CHINA’S EMERGING ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS:
IS THERE A SHIFT IN GLOBAL INFLUENCE?

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that, apart from certain sources which I have of necessity had to cite in this work, this study is the result of an original research I conducted under the supervision of Dr Boni Yao Gebe and that this research has not been presented either in part or in whole for any other purpose.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God for the grace and strength to complete it successfully, and to my wife, Josephine, and our two children, Nana Adwoa and Jojoe, for their sacrifices, support and understanding during my periods of absence from home while working on this dissertation.
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ABSTRACT

The dynamic rise of China as a global economic and political actor is a major topic of current academic and political debates around the world. The global shift in power is one of the most important transformations in international politics in modern history. This study examined China’s emerging role in international affairs and its potential of becoming a super power in the international system. The study briefly considered China’s role in Asia, Europe, The Americas and Africa; and further appraised the problem by looking at the shifting contours in global influence from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Exploratory research design was used to examine China’s emerging role in international affairs. The needed data and information for this study were primarily gathered through secondary sources: reliable text books, journals/magazine articles, news magazines, commentaries and the internet. The exploratory nature of this study was a factor with regards to primary data sources. Drawing on the literature, one hypothesis was formulated. An analysis of secondary data was conducted to examine this hypothesis. Thematic analysis indicated that, China’s growth and impact in the international system somewhat poses a threat to existing powers, although, China’s one – party system has a hobbling effect in its ambitions of becoming a global superpower. Finally, the shifting global influence has implications on international affairs. In light of the findings, a number of recommendations are made.
CHAPTER ONE
RESEARCH DESIGN
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The world centre of gravity has moved from the Atlantic to the Pacific within the last few years. By virtually any metric, whether it is economic power, military power, political power, or global influence, the world centre of power has come to reside in the Pacific — with China at the heart of this profound transition.¹

With increasing strength, China now exercises immense influence in many regions. From Asia to Africa, even in some parts of Europe and Latin America, China is becoming the largest trading partner of many countries, including several regional powers. But there is still a wide gap between China's strength and that of the US, even though it is in decline. This shows China is still in the process of extending its regional influence to the rest of the world.²

Over the past decade, China has become an increasingly important economic partner for countries on its periphery and around the world. But this trend must be placed in proper perspective. Even as trade and investment links between China and other countries have grown, the United States and Europe are—and will continue to be—vital trading partners for the region. Moreover, China’s rise is only one part of a broader shift towards a world in which emerging markets have greater economic weight. China’s growing influence must be viewed within the context of both current economic patterns and long-term global trends.³
By and large, China has the same reasons to engage in Africa as do other major foreign actors. Chinese companies, similar to their European and American counterparts, also see promising opportunities in catering to African markets. But their respective strategies naturally differ on many accounts.

German firms are increasingly doing business in Africa. However, competition to do business in Africa is already stronger today than ever before. The significance of the traditional European industrial economies is somewhat fading too. The importance of Russia as a trading partner to African countries is quite minimal when compared to other developed countries and emerging markets. Bilateral trade between Russia and Africa reached its peak of US$ 7.3 billion in 2008. Although this is close to a tenfold increase from the very low trade volume of US$ 740 million in 1994, it is not significant enough to guarantee Russian companies a bargaining edge when engaging with African countries. Yet, the influence of other countries is escalating rapidly. Countries such as China, India and Brazil have greatly amplified their political and economic presence in Africa.

Chinese involvement in Africa for instance, has increased dramatically over the past decade. Today, annual trade between China and Africa is worth more than $166 billion, a threefold increase since 2006. What is new in the relationship is China's new breadth and depth of caring. Until recently, most Chinese aid to Africa went to projects that were clearly designed to primarily benefit China's extractive industries on the continent, not Africa's people. To boot, Chinese laborers were brought to work on the projects, reducing the number of jobs available for
Africans. The result: China was accused by Africans and by international observers alike of being dastardly self-serving in its African endeavors.\textsuperscript{6}

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures, China overtook the United States as Africa’s biggest trade partner in 2009, whereas in 2000 the United States’ trade with Africa was three times that of China’s.\textsuperscript{7} It is worth noting that U.S. total trade with Sub-Saharan Africa (exports plus imports) increased 28.0 percent in 2008, as both exports and imports grew.\textsuperscript{8}

China's population of 1.4 billion renders it the most populous nation on earth, accounting for a fifth of the world's population; while at almost 10 million square kilometers, it is the third largest country after Russia and Canada. Its 2.25 million troops form the world's largest armed force. China's reputation as a major military power is crowned by the possession of nuclear capability that is able for all ranges and delivery modes.\textsuperscript{9}

Economically, it is the world's third largest trading nation, having risen from 32\textsuperscript{nd} in 1978 and 10\textsuperscript{th} in 1997. Its GDP at 13\% of world output (at purchasing power parity) is second to the US. China, inheritor of 5,000 years of civilization, is also the world's fastest developing economy currently, having grown at an average of 9.5\% annually for the past 20 years. Such high growth rates, low labour costs and a huge emerging market have attracted the world's highest levels of foreign direct investment. Since China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December 2001, it has also become one of the most open economies in the developing world, with average tariffs dropping from 41\% in 1992 to 6\% in 2001. All of these economic activities
are occurring under a communist government which, since the introduction of market reforms in 1978, operates a system it describes as “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

In all, the rise of China could represent an alternative to American global dominance. Whether this alternative is a form of complementary balance, or a precarious competition for global hegemony, has remained a matter of debate. Perhaps the greatest amongst them is the problem not of physical power but the soft power of values: how attractive is a China that lost Confucianism to Communism, and is still trying to find its way back again to Confucian humanism without sacrificing the politics of control. Domestically, too, there are costs in China's economic success with the growing divide between the wealthy coastal region and the poorer interior. Internal weakness does not bode well for external resilience, as China's history has shown. Hence, China's rise as a global power, while probable given its present trajectory of growth - must still navigate a minefield of hazards and uncertainties.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Literally, “international relations” means relations between states. In documents concerning international relations there is often consideration of relations between countries, but the relations discussed hold not only between countries or governments but also between legal citizens, firms and organisations. Such relations include relations in the fields of politics, economics, culture and science. Language also plays an important role in such relations. The principles of international relations include equality, diversity and balance; principles that the Chinese government have in recent years, emphasized and demonstrated.
As the new century unfolds, in all probability, so will China's prospects in its international relations unfold into a global power. Consider once again China's contemporary dimensions - an enormous country with the world's largest population and a huge military establishment.

According to Hirsh, (2005), China’s economy is among the world's fastest growing and it is expected to become the largest by the year 2025 (by Purchasing Power Parity calculations). Historically, too, it is imbued with greatness. Along with India, it is one of the two great civilizations of Asia. While India could rival China in the dimensions of greatness, China has had a head start. In terms of world powers, one cannot forget that an innovative America, an integrating Europe, and possibly a revitalizing Russia, are also contenders.¹²

As its GDP has increased, China has become more assertive regarding international issues. Countries on its periphery – the Koreas, Japan, Taiwan and the ten Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) – have felt China's growing influence. When these states make policy decisions, they now have to take China into account. There is no direct intimidation, but, by denying access to its huge consumer market, China can punish those who are against its interests. Therefore, none of these countries wants to be viewed as antagonistic. Increasingly, this same pressure is being felt worldwide: The balance of power is changing, if not already changed. The U.S. realizes that China's status has grown and that its views must be accorded their due weight. Were it to feel slighted, China could make its displeasure felt by being uncooperative on international issues or policies that require its support.¹³
The global power pyramid is getting increasingly flat because of multi–polarity. The US may still be the only dominating power, but it can no longer dominate world affairs alone, since China is gradually emerging as a global power.\(^{14}\)

China’s emergence as a global power is not without criticisms from critics who confront the Chinese state at a deeper ontological level. This is especially the case since autocracy has hobbled China’s bid to put a friendly face on its rise. Institutions associated with authoritarian rule such as pervasive state secrecy and official censorship mask China’s ambitions, leading outsiders to focus on what they can easily observe: diplomatic behavior and military capabilities. China has attempted to rise and reassure while retaining a system of one–party rule. The leadership in Beijing initially hoped that economic integration with the world would minimize concerns about the growth of Chinese power. But that has not been quite the case.\(^ {15}\)

There is a shifting global influence: China’s emerging role and the U.S relative decline, which certainly has implications such as tension, distrust, and conflict, all very typical features of a power transition, for both states and for the world at large. This study therefore examines China’s emerging role in international affairs and its potential of becoming the super power in the international system. The study briefly considered China’s role in Asia, Europe, The Americas and Africa; and further appraised the problem by looking at the shifting contours in global influence from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Emanating directly from the above, the following research questions are asked:
1. To what extent does China’s strengths influence its role in international affairs?
2. How does its weakness undermine this influence in international affairs?
3. Does China’s rise pose a threat to existing powers?
4. What are the implications of the shifting global influence?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the emerging role of China in international affairs and determine whether there is a shift in global influence. Specific objectives are:

