



Seven Reasons-Why China is not a Threat to U.S Hegemony

Alida Tomja¹, Alketa Dumani²

Abstract: Many researchers see China as the most likely competitor to balance US power and even overtake it as an indisputable global power. Some of them, according to the theory of transition, have predicted that the United States and China will be the two main powers forced to engage in the biggest conflicts of the future. Even recent polls show that most people share the view that China will replace the United States as the world's leading superpower. In this regard, China has become the most quoted nation when it comes to any possible change of the unipolar system structure to a two- or multipolar one. The purpose of this study is to analyze whether China has enough capacity to become a hegemonic power by challenging the role of the United States. This study provides a tableau of important factors besides those of an economic and military nature that limit the potential of this state to be a global superpower, thus challenging American hegemony. Through a literature review, documentation review, and secondary quantitative data produced by other research materials, this study concludes that China continues to be an Asian-continental power without the capacity to project its power across the globe as the United States does.

Keywords: United States; China; International System; Challenge

1. Introduction

Among the BRIC countries, China is the leading giant, with a population and economy equal to those of the other three countries combined. Moreover, China has the highest economic growth rate and the largest military budget. Therefore, it

¹ PhD, Aleksandër Moisiu University, Albania, Address: Lagjja 1, Rruga e Currilove, Durrës, 2001, Albania, Corresponding author: alidatomja@hotmail.com.

² PhD, Aleksandër Moisiu University, Faculty of Education, Albania, Address: Lagjja 1, Rruga e Currilove, Durrës, 2001, Albania.

is unclear why experts believe China to be the most likely rival capable of equalizing or perhaps surpassing American strength.

Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss are two notable scholars who have defined China as the undisputed global power (McFaul & Stoner-Weiss, 2008). Additionally, according to Barry Buzan, China is currently the most likely candidate to become a superpower, and as such, it poses the most obvious political competition (Buzan, 2004). Other scholars, in line with the theory of power transition, have managed to predict that the United States and China are the two main powers forced to engage in the greatest conflicts of the future. They anticipate that a conflict equivalent to the Napoleonic Wars, specifically the fight for supremacy between Great Britain and Germany during World War II, could occur between China and the United States (Chan, 2005). However, in Kagan's opinion, conflicts frequently arise from large changes in the variables that make up the power equation, which link an ascending power's trajectory to a declining power's trajectory (Kagan, 2012).

However, it is worth noting that China has shown limited intentions and insufficient capacity to become a global power. Therefore, in the absence of such an objective, this state cannot be interpreted as a threat. It should be kept in mind that, although there is much talk about the empowerment of this state, most studies refer to economic growth, which mostly reflects the potential power of China (Beckley, 2010), and even this growth is often overestimated. However, let us start the analysis by first looking at the dimensions of China's economic power. We will then move on to the military factors and the reasons why China cannot be a challenge for the US in terms of the role of world leadership.

2. China's Economic Power

Along with the opinions of the aforementioned professors, results from polls conducted last year reveal that the majority of people believe China will eventually overtake the United States as the world's dominant superpower, or that it already has. Even in 2019, about a quarter of Americans (24%) named China as the country that poses the greatest threat to the US in the future, almost twice as many as those who thought this in 2007 (Gramlich, 2019). What is intriguing is that the majority of the nations surveyed only have favorable attitudes toward China's economic expansion, not toward its military development. If China is perceived primarily as

an economic actor, even someone who may have pro-American attitudes tends to approve of its growth and empowerment. Conversely, if China continues to strive to establish itself as a growing military power, then pro-American sentiments tend to run counter to its empowerment.

It is true that China managed to recover quickly from the economic crisis of 2008, and, contrary to what many analysts had predicted, around 2030, the Chinese economy's overall size won't surpass that of the United States. The International Monetary Fund has stated that this excess has occurred since 2014. According to the latter, for the first time in many decades (since 1900), the US is not the largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity, as China has become number one (IMF, 2014). Always referring to the IMF, China managed to produce in this period goods and services worth 17.6 billion USD, while the United States recorded a value of 17.4 billion.

Based on real purchasing power parity (PPP) data, China today accounts for 19.7 percent of the global economy, compared to 14.9 percent for the United States (Statista Research Department, 2020). It is even estimated that, around 2040, China will produce almost 40 percent of global GDP.

