

# RISE OF CHINA AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER

MINAHIL SHAWAL AFRIDI\* AND  
BEHRAM ZIA KHAN DAWAR\*\*

## Abstract

*The 21<sup>st</sup> century is referred to as the Asian century by many International Relations scholars, where the rise of China has been one of the most important events in the global political arena. Chinese economic diplomacy in Asia, Latin America, and Africa through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been seen as a challenge to US interests and that of its allies in these regions. China's bold and assertive policies in the South China Sea has led many in the US to believe that under the garb of this 'peaceful rise', China is slowly and gradually winning its turf. On the contrary, many scholars have also argued that the rise of China might strengthen a multi-polar world order based on economic interdependence and sustainable peace, allowing greater cooperation among world powers. However, this study argues that competition between an existing hegemon and an aspiring one has been a norm in international relations since antiquity. Therefore, the possibility of cooperation between China and the US is very limited. In this regard, the West is already raising concerns related to the rise of China. On the one hand, many consider China's cooperation as a means to establish its hegemony through a debt trap while others view it as an attempt to promote mutual economic interests. Therefore, the study elucidates whether the rise of China threatens the existing global order through its imposition on weaker partner states with its growing economic*

---

\* Ms Minahil Shawal Afridi is a student of MPhil at the National Defence University, Islamabad.

\*\* Mr Behram Zia Khan Dawar is an LLB student at the University of London.

*interdependence and whether a rising China will threaten the US supremacy and change the current world order.*

**Key words:** *China-US competition, power transition theory, belt and road initiative, South-China sea, economic integration, debt-trap diplomacy, peaceful rise*

## **Introduction**

States have to survive in an anarchic system created by great powers to exercise their influence in the present world. Throughout history, this struggle for the acquisition of power and hegemony has dragged states into conflicts, wars, proxies, and/or competition. At the end of the Second World War, the world was divided into two distinct blocs: one spearheaded by the United States and the other led by the former Soviet Union. Meanwhile, China under the dynamic leadership of Deng Xiaoping embarked on reforms that enabled it to achieve phenomenal economic growth. The central tenant of the reform was a peaceful rise. It is due to these reforms that China has become an economic powerhouse of the world. The remarkable Chinese investments in almost every continent have increased both its soft and hard power elements. China's rise in the last few decades is a challenge to the US, which brings the two into a race of power and domination.

The emerging powers, particularly non-Western ones, have an interest in overturning the Western international order and revising the rules of the game set by the West to maintain its control over 'others'. The West has continued to avail the market of developing countries and exploit its material resources. However, in this struggle for domination, China adopted a unique strategy of making alliances through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The megaproject is aimed at promoting mutual economic cooperation and development. In the past decades, most of the Asian countries have shaken hands with China and have welcomed the projects initiated under the BRI.

From Greek city-states to contemporary times, trendsetters are the states that have both tangible and intangible forms of power. France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, and the US are textbook examples of how important resources are important for the growth of a state. China has the experience as well as resources needed for the assumption of the responsibility of great power. Historically, China has viewed itself as the 'Middle Kingdom' trying to occupy the centre stage among the comity of nations. With the onset of the Opium War in 1839, the Chinese believed that their century of humiliation had begun. The fall of Manchuria to Hong Kong wounded the pride of the Chinese, the dominant power of that time. The Chinese are aware of the ill-treatment accorded to them by the Western powers and Japan before the communist revolution. Mao promised the Chinese after assuming power that days of humiliation of China were over.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) aims to make China the Middle Kingdom once again for the rest of the world to revolve around it. In the present world order, China's aim is clear, i.e., to regain her lost glory. In this regard, President Xi Jinping, in 2013, announced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China claimed that the BRI would support the long-term growth of partner countries through the development of infrastructure and mutual cooperation, without perturbing the existing world structure. China's conduct in future rests majorly on how the rest of the world, predominantly the current hegemon, the US, will react to its rise to growing economic might.

Given the rising global focus on the rise of China, theorists and scholars have been involved in rigorous theoretical debates on the conduct and future of rising powers. 'Power Transition Theory' is central in this regard and explains the phenomenon of the rising powers and its implications for the existing international order. The purpose of this paper is to carefully scrutinise the increasing role of China as a rapidly emerging international economic power and potential global shareholder. The paper explores how China is creating

opportunities for cooperation for partner states and how this cooperation can establish and maintain Chinese supremacy in the evolving international order. Moreover, it also explains how a shift in power structure might impact the dynamics of the international system through the framework of power transition theory, which deals with the power structures in the international system while examining power relations in view of the rise and fall of states.

