

<p><b>Institution:</b> Liverpool John Moores University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 36 Communication, Cultural &amp; Media Studies, Library &amp; Information Management</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Identity and Security Discourse: The Rise of China and Asia-Pacific Security</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> The emergence of China as a global actor has attracted enormous attention from academics, policy-makers, journalists and business leaders. The outside world knows little about the perceptions of China’s policy elites and their internal debates. By offering an in-depth, systematic and theoretically grounded analysis of Chinese discourse, this research has revitalised the on-going academic and policy debate on the nature and repercussions of China’s ascendancy. Key findings of the research have been used to stimulate debate at the highest level in governments and diplomatic circles on how best to respond to the changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific region and the rise of China as a global actor in particular. Dr Rex Li has been regularly invited to offer his analyses and insights at policy discussion meetings at leading UK foreign and security policy think-tanks attended by experts and officials of the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> This research is undertaken and led by Dr Rex Li, Reader in International Journalism and International Relations at Liverpool John Moores University. It began in the mid-1990s as part of a wider project on international relations in the Pacific Rim funded by the ESRC. The research is part of an on-going process to analyse the changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, focusing in particular on the rise of China as a great power and its regional and global implications. Specifically, the project has examined the security discourse of Chinese policy elites on the major powers in East Asia in relation to China’s self-perception as a rising power. The central argument of the project is that a country’s security perceptions are shaped by the desire and efforts of its policy elites to construct a distinct national identity. While acknowledging the relevance of material forces such as power and capability, the research has explored the significance of ideational factors such as values, norms and identity. It draws upon the theoretical insights of various academic disciplines, including International Relations, Media Studies, Sociology and Social Psychology.</p> <p>When this research started in the mid-1990s, China’s power and influence were relatively limited. Since then China has become much more powerful in both economic and military terms. Moreover, China’s political influence on many regional and global issues has increased substantially. Meanwhile, the scale and intensity of its interactions with the wider world have been dramatically augmented. The project has tracked, dissected and analysed the changing discourse of Chinese policy elites for over 15 years.</p> <p>The discourse analysis in this project is based on extensive interviews and a wide range of Chinese-language sources that are not readily available in the West. Most of the documentary sources consulted are produced mainly for domestic audiences. They are published by the organisations that are considered to have substantial input into China’s foreign policy and/or significant impact on the security debates among Chinese elites. The value of the source materials lies in their authors’ unique positions in China’s foreign policy-making process. In addition, the project has utilised information that has been gathered through off the record interviews and public discussions with many Chinese scholars and think-tanks specialists.</p> <p>The key research insights of this project indicate that Chinese elites perceive the power, aspirations and security strategies of other major countries or actors, such as America, Russia, Japan and the European Union, primarily in terms of their implications for China’s construction of a great power identity. The findings published in various well-reviewed books and prestigious journals demonstrate that China is deeply apprehensive of the strategic intentions of the US and Japan, and that Chinese suspicion of Russia is minimal, at least for the time being (please see Section 3 for details of publications). The Chinese discourse of the EU is much more positive, which is treated as a significant force in an emerging multipolar world that China has been trying to promote since the end of the Cold War. The research does not indicate that China will seek to confront America and Japan in the near future. This is because Chinese elites are well aware of the fact that China’s military capabilities are not as strong as those of the two East Asian powers. They also understand that a confrontation with them would be detrimental to Chinese economic interests, making it more difficult for China to fulfil its great power aspirations. However, should Chinese leaders fail to attain their national goals through existing strategies, there is no guarantee that they will not pursue a belligerent policy towards the US and Japan. After all, the Chinese</p>

writings examined in this project clearly reveal a discursive construction of the two countries as threatening 'others', who seek to undermine China's efforts to achieve a great power status. This partly explains why China has become more assertive in dealing with its territorial disputes with Japan and South East Asian countries in the past few years. It can also explain China's strong reactions to the Obama administration's re-balancing strategy in the Asia-Pacific region (ref 2, ref 4: chapters 2-6, refs 5 and 6).

An important question that is often raised in the rise of China debate is whether and to what extent China will respect the rules and norms of international society. The research findings indicate that China has adopted a strategy of integrating itself into the existing system, while seeking to exert influence on the agenda, rules and operation of various international institutions and regimes wherever possible. The evidence suggests that China is hoping to use its involvement in a wide range of international bodies to enhance its great power status. It also suggests that the long-term goal of Chinese elites is to gradually reshape the norms and rules of the international society to reflect China's growing power and its expanding global interests. Many Chinese elites support the notion of China's 'peaceful rise', but they also believe in the utility of military force in achieving Chinese national goals. The internal debate among Chinese elites on China's 'peaceful rise' does not provide conclusive evidence as to whether it is a reflection of short-term considerations aiming to minimise potential obstruction to China's ascendancy, or a long-term strategy that would renounce the use of force in fulfilling its great power aspirations (ref 1, ref 4: Chapters 6 and 7).

