US-CINA RELATIONS: RIVALRY WITHIN INTERDEPENDENCE

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DECLARATIONS

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This research is about big powers' interactions in the context of an established hegemon and a rising power. Specifically, it examines the established hegemon's response to the rising power and the latter's reactions to the various policy choices adopted by the former, focusing on the case of US-China relations. Interpreting from a neoclassical realist perspective, it also offers an examination as to whether, and to what extent, the growing economic interdependence between the US (an established hegemon) and China (a rising power) matters in reducing the possibility of conflict between them. This research finds that economic interdependence is one of the factors, but not the only factor, in determining US-China relations. Both the systemic-level and domestic-level variables are relevant and important determining factors that dictate a state's behaviour, be it an established hegemon or a rising power. Structurally, the changing position and the distribution of power of the US and China in the international system have led them to respond to these structural imperatives and behaved as they thought would best serve their interests. Domestically, history, ideologies, perceptions, domestic politics and nationalism act as intervening variables as to the foreign policy choices of the US and China respectively. A good example can be seen in China's choice to "lean to the Soviet camp" in the early Cold War era. This research observes that as compared to the established hegemon, the rising power faces more constraints as regards the systemic-level variables when making their foreign policy choices and this has a lot to do with its relative power capability as compared to the former. Thus, the rising power will adjust its foreign policy choices accordingly vis-a-vis its search for security and prosperity as evidenced by China's adoption of the concept of tao guang yang hui as its foreign policy guideline.
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