an effect on state behaviors. The result supports the main argument.

In the next section, I briefly discuss how rationalist international relations (IR) theories cannot provide the whole picture to China's popularity. Section three discusses SCT and how to apply it to the field of IR. Section four discusses social categories adopted and variable operationalization used in the regression analysis. Section five presents the result and section six concludes the paper.

Critique of rational approaches

Existing literature shows China's popularity through the lenses of rational IR theories that demonstrate the effect of material incentives. A realist would argue that states get together for common threats (Walt, 1987). Western countries' intention to interfere with domestic affairs in developing and non-democratic countries is the perceived threat that unites China and the developing world. This is manifested in Beijing's close relationship with African, Central Asian, and Southeast Asian countries through the frameworks of FOCAC, SCO, and ASEAN. However, as China rises, it is also prone to becoming an insatiable power that seeks more resources and causes trouble (Alden, 2005; Friedberg, 2005). The potential behavioral shift ought to generate concerns for exploitation or occupation, rather than welcoming arms, among developing countries as they should be cautious about, and alarmed by, Beijing's excursion in their resources and territory. In addition, with its growing status, China is more and more likely to change the international system by narrowing potential profits and costs (Gilpin, 1981). Beijing should be more and more seen and perceived as a potential threat, rather than a reliable partner. Furthermore, since land-based powers with strong army forces are often more prepared for invasion (Levy and Thompson, 2010), China's land-based military power is likely to constitute a threat to its neighboring countries. In sum, while realist arguments associate the rise of China with stronger negative perceptions from the developing world, the theory is not supported by several global and regional polls and surveys demonstrated in the beginning of the article.

A liberalist perspective may offer a better explanation at first glance. It argues that China's popularity comes from the unconditional assistances it has offered, which developed countries prefer over conditional offers that often come along with the interference of domestic affairs. The principle of non-interference, as a consequence, lessens concerns of a weakened dictatorial power in the developing world (Esteban, 2009), and makes China's official development assistance more popular. A more desired interdependent relationship is thus created, where developing countries get easy money and China gets resources and a good reputation. This explanation is insufficient, however, when considering that it is more efficient for developing

countries to cooperate with former Western colonial powers. From the neo-liberalist standpoint, political, economic, and cultural legacies left by former colonisers have brought into developing countries sunk costs, resources, and similar institutions, which would contribute to further mutual cooperation (Keohane, 1984). Those legacies would reduce transaction costs if developing countries aligned more with former colonial powers at the expense of China, who is relatively more erratic and costly to engage with.

Through the rational lens of both realist and liberalist perspectives, as long as developing countries are concerned with their survivability and utility maximization, active engagement with China at the expense of others seems irrational. Material incentives, in this sense, cannot paint a complete picture of the relationship between China and the developing world. The problem goes further when rationalist approaches treat states preferences as a given and environments as exogenous; in this sense, state behaviors can only be affected by the material environment. What states believe, identify, or perceive thus remain constant forever. In this paper, I argue that it is necessary to relax such rationalist assumptions that fix states beliefs, perceptions, and preferences as constants. An alternative explanation treating states preferences as endogenous to the environment is needed. In other words, perceptions and beliefs are variables, rather than epiphenomenal. In the following section, I propose an alternative explanation to the SCT, which argues that qualitative similarities between China and developing countries are key to binding them and is also what changes their perception toward China's rise. China's inherent qualitative features, such as being a developing country, non-democracy, or former colony, are what contribute to its popularity.

Self-categorization theory

It is normal for individuals to group together for a purpose. Social psychologists are interested in what triggers people to group together, as well as in how people deal with ingroup and outgroup members. In the beginning, scholars have found motivational or interdependent explanations arguing that behaviors can be determined by goals, which lead to positive or negative social relationships between groups. If a goal has a cooperative characteristic, intergroup relations will be positive; if a goal has a competitive characteristic, intergroup relations will be negative (Sherif, 1967).[2] In Tajfel's seminal minimal group experiments, he demonstrated that people who are categorised by trivial distinguishing characteristics will discriminate against others in

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[2] For a well-known field experiment of boys' summer camp, see Muzafer Sherif, *Group Conflict and Co-Operation : Their Social Psychology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

favor of people perceived in the same group. Tajfel also showed that if material interests are involved, a strong correlation between self-categorization and subjects' behaviors still exist (Tajfel, 1970). This shows that if today is the first day of history, trivial characteristics such as the same hair color, are sufficient enough to group people together. Tajfel's series of experiments demonstrate that in controlling for any possible material interests, grouping and the subsequent acts of biases are a result of psychological factors that can be defined as cognitive representations of a social division into groups (Turner, 1987: 27). Tajfel's findings have developed into a theory called the social identity theory (SIT).

