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Rise of China and Its Role in Regional Organizations

Rai Muhammad Feroz
BS International Relations, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Central Punjab, Lahore

Abstract
The emergence of China is one of the most dramatic changes that have happened in the modern international relations, which radically changed the nature and framework of the global order. The article further examines some of the milestone the globalization of the country as China has joined the international community by joining the United Nations in 1971, and by joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, which have boosted its international legitimacy considerably. Moreover, the study evaluates the economic diplomacy of China that is based on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and gauges how this strategy influences Central Asia, South Asia, or Europe. Although the notion of BRI can be seen as a development program, it can also be viewed as an instrument to further Chinese power and transform the landscape of worldwide connectivity. It also assesses the Chinese membership of multilateral institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), BRICS, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and counterbalancing concepts, including the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and Indo-US strategic partnership. Specific focus is paid to the foreign policy of China in South China Sea where one can see the growth of assertiveness and a threat to the stability and freedom of navigation in the region. The results imply that the emerging power of China does not necessarily result in the breakdown of the liberal international order but adds to its conversion into a more sophisticated and multipolar system. The world order of the future will rely on the ability of China and other giant powers to strike the balance between cooperation and competition.

Keywords: *Globalization, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, BRI, BRICS, South China Sea, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*

Introduction

The process of the rapid rise of China has already become one of the most symbolic characteristics of the nowadays international system reorganizing the world balance of power and putting the current beliefs about the form of the global politics to the test. Throughout the last few decades, China has transformed into a comparatively marginal country in the matters of international relations to a key participant with a profound impact on both economy, politics, and strategies. This change has not merely changed the balance of power but has also thrown to the wind some fundamentals concerning the future of the liberal international order which has since the past been dominated by the western powers especially the United States (Acharya,2014; Ikenberry,2011).

It is being marked by a system of global organizations or international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund that all strive to establish international relations via rules and norms. Free trade, multilateralism and the rule of law are also foundations of this system that has led to interdependence in the economies and minimized chances of a major power reaching into a fight against one another (Ikenberry,2011).

China started getting involved into this system slowly but this pace has increased at a staggering rate since the economic reforms by one belt road intitative. These reforms were a move towards

planned economy, which liberalized China to international investments and global trade. Consequently, China came out with a booming economy, being an important contributor to global production and commerce. This integration was further entrenched in 2001 when China joined the World Trade Organization where it would now be fully incorporated in the global economy by being able to enjoy the fruits of a liberal international order (WTO,2001; World Bank, 2020).

The emergence of China has however elicited a significant amount of controversy with respect to its long-term goals as well as how it affects the international system as it is now. The main areas of concern in this discussion are whether China is a status quo power, which aims at working within this status quo, or a revisionist power that is geared towards restructuring it in the best interests of itself. On the one hand, China had proven that it is willing to cooperate with the rest of the world and is contributing towards global governance. Conversely, its growing activism in other areas like the South China Sea and its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative plan indicate that it would like to widen its influence and can potentially change the system rules (Mearsheimer, 2010; Shambaugh, 2013).

Other relevant factors of the rise of China include its ideological and historical background which greatly contributes to its foreign policy. The events that China underwent in the course of the century of humiliation when it was forced to deal with foreign intervention and loss of its territories have made an unending mark on its national identity and perspective in the strategies. This historical account aids in the fixation of China on sovereignty, geographical solidarity and national restoration. Simultaneously, China tries to create the image of a peaceful and responsible world actor, disseminating the ideas about the win-win cooperation and peaceful development.

It has also brought responses by other major powers, especially the United States, due to the rise of China resulting to more strategic competition. The competition is realized in aspects like trade, technology, and military presence of Indo-Pacific region. Programs like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and Indo-US strategic collaboration have been seen as a mechanism of equalizing increasing role of China and preserving the stability in the region (Christensen, 2015; Friedberg, 2011).

With all these intricacies, this study shall endeavor to give an in-depth evaluation of the emergence of China and the consequences it has on the liberal international order. Through an admixture of theoretical outlook and practical results, the paper aims at providing a subtle insight into how China may be critical to the changing world order.

Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to provide a critical analysis of the implications of Chinese rise to the liberal international order especially on the economic, political and strategic aspects of this trend. Since China is continuing to wield more global power, it is imperative to assess the impact of its increasing capacities on the already in existence structures of world government and how they either uphold the status quo or snap it. This goal is based on the wider argument in the field of international relations on whether the liberal international order can be sustained in the presence of new powers.

A second important aim of the present research is to assess the conduct of China using major theoretical approaches that include realism, liberal institutionalism. This approach provide different insights into the driving forces behind states and their behavior and can be used together to gain a more detailed overview of the China rise. With the help of these theoretical frames, the research aims to uncover the patterns of behavior that are not evident when using a single framework to analyze the Chinese policies and strategies.

The second issue of interest is to examine the economic diplomacy of China especially with campaigns like Belt and Road Initiative. This entails evaluating the use of economic instruments by China to gain more power and consolidate its status in the international system. The research intends to examine how far economic initiatives are oriented to developmental and strategic goals and the effect they have on the participating countries and regions.

Moreover, the study aims at investigating the involvement of China in multilateral organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. These sites enable China to interact with other countries, encourage a cooperative approach, and influence the international standards. Through the analysis of the participation of China in these organizations, it is hoped that the study will be able to know how it combines cooperation as well as competition in the international arena.

Lastly, the study will also examine how other key powers reacted to the increasing power of China, especially regarding balancing policies and strategic alliances. The examples of the adaptation of states to shifting power relations are discussed in such initiatives as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and Indo-US cooperation. This goal is crucial to make sense of the bigger picture of how the emergence of China impacts the world order and what paths the world could order of liberalism take in the future.

Research Questions

Three main questions led the research and related to the main themes and aims of the research.

1. Does China fit the description of a status quo or revisionist state in the liberal international order? This is a key question that would help to find out the intention of China and its possible effect on the global structures of governance.
2. It deals with the future implication of the rise of China on a liberal international order. This includes analyzing possible future scenarios and determining how the relationship between China and the other great powers are likely to influence the development of the international system.

Literature Review

The scholarly literature on the rise of China is vast and eclectic as much as the phenomenon is multidimensional and has an extensive impact. One of the main themes of this literature is whether the international system will experience conflict, or cooperation in the face of the rising power of China. This discussion has frequently been made as a contesting theory to another, which can give a variant interpretation of the China behavior and the effect it has on the liberal international order (Mearsheimer, 2010; Allison, 2017).

Most realist scholars are mostly pessimistic in their perception and argument that the increase in China will dictate greater competition and its probable conflict with the established powers. This views is based on the assumption that the international system is anarchic meaning that states have to depend on their capabilities to ensure survival. While China has already developed more power, there is an implication that China is going to make more claims and contest the United States dominance more so in the Asian-Pacific region. This dynamic is regularly explained by the concept of power transition theory that implies that the periods of power increase are commonly connected to the instability and conflict (Allison, 2017).

Nevertheless, the liberal institutionalist researchers are more optimistic in their views, as they recognize the role of economic interdependence and the use of international institutions in facilitation of cooperation. In this perspective, the incorporation of China into the global economy gives powerful motivations to stay stable and not to go to war. Organizations like the World Trade Organization are offering a platform on how to conduct economic relationships and deal with conflicts, minimizing the chances of conflict. According to this school of thought the

emergence of China can be fitted within the established international order as long as organizations can adjust to the emerging dynamics of the powers (Ikenberry, 2011; Johnston, 2008).

The liberal scholars provide further analysis by emphasizing the influence of identity, norms and ideas in describing the behavior of China. Under this school of thought, the foreign policy of China is not only made based on material considerations but also its historical experiences as well as the national identity. The story of the century of humiliations is influential in developing the focus of China of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Meanwhile, there is an attempt of China to create a positive image by tendencies like peaceful development, which are meant to create a feeling of security to other states and development cooperation (Qin, 2018; Zhao, 2018).

