

CHINA, THE RISE

Abdul Waheed Parry



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 Analysis

China is a rising power and its importance in world affairs represents key changes in global power dynamics. China's rise in Asian affairs especially is a challenge for the US and its allies. China's economic success is the main reason for it to play a greater role on the international stage. Besides being a recognized regional power, China has proved itself as a global power as well. The growing trade relations and security ties within Asia are evident that China has grown more prominence in regional politics.

Similarly, the signing of agreements on environmental protection and public health shows China has successfully invested in active diplomacy. The more interesting feature of this active diplomacy is the positive way China has dealt with its neighbors. It seems that most Asian region has received China's activism wholeheartedly. With its continuous efforts, China has succeeded in moderating the fears of

its neighbors by adopting an approach aligned with the economic and security interests of the region. This positive diplomacy has resulted in success, most notably in trade, where China is speedily emerging as an engine of regional economic growth.

There is much more to do for China to advance itself as a regional leader. More focus on its policies in issues such as health, the environment and human rights is needed to have an effective impact on the region.

There is a need to assess the scope and implications of China's development within Asia and the world. Many will assess and focus on China's strengths, undertakings and features of its diplomacy in Asia. Yet balanced assessment will require a wide-range of study on China's strengths and weaknesses, as well as clear-eyed views of determinants influencing its policies in Asia and other parts of the world. Moreover,



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awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of other powers and influences in the region and across the globe, especially those exerted by the US also needs to be looked at.

China's rise must be essentially seen as a political process. The ruling Communist Party worked on legitimizing its rule through a course of different aspects. The party realized that performance-based legitimacy is the only way to prolong its rule. For the party, performance-based economic development became the synonym of politics in China. Economic development led to China's political stability and overall prosperity. China's rise is perceived as a threat by many, the US being at the top of the list. Countries like Japan and India in the nearest region share this view.

The American concern mainly arises from its hegemony in world politics. China's emergence as a global power may challenge US hegemony. The pace of China's economic growth has convinced the world that it is only a matter of time before China emerges as a global power.

Neighboring countries have realized that they have a more beneficial role to play vis-a-vis China. China's economic growth has forced them to be very careful in handling their relationship with the country. China is a gigantic country. It consumes a tremendous amount of foreign direct investment and pops out a huge volume of exports. Other countries are faced with China's competition within the economic fold. No government in Asia has adopted an anti-China policy. China's increasing economic growth has caused concerns among many nations in the world. India is covertly being used by world superpowers to contain Chinese influence, which seems to have failed very badly. The recent face-off between the two countries in disputed Jammu and Kashmir's Ladakh region is one such example, where India lost more than 20 soldiers in a single scuffle. China is trying to calm down the growing concerns about its future endeavors.

“The combination of stunning economic growth and unpredictable political governance causes

deep concerns about China among the nations in the world. The Chinese leadership has realized the urgency to calm down these concerns and to build a supportive international environment for its ascendancy. To make its rise less a threat, the Chinese government has sponsored many PR events, such as exhibitions in foreign countries, promoting Chinese language programs, and so on.”¹

China in response has been talking about its policies based on the idea of peace. The thesis of “China's peaceful rise” is a clear message to the world in this regard. The policy would mean that; first, China's development depends upon and in return will contribute to world peace; second, China will resort to peaceful means for development; third, China's development will rely more on its own resources and market; fourth, China is prepared for a long-term process of hard work, even several generations, for economic prosperity. Finally, even as China has achieved its economic development, it will not seek hegemony in the world or come out as a threat to any country.

China is committed to its “China's peaceful rise” policy. Its success is clearly gained with the help of this policy. It has made strategic partnerships with the EU, Russia, and other second-tier-powers. China has promoted the “good neighbor policy” in Asia. It has increased trade relations within its neighboring region. The Belt-Road initiative, CPEC, and many development projects, etc. have paved China's way to strengthen its ties with its neighbors. China has positioned itself as an important trading partner with these countries. Besides, China has entered into various mechanisms of regional cooperation with the countries.

On the other hand, China is determined to increase its military capabilities. The balance of global power has been shifting rapidly largely due to China's rise in its military might. The rise in China's military power will not only affect the balance in Asia, it will have a great impact in the changing dynamics of world power politics.



“According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), while the U.S. defense expenditure declined by 15 percent and Japan’s increased by only 2 percent between 2009 and 2019, China’s defense spending increased by 85 percent in the same period. In absolute terms, the United States still remained in first place globally, with \$732 billion spent in 2019, and China was in second place with \$261 billion. However, it must be noted that while the U.S. military is globally committed and has been engaged in conflicts in the Middle East, the Chinese military is only regionally engaged and has not fought in a major conflict in the past four decades. When one considers the long-term trends, it is clear that in the future it will be difficult for the United States to keep competing with China on military spending.”²

The third important factor concerning the global structure especially the US is China’s ideological orientation. China is being projected as an ideological “China threat”. Western scholars have been writing on this subject extensively. One example is Samuel Huntington. According to Huntington, China’s cultural factor along with Islamic civilization is a threat for Western

cultural hegemony. In his book, “The Clash of Civilizations”, Huntington writes that the “unholy alliance between Islamic and Confucian civilizations” is the most fundamental threat to the West. China has termed this perception of the “China threat” as international bullying. The Chinese often suspect that the US and Japan are the originators of the “China threat” arguments.

The Wuhan-origin pandemic that was supposed to give a serious blow to the Communist regime has surprisingly provided China with an opportunity to further its goals. China is the only American rival enjoying an upper hand on geopolitical grounds since the Vietnam War. China, with the help of smart policies, has succeeded to buy allies within the developing countries. It has also succeeded in gaining access within the power centers of its rival America.

However, for the last few years, China has successfully expanded its diplomatic and economic relationships. By launching new institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China has positioned itself as a donor of much-needed public goods through policies like the vast amounts of infrastructure investment through the Belt and Road Initiative.

Endnotes

¹ <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/chinas-rise-as-a-military-power-a-view-from-tokyo/>

² <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html>