1. To assess the strengths and weakness of China (Economic, Military, Nuclear power status, Social, Political) in its rise to becoming a global superpower;
2. To evaluate the scope of influence of existing world powers and emerging powers;
3. To ascertain the implications of the shifting global influence;

1.3 Rationale for the Study

The global shift of power to Asia and the global strategic dominance of the United States have been the subject of discussion of several recent publications around the world. Whether the power of the United States is in ‘absolute decline’ or ‘relative decline’ with regards to China’s emergence as a dominant influence is still debatable. Either way, with the global shift of power to Asia what would inevitably follow is that the global balance of power would also be acquiring newer contours with consequences for the international system. It is in this light that this research is conducted.
1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is designed to examine China’s emerging role in international affairs, by considering this role in Asia, Europe, The Americas and Africa, vis-à-vis the roles of existing superpowers like U.S.A. The study is limited to the domains of influence where China plays a predominant role, that is; Social, Political and Economic, with an aim to of examining policy implications of the shifting contours.

1.5 Hypothesis

China’s growth and impact in the international system pose a threat to existing powers.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Offensive Realism

The theoretical framework for this study is Offensive Realism. Offensive realism is a structural theory belonging to the realist school of thought that holds the anarchic nature of the international system responsible for aggressive state behaviour in international politics. The theory depicts great powers as power-maximising revisionists who privilege buck-passing over balancing strategies in their ultimate aim to dominate the international system.\(^{16}\)

John Mearsheimer’s offensive realism theory does reiterate and build on certain assumptions elaborated by classical realists. It departs from this branch however by adding a system-centric approach to the study of state behaviour in international politics based on the structure of the international system. Accordingly, his offensive realism pertains to the sub-branch of neorealism alongside other structural theories such as defensive realism.\(^{17}\)
The theory is grounded on five central assumptions. These are:

- Great powers are the main actors in world politics and the international system is anarchical;
- All states possess some offensive military capability;
- States can never be certain of the intentions of other states;
- States have survival as their primary goal;
- States are rational actors, capable of coming up with sound strategies that maximize their prospects for survival.

John Mearsheimer’s offensive realism advances drastically different predictions regarding great power behaviour in international politics. Offensive realists affirm that, states need to accumulate and possess power to ensure its security and issue strategies which when pursued can meet this satisfactory level of security. Again, states always seek to maximize their own relative power, defined in terms of material capabilities. They therefore look for opportunities to alter the balance of power by acquiring additional increments of power at the expense of potential rivals since the greater the military advantage one state has over other states, the more secure it is. States seek to increase their military strength to the detriment of other states within the system with hegemony—being the only great power in the state system—as their ultimate goal.

Mearsheimer summed up this view as follows:

“Great powers recognize that the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now, thus eliminating any possibility of a challenge by another great power. Only a misguided state would pass up an opportunity to be the hegemon in the system because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive”.
Accordingly, Mearsheimer believes that a state’s best strategy to increase its relative power to the point of achieving hegemony is to rely on offensive tactics. Provided that it is rational for them to act aggressively, great powers will likely pursue expansionist policies, which will bring them closer to hegemony.

The appropriateness of this theory for this study is that among other things, it espouses the implications (conflicts and tensions) that are likely to occur when one hegemon is declining and another is emerging.

The November 2004 issue of the IISS Strategic Comments states that China has ‘sought to promote a variety of new institutional arrangements that exclude the United States . . . [in Eastern Asia] where China can exercise a natural leadership role’ and that its need for energy and raw materials has extended its resource diplomacy to Central Asia, and other parts. Indeed, many of China's gains are in direct relation to American interests. China stands to benefit more by entering into regions that are prohibited to American business interests than investing in such politically risky energy producers.

It is better for states to achieve regional hegemony, which refers to dominating one’s own geographical area than global hegemony. This is because global hegemony is nearly impossible to attain. China's interest in promoting peace on the Korean peninsula through its hosting of the Six-Party Talks on “preventing the nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula”, and a planned common economic future with Southeast Asia, clearly shows its desire in achieving, if not already achieved, regional hegemony. The end of this decade will see the emergence of a
regional free trade agreement between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Tariffs are to be reduced to between 5% and zero and investment barriers removed. This trade region will create an integrated market of 1.7 billion people, forming what will become the world's most populous free trade zone.  

The relentless quest for power, however, inherently generates a state of constant security competition. Realists go on to note that as China gets more powerful and the United States' position erodes, two things are likely to happen: China will try to use its growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests, and other states in the system – especially the declining hegemon – will start to see China as a growing security threat. The result of these developments, they predict, will be tension, distrust, and conflict, the typical features of a power transition. In this view, the drama of China's rise will feature an increasingly powerful China and a declining United States locked in an epic battle over the rules and leadership of the international system.  

1.7 Literature Review

The literature review covers related studies in the field of international affairs with respect to China’s emerging role and the relative decline of the other great powers.

The book – China’s Rise: Challenges and Opportunities by Bergsten, Freeman, Lardy & Mitchell (2008), examines the dynamics underpinning China’s rise and suggests U.S policy responses. The book argues that China poses enormous challenges and opportunities to the U.S and the world at large. As China continues to evolve and debate its future course, U.S interests can be
best protected by engaging China actively during this formative period, and by helping the country develop the tools, infrastructure, and policies that will enable Beijing to become a cooperative counterpart to Washington in global affairs. The U.S should therefore support reconfiguration of the global architecture to incorporate China into the discussion both of the development of international rules and of what it means to be a “responsible stakeholder”.23

This book is particularly relevant to this research because it considers the implications of China’s rise and suggests how the declining hegemon (U.S) should handle it in order to avoid instability in the global sphere, which is the major issue that this study also addresses.

The Three Faces of China by Lampton (2008) also investigates the military, economic and intellectual dimensions of China’s growing influence in the world. The main argument is that China has a two decade – long window of opportunity to realize the country’s goal of becoming a comprehensive global power capable of pursuing and defending national interests. Until then, China will be primarily focused on domestic challenges, such as economic and social development. Because Beijing will judge its foreign policies on how they lighten domestic burdens, China will seek a peaceful international environment. Although disagreement between Beijing and Washington will be inevitable during the next twenty years and beyond, intense conflict can be avoided through skilful diplomacy.24 This book’s relevance to this research is that it examines China’s strengths in the international system. It however fails to identify how this impact on the possible shift in global influence from the West to the ”rising East”; a dimension which is reviewed in this research.
Recent publications, by Rosecrance, Stein and Brawley, introduce domestic level analysis to the realist's traditional systemic level hypotheses to explain how America’s primacy is eroding. It introduces a multi-dimensional approach recognizes the influencing factors in both the systemic and domestic environments. The domestic level analysis captures the dynamics of the decision-making process, accounting for the rational and sometimes "irrational" cost - benefit calculations. Advocates of this multi-dimensional approach believe it generates more reliable and predictable hypotheses than any single approach. In this tradition, one of those numerous factors advanced earlier to account for the decline process in world super powers includes the increased cost of maintaining the international system. This hypothesis is derived from two basic contentions: (a) the hegemon is responsible for the leadership and maintenance of the international system; (b) the hegemon continues to maintain the system despite reduced benefits of leadership and higher costs. Observers conclude that the system leader rails to develop a long-term strategy for balancing its commitments and resources, and instead tends to "muddle through" its problems. The end-result is the gradual deterioration of systemic leadership and the increased likelihood of system closure and/or major war. This literature is of interest to this study because American primacy is eroding as it appears to manifest all the features of a deteriorating systemic leader. China and other nations are steadily ascending, while the United States and its allies are stuck in an economic rut. The long era of Western hegemony seems to be coming to an end.

1.8 Great Power Status and the Chinese Threat

According to Bull's classic 1977 work, ‘The Anarchical Society’, a great power belongs to a society of states that maintains a balance-of-power to prevent a global dictatorship emerging
through imperial conquest. Besides the balancing-of-power in maintaining this socially constructed system, great powers also engage in the order preserving mechanisms of international law, diplomacy, concerting (or joint management of the system), and war when it acts to preserve (or defend) the system rather than destroy it. As a member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, China belongs to the elite club of recognized great powers. It is involved in more than 1000 international governmental organizations that deal with issues ranging from drug trafficking to the environment; and it is an ardent supporter of the United Nations and international law, warning against the exercise of military power when peaceful methods of diplomacy ought to be given greater scope for realization. This was especially notable with regard to China's reaction to American military interventions in the post-Cold War era, indicating China's understanding of the need for great powers to critique one another in the interests of a balanced state system. Even before its economic rise and military modernization, China was a vocal critic of superpower conduct in world affairs. Indeed, China's role during the Cold War was one of balance in the strategic triangle (comprising the US, Soviet Union and China), whereby China pursued a policy of 'leaning to one side' (either the Soviet Union or the United States) from within a posture of strategic independence.

