Master Thesis Proposal

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Notes: The proposal should be 3-5 pages long and sent to martinriegl(et)email.cz.

Proposed Topic:

Registered in SIS:NO

Object: Imperialism, geopolitics, World Order

Title: Imperialism and the Rise of China

Problem: Is the rise of China comparable to the UK or US imperialistic rise? Can we learn anything from their strategy to determine China’s future behaviour?

Research Questions:
What does the behaviour of the British and American empires tell us about the future behaviour of China?

Is China’s involvement in the international community comparable to the role of previous empires?

**Goal:** To compare and evaluate the foreign policy and involvement of China in the international community to the actions and behaviour of the British and American empires from approximately 1860 - 1965 to determine whether or not this can give insight into China’s future international activity.

**Interest of Problem**

China’s opening and growth in the second half of the 20th century caused a shift in the global economy that has greatly impacted the modernized West. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was created and various bilateral trade agreements have been signed which increasingly expand China’s influence on the global stage.

When Xi Jinping announced the One Belt, One Road Initiative in 2013, it was a signal to the world that there will be a shift away from Asia’s dependency on the United States. New trade routes will be created which would allow China to access new markets for its products and also connect to Europe overland. Will the New Silk Road be the final step in shifting the world order away from the United States and towards China?
The project is seen as having “no-strings attached” and Xi Jinping has called for “respect to the development paths and policies chosen by the people of regional countries and never interfere in the domestic affairs of Central Asian nations….never seek a dominant role in regional affairs, not to try to nurture a sphere of influence.” However, what, if any, of the actions that China is taking now are similar to the steps taken by the British and American empires to increase power and ultimately achieve superiority? Is China’s future role really that of a benevolent power?

Methodology:

Theoretical Context

- Mahan’s Influence of Sea Power
  - Mahan was a proponent of the belief that the British Empire was able to gain superiority due to their control of the seas and the corresponding decline in the naval strength of its major European rivals. This superiority allowed them to increase their military, economic and political power and you can still see the influences of the British Empire around the world. Is China following in these same footsteps?
    - China currently possesses all of Mahan’s 6 characteristics of world power including territory, population, geopolitical position, strong government, national character and strong navy & good harbors.
Compare and contrast the various international institutions created by the United Kingdom, United States and China.

**Historical Context**

- Briefly analyze the beginning of European colonialism and the decline of Asia
- How were the British and American dominance achieved?
  - Mahan’s Influence of Sea Power
  - Benefits resulting from trade and geoeconomic strategy
  - International institutions created and the long-standing impact on world order
- What actions has China taken so far that are similar to previous actions by the British and American empires?

**21st Century Initiative**

- What institutions has China created to influence its neighbors away from American influence?
  - Shanghai Cooperation Organization
  - Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
  - Confucius Institute
- How is the New Silk Road Initiative going to be achieved?
  - What challenges will China face?
  - Identify the Inter-Asia concerns and logistical issues
Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. The British Empire
4. The American Empire
5. The Rise of the New Chinese Empire
6. International Institutions Created by the British and Americans and their legacy
7. What is the New Silk Road Initiative?
8. Why is it important?
   a. The New Marshall Plan?
   b. Geopolitical impacts of investment
9. Relationship to Mahan’s theory
10. Positive Aspects of China’s Foreign Policy
    a. Economic Development
    b. Infrastructure development
11. Conclusions
12. References / Bibliography
13. Annexes

Potential References

Journal Articles


Gunn, Geoffrey C. "Understanding China: The Silk Road and the Communist Manifesto."


Xu, Hangtian. "Domestic Railroad Infrastructure and Exports: Evidence from the Silk Route."


**Books**