### **Rise of China through the Lens of Power Transition Theory**

Power transition theory is a prominent theory in international relations. There are three intellectual generations of the power transition theorists: A.F.K. Organski,<sup>1</sup> who conceived the basic concept of the theory in 1958, Jacek Kugler,<sup>2</sup> who joined Organski for the empirical evaluation of the theory, and Douglas Lemke<sup>3</sup> and Tammen,<sup>4</sup> who extended the theory beyond great power interactions. Power transition theory provides an effective and systemic model for analysing essential transformations in the international political order and anticipating the conditions of cooperation or causes of conflicts at all levels of analysis.<sup>5</sup> It focuses on the hierarchical nature of the international system, the pace of economic development, power transformation, the change in the international order, as well as the means through which these transformations occur. Powerful states control the resources and dictate the trends of the international system. On the other hand, the less powerful states or the relatively weaker ones then decide whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the existing hegemon.

The actors in the international system who are content with the dominant state do not challenge its position and rather make efforts to ensure peace and stability. Whereas, a rising power dissatisfied with the trends set by major powers and existing resource structures can create problems, thus, leading to conflict. Historically, the rising states tend to create an environment of competition to

challenge the existing status quo and this creates a ground for conflict. The power transition theory attempts to explain the international system in a unique manner. It negates the realist assumption regarding the international order being anarchic, having no police force or supreme regulatory authority. Power transition theory holds that the international system is hierarchical wherein the dominant state lies on the top of this hierarchical pyramid, constituting maximum power as compared to the other states in the system.

Moreover, the international system is configured in a manner that is similar to the domestic political system. The actors in this international system acquire a certain position and accept or reject the influence of dominant actors based on their levels of satisfaction with the rules set by the major powers.<sup>6</sup> Just like the political groups in constant competition with each other in the domestic system, states continue to compete with one another over deficient resources. The dominant power ensures stability in the international system with the support of great powers who are satisfied with the policies of the existing hegemon. On the other hand, dissatisfied countries are not pleased with the functioning and management of the international order. If the dissatisfied states are comparatively weaker, they cannot threaten or challenge the dominant state. However, if the discontented state is also a strong power, it becomes the challenger and, thus, challenges the predominant power. Due to the rise of a potential challenger, the chances of conflict increase as it aims at establishing a new place for itself, which it believes its growing power entitles it.

The international order is very likely to shift when a discontented state reaches parity by increasing in power more rapidly than the predominant nation. According to Kugler and Organski, in the post-cold war period, the international order led by the US was supported mostly by the major powers of the world, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, France, Italy and India whereas China and Russia became potential challengers. The challengers in

such a situation have some basic objectives which include, surpassing the dominant nation and challenging the existing rules of the international order. Consequently, the dominant power prepares to resist this change.

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the patterns of growth in the Asian continent changed. It compelled the thinkers and policymakers to consider a new dimension in international politics. This new dimension was the fast-growing Chinese economic power in the region. Kenneth Organski had predicted the rise of China in 1958, long before it happened. He argued that the concerning part was not whether China will become the most powerful state in the world, but rather how long will it take China to achieve the status of a global hegemon.<sup>7</sup> According to the power transition theory, if China surpasses the power of the United States, and has no considerable demands for a change in the existing principles of the international order, the possibility of any major conflict can be avoided. In this case, China will be characterised as a 'satisfied' rising power, similar to the role that the United States assumed when it acquired the position of international leadership from the United Kingdom. Contrarily, if China poses a threat to the US power and challenges its hegemony while holding deep-rooted grievances against the Western-imposed global principles and standards, the probability of conflict is likely to increase. Thus, the power transition theory, at its heart, focuses on the current most important concern of world politics, which is the international order and great power stability.