Following Tajfel's footsteps, more scholars have devoted their research in this area and found that social identity is not the epiphenomenal byproduct of resource interdependence but the result of self-categorization (Abrams et al., 2005; Gries, 2005; Hogg, 2005; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Turner, 1987). John Turner developed many relevant hypotheses of self-categorization theory for application (Turner, 1987: chapter 3). In his setting, four stages of self-categorization must occur before group behaviors are demonstrated. First, factors that generate the salience of ingroup-outgroup categorization are needed. Second, the salience should be apparent enough for individuals to sense the large difference between themselves and outgroup members and the small difference between themselves and ingroup members. Turner used 'meta-contrast ratio' to conceptualise this idea. Third, when the meta-contrast ratio is large enough, individuals will perceive themselves as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category. This is called the process of depersonalization. After enduring these three stages, individuals would form their attitudes toward others based on their perception of the ingroup-outgroup categorization.

[Figure 1]

Meta-contrast ratio

Tajfel's minimal groups experiments demonstrated that, ceteris paribus, even trivial factors can generate behaviors of grouping. For individuals, these factors may include biological characteristics, nationality, material well-being, or social background. While entering a new environment, people are inclined to pinpoint their similarities with others in their conversations. They unconsciously compare their relationship with whom they have more in common to those with whom they have less in common. Should there be a prominent difference, the meta-contrast ratio will be high. For example, in a three-person scenario, the meta-contrast ratio for the first person, an Asian farmer, is very high if the second person is also an Asian farmer and

the third one is an European billionaire. The meta-contrast ratio here is defined as the ratio of the average perceived difference between members outside the category and the other stimuli (the mean inter-category difference) to the average difference perceived between members within the category (the mean intra-category difference). It provides a simple quantitative measure of the degree to which any subset of stimuli tends to be cognised (i.e., perceptually categorised) as a single unit, entity, or group (Campbell, 1958; Turner, 1987: 47). Meta-contrast ratio is more of a concept than a real numerical ratio. It captures a relative idea by comparing how differently one perceives itself with an ingroup member and how differently one perceives itself with an outgroup member.

$$Meta\text{-}contrast\ ratio\ = \frac{perceived\ difference\ of\ self\ and\ outgroup\ members}{perceived\ difference\ of\ self\ and\ ingroup\ members}$$

In this formula, if the difference between the self and outgroup members increases, given the difference between self and ingroup members, the ratio will increase, vice versa.

Depersonalization and ingroup category

If the meta-contrast ratio for individuals becomes higher, then they are likely to go through a process of depersonalization. Depersonalization here refers to the process of 'self-stereotyping' whereby people come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplar within a social category rather than as unique personalities defined by their individual differences (Turner, 1987: 50). In other words, after depersonalization people will behave as a member of a social category when interacting with others. This process is the foundation of group behaviors. If individuals have gone through such processes, we are likely to observe group cohesiveness, ethnocentrism, cooperation and altruism, emotional contagion and empathy, collective action, shared norms, and social influence processes (Turner, 1987: 59-62). For example, if the competitors arriving from the same country to an international event identify themselves as representatives of a nation rather than individuals, they are more likely to act cohesively and put the interest of their nation before their own ego when competing with representatives from other nations. At this stage, individuals will put themselves in ingroup categories with which they identify; thus forming an ingroup-outgroup categorization that influences their behaviors. As Hogg puts it, the depersonalised perception of outgroup members is called 'stereotyping' and when the same process occurs internally, it is called

'self-stereotyping,' which happens when individuals associate themselves with ingroup attributes. With self-categorization comes ingroup liking, trust, and solidarity (Hogg, 2005: 139-140).

Group relationship

After associating with the ingroup-outgroup categorization, individuals will behave in tandem with this perceived relationship. It is argued that the salience of shared ingroup memberships tend to increase the level of intragroup cooperation and also intergroup competition. Factors that lead to the categorization of others as outgroup members will increase interpersonal competition. In other words, not only might intergroup competition occur, interpersonal competition within a group might also emerge should ingroup members find less similarity, or more differences. In addition, intergroup relations may vary with social comparison. Group attributes with regard to group status, stability, legitimacy, permeability, and alternatives cause different kinds of intergroup behaviors. For example, a member affiliated with a low status group in a permeable society might seek to disconnect himself from the current group for a group with higher status (Hogg, 2005: 142-143).