However, this does not mean that China is the richest country in the world. We need to be clear that when we speak in terms of so-called purchasing power parity (PPP), the different costs of living in China and the United States must be taken into account. Because the cost of living in China is lower, a person who has thirty thousand dollars can buy more in China than someone with the same amount could in the US; by this logic, the thirty thousand dollars spent in China are worth more than the same amount spent in the US. Purchasing power parity has been used by economists for more than fifty years and is an indicator often used by the World Bank to calculate the purchasing power of populations. Similarly, if we were to calculate China's economic output based on what it could buy within the country instead of buying in US dollars, then we could conclude that China's power is indeed greater. However, we are aware that this would be an unusual and abnormal measure of economic power.

Also, even if China and the United States were equivalent in PPP, we should be clear that we are analyzing two countries that reflect large differences between them, mainly due to the fact that on the one hand we have a country with almost one billion four hundred million inhabitants and, on the other, a country with three hundred and thirty million; two countries that have absolutely incomparable

economic structures, as well as two countries that are by no means in the same situation in terms of wealth creation and economic development. While China continues to be heavily dependent on foreign markets, exports, and global economic scenarios, the United States has a population that enjoys high living standards, a diversified economy, and highly advanced technology; therefore, they enjoy the advantage of being one of the fundamental engines of the global economy.

Therefore, we cannot claim yet that the movement of tectonic plates that caused the “economic earthquake”, has occurred. We would accept the opposite if China’s GDP had equaled or exceeded that of the US and, along with it, the standard of living of the Chinese population had risen, China’s dependence on exports had been reduced, and the Chinese economy was characterized by high consumption, diversity, and development. China has adopted the same approach as its neighbors in Asia, utilizing trade as a launchpad for economic growth. Data from the World Bank show that exports of goods and services make up nearly a quarter of China’s GDP, with the most recent figure coming from 2019 at 19.51 percent (The Global Economy).

Even if we continue to claim that low-cost labor will not be depleted, China’s reliance on an export economy oriented towards foreign markets makes China’s prosperity in this area far more vulnerable than that of America. During the 2000s, China was the ninth largest exporter, but since 2009, it has grown to be the world’s largest exporter (Investopedia, 2018), a position that undoubtedly requires adapting the model that leads China’s exports to financial balances and global trade, especially after the effects of financial crises such as 2008.

China has outsold the United States by nearly \$100 billion in recent years compared to purchases (Curtis, 2005), but the Chinese economy will not be able to maintain this pace for long if the gap in labor costs between the two nations widens or if Washington perceives Beijing as a serious challenge to its interests. There is no denying that China’s current pace of economic development depends heavily on offshore resources, markets, foreign investors, and its trading partners.

However, this does not mean that China’s economic power, which is often cited, is not a reality. It remains a fact that China, as the second-largest economy in the world, has a very important role in the global economy, especially when it comes to the electronics and textile industries or the role of Chinese enterprises in the

global industry. In this context, China's weakening would be bad news for everyone. Or, as the late Bill Clinton stated in 1999,

Let's not lose sight of the threat posed to us by a weak China, which would be one of the most unstable regions of Asia if it were engulfed in internal conflicts, social upheaval, and criminal activity. A weak China, not a strong one, is what should frighten us (Clinton, 1999).

However, China has a long way to go before it equals the United States in terms of power sources, as it still faces many obstacles. At the beginning of the 21st century, the US economy was about twice as large as China's in terms of purchasing power parity and more than three times the official exchange rate (Krueger, 2006). Even if China's GDP were to surpass that of the United States by 2030, the size but not the makeup of the two economies would be equal. China will continue to have massively underdeveloped villages and demographic issues as a result of the one-child policy that has been in place since the 20th century. Among developing countries, China is the country with the highest, even extraordinary, rates of population aging. Around 2030, China is expected to have more seniors than children, a fact that has worried Chinese demographers, who predict they will grow old before becoming rich (Greve, 2006).