### **China - A Satisfied or Dissatisfied Rising Power?**

The world power composition is based on a hierarchical structure that reflects variations, motivated by fluctuating growth rates and movement of resources across states. The countries dissatisfied with the international order established by the more significant power tend to reorder the hierarchy. The cost of conflict is

high for the relatively weaker powers and thus leading power aims at maintaining the status quo allowing less powerful states to adjust in the order established by the former.<sup>8</sup> Several pieces of research indicate that a situation wherein a challenger figures out how to overpower the predominant country crosses the capabilities of the latter is the most concerning/worrying stage in this game of power-balancing.<sup>9</sup>

Since the post-Cold War era, the US has enjoyed the status of being the only dominant power and its dominance had remained unchallenged. Now, the US and China are in a long-haul rivalry as the latter continues to develop at an alarming rate. Thus, strategically, this places China as an equal counterpart of the United States. In contrast to the rivalry with the USSR, it is believed by many that over time, China could surpass the United States in terms of GDP. If such a situation occurs, China's subsequent economic equality might transform into military predominance as well, particularly given China's gigantic population. If China develops to its maximum capacity, it would turn into the pre-eminent country in the global system in the near future.

The important concern or debate is not whether China will be the dominant country in the international system, but rather, the concerns regarding the said predominant China challenging the existing worldwide regime, or joining or even leading the international system. History is replete with such instances of power dominance. For instance, the US overtook the British in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. British accepted US leadership peacefully and have cooperated with them ever since. However, when Germany tried to confront the United Kingdom in a power struggle, it resulted in two world wars to decide on who would dominate the world. Stability is possible given that the challenger is satisfied with the existing status quo. The key issue with the current world order remains to determine whether China is

satisfied or dissatisfied? An array of factors must be taken into account when determining the aforementioned.

The first factor is the role of any land/territorial disputes capable of feeding dissatisfaction and the possibility of a conflict. An important concern is to be certain about any outstanding territorial dispute between the United States and China. Historically, both powers have been confronted with territorial implications from the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and Taiwan. In recent times, Taiwan is seen as part of its core territory by China and represents the most threatening example of a territorial dispute.

The second factor is the build-up of armaments to counter the threats to each other. Furthermore, it is important to consider if the two countries are engaged in an active arms race. Chinese defence expenditure has increased and is likely to cope with that of the US and Russia. Also, the maximum of the Chinese military expenditure is off-budget. It is not revealed in official budget documents. China is also buying and trying to secure co-production rights for advanced arsenals from Russia.

The third important factor is to ascertain whether China is unhappy/dissatisfied with the existing international rules of world politics. The Chinese leaders portray their rise as a peaceful phenomenon with a benign agenda to advance the development of the partner countries. They have exhibited their foreign policy as being that of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. Considering the growing impact of China, it is currently engaged in bilateral as well as multilateral initiatives. Its economic expansion has overtaken the US export market and is now becoming the economic hub of South Asia. This depicts a long-term Chinese strategy for casting regional influence. Internationally, China has always been prudent in choosing its affiliations with the organisations operating in the world. For instance, Chinese leaders chose to enter the World Trade Organisation (WTO) but refused to extensively cooperate with



the conventions and organisations dealing with the escalation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and its associated delivery systems. This Chinese approach reflects its level of dissatisfaction with the existing international order set by the United States.

The fourth essential factor is to consider the possibility of a lingering ideological conflict between the US and China. State-supported and implemented ideology is the required cost of constrained individual freedom. This arrangement of ideological convictions is disturbed, however, when the enforcement mechanisms of the government and its emphasis on party predominance have been rather steady. The two ideological frameworks: one led by the United States and the other by China, stand at variance with each other over the role of primacy in the political domain. The long history of Western invasions in China, the sentiment among some Chinese leaders that the West treated China disrespectfully and the sense of humiliation that China has been compelled to swallow bitterness on account of the West, complicates this conflict further. With the addition of rising patriotism, these enemy anti-West and xenophobic frames of mind, make a vague mix among the Chinese political elite. There are domestic elite groups in China, comprising particularly of the business community and other blocs of the civil society that act as key components in setting internal as well as external preferences away from nationalism in the pursuit of the global agenda. Thus, the elites or interest groups support the international order set by the global hegemon, leading to the acceptability of the world rules.

The fifth factor to ponder over is to ascertain if there are any patterns of trade and partnership between the two states. There is significant economic bonding between the US and China. The phenomenon of economic interdependence is also rising. China represents the largest bilateral trade deficit with the US and is its third-largest trading partner. The loss of momentum in the existing economic ties between China and the US has the potential to cast a

significant impact on both countries. Therefore, future cooperation between the two is essential to ensure economic stability. The US and China have the choice of opting for conflict or cooperation or even integration. Integration would mean China's adjustment within the current global order while cooperation would entail no arms race or military build-up between the two powers, moderation of nationalism, promotion of internationalism, and trade enhancement in pursuit of mutual interest. The challenge for the US in future will be to carefully observe the patterns of economic growth and rising nationalism in China. The United States will need to create a balance in avoiding the conditions that would result in China's dissatisfaction while not fully letting the latter expand its influence over the world. US strategy should be reciprocal yet interlinking, self-interested, and binding towards China.