Inferring from interpersonal to international relations

Just like microeconomic theories explaining human behaviors are borrowed by IR scholars to account for state behaviors, a question on why it is appropriate to apply social psychological theories of SCT to IR should be posed. It is reasonable to apply microeconomic theories to state behaviors because like individuals, states are also motivated by maximizing self-interest. However, it is less clear whether states have a similar psychological status to individuals. Can a state's belief, preference, perception or behavior be influenced by emotional or psychological factors? Can a state simply have a changeable mind?

In this respect, I share Wendt's idea that states, like persons, are conscious, intentional, and purposive actors. A state is an organism that acts with intention and conscious. It has a self-organizing quality that cannot be reduced to a social context (Wendt, 2004). Some see state behavior as an agent of collective social and political (human) activity (Flockhart, 2006; Wight, 2004); thus, individuals who are able to be socialised and socialise others, act in the name of the state (Weldes, 1996). A state organism that is operated by individuals therefore will reflect characteristics of people.

In treating states as persons, or agents of a group of people, IR scholars have

tried to use social psychological theory to explain state behaviors. Gries (2005) used SIT to account for the changes in Sino-American relations. Unlike Mercer's argument that social identity would lead to conflict (Mercer, 1995), Gries contended that 'it is the actions of individual Chinese and Americans that will determine whether our need to view our nations positively will lead to Sino-American conflict.' Borrowing from SCT, Sino-American relations is contingent upon intergroup comparison. Larson and Shevchenko (2010) applied SIT in explaining China and Russia's status-seeking behaviors over their seeking of stronger relative power. They reasoned that in the past external behaviors of China and Russia were based on their accessibility to great power groups of the democratic West. When denied accessibility, both countries sought creative ways to gain recognition in that group. Emerging as a responsible power consequently became an option. In adopting SCT, Suzuki (2007) argued that China's national identity is shaped by their sense of victimization by Japan's imperial history. He explained that by highlighting this history, China will approach Japan as an 'other,' which will in turn widen the characteristic differences between Japan and others.

These approaches put emphasis on the process of mutual constitution of agents and international structures constituted by social categories (Checkel, 1998). Structure is capable of shaping agents acting in the international society and, in turn, agents are also capable of changing the nature of structures. For example, lower meta-contrast ratio may trigger interpersonal competition within a group and may harm the cohesion of a certain social group. This paper investigates how an agent's nature and consequent behaviors are shaped by the environment. I apply SCT to understand how differently developing countries might perceive China and other players who are vying for their interests. Intergroup relations would form in a social world that is categorised into separate groups by race, nationality, status or other social traits (Delamater, 2003: 483). Social categories can be anything from values and beliefs to other social traits. Actors in a society can associate with different categories as long as the categories make sense to them. Intergroup behaviors are thus shaped by the environmental context, and our world is filled with 'us' and 'them.' In applying this perspective to the international arena, a state's behaviors can be explained by the social categories in which it belongs. Countries that associate themselves with the same social categories are more likely to act in favor of ingroup members. On the other hand, countries that identify themselves in different social categories are less likely to act in favor of or in tandem with others.

Research design

In this section, I first discuss the way I sort out social categories identified by states participating in international affairs. It will be followed by a discussion of the unit of analysis and operationalization of each variable included. In the end I specify quantitative models I used to test the hypothesis.

Categorizing the world

In order to examine the hypothesis, appropriate social categories for analysis should be identified. According to SCT, individuals in any given setting are more likely to categorise themselves as a group if the perceived differences between ingroup members are less than the perceived differences between them and outgroup members. Therefore, categories selected should be able to capture salient differences among members in different groups. I approach this by observing IOs, where members sometimes share common features. IOs therefore can help identify important features that bind states together in a certain group.

The first category is the level of development. Many IOs classify states based on their economic well-being. Each IO has their own criteria for categorizing the world in terms of levels of economic development. Such distinction inevitably highlights the differences between developing and developed countries, and can potentially lead to contradictions among members of both groups. Emerging countries, such as China, are prone to provoke such differences to garner cooperation from African countries. As mentioned above, during the first meeting of the FOCAC ministerial conference, former Chinese president Jiang Zemin highlighted the similar development level between China and Africa. In the following decade, FOCAC's joint declarations signed by China and its African counterparts contain rhetoric on the north-south divide, which was used not only to capture similarities and form collective identity but also to produce common actions. Developing countries also complain that they are forced to follow standards or rules established by the developed countries (Winters, 2010) that form the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Those rules are not appreciated in developing countries, who are trying to counter the developed coalition in global arenas. In terms of the level of development, north-south relations can be a salient feature that allows countries to distinguish themselves from others and unite themselves in a meaningful, social solidarity group.