Even with the collapse of the Cold War structure, and the clear military and economic superiority that now rests with the remaining superpower, the United States still supports the prevailing state system and is sensitive to balance-of-power as well as concerting behaviour. Thus China may continue to exercise its role of superpower critic as the need arises. China is not alone in its balancing efforts, as the failure of the US to gain UN support for its war on Iraq in 2003 demonstrated. In this sense, the European Union (EU) and its member states, Russia and others
act as both a concerting and balancing force. China, too, acted in concert with the US in its campaign against state-defying terrorism. But alongside other states, including France, Germany, Russia, and Turkey, it opposed the US war on Iraq. Even though the US went ahead regardless, it still returned to the UN to gain a mandate to continue in the aftermath of the war and to involve other nations. This indicates that the American hegemony is aware of the need to maintain its power through legitimacy, as well as reducing its foreign policy costs in material terms, in the rate of casualties, and hence in domestic public opinion terms.\textsuperscript{29} Another 'Vietnam' - both at home and abroad - would not be countenanced by the American public.

Unlike the characteristically unipolar structure of the state system over which Washington presides coupled with US unilateralist management tendencies, China has been a strong advocate of multi-polarity and, of late, multilateralism. This would suit China in view of its subordinate power status in comparison to the US; a view which would suggest to some observers that if China surpasses the US and becomes the dominant state, it would behave in a similar fashion to the US. This is the 'strong states cast long shadows' proposition. Such a proposition supports the China threat thesis if (a) one is opposed to the emergence of an Oriental hegemonic power in the state system preferring an Occidental one, or (b) if one is opposed to unipolarity, preferring a closer semblance of balance-of-power in bipolarity or multi-polarity. The first pertains to cultural affiliations and Huntington's (1993) 'clash of civilizations' thesis; the second has an aversion to hegemonic systems. In light of increasing opposition to US hegemonic leadership in the aftermath of the Iraq war, China may garner some support for its rise as a serious balancer to the US. However, the US would need to entrench itself in world-defying, self-aggrandizing...
behaviour to warrant such an adversarial image. Indeed, the US would need to lose its hegemonic legitimacy and China to gain it.\(^{30}\)

With regards to the China threat theory - the fear that China will grow into a military superpower, China's leadership deliberately adopted a policy of good-neighborliness under the concept of ‘‘heping jueqi’’, meaning 'the peaceful emergence of China', also known as its 'peaceful rise'. This entails the non-hegemonic stance of China, the emphasis on development and the view that China's economic growth will benefit other nations, not hurt them. Indeed, 'peaceful rise' was replaced with 'peaceful development’ to further emphasize the non-threatening nature of China's growth. If China is a peacefully rising power, how does one explain its armory of over 30 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), 110 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM) as well as its submarine-launch missile capability (which is still small)? While this nuclear force is by no means comparable to that of the US which has over a thousand nuclear missiles, or Russia with its 635 ICBMs, and its newly announced plan for nuclear modernization, China's nuclear force does bestow upon it the prestige and deterrent power sought by others in recent times - including India, Pakistan and even North Korea in its formative stages of becoming a nuclear power.\(^{31}\)

It may be argued that with its minimal deterrent force China is hardly a nuclear superpower to be taken seriously. On the other hand, China does have global reach – the many nuclear warheads needed to constitute a threat and to be deemed a credible deterrent is not quite present.
Moreover, China's nuclear arsenal is not designed to compete (as occurred during the Cold War between the USSR and US in the accumulation of ever greater numbers and sophistication of nuclear warheads and delivery systems), but to deter threats to China. It does not have a strategic alliance system to defend or an umbrella under which allies’ shelter - as is the case with the US and its defence partners. Thus, China can claim nuclear superpower status without arousing undue suspicion. The suspicion which it does arouse concerns Taiwan - and this is precisely what Beijing intends: to deter a Taiwanese bid for formal independence.  

China's insistence that Taiwan - a democratic country with all the attributes of independent statehood except recognition - belongs to China and has no right to an independent sovereignty strikes at the heart of China's legitimacy problem as a global power. For all its good-neighbourly diplomacy and calls upon the presiding superpower to exercise restraint in the exercise of its coercive power, China in domestic (Tibet, Xinjiang, democracy movements, human rights) and quasi-domestic (China-Taiwan) affairs is seen as overbearing when handling the problem of dissent. Given that most states in the world accept Beijing’s view on the matter, that is, the One China policy which states that there is one China and that Taiwan is a province of China, this does not appear to be a problem for the society of states. Irrespective of minority claims within its sovereign territory, China remains an accepted great power in the International Relations system.

In military terms it is also a superpower if one accepts that its nuclear arsenal is adequate to the task of global (deterrent) reach and that its conventional forces can defend China in the improbable event of attack. Unlike the US and other modern military establishments, China lacks
the latest technology. However, it continues its program of modernization, which it is increasingly able to afford thanks to a strengthening economy.

Therefore, while China is a great power, exercising a valued balancing and concerting role in the system, it is yet to be accepted as a superpower along U.S lines. In terms of global power, China demonstrates an ability to engage in global governance when state-managed (as in the UN and its agencies) and transnational business relations (benefiting from investments from transnational companies), but where issues of dissent and their wider ramifications are involved (particularly democracy and human rights issues), global civil society is not overly impressed with China. Social networks independent of the state, including human rights activists, as well as postmodernist views on diversity and tolerance, find the authoritarian government of China troubling and out of touch with the global ethos.34

1.8.1 Relative Decline of Hegemons

Since the emergence of the modem nation – state, two states have fallen from the preeminent position of system leader, or hegemon, while a third, the United States, is currently experiencing many of the same symptoms associated with decline. Historical patterns suggest that the current system leader will suffer the same fate as that of the two prior hegemons - the Dutch Republic and Britain. The leader will likely experience a relative decline of its economic and military strength, increased competition from rising powers and higher system maintenance costs. The international system will lose cohesion and order. An increase in military and political rivalries will result with the proliferation of bushfire conflicts, disrupting international trade. Eventually, a major power will challenge the leader's primacy, resulting in a major war and the subsequent
closure of the international system. Scholarly interest in hegemonic decline has increased significantly in the last twenty years with the U.S.'s relative decline. Numerous factors and theories have been advanced to account for the process, the most noteworthy being Hegemonic Stability Theory. Based on realist theory, Charles Kindleberger and Robert Gilpin, among others, suggest that a hegemon promotes order and cohesion through the implementation of an international free trade system. These conditions stimulate relative peace, stability, and economic growth. A hegemon's decline, according to the theory, initiates the system's return to global anarchy. The theory discounts the role of domestic factors and its interaction with systemic factors for determining national policy. 

1.9 Conceptual Definitions

**International Affairs:** Affairs between international actors for instance states and organizations. For the purpose of this research, the economic, political and social affairs between nations are considered.

**Hegemony:** The dominating influence of one state over others.

**Implications:** The resulting effects of one phenomenon to another. In this research, the resulting effects of China’s emerging role and the relative decline of the U.S.A for both states and the world at large.

**Super Power:** Dominant state power in the international system which enjoys hegemonic status.

**Great Power:** A state that is recognized as having the ability to exert its influence on a global scale.
Soft Power
Global influence attained through diplomatic, economic, cultural, and other non-coercive means

Multipolarity:
Conceiving multiple centres of power or influence. Also, a distribution of power in which more than two nation-states have nearly equal amounts of political, military, cultural, economic and ideological influence.

Unipolarity:
A distribution of power in which one state exercises most of the cultural, economic, and military influence.

1.10 Research Methodology
Exploratory research design was used to examine China’s emerging role in international affairs. This research design was useful in identifying the boundaries of the environment in which the problem (China’s emerging role and US relative decline), opportunities or situations of interest are likely to reside as well as identify the salient factors or variables that are relevant to the research. Although China’s emerging role in international affairs is not a new topic, the trajectory of this study is a relatively new issue, as such the use of this research design helped to gain familiarity with the issue in order to acquire more insight into it. Again, because of the difficulty to collect primary data on this topic, exploratory research which relies on secondary data or qualitative approach is appropriately utilized.
1.10.1 Sources of Data

The needed data and information for this study is primarily gathered through secondary sources: relevant text books, journals/magazine articles, news magazines, current affairs commentaries and the internet. The exploratory nature of this study was a factor with regards to primary data sources. A thorough search for relevant materials in this subject area was carried out. In-depth readings were done where most common literature about the subject matter was noted, analyzed and evaluated in order to inculcate vital lessons drawn from them into this study.