The primary issues between the two powers include debate or dialogues over copyright laws, fiscal transparency, the dollar as international standard currency, access to world markets, labour standards, migration patterns, environmental concerns, exchange rate controls, etc. For China, tackling these issues will be more difficult as there is a deep gap between the individual productivity of the Chinese labour and that of the US. Individual productivity refers to the effectiveness of productive effort, calculated in terms of the rate of output per unit of input.

The alternative for the US will be to alter the timing of parity by bringing out a structural change to avoid confrontation with China. This might include the enlargement of NATO or any similar arrangement to gather Russia, India, and Japan under one umbrella of the Western alliance in order to delay parity with China for a considerable range of time. China could also join an international structure like NATO but such a possibility seems a little far-fetched given China's foreign policy and her geopolitical interests. However, if China along with India follows this strategy, it would ensure global

peace and stability. Although the power structure is changing in a way that China is becoming the focus of the international political system, the reality that the US has widened the power gap with other states to a considerable extent cannot be neglected. This argument can be supported considering the military might of the US which is clearly demonstrated in its armed conflicts with various countries of the world.

The US is superior in terms of technological capabilities and modern military tactics and has a considerable lead in military proficiency. Dating back to the first Iraq war, the military capabilities of the US have been very well-demonstrated. The US exhibited skilful and unique airpower and an efficient plan that employed deception, speed, and substantial firepower to win an astonishing victory against a massive military force, despite being weakened by a decade-long engagement in war. In the Bosnian war as well, the United States conducted an air campaign and achieved a full range of war objectives, without the use of ground forces. This adroit military success cast anxiety and a sense of competition among international players. Similarly, in the second Iraq War, the US military tactics astonished worldwide military planners. China's richest asset is its manpower, i.e., its human resource. However, modern US military tactics made China realise the fact that manpower can no longer provide a strategic advantage. China has focused more on developing its economy over its military ever since. The Chinese leadership needs to reconsider the strategy and discover approaches to reach the level of tactical supremacy of the US if it is to compensate for the imbalance.

### **Chinese Geo-Economics via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

China's rise in such a short time is unparalleled in the history of the world. Its economic gains have fascinated the great powers. The kind of geo-economic clout that China carries in the contemporary international system is changing the individual perception about the

essence of international relations of the current century. BRI is an important component and catalyst of this growing influence. China directs its external and strategic initiatives through the BRI spectrum which has become an anchor to its emerging power. Fairly and unquestionably BRI is seemingly the most momentous economic and social accomplishment of the century.

Some commentators correlate that BRI is a modern form of the Marshall Plan with a Chinese attribute.<sup>10</sup> According to Beeson and Li, "Indeed, if the BRI becomes a reality it will quite literally cement China's place at the centre of a regional network of production processes that will inevitably enhance China's overall economic and geopolitical importance."<sup>11</sup> It is very obvious now that the strength of states is displayed by their comparative alterations in the economic spheres than by other critical conventional factors. It is a known fact that progress and transformation in the economic field have visible impacts on geopolitical outcomes. As pointed out by Gilpin in 1981, change in the basic tangible areas and revival of the economy have a visible effect on the power-sharing, it upsets the existing settled structures and constitutes provisions for 'hegemonic transitions'.

The current relationship between China and the United States has again diverted the debate to these concepts. According to some experts, the US rise after WWII followed the same economic pattern as China is currently following. The analysts who consider the BRI as an evolved version of the Marshall plan present many supporting arguments. "While the instant goal of the Marshall Plan was to offer a direct boost to Europe's ailing economies, in the eyes of its architects it was seen as the key to social harmony, to the survival of private-enterprise capitalism and the preservation of political democracy."<sup>12</sup> In the view of analysts, if this so-called 'Chinese Marshall Plan' becomes a reality, it will function in different political and strategic circumstances. To understand its significance, it is important to discuss the essence of

geo-economic power that changes the more crucial international prospects in contemporary times.