> **Hypothesis 1:** *Developing and emerging (advanced) economies sharing similar levels of development are more likely to recognise each other as an ingroup member and therefore are more likely to act in tandem.*

The second category is a state's colonial history, which is often embedded in the development level of a country. Many developing countries that had once been colonised by Western powers blame their economic inferiority on exploitation by former colonisers. A large-scale cooperation scheme was attempted in 1955 between Asian and African countries, which led to the colonialism bashing at the Bandung Conference. It evolved into the establishment of a larger coalition of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which is still functioning. NAM currently has 137 members, of which Chile is the only OECD country. A north-south divide was thus created and identified by countries (Moon, 2007). Instead of focusing on development level, countries recognizing NAM often blame economic inferiority to unequal distribution of economic resources, which is linked to colonialism or imperialism. Furthermore the fear of neo-colonialism emerged in the developing countries (Nkrumah, 1965). They fear that developing countries depend too much on developed countries, who will in turn interfere their domestic affairs (Easterly, 2006).

Hypothesis 2: *Countries who were once colonies (colonisers) are more likely to recognise each other as an ingroup member and therefore are more likely to act in tandem.*

The third category is the type of regime, which is often used as a variable to explain a state's foreign policy. Existing literature shows that countries with similar regime type are more likely to cooperate with each other (Doyle, 1983; Milner and Kubota, 2005; Peceny et al., 2002). Several international groupings are made up of countries with similar regime types or democracies. For example, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Esteban, 2009), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are IOs where most members are non-democracies. The Copenhagen criteria, on the other hand, requires a state to guarantee a democratic institution and human rights to be admitted to the European Union. International organizations featuring the type of governance may produce ingroup-outgroup difference among states, especially when democratic countries often criticise authoritarian regimes around the world for bad governance, human rights violation, and economic recession. Harsh criticism could further alienate autocrats from democracies, making room for the formation of a group of autocracies. Kagan (2006) claimed that a league of dictators might be forming. In sum, different regime types can lead to social categorization.

Hypothesis 3: *Democratic (non-democratic) countries are more likely to*

recognise each other as an ingroup member and therefore are more likely to act in tandem.

The fourth category is geography. Many regional security and economic organizations are defined by geography. Countries in the same continent or with geographical adjacency may interact with each other more or share more common interests. Therefore, they are more likely to identify themselves in the same groups. For example, the European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or ASEAN are all groups where members are geographically closer to each other. These organizations show that states adjacent to each other are likely to form ingroups based on location. The closer they are, the more likely for them to sense the ingroup-outgroup contrast.

> **Hypothesis 4:** *Countries that are geographically closer are more likely to recognise each other as an ingroup member and therefore are more likely to act in tandem.*

The last category is culture. Geert Hofstede (2001) stated that culture is 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.' People are able to categorise themselves based on their cultural inherence. In studying the relationship between culture and conflicts, Samuel Huntington (1996) argued that future conflict may occur at the fault line of different civilizations. Culture is one of the important dimensions that defines a certain kind of civilization. Cultural difference is capable of being magnified and lead to the awareness of 'us' and 'them.' Disagreements and conflicts will emerge among groups sharing different cultural traits. However, culture is a rather elusive idea to capture. Below I will demonstrate a strategy using factor analysis to identify this category and measure the cultural distance between a pair of countries.

> **Hypothesis 5:** *Countries with shorter cultural distance are more likely to recognise each other as an ingroup member and therefore are more likely to act in tandem.*

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in this research is the dyad of two countries and a state's meta-contrast ratio. The dyad relationship captures the distance between states in terms of their social categories and its effect on the level of cooperation between them

while they engage in global issues. I focus especially on two sets of dyad relationships: China and the United States' dyadic relationships with other 57 countries. The change of global perceptions and opinions toward both countries is an important topic since it might potentially lead to other countries' behavioral changes, which would matter to the global distribution of power and the structure of international alliances. In addition, both powers are very dissimilar in their views on global issues. Table 1 presents the ratio of the number of same votes to the number of total joint votes between China and the United States in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The United States is the most dissimilar counterpart to China in the UNGA in the past few years. This indicates that both powers see most international issues differently and are involved with canvassing support to their respective positions. If the dyadic difference between China, or the United States, and its counterparts is smaller, they would act in tandem more in the UNGA.

[Table 1]

Aside from dyadic relationship, I also examine a state's meta-contrast ratio and its effects on voting decisions in the UNGA. The ratio is the distance of features between a state and the United States to the distance between a state and China. The larger the ratio, the more a state senses greater differences with the United States relative to China. That state will consider China more as an ingroup member and the United States more as an outgroup member. As a consequence, the state is more likely to support China's position and act in tandem with it.