1.11 Arrangement of Chapters

This research is divided into four main chapters and the content of each chapter is illustrated below:

a. Chapter 1 – Research Design: This comprises introduction to the study, Background, Statement of the Research Problem and Objectives, Research Rationale, Hypothesis, Scope of Study, Literature Review, Methodology among others.

b. Chapter 2 – Global influence of the USA and China: The chapter consists of an overview of China’s emerging role in Asia, Europe, The Americas and Africa, vis-à-vis the roles of existing superpowers like U.S.A; and the domains of influence (Social, Political and Economic).

c. Chapter 3 – The Strengths and Weaknesses of China in its Emergence: This Chapter looks at the strengths and weaknesses of China in its pursuit of rising to becoming a global superpower. Again, the implications of the shifting contours are evaluated. Analysis of secondary data are also thoroughly discussed.
d. **Chapter 4 – Summary, Conclusions and Observations:** This Chapter comprises a Summary of the findings, Conclusions and Recommendations.
Endnotes


7 Kermeliotis, T (2011). Is the West losing out to China on Africa? CNN’s MarketPlace for Africa, September


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CHAPTER TWO
GLOBAL INFLUENCE OF THE U.S.A AND CHINA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of China’s emerging role in international affairs. It also attempts an assessment of the global influence of the U.S.A and China over the years.

2.1 Overview of China’s Emerging Role

Due to the changing landscape of the world economy and the reverberations of the financial crisis, the global and regional architecture is bound to vary. This reality coupled with other factors has prompted China to actively engage in regional and global architecture to ensure that its rise continues “peacefully”. China’s interests and participation presently lie well beyond its border and extend around the globe. China’s economic, military and political rise plays a pivotal role for the future of the international community and the shape of a “new world order”. China has constantly widened its political sphere of influence (in Asia and in other regions of the world) which also implies an increasing engagement in regional and international affairs.
2.1.1 China in Asia

China’s economic, military and political rise has a lasting impact on the structure of Asian regional order. From a merely geo-politic perspective, Though China is the gravitational centre of Asia it is actively involved in the politics of various regions and sub-regions, e.g. East Asia, South Asia, or Central Asia, although the debate dealing with China’s role in Asian regionalism mainly focuses on the regional order in East Asia.¹

China is expanding its diplomatic and economic activity in South Asia as part of an overall effort to enhance its global influence. The closeness and intimacy between China and South Asia is historically and geographically interlinked. China and South Asia have contiguous borders, share same rivers that originate from the Himalayas and traverse across the neighbouring countries of India, Nepal and Bangladesh before flowing in to the Bay of Bengal. In East Asia, a region emerging as the powerhouse of the world economy, China is pushing for regional integration. The financial crisis has reshaped the global architecture as new challenges no longer rest on developed countries to solve. China has always valued the development of friendly relations with neighboring countries and the maintenance of stability in its neighborhood. South East Asia and Korea have both bounced back to rates that whilst slower than pre-crisis are still respectable by any absolute standards other than their own over-hyped and unsustainable pre-crisis levels. Most importantly, their bounce-back has been aided by the strength in China's economy with which their ties grow steadily. The recent ASEAN summit with China and the talk of a free trade agreement between the two are signs of this growing Chinese power.²
Regional integration in Asia is one sure way China can ensure hegemony especially in its geographical area.

2.1.2 China in the Americas

Traditionally, China had virtually no footprint in Latin America or the Caribbean. It was a region that Chinese leaders considered the “backyard” of the United States and were reluctant to enter. Similarly, Latin American and Caribbean leaders gave almost no thought to China.

China has however forcefully entered this region in recent years. Between 2000 and 2009, China’s imports from Latin America and the Caribbean ballooned from approximately $5 billion to $44 billion. Exports to the region have followed a similar trajectory, rising from $4.5 billion to $42 billion over the same time period. China is now Brazil and Chile’s largest trade partner, and may soon be Peru’s as well. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean estimates that China will displace the European Union as the second-largest regional trading partner by 2015, and will trail only the United States.³

U.S – China economic ties have expanded substantially over the past three decades. Total US – China trade rose from $5 billion in 1981 to $503 billion in 2011. China is currently the United States’ second largest trading partner, its third largest export market and its biggest source of
exports. The rapid pace of economic integration between China and the United States, while benefitting both sides overall, has made the trade relationship increasingly complex. China’s large population and booming economy have made it a large and growing market for U.S exporters and investors.  

2.1.3 China in Africa

Economic co-operation lies at the forefront of contemporary China-Africa relations. In just ten years, between 1998 and 2008, China’s trade value with Africa grew from under $6 billion to $107 billion. Natural resources have a prominent role in the trade relationship, but Africa also presents a growing market for China’s own goods and investments. China has committed itself to becoming a development partner for Africa and has started to deliver development assistance. China’s relations with Africa – often referred to in terms of “south-south co-operation” – is largely managed through state-to-state bilateral relations. China’s investments in Africa, and trade with the continent, are growing at a breakneck pace.

China’s military co-operation is modest compared to its wider engagements in Africa, and it is primarily used to strengthen political ties with African governments. It is facilitated through high-level political delegations, military exchanges and defence attachés based in embassies. The content of military co-operation varies from country to country, but includes financial assistance for military infrastructure, de-mining support and training for African armed forces. Again, bilateral military relations remain extremely opaque.
2.1.4 China in Europe

Europe’s relationship with China has become more prominent over the years as trade between the two continents has blossomed. The relationship has taken on another level with the debt crisis as several euro zone countries have looked to China as a country capable of salvaging the situation. China’s investment in Europe is increasing though from a small base with a focus on strategic infrastructure and high – tech companies.

2.2 Comparing China and U.S.A in Global Influence

In the past decade, China’s “soft power” — global influence attained through diplomatic, economic, cultural, and other non-coercive means — has grown along with its international standing. Despite this development, the United States remains the preeminent global force in many areas of soft power. The United States exceeds China in global trade, even though China is fast catching up. In 2008, the United States was the dominant external political and military actor in the Middle East, and had a greater political and economic influence in Latin America. The United States maintains robust, formal alliances in Europe and Asia, and far outweighs China in military spending and capabilities. U.S. soft power has declined in relative terms, however. Some experts argue that China’s rise poses serious challenges to U.S. interests, while others believe that its implications are limited and that U.S. strengths remain formidable.

China has captured the attention of many developing countries due to its pragmatic approach to diplomacy, the ways in which the government links diplomacy, commerce, and foreign aid, and the dramatic expansion of its global economic influence. Since the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of China’s economic take-off in the mid-1990s, Beijing’s “win-win” diplomatic
style has featured greater accommodation and an emphasis on short-term, common economic interests. In the past several years, China’s proliferating trade, investment, and foreign aid accords with other countries, made possible by its own rapid development, have stressed mutual benefits. Through these agreements, China has gained markets for its goods, access to raw materials, and international esteem while providing other countries with foreign investment and aid projects without imposing conditions such as political and economic performance criteria. China’s style of diplomacy and its foreign policy principle of “non-interference” have been characterized as sensitive to local conditions rather than imposing standards. Many countries appear to appreciate this style.8

The United States continues to exert global foreign aid leadership and maintain a major, and much appreciated, aid presence in Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. U.S. foreign assistance to Southeast Asia has increased markedly since 2001, although most new funding has been directed at counter-terrorism and related programs in Indonesia and the Philippines. Japan remains the dominant provider of official development assistance (ODA) in Southeast Asia. In 2004, the Bush Administration launched two significant development aid programs — the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) — which represent far more ambitious humanitarian and development goals than does China’s aid. The MCA promotes good governance, investment in health and education, and economic freedom by providing assistance to countries that satisfy performance criteria. The U.S. State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) encourages reform in four areas — politics, economics, education, and women’s empowerment — through grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, and universities. The
U.S. Peace Corps, which has sent 190,000 American volunteers to serve in 139 countries since 1960, has no real counterpart in China. China’s six year-old “youth volunteers” program has sent several hundred Chinese youth to about one dozen countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹⁹

In terms of ODA grants, the United States is the world’s largest foreign aid donor far exceeding China. According to some estimates, China’s ODA ranges from $1.5 billion to $2 billion annually, compared to the United States’ core ODA budget of $19.5 billion in FY2007 (not including military assistance).¹⁰

However, China’s emergence as a major foreign aid provider has had a significant impact both in the developing world and among major foreign aid donors because of its size, growth, availability, and symbolic value. China often offers concessional loans, trade deals, and state-sponsored investments as part of aid packages, and when these are included, China’s aid may far surpass U.S. ODA. According to one study using unofficial reports of both actual and pledged aid, Beijing provided or offered a total of $31 billion in economic assistance to Southeast Asian, African and Latin American countries in 2007, a threefold increase compared to 2005 and 20 times greater than 2003. Chinese foreign assistance is attractive to many developing countries because it generally does not require changes in the policies or performance of recipient countries’ governments. Furthermore, China’s aid finances highly visible projects, such as infrastructure and government buildings, that provide immediate benefits and recognition of China. China is also providing professional and technical training for people from developing countries, particularly in Africa.¹¹
By some indicators, China’s rising soft power may have experienced some recent setbacks, while the U.S. image has shown signs of a possible renewal. China has received criticism from other major powers for its economic relations with many countries reported to have serious human rights problems.