Geo-economics has become an important part of the contemporary academic debate. However, there is a lack of consensus over the definition of geo-economics. Geoeconomics refers to “applying economic instruments to advance geopolitical ends.”<sup>13</sup> Geo-economics symbolises realist power politics by other means; national interests remain pre-eminent. China too is seemingly using these ways to promote its national interests and maintain its stature as an emerging global leader. It has adopted various means and measures to ensure and enforce these national goals and the BRI is one of them. “China’s elites are both increasingly confident about their capabilities and their right to occupy a more central position in the mechanisms of global governance.”<sup>14</sup>

Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia bears a stark resemblance with contemporary Chinese expansion in Africa. Africa serves as the required testing space for China to emerge as a new epitome of power and influence in the global economic sphere, hence highlighting the importance of geo-economics in contemporary international relations. The Chinese have been taking steps for the restoration of the ancient Silk Road and associated trade routes. These linkages provide China with a rather deep-rooted economic superiority in Asia. The BRI has two main facets, the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ (SREB) and the ‘Maritime Silk Road’ (MSR). The MSR is particularly designed to connect and harmonise the maritime states of Southeast and South Asia. The SREB on the other hand aims to reconnect and renovate the ground-based linkages with Central and South Asia, connecting them with China and finally with Europe. The infrastructure that will be developed across the old Silk Road will stabilise and strengthen China's position as the centre of economic activity.<sup>15</sup>

According to some commentators, the BRI is the quintessential manifestation of China's potential economic leverage and a more proactive approach to foreign policy-making.<sup>16</sup> The BRI goals also extend to bringing stability to China's internal policy.

### **US-China Relations in the Post-COVID 19 Era**

The pandemic has further widened the gulf between the US and China. It seems that there exists a bipartisan consensus in the US over unilateralism and protectionism. The superpower status of the US demanded it to ensure consensus among the world community against coronavirus, and leadership in the time of a global health crisis. Contrarily, the US adopted an entirely opposite approach and looked inward by adopting an 'America first' approach. It ceased World Health Organisation (WHO) funding, the only world body capable of mounting a coordinated response to the transnational threat of coronavirus. The cessation of funding was due to WHO's refusal to blame China for the emergence of the pandemic. The US cut the supply of essential medical equipment and instead began storing vaccines in silos instead of distributing them.

On the other hand, China generously donated vaccines to developing countries amounting to 1.1 billion doses of vaccines in over 100 countries.<sup>17</sup> The Chinese government declared vaccines as a public good, thus, occupying the position which the US relinquished. Vaccine diplomacy added to China's soft power. The US along with its allies has launched Build Back Better World (B3W). B3W seemingly aims to counter China's BRI, intended to provide alternative sources of funding to developing countries. G-7 are to finance the projects in partner countries. In Indo-Pacific, the US has launched the AUKUS to check the growing influence of China. Under the AUKUS, Australia is to receive nuclear submarines which will strengthen its position in the region.

### **The Western Perspective**

The current debate among the Western policymakers and statesmen is that whether the rise of China is a threat to the US hegemony and the regional countries or a guarantee of peace in the global political arena. The main US anxiety is the rise of China's hegemonic position in the international system and its ideological conflict with the West. China's ideological intentions threaten the US and other countries of the world. Different arguments have been developed to explain the implications of China's rise.

The first one is that the cultural and ideological aspects portray China as a threat. According to Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' thesis, the cultural factor in the struggle between civilisations is of great significance. It maintains that the unholy alliance of Islamic and Confucian civilisations is the most prominent threat to the West.<sup>18</sup> Under this logic, a rational response from the US in the short run could be a containment policy, or a head-on approach if needed.

The second aspect is the geopolitical and geo-economic facets of China's rise. Nationalism can still put China in a confrontational position with the US if the latter refuses to share leadership with China as a growing power. A major apprehension is also that democracy will bring about strong nationalism, making China even more aggressive towards the US.

The third argument is China's downfall similar to that of the former Soviet Union. Proponents of this perspective argue that sudden death syndrome like that of the Soviets can be worse for the region. The huge Chinese population might result in the worst refugee crisis, while state failure might result in an eruption of a civil war, accelerated crime, domestic unrest, etc.