Variables and statistical model

Using the voting similarity index maintained by Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), the dependent variable is states' voting behaviors in the UNGA, which is adopted to approximate the level of solidarity between a pair of states. The index equals to the percentage of a dyad of countries who cast their votes in the same way in a given year. Since votes in the UNGA are considered a symbolic gesture at best, Erik Gartzke (2010) suggests that such index can be more relevant in understanding a state's perception toward another without involving too much rational calculation, which should be an ideal proxy to the hypothesis. Yearly dyadic results show how similar a pair of countries perceives their respective interests. A higher value represents more common attitudes and behaviors in both countries. If the hypothesis holds, the value of the index is higher when both countries consider each other to be in the same social categories. Both countries are more prone to vote similarly rather than basing their

selections on intensive self-interest calculations when they recognise the other as an ingroup member. In terms of the availability of data of other variables, I examine a cross-national dataset of 57 dyads consisting of China and certain countries in 2009. Another 57 dyads for the United States and its counterparts are also observed. To test meta-contrast ratio, I divide China's dyad by the United States's dyad, which represents a country's level of relative voting similarity with China and the United States.[3]

For the independent variables, they are designed to approximate five social categories: development level, colonial history, regime type, geographic distance, and culture. I first discuss the standards used to assign the five categories in each case and then discuss the strategy used to put them in the contexts of a dyadic relationship and a county's meta-contrast ratio situation. For the development level, I use the standard set by IMF to distinguish a state's level of development (International Monetary Fund, 2010: 149-150). IMF identified 33 advanced economies and 147 emerging and developing economies in their report published in 2010. For the colonial history, I use data from GeoDist maintained by Mayer and Zignago (2011), which lists former colonisers around the world. I only count non-European countries that had once been colonised as former colonies because European countries did not participate in the anti-colonial movement by forming the Bandung Conference and NAM, an indication of their different view toward colonialism of former colonies in the developing world. The regime type is approximated using the POLITY IV score (Marshall and Jaggers, 2009), which counts a country with a score of 6 or higher as a democracy, and a country with a score lower than 6 as a non-democracy. Geographic distance is calculated as the capital-to-capital distance between two countries. The data also comes from GeoDist (Mayer and Zignago, 2011).

The last category is culture, which is conceptually elusive. To create the index, I use data collected by Hofstede et al. (2010). where they identified six dimensions of cross-national culture, including power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, long-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint. Given these dimensions, I use factor analysis to extract the latent variable of culture. Excluding countries with missing data, 59 countries are measured and observed. The dimension of masculinity and long-term orientation are excluded due to its weak correlation with all other dimensions and its failure to pass the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of the factor analysis is .564, which is significant and passes the minimum value suggested by Kaiser (1974) and Bartlett's

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[3] A country will have its dyadic data with China and the United States respectively, as well as having a relative voting similarity with the two. Since China and the United States vote divergently in the UNGA, a higher relative ratio means that the country chooses to align with China at the expense of the United States.

test score ($\chi^2 = 62.761$, *p-value* $< .005$). Principle components analysis was adopted and one factor was extracted. It explains 47.5% of total variance. Table 2 presents the factor loading. The culture variable created is composed of power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence vs. restraint. Using the factor analysis, this new variable of culture is adopted to represent a national culture and to calculate cultural distance between a pair of countries.

[Table 2]

Aside from the five social categories, I also include two variables to control for the rationalist explanation, which may treat states' voting behaviors in IOs as a function of military alliance and economic interdependence. I use Formal Interstate Alliance Dataset, 1816-2012, to check whether a dyad of countries signed a defense pact, neutrality pact, or non-aggression pact (Gibler, 2009). Economic dependence is calculated as the percentage of a country's total trade volume with China or the United States to its total trade volume with the world. Bilateral trade data comes from International Trade, 1870-2009, dataset of the Correlate of War Project (Barbieri and Keshk, 2012). Seven explanatory variables are included in the model.