China’s allegedly apolitical and mercantile foreign policy, lack of transparency, and absence of political conditions and social and environmental safeguards on China’s foreign investment and aid projects have brought some instances of public outcry against Chinese political and economic influence in some developing countries. Perceptions of Beijing’s poor domestic human rights record, including its policies toward ethnic minorities, also have undermined its global image and influence. Many countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, remain wary of Beijing’s intentions and doubtful of its sincerity even as they welcome China’s economic ties and aid.  

The United States possesses latent reserves of soft power. Many aspects of U.S. social, economic, cultural, academic, technological, and other forms of influence, much of which emanate from the private sector or outside the scope of government, remain unmatched in the world. Many American ideals have long-term, universal appeal, while the United States continues to be a magnet for immigrants and foreign students. Globally, negative views toward the United States appear to be significantly correlated to the Iraq war. Attitudes can vary in response to changes in U.S. foreign policies, leadership, diplomacy, and other instruments of soft power.
The United States and China share the same vital national interests of security and prosperity, although each has a particular additional interest and each defines its interests somewhat differently. Each seeks freedom from fear and want and to preserve its territorial integrity. For the United States, its particular interest lies in value preservation and projection of those values. Many Americans view the spread of democracy and free markets as enhancing national security and often seek improvements in human rights as part of their negotiating goals. China has a particular existential interest in regime preservation or the survival of the Chinese Communist Party as the sole ruler of China. This dovetails back into the Chinese vital interest of economic prosperity. The Party needs economic growth in order to deliver a rising standard of living to the people and provide legitimacy for its one party rule.  

The means, goals, and strategies by which each country pursues its national interests differ in many important respects. Each country wields an array of hard and soft power that includes its military, diplomatic and political activities, economic and financial clout, and considerable cultural and informational appeal. Each country deploys its power, however, in different ways. In cases, the differences may be subtle, but some are glaring.

With regards to strategic goals, each country arguably aims at maintaining internal and external stability and developing amicable and cooperative relations with the rest of the world. At times, though, the need for security trumps stability, and a country may undertake a destabilizing action (such as the invasion of Iraq). Each occupies a different position in world leadership. Even China recognizes that the United States is the only nation that has the will, stature, and means to mobilize the world community to undertake the great projects of the day.
China’s philosophy has been characterized as “live and let live,” a more non-confrontational approach that eschews outside interference in “internal matters.” China portrays itself as a benign, non-colonial power with influence, deep pockets, an ever expanding manufacturing base, and a nation that has lifted 300 million of its people out of poverty and, therefore, has become a potent model for other developing nations. The United States has long viewed itself as exceptional and a “shining city on a hill” for freedom-loving peoples all over the world. It too has deep pockets. China likely recognizes that it is not the center of the world, as its name in Chinese implies (often translated as Middle Kingdom), but it seems to be wielding its soft power in order to pursue its national interests in ways not unfamiliar, but at times anathema, to the United States. It appears that Beijing views its rise as a global force or at least a dominant factor in East Asia as only a matter of time.  

2.3 Regional Comparisons

2.3.1 Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is cast as a crucial arena of Sino-U.S. competition. The United States has deep security, trade and investment relations with the region, and many believe that Southeast Asian nations deeply value the longstanding U.S. “security umbrella” against a potentially expansive China. Southeast Asia’s proximity to China historically has cut two ways — creating cultural and regional affinities, but also breeding an existential Southeast Asian fear of potential China domination. But China has spent over a decade actively courting Southeast Asian states with new diplomatic initiatives, trade and investment, and foreign aid. In fact, both China and the United States have strong ties to Southeast Asia, and both draw upon considerable strengths in
projecting soft power in the region. Despite widespread improvements in public perceptions of China and parallel declines in perceptions of the United States, the United States draws upon considerable security and diplomatic assets in Southeast Asia and neither side can really claim to be the dominant power in the region. Some analysts argue that China seeks to create a sphere of influence in Southeast Asia and to erode U.S. dominance, while others contend that China has not the will, capability, nor acquiescence of countries in the region to carry out such a goal, at least in the short- to medium-term.  

Southeast Asian countries generally welcome China’s aid, investment, and friendship, but do not want China to dominate the region militarily. Many citizens in the region support or accept the U.S. military presence, but feel that the United States has often neglected to engage them diplomatically or hear their concerns. This void has been filled in part by China’s growing soft power. China’s growing influence derives mainly from its role as a market for the region’s natural resources, the economic benefits that it bestows through aid (mostly loans for infrastructure projects) and investment, gestures of friendship expressed through its diplomacy and foreign assistance, China’s standing as an economic development model, and economic and cultural integration stemming from proximity and migration. The United States maintains its influence based upon its military presence, foreign direct investment, its market for the region’s manufactured goods, military and development assistance, and educational opportunities. Many Southeast Asians continue to view the United States as a model of democracy and free market economics, aspire to its middle class lifestyle, and are attracted to its popular culture.
The overarching principles that inform China’s soft power activities make it a powerful alternative to U.S. soft power. China’s official embrace of Southeast Asia — what some refer to as its “charm offensive” — has nurtured China’s rising influence. By contrast, perceptions of U.S. aloofness and narrow security interests in the region and of Washington’s demanding conditions for diplomatic and financial support have contributed to Southeast Asian disillusionment with the United States. In the past decade, China has cultivated goodwill in Southeast Asia by refraining from devaluing its currency and by contributing to the International Monetary Fund “support package” to Thailand during the 1997–98 Asian Financial Crisis; downplaying territorial disputes and agreeing to strive for peaceful resolutions to such conflicts; developing a very active diplomatic agenda; promoting free trade agreements; and providing economic assistance without conditions.

For China, despite its successes, Southeast Asia presents an uneven and challenging landscape for soft power projection. The United States maintains alliances with the Philippines and Thailand, has a strategic agreement with Singapore, is developing military-to-military relations with Indonesia, and cooperates with Malaysia on counter-terrorism efforts. These and other countries in the region, or elements within them, continue to feel ambivalent towards China due to ongoing territorial disputes, China’s past and present support for repressive regimes, and tensions between indigenous peoples and the region’s ethnic Chinese communities.

An analysis of China’s bilateral relations in Southeast Asia leads to a regional division between mainland Southeast Asian states, particularly Burma, Cambodia, and Laos, where China is more influential, and maritime Southeast Asian states (Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore),
where Beijing wields less power. Thailand, a major non-NATO ally of the United States, appears to be more comfortable in its relationship with China than other regional states.

China’s historical conflicts with Vietnam, including a brief border war in 1979, and Vietnam’s close economic relations with Taiwan have placed limits on rapprochement between the two neighboring countries. In the past decade, the Philippines, a major non-NATO ally, has pursued stable and friendly political and economic relations with China, while relying upon the United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as security and diplomatic counterweights to China. Muslim states in the region (Indonesia, Malaysia) look not so much to China as they do to the rest of the Muslim world for models outside their national settings. Given that Muslims represent approximately half the population of Southeast Asia, and are concentrated in maritime Southeast Asia, this should place limits on the extent of Chinese influence there. Singapore, arguably the most strategically vulnerable and trade dependent state in the region, has promoted a balanced approach to the involvement of great powers in its region.22

2.3.2 Central Asia

Compared to other regions, China’s main interests in Central Asia, which is situated along its western border, involve not only trade, but also considerations related to both external and internal security. The region, encompassing the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, remains under the strong Russian strategic and economic influence.
Since the end of the Cold War but especially since 2001, the United States has been actively engaged in the region. As “front-line” states in the war on terrorism, Central Asian states have hosted U.S. and NATO military personnel and have received substantial U.S. foreign assistance. Despite these constraints on Chinese influence, Beijing has become a major diplomatic and economic presence in Central Asia.²³