In addition, linear forecasts of economic growth trends may be misleading. China's workforce, which is claimed to have peaked in 2016, will tend to decline in the coming years. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that its economy can continue to expand as quickly as it did in the country's early years of development since, as Joseph Nye points out, growth rates tend to slow down as countries develop (Nye, 2002). However, even if we assume that the growth rates of the Chinese economy after 2030 will continue at 6 percent and those of the US only at 2 percent, At least until the second half of the century, China won't be able to overtake the US in terms of per capita GDP. While the latter continue to be a crucial indicator of an economy's level of sophistication. In other words, China already has tremendous sources of power due to its population size and fast rate of economic growth, but that does not imply it should be compared to the United States.

Even the economist Michael Pettis predicts that China could experience a painful financial contraction. According to Pettis, China's economy will almost certainly experience a sharp slowdown, but it will nonetheless continue to develop faster than the rest of the globe (Pettis, 2010). Whereas the aforementioned author,

Joseph Nye, states that China, although holding large foreign exchange reserves, will continue to have significant difficulties increasing its financial impact through lending its currency overseas (Nye, 2010). In truth, China's economy is dealing with significant challenges brought on by ineffective state-owned businesses, rising inequality, extensive internal migration, insufficient social security measures, corruption, and weak institutions, all of which have the potential to fuel political instability. The country's north and east have exceeded its south and west. Only ten provinces—out of 31—have per capita incomes that are higher than the national average (Junmian, 2012), while national minorities are still overrepresented in undeveloped provinces such as Tibet and Xinjiang.

It is true that China is a country with great potential to be an important actor in today's international system, and it is. Although most predictions about China's power are based on the country's rapid GDP growth rate, other important sources of power are not to be denied. Its territory, which is almost as huge as that of the United States, and its population, which is four times greater than that of the latter, continue to be highly significant factors. It has the largest army in the world in number, followed by the United States and India, and possesses about 290 nuclear weapons, although a significantly smaller number compared to the United States and Russia. Cyberspace in particular has several incredibly advanced features, like the largest Internet user base on the planet with 748 million users (World Atlas, 2019). However, predictions based only on current economic growth rates and China's political rhetoric should be seen with skepticism. Despite its dynamism, China is unlikely to "overthrow" America from its position of global hegemony with greater success than Japan and Russia. The conclusion is based in part on the advantages that America enjoys and in part on China's limited capacity to continue advancing.

3. China's Military Power

Now let's focus on the issue of China's military power, an issue that most analysts would have considered from the outset. Military spending often reflects economic growth, and this is especially true in the case of China, where spending in this area has grown almost in line with economic growth, making China's official military budget, from 1989 to 2008, increase by two digits each year (Nye, 2011). Official Chinese military spending reports do not contain many of the expenditures indicated in the US defense budget, but regardless of their content, this country,

with a policy of massive military spending, has marked for 2020 the value of 237 billion USD, compared to \$750 billion, or over 1.9 percent of GDP, for the United States, as opposed to almost 3.4 percent for the United States (Global Firepower, 2020). In a new report published on January 27, 2020, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reports that China is now the world's second-largest arms exporter, ranking ahead of Russia but behind the United States (SIPRI, 2020).

The size of the Chinese army is staggering, with active frontline personnel of 2,183,000 and 510,000 additional reserve troops (Global Firepower, 2020). However, we must not forget the fact that most of the military equipment that China has was bought from Russia and has been dubbed "junk". It was made clear to Chinese officials how far behind it had fallen in terms of contemporary military capabilities during the Gulf War in 1991, the tensions over Taiwan in 1995–1996, and the Kosovo case in 1999, while at the same time pushing them to quadruple military spending over time.

China's weapons are primarily designed to secure regional rather than global dominance. While it takes many years of investment to own complex submarines and aircraft carriers, the People's Liberation Army lacks the experience needed to fight in the modern theater of war. Robert Ross finds that transforming the latter into a vast strategic power in the region will take many decades (Ross, 2010). Not to mention, from an even further off perspective, its development into a major strategic player worldwide. As a result, China continues to be very remote from the American industrial-military complex.

On the other hand, there has been a lot of talk lately about China's military engagement, relating to the covert use of anti-ship and anti-satellite weaponry. Such programs do exist, but it is unclear at this time how great of a threat they are to the United States. Beijing, for instance, lacks the tools needed to track and find US wars (Thompson, 2019), and even though it's making progress in this area, it is aware that it is facing the world's most formidable air defense. Much has been written about China's growing investment in nuclear weapons, but as was mentioned above, the best publicly available information indicates that China has about 290 nuclear warheads in its strategic arsenal, which does not compare to that of the United States given that it has 3,800 nuclear warheads available, which can be used by missiles or aircraft, and an additional reserve of up to 2385 (Arms Control Association, 2019).