For each variable, I calculate the dyadic distance between a certain country and China or the United States. In China's dyadic distance with its counterpart on development level, colonial history, regime type, and military alliance, I code '0' if the other country is identified as an emerging or developing economy, non-European former colony, non-democracy, or a military ally; '1' otherwise, which represents greater categorical distance. In the United States' dyadic situation, on the other hand, I code '0' if the other country is an advanced economy, Western country, not colonised, democracy, or military ally. Geographic distance and culture is calculated by the difference between both countries in a dyad. For the meta-contrast ratio measuring a country's relative social categorical recognition between China and the United States, I code '1' if the country belongs to the same group as China and not the United States based on the variables of development level, colonial history, regime type, and military alliance. This represents a greater contrast ratio that makes the distance with the United States longer than with China. '0' is coded if that country belongs to the same group as the United States but not China. It is coded '.5' if that country belongs to the same groups both with the United States and China. For example, Pakistan has military alliance with both China and the United States. For the meta-contrast ratio of geographic distance and culture, I divide United States' dyad by China's dyad. The ratio goes up when the distance with the United States widens given distance with China, an implication that a certain country senses great categorical difference with

the United States; they are thus less likely to act in tandem with Washington. Such strategy seeks to approximate SCT indicating that a higher ratio will make an individual more likely to recognise the qualitatively similar counterpart as an ingroup member in a certain category. In turn, group cohesiveness will emerge and be reflected in the positive and cooperative bilateral relationship.

The statistical model, ordinary least square (OLS) estimation, is used to examine a cross-sectional dataset comprising observations of 57 dyads for each China and the United States' case.[4] Another 57 observations of meta-contrast ratio for each country are included. The OLS model uses White's heteroskedasticity-corrected standard errors to avoid possible violation of OLS's homogeneity of variance assumption (White, 1980). The next section reports the findings.

Empirical Findings

This section demonstrates the plausibility of the five hypotheses proposed in this research. Model 1 and 2 estimate China's social categorical distance with 57 countries and its effects on their behaviors in engaging in international affairs. Model 3 and 4 estimate the same thing between the United States and the other 57 countries. Model 5 and 6 estimate how the 57 countries perceive the relative social categorical distance between China and the United States, and how the views shape their behavioral outcomes in either aligning more with China or the United States. Model 1 includes all five social categories discussed above and two control variables emphasizing rational calculation. In China's case, quantitative evidence shows strong support for the argument in developing countries, former non-Western colonies, and non-democracies. Evidence shows strong support for the argument that developing or emerging economies (H1), former non-Western colonies (H2), and non-democracies (H3), who share the same categories with China, vote more similarly with China in the UNGA. Support also goes to the cultural hypothesis (p-value = .067) that countries with shorter cultural distance act more similar with China (H5). Geographical affinity, military alliance, and trade dependence do not contribute to cooperative behaviors. In a numerical sense, ceteris paribus, a country categorised as a developing country will vote 5.2% more in the same way as China. The number is 9.9% for former non-Western colonies, and 10.6% for non-democracies. Model 2 excludes the rationalist variable and the result is much the same as model 1. In the United States' case, evidence gives strong support to the argument that developed countries (H1), non-former colonies (H2) and democracies (H3), who belong to the same categories as the United States, vote more similarly to Washington in the UNGA.

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[4] Please refer to appendix 1 for the list of all 57 countries.

The cultural hypothesis is not supported in the United States' case in both models 3 and 4. Same as the China case, geographical affinity, military alliance, and trade dependence do not result in greater voting cooperation in the UNGA. In a numerical sense, ceteris paribus, a country categorised under an advanced economy will vote 10.6% more in the same way as the United States. The number goes up to 13.3% for non-former colonies and 14.3 for democracies. Model 4 excludes the rationalist variable and produces similar results.

[Table 3]

Model 5 and 6 simulate a country's behaviors based on its meta-contrast ratio when weighing against alignment between China and the United States. As described above, a higher ratio presents a situation where the categorical distance between that country and United States is larger than with China, which means that the country will perceive China as a closer ingroup member and choose to cooperate with China rather than with the United States. The dependent variable in models 5 and 6 equals to a country's affinity index with China divided by its affinity index with the United States. For example, if a country voted 70% the same way as China and 35% the same way as the United States in the UNGA, the dependent variable will be 2, which indicates that the voting coincidence with China is twice as high as with the United States. Therefore, in models 5 and 6, categorical variables should positively correlate with the dependent variable to support the hypotheses. As shown in table 3, the meta-contrast ratio in the social categories of development level (H1), colonial history (H2), and regime type (H3) significantly correlate with cooperative behaviors. Model 5 also supports the rational argument that a country will cooperate more with the one on whom it has greater trade dependence. For example, if a country is categorised as a developing economy, former colony, non-democracy, or if it is relatively more dependent on trade with China, it will perceive a relatively larger difference with the United States and in turn see China, a developing economy, former colony, non-democracy, or relatively important economic partner, as a close ingroup member. Such countries therefore will be more likely to act in favor of China. The results indicate that whenever a country confronts a choice between cooperation with either China or the United States, they will favor China. In sum, the statistical model supports the effect of social categories on state behaviors, but not as expected in all hypotheses. The evidence strongly sustains hypotheses 1-3 and less on hypothesis 5. The hypothesis of geographical affinity finds no statistical support. The finding shows that military alliance hardly affects voting behaviors, which is surprising and may yield policy implication. Trade dependence may affect voting behaviors only when

states have to partner with only one out of several options.