The United States wields somewhat more influence than does China in a few non-military cultural, diplomatic, and economic areas of “soft power” in the region. These include the amount of foreign assistance and perhaps the number of mid- and lower-level official visits and presence in the regional states. In other areas, China has more regional influence than the United States, including in trade and the number of its citizens visiting the region. The Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) — which includes Russia and all of the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan and pursues economic and security cooperation — has no equivalent U.S. counterpart. However, the United States wields influence through its membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and NATO, which are active in the region.²⁴

Cross-border migration between China and Central Asia has facilitated stronger economic ties and also has contributed to more complicated diplomatic relations. There reportedly are over one million ethnic Kazakhs in China, with most residing in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Several tens of thousands have moved to Kazakhstan in recent years.²⁵

2.3.3 Africa
China has pursued ties with Africa since the 1950s. Prior to China’s broad economic reforms of the 1980s, its engagement in Africa was primarily defined by political factors (e.g., colonial liberation, Third World development, and the Cold War). The 1980s brought a gradual shift in Chinese foreign policy in Africa and elsewhere, as Beijing’s motivations increasingly came to be dominated by pragmatic economic and trade-related considerations. This has increased in recent years with China’s outward investment push and its search for new sources of energy and natural resources. China continues to support aid projects in Africa, but many of these projects are increasingly commercially driven.\(^{26}\)

As with China, U.S. relations were long influenced by Cold War concerns and by associated support for free markets, along with a desire to provide humanitarian assistance when needed and assist in Africa’s socio-economic development. After the Cold War, U.S. engagement with Africa declined somewhat, but bilateral assistance levels gradually rose again starting in the early-mid 1990s. While security concerns played a role in U.S. relations in Africa during the Cold War, U.S. interest in African security issues declined for a time after the Cold War. The U.S. appetite for direct military intervention in Africa’s many conflicts was limited, and this notably became the case following the killing of U.S. soldiers in Somalia in 1993 during the infamous “Blackhawk down” incident.\(^{27}\)

China’s determined political courting of and growing economic support of African governments, may lead — and in some cases has already led — them to view China as a desirable political ally and a model for development. China’s policy of non-interference in states’ internal affairs, especially with respect to issues of human rights and democracy may prove attractive,
particularly in contrast to Western donor governments’ imposition on Africans of political conditionalities in return for credit.

Some Africans see such Western approaches as paternalistic, and some African states, when subjected to sustained Western policy pressure, have already turned to China. While such realignments may not be permanent, Angola’s rejection of relations with the IMF in favor of access to Chinese economic ties and Zimbabwe’s ties to China have been interpreted as reflecting such views. Rapidly expanding Sino-African economic cooperation and the perceived relevance to Africa of China’s rapid economic development may also lead Africans to view China as a more relevant political economic model than Western democracies.

Early in the present decade, China’s economic boom prompted a renewed push to accelerate the development of relations with Africa. Chinese-African economic and political ties are now rapidly burgeoning and take many forms: trade agreements, commodity acquisition and production deals, and scientific, educational, technological and — in a few cases — security cooperation. China is also offering increasing amounts of development aid to Africa.\(^28\)

The dominant factor driving such ties is trade. Sino-African ties are underpinned by China’s prodigious demand for Africa’s plentiful commodities, notably oil and unprocessed metals and minerals, to supply its rapidly growing economy, and by African demand for Chinese goods and services. China uses a combination of political and economic means to protect this trade and foster bilateral ties. As a result, economic relations are not carried out on a purely commercial basis. There is a substantial amount of overlap between Chinese development aid, investments,
and business deals. These are often underpinned by China’s soft loans, with terms ranging from a no cost (i.e., grant) basis to near-market rates. China’s financing and political backing are increasingly enabling Chinese firms to attain a dominant competitive position with respect to the demands of Africa’s small but often rapidly growing markets, which many view as having often been neglected by developed country businesses.  

2.4 Global Public Perceptions of China and U.S.A

Although public perceptions of the United States and China vary widely within regions and are sensitive to current events, some public opinion studies point to a significant decline for the United States after 2002. A comparison of surveys conducted in 2002 and 2007 by the Pew Research Center shows that images of the United States declined in 26 of 33 countries. In a 2005 Pew 16-nation survey, images of the United States had improved somewhat from its low point following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but its favorability rating still placed it last among five major powers — Germany, France, Japan, and China. In a 2006 Harris Poll, among European countries, the United States was viewed as the greatest threat to global stability, followed by Iran and China.

Although positive attitudes toward China have declined somewhat in the past few years, its image is regarded as “decidedly favorable” in 27 of 47 nations surveyed by Pew in 2007. These responses reflect a view of China’s economic influence as largely positive, especially among developing countries that do not compete directly with China. However, concerns about China’s military strength are evident in Europe, Japan, and South Korea. Western European nations have become increasingly critical of China’s role in the world. In a 2008 Harris Poll, among major
European countries, China has overtaken the United States as the “biggest threat to global stability”. Some observers argue that China’s self cultivated image of “peaceful development” may have been marred by reports of China’s police crackdown in Tibet and Chinese foreign students attacking human rights demonstrators in Seoul, South Korea during the Olympic torch relay there.
Endnotes


8 Ibid

9 Ibid


Ibid


Ibid


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A 2006 Harris Poll. Available online at www.harrisinteractive.com


CHAPTER THREE
THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CHINA IN ITS EMERGENCE

3.0 Introduction

China is experiencing an unprecedented economic development that both fascinates and, at times, concerns the World’s most advanced economies. The country has achieved a spectacular economic take off, multiplying its global weight seven times over the last thirty years, to become the second largest power in terms of nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the first in terms of exports. Furthermore, China has set up major internationally-orientated industrial companies and is increasing its investments both abroad as well as in new technologies at home, such as renewable energies, to yet further strengthen its position. However, this remarkable and continued rise is not without some challenges. This chapter examines China’s strengths as well as those weaknesses that can undermine its emergence in international affairs.

3.1 China’s Strengths

China’s rise since the start of the era of reform in 1978 has certainly been exceptional in terms of its degree, but even more in terms of its scale. In 1976 the country totalled 1% of the world’s economy; today it represents more than 7%, with growth forecasts taking it in some cases to 20% in 2025 (CEPII, 2010) (the European Union would then total 21%, as the USA). Its economic rise to power enabled it to rise beyond Japan in 2010 to become the second economic power in terms of nominal GDP (third if we include the EU). It is now the world’s leading export and manufacturing power, having overtaken the USA in 2010 from a quantitative point of view (productivity remaining well below that of the USA). For example, it is the leading car market
with 18 million vehicles sold nationally in 2010. This great leap forward has been indeed mainly
fuelled by an economic policy initially fostered by heavy investment and a ruthless priority being
given to exports. Hence, in very little time China has become the EU and the USA’s second trade
partner, and its weight, especially for the EU, is constantly rising (in 2006 the country
represented 10.1% of all the EU’s exports and imports in goods but 13.9% in 2010; in the same
year the USA accounted for 14.4% of the European Union’s trade). To this we might add the
well known emphasis that has been placed on savings, a major increase in banking services
together with a rapid increase in monetary growth and a limited external debt: a strategy altoge-
ther relatively similar to that adopted by other emerging countries in Asia.  

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One of the most notable facts of the Chinese successes over the last few years lies in the creation of major Chinese groups with a world vision, accentuated by a strategy to move up market both industrially and technologically and in a context of increasing Chinese investments abroad – the so-called national “go-global” strategy.