Although China's navy has not been able to develop the capabilities needed to project power globally, with its long-range missiles and expanding submarine fleet, it may make US naval operations on its shores more difficult, thus raising a number of questions about its interest in keeping the South China Sea under control. It has very sporadically been found outside of regional seas, and when it has, it has usually been for anti-piracy and humanitarian reasons. Despite the fact that the US has sent thousands of troops to around 177 different countries (Desjardins, 2017), including countries close to China, such as South Korea, Japan, and also Australia and Singapore, China has not done the same, thus having no overseas base. Also, when it comes to aircraft carriers, the United States is still dominant, as by possessing twenty of them, it can project its power worldwide. Meanwhile, China has only two. Moreover, US Navy aircraft are nuclear-powered, which gives them greater navigation stability than conventionally powered ships (Global Fire Power, 2020).

Chinese investment in naval infrastructure aims to rival US naval dominance. However, even if China can dominate the region, that does not mean it has the capacity to dominate the globe, as there are still many obstacles to overcome. Beijing's decision to have a modest level of nuclear deterrence—some would even call it minimal—seems incompatible with the idea of rivaling US power. Until recently, China did not possess reliable preventive naval defense forces; it even lacks an actual aircraft carrier, and many of its submarines are powered by oil rather than nuclear power. (Thompson, 2014). Taking into account these military characteristics, combined with the widely reported shortcomings in air transport, intelligence, logistics, and other key capabilities, one cannot claim China poses a threat and challenge for the US in the military aspect. China, militarily, is an emerging regional power and is still far behind America in key aspects of power in this regard. Expressed in the words of Kenneth Lieberthal since 2011.

There is no military expert in either China or the United States to claim that China has any chance of dominating the globe militarily in the next three or four decades (Lieberthal, 2011).

This finding is supported by even the "harshest" Chinese experts (Etzioni, 2011). But it is well accepted that China's military might is mostly focused in its region, and it is expected to remain so in the foreseeable future. However, this fact has increased regional tensions, encouraging higher military spending among neighboring countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan. While there are

many factors that shape the strategic balance in East Asia, the rapid growth of China's military spending over the past twenty years has been the most important factor that has affected regional security. Allegations that the figures mentioned above may unofficially be even higher have caused concern throughout Asia. Many countries, concerned about the lack of transparency in China's military budget, have adopted defensive or balancing strategies in response. Greater transparency on China's part would certainly help avoid a regional arms race while also making a positive contribution towards strengthening peace and stability regionally and globally.

In this regard, although Chinese military leaders do not hesitate to describe America as a declining nation, they are even "encouraging" some scholars to declare that America's greatest geopolitical challenge in the 21st century is the "transition of power" in East Asia (Shambaugh, 2005). In the below study, we will provide an overview of other important factors aside from those of an economic and military nature that have limited China's potential to be a global power and challenger of US hegemony.

4. Seven Other Reasons why China is not a Challenge to US Hegemony

First, let's look at per capita income in China, which is roughly one-tenth of per capita income in the United States. Specifically, according to data released by the World Bank for 2019, per capita income for these two countries is 10,098 for China and 65,111 for the United States (World Economic Outlook Database, 2020). Going back in time, China's per capita income in 2010 was \$4,260 compared to the United States' per capita income of \$47,140, placing China about on par with nations like Ecuador and Algeria (The World Bank, 2010). This gap is expected to continue for decades due to the fact that the US gross domestic product per capita will continue to be almost three times that of China in 2050 (Dadush & Staricil, 2010). It is this indicator, not the total size of the Chinese economy, that must be considered to conclude that China has limited opportunities to engage in an internationalist foreign policy. Therefore, considering China's population, the Chinese government will have to engage almost four times more than the US government in order to be able to first fight the poverty commonly experienced by a very large number of rural families.

