

# The Rise of China and Power Transition in Contemporary International Relations

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*Power shift is an important aspect of international relations. The 21<sup>st</sup> century shows the possibility of the shift of power to the East. One of the key drivers of this process is China. It promotes the dictum of peaceful rise and attitude that favors globalization. Policies such as economic modernization through higher interaction with the world is one aspect. Its GDP has surpassed that of the US. The trade deficit of US with China is tragic. At the military level, spending has gone up. Along with this, China uses diplomacy for its advancement. The new projects like OBOR must be seen in this context. China is increasing its presence in Africa, especially with regard to its energy needs. In controversial issues such as the Korean issue, China's voice is considered as important by other nations. Now China has moved to another field called soft power projection. These will have adverse impact on the position of the US and over the world in areas such as environment, energy security and economic structure. This paper analyzes the concept of power transition in the context of rise of China as a global power.*

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## Introduction

Power shift is an important aspect of international relations. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the world power was concentrated in the East. As a result of the industrial revolution and colonial invasions made by the European nations, power shifted to the West in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But the post-Second World War era witnessed the disintegration of the major powers, and the US and the Soviet Union arose as superpowers. Since the disintegration of the USSR in the 1990s, the US has become the hegemon. But the developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century show the possibility of the shift of power to the East. One of the key drivers of this process is China. China continues to grow in the present century as it provides scope for overcoming America as the world's dominant power before the middle of this century.<sup>1</sup>

China's dynamic growth was not initiated in the 1980s, but in the 1950s itself when assistance was provided to the destitute peasants and landless rural workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Lemke Douglas and Ronald L Tammen (2003), "Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China", *International Interactions*, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 269-271.

Through human capital and social mobilization, the country built its backbone of economy. In the 1980s, the Chinese government opened its economy for large-scale foreign investments. It was based on the exchange of cheap labor to the foreign firms in exchange for access to technology and market. It followed a policy of privatization on the ground to create a class of billionaires linked to overseas capitalists. It was this collaboration which played a significant role in making China as the world's second largest economy today.<sup>2</sup> When the then US President Richard Nixon sought rapprochement with China, it helped China to move away from the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>3</sup> 'Peaceful rise' or 'peaceful development' was promoted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century under the leadership of Hu Jintao. It was an assurance to the international community, especially the existing hegemon America, that they would focus only on economic resurgence through peaceful means which was in contrast to the 'China threat' prevalent in the world.<sup>4</sup> It is thus the US which propagated the rise of China in the face of suspicion. Another important event which led to increased discussion regarding China's rise is the work report presented during the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Communist Party of China in 2017. The General Secretary, Xi Jinping reiterated the beginning of a 'new era'. The chief feature of the era will be socialism with Chinese characteristics. China is moving to the center stage. It is also a signal to the world by China that in the era of deglobalization, it hopes to take a more active role in global governance by suggesting and providing more appropriate and applicable solutions.<sup>5</sup>

China has developed its own strategy for its rise as an international power as compared to the present hegemon, the United States. In the analysis of ascendancy of China as a rising power, it is adequate to have an understanding of military, economic and technological capability of China where it mainly concentrates. Along with this, there is a new dimension of soft power which is mainly through the propagation of culture and values. Such a broad approach is needed as a country cannot become an influential power while avoiding any of these spheres.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Petras James (2018), "China: Rise, Fall and Re-Emergence as a Global Power", Global Research: Center for Research on Globalisation, available at <https://www.globalresearch.ca/china-rise-fall-and-re-emergence-as-a-global-power/29644>. Accessed on February 7, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> M Kamrany, Nake and Frank Jiang (2018), "China's Rise to Global Economic Superpower", available at [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nake-m-kamrany/chinas-rise-to-global-eco\\_b\\_6544924.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nake-m-kamrany/chinas-rise-to-global-eco_b_6544924.html). Accessed on February 14, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Zhu Zhiqun (2007), *The China Journal*, No. 58, pp. 228-230. doi:10. 2307/20066238

<sup>5</sup> Kai Jin (2017), "The Rise of China: Version 2.0", *The Diplomat*, at [thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-rise-of-china-version-2-0/](http://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-rise-of-china-version-2-0/). Accessed on February 8, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> G Brooks Stephen and William C Wohlforth (2016), "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-first Century: Chinas Rise and the Fate of Americas Global Position", *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 7-53.