Conclusion and implications

This paper applies self-categorization theory to the field of IR and provides statistical support to the fact that self-categorization can influence a state's behavior. The results demonstrate strong voting attraction with China in the developing world and the source of popularity may come from categorical similarity recognised by its counterparts. However, it also reveals China's unpopularity in the developed world. Surprisingly, the model does not give strong support to the factor of military alliance and economic dependence when the ideational factors are included. This may imply that contemporary international politics no longer dictate solely on material interests. Ideational factors, such as the creation of a sense of belonging, may have seized its significance. The state-to-state cohesion is made possible by the creation of common social identity, which can cause a state to depersonalise and make it act in favor of members who belong to its same invisible social categories. If such ingroup-outgruop contrast continues to widen, higher intergroup competition should be expected, which may lead to the polarization of behaviors in global affairs. Four implications can be drawn from the findings.

First, the findings support the democratic peace theory, but not from the angle of institutional effects such as electoral institutions (Doyle, 1983). Rather, I find that qualitative similarity may be enough to create common identity, which in turn produces cooperation among countries. It further corroborates research identifying the peaceful effect of political similarity, which comes from common ways of thinking and acting (Werner, 2000). It also gives support to autocratic peace theory that no two dictators or two military regimes have gone to war with each other since 1945 (Peceny et al., 2002). Academically speaking, this research finds support to downplay the institutional pacifying factors while giving more weight to the ideational factor of political similarity.

Second, the empirical findings contribute to the extension of the soft power perspective, which considers cultural attractiveness as an important power basis nowadays (Nye, 2004). In adopting SCT, soft power for states is seen as the perceived similarity amongst a set of various social categories. The more the groups share similarities in a set of social categories embodied in their cultural distance, the more attractive they are to each other. As a consequence, stronger contrast perceived from outgroup members would keep the relationship among ingroup members even more solid.

Third, SCT theory explains the exportation of democratic institutions by

democratic powers and the support of global autocracies by authoritarian powers. Since the similarity in regime type produces greater international cooperation, the best way for powerful countries to garner support is to bring influence to their current status in a certain social category. This is especially true when evidence shows that military alliance hardly helped the United States secure more votes in UNGA. The finding thus provides strong theoretical foundation to justify the United States' tactic of garnering international support through exportation of the democratic system. In addition, the creation of cultural affinity is crucial. As the United States exports democracy, China exports the Confucius Institute, which aims at disseminating the Chinese language and culture. Its function is also speculated as propaganda for China's reputation. One of the muted aims of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may be to fend off the democratic trend (Ambrosio, 2008). U.S.-China rivalry in such way may clearer delineate the fault line of different social categories. Although it may contribute to more solid ingroup cooperation, it would also lead to greater intergroup competition, which may create global instability.

Finally, the emergence of regional organizations will contribute to more clear-cut social categories based on rather restricted admission requirements. Collective regional identity can be created but should the identities among different regional organizations become too clear, competition among them may become intensive. The current competition between Asian-Pacific regionalism represented by Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and East Asian regionalism represented by Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is one that epitomises potential inter-group competition in the region. Although lots of regional organizations are treated as a transitory plan to global integration, it may lead to the opposite outcome, which should alarm worldwide policymakers.