Second, with a population of one billion four hundred million, China is the world's largest country by population. However, because of the "one-child" policy it has implemented since 1979, China's population is aging quickly. (Greenhalgh, 2008). The family planning policy pursued in China for years, specifically until 2013, did not allow more than one child, which means that in a few years, China's workforce will start to shrink, and a relatively significant percentage of the population will have to be supported by the working age group. With 1.6 children per woman currently, the fertility rate is still below the 2.1 needed for long-term population stability, and even in some other Asian countries, it has been found to have lower birth rates. What does this mean in economic terms? As mentioned above, the working-age population will reach its historic peak in a few years and then start on the way to a rapid decrease. Free labor in large quantities, which drove China's economic miracle, has recently started to drastically decline, raising wages significantly as well as pushing some of the most labor-intensive industries to relocate. In the coming years, the aging population will undermine efforts to stimulate domestic demand, creating pressure to increase spending on social welfare. On the other hand, the rural population has moved towards urban areas, and this labor surplus has been to the benefit of the economy. However, when this labor surplus begins to shrink and deplete, the country will experience a significant turnaround, leaving China facing fundamental economic challenges. It remains to be seen whether China will be able to come up with a plan to manage middle-class urban expansion, regional disparities, and ethnic minority discontent.

Third, since the Communist Party has monopolized power in China, the chances of a fundamental reform of the political system remain slim. As former US Ambassador Chas W. Freeman points out, the Chinese political system is subject to political upheaval, lacks legitimacy, has significant levels of corruption, and lacks a coherent vision for self-improvement (Freeman & Chas W. Jr. 2010). According to him, despite its economic success and increasing investment in the field of defense, China's international influence will remain limited for as long as it does not manage to develop an attractive political system.

According to The Guardian, the cost of the sold military positions has been in the hundreds of thousands of pounds, which has led to a vicious cycle of officers who have paid for their positions and are attempting to recuperate the cost (Branigan, 2014). The state's policy of controlling industries has proven massively inefficient. Bribery, abuse, blackmail, theft of property, and deep inequality between urban and rural residents remain endemic in China, inevitably leading to the promotion of

political instability. The above facts demonstrate to us the consolidated culture of corruption, for which China's political culture does not seem to be able to offer any solution.

China's authoritarian political system, based on communist ideology, has not yet found a solution to increase political participation. In the words of Susan Shirk, China is strong externally and weak internally (Shirk, 2007). Its internal fragility poses the greatest danger to China. We are, nonetheless, right to think that economic change could also lead to political change, with China gaining minimal status as a "partly free" country. However, it is too early to consider such political changes in the current context of China, but they may become tangible when a young generation with international education ascends to power after at least 10 or 15 years. They will know where the system's issues are. The key point is that no one, not even the Chinese, can foresee China's political future or how it will impact economic growth. However, China's political society and culture appear to be in some danger for the future and are in no way comparable to those of the United States.

Fourth, unlike America, geographical constraints significantly restrict China's ability to conquer new lands. It faces the desolate Tibetan plateau and the Gobi Desert to the west. In respect to the Indian subcontinent, the Himalayan mountains create a barrier in the south. The vast, largely uninhabited plateaus, known as the steppes, act as a sort of barrier against Russia to the north, and the largest ocean in the world lies to the east, dividing the region by more than 6,000 miles of sea between Shanghai and San Francisco. Therefore, China does not seem to have much chance to increase its presence on its border, leaving aside Taiwan's historical claim to China and their shared southern coastal plain with Vietnam. Ironically, Beijing's struggles with its neighbors over the use of tiny islands and reefs highlight how little real capacity Beijing has to extend its influence to far-off regions, a quality that should distinguish a global power.

Fifth, China still lacks a cultural sector that can rival Bollywood or Hollywood, and its universities are still inferior to those in the United States; moreover, it lacks the significant impact of NGOs, which generate soft power in America (Nye, 2011). However, China is making great efforts to invest in this area. Recently, it has been noticed that China, aware of its attractive traditional culture, has promoted the establishment of 200 Confucian Institutes worldwide to teach the language and culture of this civilization. Among other things, China has geared its diplomacy

towards multilateralism to reduce the potential of other countries to build balancing alliances with this growing power. However, China should aim to inject more political values and cultural norms from the democratized world domestically before considering what it can “export” to the world.