Considering the aforementioned, the US tends to fluctuate between demonisation and romanticisation of China, i.e., from pressure to engagement.<sup>19</sup>

The relatively less powerful Asian countries, particularly closer to China have more than just ideological stakes in China's new move. For them, the presence of a powerful country surrounding them and their growing dependence on the Chinese economy for development has compelled them to be very cautious about their terms with China. In the Asian continent, China has vast territorial land and population as compared to the other Asia Pacific countries. China has an enormous quantity of FDI and provides a large number of exports. In that, China's increasing economic, as well as military might, is often viewed as a threat by other countries. Thus, none of the Asia Pacific states has clearly shown any of its policies against China as it is an emerging power in their view.

China is a tough strategic competition for the United States. The US views China as an aggressive state, pursuing authoritarian expansionism. This is depicted from the remarks made by the former US Vice President Mike Pence contending that China chose 'economic aggression' to expand its influence on the world in addition to 'debt diplomacy'. He mentioned that China was using political, economic, as well as military propaganda to promote its influence across the region and beyond and there was no confusion that in doing so China was interfering in the US democracy.<sup>20</sup>

In the past few decades, the US has placed at risk the privilege of maintaining its position as the global hegemon due to a number of reasons. Statistics and data reveal that in the realm of international trade, China has outpaced the US as a credible trade associate. Of 115 units in Germany that deliberated to shift their production units overseas, 31 per cent preferred China while only 9 per cent wanted the US to be its next production facility.<sup>21</sup> The measures taken by the US against China under the Trump administration depicted US insecurity with the rising global rival. President Trump imposed harsh restrictions on Chinese telecom giant Huawei arguing that technologies such as Huawei could be used as an espionage source for the Chinese



Intelligence. Such a measure by a state whose national intelligence agencies were caught for using user data of various social media websites and communication channels is rather ironic.<sup>22</sup> US Secretary of State later accused the company of its covert collaboration with the Chinese government and the CCP.<sup>23</sup> These steps reflect a misuse of state power to restrict the growth and development of a Chinese company that US companies could not compete with.

China's rise is also visible in the worldwide ascent in Chinese companies in various technologies, including most prominently the advancement in 5G technology. With 5G, the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and mechanisation could be fully harnessed. It will change the contours of contemporary technology as well as the various aspects of life associated with it. These factors clearly suggest that China has challenged the US global dominance. Data indicate that Huawei sales amounted to over 50 per cent in the first quarter of 2019, surpassing Apple in its worldwide sales. Huawei sales are increasing exponentially while Apple sales have dropped by 30 per cent in the same duration. Despite all US restrictions, Huawei sales managed to cross \$100 billion.<sup>24</sup> China considers the US responsible for the downturn in its bilateral relations with the former. This was declared in a white paper that was issued in the first week of June 2019 in China.<sup>25</sup> The paper also clarified that the People's Republic is ready for cooperation given that it is favourable for both countries.

The Australian parliament passed new laws to stop foreign involvement in Australia seemingly targeting the widespread Chinese interference in their homeland. The increasing concern of nations has also led to restrictions on Chinese telecom companies such as Huawei, ZTE, etc. The Australian government imposed a ban on Huawei and ZTE from providing 5G mobile network technology in the country. The British security committee also expressed worries about Huawei's telecommunications equipment. Additionally, Germany also vetoed

the acquisition of an engineering firm by a Chinese company due to national security concerns.

The BRI is being opposed by many countries due to the fear of debt-trap diplomacy and foreign influence. States like Sri Lanka and Malaysia expressed serious concerns about the mega project.

### **The Chinese Perspective**

In a world that is embroiled in tensions and conflicts, US confrontation with China could further destabilise the already anarchic world order. The Chinese leaders have recognised the need to dispel fears regarding their rise and create an international environment favourable to China's rise and progress. The Chinese government has taken many steps including sponsoring exhibitions regarding China in foreign countries, promoting Chinese language programs, tourism, etc. In light of the peaceful rise of China, there are certain arguments evaluated by Chinese scholars and strategists. China's growth is dependable on world peace and, in response, China will bestow to play its role in contributing to peace. Secondly, China will continue to grow peacefully. It will rely on its resources, not intended to exploit the developing or the underdeveloped states. Also, China is focusing on its development for the upcoming future generations in the long run for their well-being. And lastly, if China seeks its final target of achieving economic might, it shall not create trouble for the rest of the world.