In Europe, for example, there has been the Chinese takeover of car manufacturer Volvo by Geely for 1.3 billion € in 2010, of the Hungarian chemical company Borsodchem by the industrial group Wanhua (1.2 billion € in 2011), the acquisition via the State sovereign fund China Investment Corporation (take-over of 9% in the capital of the British water company Thames Water in 2012, and the protocol agreement in view of purchasing 30% of the drilling and production branch of GDF Suez in 2011). Although these major investments still tend to be marginal and although China is only 16th in the World in terms of outward FDI stocks (which represents around 3% of that of the EU), it is generally believed that within the next few years it will become one of the world’s main contributors in terms of foreign direct investments.¹

Domestic investment in new technologies, particularly in renewable energies and services, also highlights a determination to strengthen the scientific and innovative capabilities of the Chinese economy. This is notably based on cutting-edge technology parks such as Zhongguancun near Beijing, which focuses on research activities, the development and production of services and which now hosts nearly 20,000 high tech businesses including some major Chinese (Lenovo) and foreign companies (Google and Microsoft). Thus, although the contribution by the tertiary sector to the Chinese GDP totalled 43% in 2010 (industry 47%), it is believed that this ratio will inverse
rapidly with the share in the tertiary sector taking over between 2016-2020 (51%) to rise to a possible 61% in 2026-2030 – drawing close to the average of 75% estimated by the World Bank for the so-called High Revenue Economies.\(^2\)

China’s determined political courting of and growing economic support of African governments, may lead — and in some cases has already led — them to view China as a desirable political ally and a model for development. China’s policy of non-interference in states’ internal affairs, especially with respect to issues of human rights and democracy may prove attractive, particularly in contrast to Western donor governments’ imposition on Africans of political conditionalities in return for credit. Some Africans see such Western approaches as paternalistic, and some African states, when subjected to sustained Western policy pressure, have already turned to China.\(^3\)

According to World Bank/IFC Doing Business Report (2013), China’s economy is among the top 10 economies with the most business-friendly regulation. Economies that rank highest on the ease of doing business are those where governments have managed to create rules that facilitate interactions in the marketplace without needlessly hindering the development of the private sector. The World Bank/IFC Doing Business encompass 2 types of indicators: indicators relating to the strength of legal institutions relevant to business regulation and indicators relating to the complexity and cost of regulatory processes. China’s economy tends to combine efficient regulatory processes with strong legal institutions that protect property and investor rights. In addition, China’s preferential policies for foreign investors such as much reduced import duties, cheap land, special economic zones, proximity to the dynamic East Asian economy, political
stability and opening of an increasing number of sectors and geographic regions has made the country very attractive to foreign investors.⁴

China’s influence in North Korea is also worth mentioning. North Korea poses serious international security risks that have increased since it demonstrated a nuclear weapons capacity in 2006. Both the United States and China have been thoroughly engaged with North Korea, but the nature of that engagement differs for both nations. For China, its position has been to provide aid and political cover when most of the rest of the world is turning the screws in response to misbehavior. China ultimately provides enough food and other assistance to keep the regime in power and the state intact. The United States has also paid plenty of attention to North Korea. But that attention has almost always been punitive: unilateral or UN-sponsored sanctions as a reaction to provocative actions taken by the North. China exerts a strong economic and perhaps political influence on North Korea which can undoubtedly entice and persuade North Korea to move in the directions required to ensure a stable, economically viable state whose security concerns do not require it to maintain a nuclear stockpile.⁵

3.2 China’s Weaknesses

Growth, however measured, does not make challenges disappear. It merely transforms old ones or produces new ones. At one time China lived in fear of famine and the resulting social instability. Freeing the peasantry and two generations of peace has removed the fear of famine. However, the fear of social instability is still a key motivating force of China's policy makers and planners.
China has vast and growing reserves of unemployed and underemployed in its western rural regions and on the payroll of unprofitable state-owned enterprises. The unprofitable state-owned enterprises are indeed a warehouse for further hidden underemployment. The transformation of the economy and entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) are only increasing the scale of this unemployment and underemployment. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security estimates that China will have 20 million urban unemployed in a few years together with 150 million surplus labourers - almost 25 percent of the available workforce. China produces only about 8 million new jobs a year whilst 12-13 million enter the workforce to add to the stock of 7 million urban unemployed, 5 million laid off from State Owned Enterprises (SOE) and the 150 million surplus rural workers. Presently, those who lose their SOE jobs lose their health benefits and pensions, creating a dissatisfied army and potential source of instability.6

Another primary constraint that China could face as it continues economic expansion is those that will occur naturally – through environmental pressures. There are a number of well known and oft-repeated statistics on environmental degradation in the developing world: China has surpassed the US as the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, the country contains 16 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world and 54 % of all of China’s river water is “unsafe for human consumption”. A recent report on the economic cost of China’s air and water pollution co-authored by the World Bank and the State Environmental Protection Administration of China placed the estimated cost of pollution in 2003 between 2.7 % and 5.8 % of GDP depending on the methodology used.7
China's political development has not proceeded alongside its economic liberalization. Whilst this may not be a problem at this time, it is one for the future since experience elsewhere shows that an increasingly affluent and educated population will demand more rights if, and when, their economic progress is threatened. Regional stability, both economic and military is an area where China's voice and vote is growing with its economic might and its integration with the region. At a parochial level, the eventual status of Taiwan remains the great-unresolved question.  

China's insistence that Taiwan - a democratic country with all the attributes of independent statehood except recognition - belongs to China and has no right to an independent sovereignty striking at the heart of China's legitimacy problem as a global power. For all its good-neighborly diplomacy and calls upon the presiding superpower to exercise restraint in the exercise of its coercive power, China in domestic (Tibet, Xinjiang, democracy movements, human rights) and quasi-domestic (PRC-Taiwan) affairs is seen as overbearing when handling the problem of dissent.

In a much similar fashion is China’s’s claim of territorial integrity on Tibet. The prolonged debated status of Tibet (either as an independent state or as a Chinese territory) and the recent self immolations of some Tibetans in the quest for freedom and sovereignty is one international human rights issue.

In the summer of 2008, when the Olympics was set to take place, human rights advocates began shining light on China's poor human rights record, with some proposing a boycott of the Olympics in protest. Human rights abuses in Tibet were seen simply as a part of this larger story.
of Chinese government abuses. In early 2008, pro-independence Tibetans staged a large protest against Chinese rule and for independence. The protests were brutally suppressed by the Chinese government. The Dalai Lama’s government in exile counted the death toll at around 80 Tibetans.

In November 2012, thousands of Tibetan students gathered in the historic monastery town of Rebkong to protest Chinese rule over the restive Tibetan plateau, where nearly 70 Tibetans have lighted themselves on fire since March 2011 in gruesome displays of desperation. The case of Tibet defaces China particularly in the lines of International Values of Peace, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.  

China has attempted to rise and reassure while retaining a system of one-party rule. The leadership in Beijing initially hoped that economic integration with the world would minimize concerns about the growth of Chinese power.

They also kept to the maxim articulated in 1991 by Deng Xiaoping: “Observe carefully; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership.”

This reassurance strategy has subsequently shifted as China’s economic and military strength has become unmistakable. While embracing a more prominent international role, the leadership in Beijing has challenged any questioning of its intentions, insisting on China’s commitment to a “peaceful rise” and later, “peaceful development.”

However, autocracy has hobbled China’s bid to put a friendly face on its rise. Institutions associated with authoritarian rule such as pervasive state secrecy and official censorship mask China’s ambitions, leading outsiders to focus on what they can easily observe: diplomatic
behavior and military capabilities. Beijing’s more assertive rhetoric in territorial disputes coupled with the rapid modernization of the People’s Liberation Army has generated unease across Asia, the US and even Europe. Exacerbating these concerns is the lack of opportunities for shaping China’s future course. With basic information about China’s decision-making process obscured under an authoritarian regime, and domestic actors either co-opted or controlled by the state, outsiders have little capacity to influence Beijing’s foreign policy from within.11

China’s lack of domestic political reform is now becoming a strategic liability. No matter how many times a rising China reiterates its commitment to “peaceful development,” no matter how many confidence-building dialogues a rising China participates in or free trade agreements it signs, the anxieties generated by its authoritarian system will remain. Rightly or wrongly, China will be mistrusted and even feared. Wary of China’s growing power, the US, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia and others will behave in ways that harm China’s interests. Although China will not face a unified alliance like the Soviet Union did during the Cold War, it will confront an international landscape that is increasingly unwelcoming. This forecast is already coming to pass; even Burma, China’s erstwhile ally, is now looking to reduce its reliance on Beijing by opening up to the US.12

Over the long term, a system of one-party rule will prevent China from taking a global leadership role that is commensurate with its objective strength. Barring a severe and enduring setback, China will become the world’s largest economy during the first half of this century. Its capacity to provide foreign aid and financially contribute to major global institutions will surely increase. So will China’s capacity to project military power, as demonstrated by the sea trial of its first
aircraft carrier in 2011. And yet, authoritarian rule will constrict China’s ability to translate its size and resources into direct influence. On the economic side, the opacity of basic decisions such as the setting of interest rates and currency values will limit China’s ability to become the lynchpin of the global financial order. Militarily, China will suffer from a deficit of allies and meaningful strategic partners due to widespread mistrust of its ambitions. In this sense, an authoritarian system will deprive China of the ultimate capstone of its rise: global leadership.\textsuperscript{13}

Furthermore, modern Chinese global economic power is not accompanied by any imperialist undertakings. China seriously lags behind the US and Europe in aggressive war-making capacity. Even though this may have allowed China to direct public resources to maximize economic growth, it has left China vulnerable to US military superiority in terms of its massive arsenal, its string of forward bases and strategic geo-military positions right off the Chinese coast and in adjoining territories. China’s lack of a political and ideological strategy capable of protecting its overseas economic interests has been an invitation for the set-up of regimes hostile to China\textsuperscript{14}
Endnotes


8 Ibid


12 Ibid

13 Ibid

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND OBSERVATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations for further research and implementation.