Sixth, the issue of the environment remains very important, as developed countries have not only delocalized their production in China but also the pollution associated with it. China needs to control industrial pollution and, especially, the release of CO₂ gas, which has extremely negative consequences. Presently, China is the country with the highest CO₂ emissions (Blokhin, 2019). About 70% of the total energy derived comes from coal alone, the combustion of which in industrial plants and boilers makes China the number one holder of this gas in the atmosphere.

The global economy, including China's, faces a significant challenge in reducing emissions in the atmosphere. According to this viewpoint, China faces significant challenges if it cannot control its environmental impacts on the global climate, internal strife, and migrant flows.

Seventh, China's role in the UN reflects its reluctance to use power globally. The West's “new intervention” in Kosovo and Iraq caused great alarm in the 1990s, but (in 2009) China's stance on peacekeeping operations changed to a more practical and colorful approach. However, despite initial opposition to the intervention, China contributed to peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo. On the other hand, China showed restraint in exercising its veto over Resolution 678, despite open opposition to the first Gulf War, which authorized the use of all means necessary to restore peace and security after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq¹. Most importantly, when the UN Security Council took a different stance from the Chinese point of view, China avoided a veto, choosing instead to abstain. China had only used its veto sixteen times as of October 2015, compared to the United States' approximately eighty-three times (UN Security Council Report on Security, March 2020).

In this regard, China has set regional issues, such as Tibet, Taiwan, and especially the attitude held towards the South China Sea, as the focus of its geopolitical implications and objectives. Large portions of this sea, according to China, are considered to be within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ); however, other nations

¹ Regarding Resolution 678 authorizing the use of force to liberate Kuwait, all permanent members voted in favor except China, which abstained, but the abstention did not reject the resolution.

in the region, including Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines, have strongly disagreed with this claim. Opponents of China's foreign policy have expressed concern about a possible move by China to use the military with regards to this claim.

However, there does not seem to be room for the above concern, as China's stated foreign policy doctrine is aimed at promoting peace and has even recently been christened the doctrine of "peaceful development" in an effort to reassure the world that a zero-sum game will not result from China's expanding influence. In line with this strategy, China has frequently offered talks or other peaceful means of resolving disputes with its neighbors in recent years. Between 1949 and 2005, China was able to resolve seventeen of the twenty-three territorial disputes with other governments, pursuing a policy of consensus with the latter (Fravel, 2005). Its peaceful stance on resolving these disputes, acknowledging in most cases less than 50 percent of the disputed territorial area, indicates that China, over the past decades, has not tended to impose its power even at the regional level. Even with the knowledge that its empowerment could be interpreted as a threat to Asian countries, it has made efforts to manifest a generally benevolent approach to foreign policy, obtaining influence through financial contributions, development initiatives, or diplomatic actions. Even with regards to the Taiwan matter, we note the tendency of Chinese politics to balance diplomatic and military pressure with inter-economic ties.

However, as long as China's economic and military power continues to grow, the perception of a dangerous China in relation to its neighbors is also likely to increase. Long before China could achieve such a development, its neighbors, largely influenced by Beijing's territorial claims, sided with the West, attempting to "balance" it by forming powerful relationships with the US. This pattern can be seen in the cases of not only Japan, Malaysia, or the Philippines, but even Vietnam, a former close ally of China. Even Burma gives the impression that it has tried to distance itself from China; this is evidenced by the fact that in October 2011, Burma suspended the implementation of a Chinese dam project worth \$3.6 billion (Hille, 2011). In fact, this case is a rare example of public disagreement between two neighbors and close allies. The move is widely regarded as evidence of the Burmese government's determination to show that it is not a client of China.

In a broader sense, India and Japan have both resisted the expansion of Chinese power in Asia, which has benefited U.S. influence more. The alliance between

Japan and the United States, as well as the improved relations between the latter and India, pose a significant obstacle to China's ambitions in the region. This means that China will find it very difficult to remove the United States from the policies of the great powers in the region. In such a context, the United States, Japan, India, and the other countries mentioned above should work to encourage China to play a responsible role, thus reducing opportunities for aggressive behavior while its power grows.

5. Conclusions

Despite the above arguments, we are not trying to defend the idea that China has not gained power and authority in today's international system. There can be no denying that China is indeed a very powerful player in this system and has been able to create a global profile. China has consistently preserved Westphalian principles of sovereignty, joined the World Trade Organization, and increased its financial support for the International Monetary Fund. Furthermore, China is regarded as the permanent member of the UN Security Council that most actively promotes peace. However, being a global power requires much more than that; it requires full capacity in all the constituent components of power; it requires power, defined in the time of the classics as the ability to dictate to others to follow a course that in other conditions would not follow (Dahl, 1957).