Basic principles of China's peaceful ascension can be summed up as follows:

1. Building a strategic partnership with second-tier powers through strategic partnership pacts with the EU, Russia, and regional powers;
2. Promote a friendly neighbourhood policy in the Asia-Pacific region by expanding trade; and
3. Looking for partnership and avoiding direct confrontation with the US.

## **Conclusion**

Some scholars predict a Sino-centric world in the future while some argue that China would collapse like the former USSR. The US views the rise of China as a threat, whereas the Chinese view the US as an unhappy state that is, directly and indirectly, trying to hinder its rise. The US wants China to be brought into the existing governance structures of international relations. With time, China has evolved its internal composition and technological capabilities to match those of the US but at the same time, the reality of the US military supremacy cannot be disregarded. In order to avoid the possibility of a conflict or confrontation in future, the US will have to find ways to accommodate China into the current norms of the international order. The process of integrating China into the existing order can be initiated by the world states to join and participate in the regional and international organisations. China's path to a smooth rise might be hindered if its leadership is unable to balance between the national imperative to develop rapidly with the careful handling of the overheated economy. So far, China has depicted its rise as a peaceful and non-threatening phenomenon with no intention of replacing the existing international order. What happens in future will depend on how the world reacts to the rise of China, particularly the United States.

## Notes and References

- 1 A. F. K. Organski. "World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 2 (1959): 587–87.
- 2 Douglas William Lemke and Ronald L. Tammen, "**Power transition theory and the rise of China**," *International Interactions* 29, no. 4(2013):269-271.
- 3 Gerald Schneider, *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 504–5.
- 4 Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler *et al.*, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (Seven Bridges Press, 2000): 264.
- 5 Jack S. Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts: The Evolution of the Power Transition Research Program," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 6 (1999): 675-704.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Organski, "World Politics."
- 8 Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (Princeton University Press, 1984), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sq9s>.
- 9 Jacek Kugler, "The Policy Implications of Power Parity," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 16, no. 2 (1998): 99–124.
- 10 Ying Chen & Wojciech Olszewski, *Effective Persuasion*, 22 April 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1111/iere.12051>.
- 11 Mark Beeson & Fujian Li, "China's Place in Regional and Global Governance: A New World Comes Into View," *Global Policy*, 2016, 10.1111/1758-5899.12348.
- 12 Charles S. Maier, "American Visions and British Interests: Hogan's Marshall Plan," *Reviews in American History* 18, no. 1 (1990): 102-11.
- 13 Robert D. Blackwell & Jennifer M. Harris. *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*, (England: Harvard University Press, 2016), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c84cr7>.
- 14 Mark Beeson, "Geoeconomics with Chinese characteristics: the BRI and China's evolving grand strategy," *Economic and Political Studies* 6, no.3 (2018):240-256.

- <sup>15</sup> Nadège Rolland, "Beijing's Response to the Belt and Road Initiative's "Pushback": A Story of Assessment and Adaptation," *Asian Affairs* 50, no.2 (2019): 216 -235.
- <sup>16</sup> Michael Clarke, "The Belt and Road Initiative: China's New Grand Strategy?," *Asia Policy* 24, (2017): 71-79, <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
- <sup>19</sup> Paulo Ribeiro, "Is China Threat Theory a Construction?," 2015, 10.13140/RG.2.1.1654.4089.
- <sup>20</sup> "Remarks by Vice President Pence, on the Administration's Policy toward China," Foreign Policy, 4 October 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-administrations-policy-toward-china/>.
- <sup>21</sup> Chen Qingqing, "Huawei expands 5G footprint in Europe despite the US," *Global Times*, 31 May 2019, <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/index.php/world/europe/huawei-expands-5g-footprint-in-europe-despite-us-crackdown-1559388119>.
- <sup>22</sup> Finian Cunningham, "Washington's Huawei hypocrisy.US government is an instrument of American corporations," *Russia Today*, 30 May 2019, <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/460667-huawei-corporations-us-interests/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Sandy Fitzgerald, "Pompeo: Huawei an 'Instrument of the Chinese Government'," *Newsmax*, 29 May 2019, <https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/mike-pompeo-huawei/2019/05/29/id/917976/>.
- <sup>24</sup> "Huawei sales top \$100bn despite US-led pressure," *BBC*, 29 March 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47743152>.
- <sup>25</sup> Wang Cong, "China steps up criticism of the US in trade tussle with a scathing white paper," *Global Times*, 2 June 2019, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1152748.shtml>.