4.1 Summary of Findings

States always seek to maximize their own relative power, defined in terms of material capabilities. They therefore look for opportunities to alter the balance of power by acquiring additional increments of power at the expense of potential rivals since the greater the military advantage one state has over other states, the more secure it is. Again, states seek to increase their military strength to the detriment of other states within the system with hegemony—being the only great power in the state system—as their ultimate goal.

Offensive realists like Mearsheimer affirms that, great powers recognize that the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now, thus eliminating any possibility of a challenge by another great power. Only a misguided state would pass up an opportunity to be the hegemon in the system because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive.
Accordingly, China’s best strategy is to increase its relative power to the point of achieving hegemony by relying on offensive tactics. Provided that it is rational for China to act aggressively, it will likely pursue expansionist policies, which will bring it closer to hegemony. The November 2004 issue of the IISS Strategic Comments states, China has ‘sought to promote a variety of new institutional arrangements that exclude the United States . . . [in Eastern Asia] where China can exercise a natural leadership role’ and that its need for energy and raw materials has extended its resource diplomacy to Central Asia, and other parts. Indeed, many of China's gains are in direct relation to American interests. China choosing to invest in such politically risky energy producers largely lies with the benefits to be gained by entering regions that are prohibited to American business interests.

What states should strive to achieve is regional hegemony, which refers to dominating one’s own geographical area. This is because global hegemony is nearly impossible to attain. China's interest in promoting peace on the Korean peninsula through its hosting of the Six-Party Talks on “preventing the nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula”, and a planned common economic future with Southeast Asia, clearly shows its desire in achieving, if not already achieved regional hegemony. The end of this decade will see the emergence of a regional Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Tariffs are to be reduced to between 5% and zero and investment barriers removed. This trade region will create an integrated market of 1.7 billion people, forming what will become the world's most populous free trade zone. Clearly, China is striving for regional hegemony within its geographical area.
The relentless quest for power, however, inherently generates a state of constant security competition. As China gets more powerful and the United States' position erodes, two things are likely to happen: China will try to use its growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests, and other states in the system – especially the declining hegemon – will start to see China as a growing security threat. The result of these developments, they predict, will be tension, distrust, and conflict, the typical features of a power transition. In this view, the drama of China's rise will feature an increasingly powerful China and a declining United States locked in an epic battle over the rules and leadership of the international system.

As its GDP has increased, China has become more assertive regarding international issues. Countries on its periphery – the Koreas, Japan, Taiwan and the ten Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) – have felt China's growing influence. When these states make policy decisions they now have to take China into account. There is no direct intimidation, but, by denying access to its huge consumer market, China can punish those who are against its interests. Therefore, none of these countries wants to be viewed as antagonistic. Increasingly, this same pressure is being felt worldwide: The balance of power is changing, if not already changed. The U.S. realizes that China's status has grown and that its views must be accorded their due weight. Were it to feel slighted, China could make its displeasure felt by being uncooperative on international issues or policies that require its support.
China poses enormous challenges and opportunities to the U.S and the world. As China continues to evolve and debate its future course, U.S interests can be best protected by engaging China actively during this formative period, and by helping the country develop the tools, infrastructure, and policies that will enable Beijing to become a cooperative counterpart to Washington in global affairs.

It is certainly true that China could become the most powerful adversary the United States has ever faced. Over the next 20 years, China’s gross domestic product (GDP) and defence budget could exceed those of the United States. Before 9/11, George W. Bush identified China as America’s prime threat, but once the ‘war on terrorism’ was launched China became a strategic partner. In 2012, with America’s war in Iraq over, the one in Afghanistan winding down and al-Qaeda on the ropes, President Barack Obama announced yet another national-security pivot to Asia, with China again the main preoccupation. China could become a more capable opponent than either the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany at their peak, neither of which ever approached America’s economic might.

4.2 Conclusion

The size and rapid growth of China, together with its increasing assertiveness, represent a challenge to the established global order. The dynamics and the future impacts of these power shifts for the architecture of global governance and the developing world and the world at large, are far from clear and not at all determined. An analysis of China’s participation in the WTO and its stance on development policy indicates that the extent to which China’s rise will create
tensions varies according to the ways in which the basic interests of China and Western countries clash.

By the turn of the century the United States was perceived by many observers as undoubtedly the single power in world politics and in the world economy. For instance, some thought that the US bestrides the globe like a colossus, by dominating business, commerce and communication. The US economy was the world’s most successful and its military might second to none.

China was not seen by the vast majority of observers in the field of International Relations as a significant global player that could seriously challenge the western dominated global governance architecture. However over a couple of years, there has been a drastic change in the global world order, with China at the heart of this change. China’s influence in international economic affairs has surged. In terms of an expanding share of world output, China’s growth spurt has been much greater than any other yet seen.

China’s economic impact is much greater than previous rapidly – growing economies. The economic rise of China also results in large-scale changes in important global governance arenas. China’s increasing economic weight, its importance to other actors in the global economy (notably the transnational companies and global buyers that have contributed so much to the expansion of the Chinese economy), and the economic policy driven decisions of the Chinese government are already having a huge impact on various global governance arenas.

China has considerably increased its weight in international economic affairs in recent years. In terms of GDP measured at current prices, in 2010 the Chinese economy became the world’s second-largest after the United States, having overtaken Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom
and France. If GDP is measured in purchasing power parity terms, the country also ranks as the world’s second-largest economy behind the United States.

China also wields somewhat political and military influence in parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Overtime, China could become the dominant superpower in the world and change the course of international affairs.

The shifting global influence has implications on international affairs. Already, strategic competition between the U.S. and China is observable in Asia, in many parts of Africa, Latin America and Europe. The potential for conflict between these powers is increasingly accepted as growing possibility.

Supporting reconfiguration of the global architecture to incorporate China into the discussion both of the development of international rules and of what it means to be a ‘‘responsible stakeholder’’ will enable the U.S best protect its interests.

4.3 Observations

Realist theories states that the rise of a new global power will sooner or later result in conflictual balance of power strategies between the old and the new global drivers of change. This is by no means inevitable. It is observed that a proactive political strategy by both Western and Chinese would avoid global turbulences and ensure a peaceful global power transition.

Most African economies have been unable to establish substantive and competitive manufacturing sectors, the development of which has been hampered by a lack of economically
enabling infrastructure. Given the desperate state of the continent’s infrastructure, Africa can undoubtedly not afford to disregard China as a large-scale financier of infrastructure, specifically in the light of the current global recession where large values of capital from traditional investors have been withdrawn due to the crisis. If African governments coordinate a regional response to the potential advantages China could bring in the future while strategizing an approach to ensure a win – win rather than a win – lose situation to China, it could lead to the building of robust economies that can meet the needs of its citizenry without being overly dependent on external help.

Until recently, China’s role in the world was perceived chiefly in economic terms. However, new perceptions of China’s role in international affairs are emerging following China’s soft power strategies. Western countries should therefore accept that they are no longer in a position to prevent the rise of China and other actors of global change, by designing a strategy towards China that does not only constrain competition, but develop common commitments on how to deal together on pressing global challenges.

It is further observed that China’s lack of domestic political reform is now becoming a strategic liability. Overtime, it will confront an international landscape that is increasingly unwelcoming. If China should re-align its political development to proceed alongside its economic liberalization its emergence as a super power would be recognized by all.

China’s present unacceptable human rights face to the world is inimical to its rise to the status of a hegemon in the international system. By progressively working on the Taiwan and Tibet, issues which constantly defaces China, particularly in the lines of International Values of Peace, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms would be cleared.
Another observation is that International and inter-governmental organizations have no stronger structures and conflict resolution mechanisms to be able to intervene to mitigate any possible adverse and conflictual situation that may arise out of the gradual paradigm shift in global influence from the West to Asia. The establishment of such strong structures will ensure a peaceful transition.

Most economies in many developing countries especially in Africa are bedeviled with corruption and mismanagement of their resources by their political leadership. This has negative effect on the fortunes of their people as it results in wastes and deprivation of the citizenry from the benefits of the abundant natural resources on the continent thereby making them poor and particularly vulnerable to external manipulations. There is the need to eliminate these ills from the developing countries to increase their wealth thereby reducing their level of dependence on external sources. The reduction in their level of dependence will reduce the extent to which they can be used as proxies and appendages to the main actors in the struggle for dominance in global influence to increase the associated tension in this struggle.

Finally China’s lack of interest in environmental issues both at domestic and international level is not characteristic of a hegemon in the international system. China should therefore make environmental issues a priority to mitigate any negative impacts that its rise could impact on climate change.
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