Table 1. Sino-U.S. Voting Similarity in the United Nations General Assembly

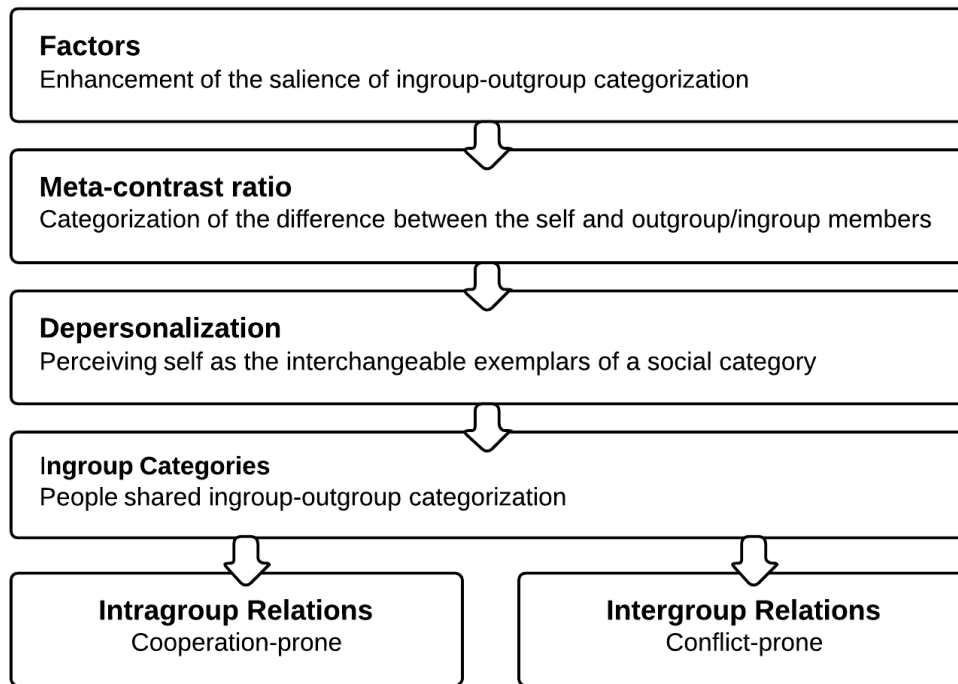| Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Affinity score	0.151	0.176	0.217	0.231	0.262	0.250

Table 2. Factor Loading

Cultural dimensions	Factor
Power Distance	.873
Individualism	-.828
Uncertainty avoidance	.475
Indulgence vs. restraint	-.477

Table 3. OLS Estimation of Social Categories on Behavioral Affinity

	China dyad		U.S. dyad		Meta-contrast ratio	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Developing country	-0.052 *	-0.057 *	-0.106 ***	-0.112 ***	0.767 ***	0.842 ***
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.198)	(0.199)
Former colony	-0.099 ***	-0.116 ***	-0.133 ***	-0.151 ***	1.362 ***	1.221 ***
	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.240)	(0.233)
Democracy	-0.106 ***	-0.123 ***	-0.143 ***	-0.151 ***	1.452 ***	1.716 ***
	(0.019)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.270)	(0.330)
Capital distance	2.7e-06	8.5e-07	-5.2e-06	-2.8e-06	-0.002	0.005
	(2.0e-06)	(2.0e-06)	(4.0e-06)	(4.0e-06)	(0.065)	(0.060)
Culture	-0.034 .	-0.033 .	-0.017	-0.013	0.008 .	0.007
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Military Alliance	0.068		0.008		0.033	
	(0.025)		(0.022)		(0.325)	
Trade dependence	0.216		-0.134		0.036 ***	
	(0.131)		(0.113)		(0.006)	
Intercept	0.935 ***	1.001	0.656 ***	0.630 ***	0.885 ***	0.958 ***
	(0.029)	(0.024)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.115)	(0.101)
Adjusted R square	0.715	0.703	0.785	0.785	0.810	0.778
Observations	57	57	57	57	57	57

Note. White's heteroskedasticity-corrected standard errors are in parenthesis

Figure 1. Self-Categorization Theory

Factors
Enhancement of the salience of ingroup-outgroup categorization

Meta-contrast ratio
Categorization of the difference between the self and outgroup/ingroup members

Depersonalization
Perceiving self as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category

Ingroup Categories
People shared ingroup-outgroup categorization

Intragroup Relations
Cooperation-prone

Intergroup Relations
Conflict-prone

Appendix 1: Country List

1	Argentina	21	India	40	Poland
2	Australia	22	Indonesia	41	Portugal
3	Austria	23	Iran	42	Romania
4	Bangladesh	24	Ireland	43	Russia
5	Belgium	25	Italy	44	Serbia
6	Brazil	26	Japan	45	Singapore
7	Bulgaria	27	Latvia	46	Slovakia
8	Canada	28	Lithuania	47	Slovenia
9	Chile	29	Luxembourg	48	South Korea
10	Colombia	30	Malaysia	49	Spain
11	Croatia	31	Malta	50	Sweden
12	Czech Rep	32	Mexico	51	Switzerland
13	Denmark	33	Morocco	52	Thailand
14	El Salvador	34	Netherlands	53	Trinidad and Tobago
15	Estonia	35	New Zealand	54	Turkey
16	Finland	36	Norway	55	United Kingdom
17	France	37	Pakistan	56	Uruguay
19	Greece	38	Peru	57	Venezuela
20	Hungary	39	Philippines	58	Vietnam

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