However, the position China will have in the structure of the international order depends a lot on the position the United States wants to take in relation to this issue. In fact, what we can say, based on concrete actions but also on the stated goals, is that China mainly seeks to position itself as a regional power, implying an increasingly narrow space for the United States in this region. The question of whether China's growing role will be in line with or contrary to the prevailing international order depends in part on America's stance. However, whether such aspirations will be sustained or met with US resistance remains unclear.

If the United States were to cut off arms support to Taiwan, it would not urge India to build an increasingly powerful military to contain China if the US welcomed China's tendency to provide the necessary routes for money and energy. If they limit India instead of increasing their military forces in the region, then it can be said that the United States is really supporting the empowerment of China as well

as the positioning of China as a regional power in the structure of international relations.

But if the United States sees fit to take the opposite course, increasing its military bases in the region as well as fostering military alliances to control China, then confrontation, I believe, will be inevitable. Nevertheless, I think the United States and China could move towards a military confrontation, but only if it concerned Taiwan and not for any other reason. In fact, the most likely scenario is that America would pressure other big Asian nations like Japan, Russia, and India to share regional leadership with China. Only if America is mature enough to recognize China's vulnerability and wise enough to not proceed alone will the idea of a partnership—where the United States and China share responsibility for regional and global leadership—be realized. But I think, as long as China continues to be a communist state, it is challenging to envision complete harmony between the two nations.

In addition, China has not yet proven that it intends to rival the United States in taking on the role of global leader. So far, there seem to be few signs of such a scenario. In 1974, Deng Xiaoping declared before the UN General Assembly that China is not a superpower, nor will it ever seek to be one. But generations change, power often creates arrogance, and “the more we eat, the more our appetite grows.” As Martin Jacques puts it, rising powers will no doubt use their new economic power for broader political, cultural, and military purposes (Jacques, 2009). According to this perspective, the current generation of Chinese leaders has concentrated on economic development and the creation of a peaceful international environment that would not impede China's growth in the international arena, realizing that rapid economic growth is the key to domestic political stability.

China has historically viewed itself as the hub of the East Asian system of states, and it will work to restore this system. But even if we agree that China's current goal is to challenge the United States' position in East Asia and, eventually, their position globally, it remains highly uncertain whether the latter will really have the necessary skills to make it happen in the near future. Moreover, China will have to face the reactions of other countries, which take on even greater importance given the above-mentioned needs for foreign markets and resources. While a military and aggressive policy would in turn lead to the creation of a counterbalanced coalition between neighbors, which would consequently weaken the power of the Asian

dragon, in such a context, China would have to negotiate in a multilateral environment, which goes against the country's preferences.

According to John Ikenberry, the existing international order, which is defined by openness and economic integration, is more able to absorb China than it is to be led by it (Ikenberry, 2008). Chinese authorities have so far only made a few insignificant moves in the direction of playing a significant role as a hegemon or, more specifically, as an accountable participant in the international system. Although they still act independently within the system, they are now becoming dependent on a world they cannot control. However, the current trend of Chinese leadership confirms the lack of an internationalist ideology as well as the claim to create a new world order. Such a fact is confirmed by the former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, who has since 2004 assured that China's ascent "will not obstruct the path of any other country, will not pose a threat to anyone, and will not come at the expense of anyone" (Quoted in Pan, 2006). However, Professor Yan Xuetong asserts that despite its military and economic expansion, China's goal is to struggle for equality with other nations rather than to establish itself as the world's dominant power (Xuetong, 1995).

What can be said with certainty is that China has not developed and does not have the necessary capacity to develop to such a level that it can project its power anywhere in the world, as has really happened with the USA. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that China is a power, but a continental Asian power.

One could argue that the United States is really supporting the empowerment of China as well as the positioning of the latter as a regional power in the structure of international relations. If the United States or they were to cut off arms support to Taiwan, it would not urge India to build an increasingly powerful military to contain China if it welcomed China's tendency to provide the necessary routes for money and energy, if they would limit them instead of increasing their military forces in the region.

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