Another significant research insight is related to the impact of China's domestic development on its foreign policy. While most observers expect China to grow continuously, there are numerous domestic problems that may derail China's economic progress and cause instability in Chinese society. This would have significant repercussions on China's external relations. For example, China might opt for an assertive or adventurous foreign policy as a result of internal factors such as serious economic crises, social and political turmoil, rising nationalistic sentiments, and pressure from some quarters of the military. A main conclusion derived from the research is that the West must prepare for various scenarios of a rising China, including the security implications of a strong but chaotic China (ref 1, ref 4: Chapters 1 and 7).

Chinese security discourse is shaped by China's self-identity as an ascending power, the regional and international security environment, and external responses to its rise to a great power status. If perception is socially constructed, it may be altered via the development of intersubjective knowledge, ideas, norms and institutions. Indeed, the research demonstrates that Chinese elites' security discourse has undergone considerable changes over the past two decades due partly to China's increasing interactions with Western and other Asian countries. The research findings indicate that the internalisation of international norms in Chinese identity formation, and cultivation of intersubjective ideas of 'other-help' and 'collective identity' between China and its Asian neighbours would help curtail the tendency of belligerent behaviour as China grows stronger. China should therefore be persuaded that the success of its emergence as a 'responsible great power' will rest on its willingness and ability to establish a stable and cooperative relationship with other major actors in the world, particularly the great powers in East Asia. One of the major conclusions arising from this work is that it is important for Western analysts and policy-makers to monitor Chinese security discourse closely, which has been changing considerably in the past few years. This has had a significant impact on China's foreign policy as its economic power and political influence are increasing (refs 1 and 3, ref 4: chapters 6 and 7, and ref 6).

### 3. References to the research

1. Rex Li, "The China Challenge: Theoretical Perspectives and Policy Implications", Journal of Contemporary China, Vol. 8, No. 22, November 1999, pp. 443-476. ISSN: 1067-0564
2. Rex Li, "Partners or Rivals? Chinese Perceptions of Japan's Security Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region", The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 22, No. 4, December 1999, pp. 1-25. ISSN: 0140-2390
3. Rex Li, "China and Regional Security: External Perceptions and Responses", in Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds and Hans van de Veen, eds., Searching for Peace in Asia-Pacific,

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Lynne Rienner, New York, 2005, pp. 181-201. ISBN: 1-58826-239-1

4. Rex Li, A Rising China and Security in East Asia: Identity Construction and Security Discourse, Routledge, London, 2009. 320 pages. ISBN: 978-0-415-44940-3 (listed in REF 2)

5. Rex Li, "A Regional Partner or a Threatening Other? Chinese Discourse of Japan's Changing Security Role in East Asia", in Christopher M. Dent, ed., China, Japan and Regional Leadership in East Asia, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2010, pp. 101-128. (listed in REF 2)

6. Rex Li, "National Identity and Changing Great Power Relations in the Asia-Pacific: Is a Cold War Emerging?", The Asan Forum, July-August, 2013, pp. 1-16. ISSN: 2288-5757 (listed in REF 2)

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- Ian Cook, Marcus Doel and Rex Li, Pacific Rim Seminar Series, ESRC, 1993-1995, £10,000.
- Rex Li, East Asian Peace Project, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond/Uppsala University, 2012-2013, £45,000.

The main outputs of this research in the current REF period include 12 papers presented at international conferences and 4 articles in peer-reviewed journals and refereed books.

The quality of all the outputs is demonstrated by a rigorous process of peer-review before they are accepted for publication. The quality of the main output (No. 4 – the monograph listed above) has been widely recognised by scholars in the field. For example, a review in a leading international relations journal published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs refers to the book as 'an important book, which should be read by all those with an interest in Chinese foreign affairs and international security' including practitioners. (International Affairs, Vol. 85, No. 4, July 2009, pp. 909-910). A top China studies journal based in Australia also concludes that the book is 'particularly valuable' in providing 'a bridge between Chinese experts writing on their perception of the world and dominant Western theories on international relations' (The China Journal, No. 63, January 2010, pp. 232-234). An independent Russian international relations journal sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation published a long review of the book with the judgment that it is 'a rich and well-crafted study' which 'will be useful to a wide range of readers, especially those who are interested in the problems of the Asia-Pacific region and China's role in world politics' (International Trends: Journal of International Relations Theory and World Politics, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2010). Indeed, Times Higher Education concurs that the book provides 'a useful overview of Chinese thinking about the world' (22 October 2009).

### 4. Details of the impact

The research is essentially concerned with gaining a thorough understanding of China's perceptions of other significant countries in relation to its self-perception as a rising power. How China perceives itself and the outside world is of huge importance to its neighbours and the international community. As the research findings of the project are particularly relevant to the needs of the foreign and security policy community in Whitehall, the project leader Dr Rex Li has been regularly invited to give presentations derived from his research insights at leading international affairs and security think-tanks and government departments in the last decade. [text removed for publication] Specifically, the research insights on Chinese security discourse and its impact on China's foreign policy and regional and international security have been used to contribute to the policy discussions in official and diplomatic circles and to inform foreign and security policy-making in the UK. [text removed for publication]

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

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