Along with the theoretical discussions, the literature also explores certain particular components of the global strategy of China, including the Belt and Road Initiative. Scholars have pointed out the prospects and the challenges linked with this initiative, in which it can lead to the economic growth, however, they also express doubts related to the debt sustainability and strategic influence. Likewise, the multilateral organizations of China and its involvement in the regional security problems has been extensively researched, which testifies to the complex character of the rise (Rolland, 2017; Economy, 2018).

Analytical Framework

The literature review helps identify the variety of opinions concerning the rise of China and shows that a very broad method of analysis is required. Although all theoretical models provide valuable knowledge, neither of them on its own is ample to explain the behavior of China. This study hence embraces a multidimensional approach that incorporates, liberal institutionalism that enable a more sophisticated analysis of the role of China in the international system.

It is necessary to provide a transition between the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study in order to create the analytical framework of the study. Through a synthesis of the findings of various views, the study will go beyond naive interpretations and seek to comprehensively understand the multifaceted nature of China on the way to its rise.

China Joining World Governance Systems

Another critical aspect of the emergence of China that needs analytical interest is that it gradually and strategically integrated itself into global systems of governance. The United Nations move of recognizing China in 1971 was a major cause of its turn to the issue of international status since Taiwan was replaced and a permanent seat on the Security Council could be assured. This strengthened both the legitimizing of China as a significant power and gave it institutional power to affect the processes of international decision making. Being a permanent member of the Security Council, China acquired the veto power, which enables the country to influence the outcome on some critical matters like international security, peacekeeping as well as sanctions.

The involvement of China into the United Nations system has changed with time; this has been a form of change in which the participation was cautious but in recent times, it became proactive. First, China followed a conservative strategy, stressing on the principles of non-interference and sovereignty. But as its own interests in the world grew, it started to play an increasingly active role, helping to keep the peace and promote development, and joining multilateral diplomacy. This development shows that China can modify its foreign policy in response to the change of circumstances preserving its principles.

The other major step towards integration in the global system by China was its joining with the World Trade Organization in 2001. It was a significant milestone in the direction of economic globalization as China promised a list of rules to be followed in international trade. Membership of WTO meant China had to make significant domestic changes including lowering trade barriers,

enhancing transparency and changes in policies to match the international standards. Such reforms enabled the Chinese to be part of the global supply chains and their economy started booming.

But inclusion of China to institutions in the world also casts troubling questions on its long-term intentions. Though they have advantages of its current system, it has also tried to shape its development in a manner that suits their interests. This two-pronged strategy of operating within institutions and slowly influencing them is a demonstration of how complicated the role of China in international governance.

International Economics and Growth (Pre-BRI Foundation)

Prior to the formal introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative, China was already starting employing economic tools as the way of extending its influence. This is what is commonly called economic diplomacy which is when trade, investment and developmental aid is used to accomplish some type of strategic goals. The increase in economic strength of China has helped it to implement this strategy at the international level, its interaction with the developing states has intensified and its influence in the system of international relations has risen.

The interest in infrastructural development is one of the main features of the China model of economic diplomacy. Most developing nations experience a great lack of infrastructure that restricts their integration and economic development into the world markets. China has established itself as a major participant in meeting these challenges as a result of funding and technical knowhow. This strategy not only leads to economic growth, but also provides Chinese companies with chances and political ties are reinforced.

Meanwhile, the economic diplomacy of china has raised the specter of dependency and influence. According to critics, certain countries will become too dependent on Chinese investment and therefore they might not be able to implement their policies. These issues underscore the necessity of a balanced evaluation of China based on its role and the opportunities and threats that are related to its economic involvement.

Rising Regionally: Influence of China

The investments in ports, railways, and logistic systems by China in Europe are indicative of its bid to invest more in trade and enhance economic relationships. Although such investments have led to economic growth, it has created concerns over political influence and strategy dependency. The reception of the European countries towards Chinese involvement has been varied, given that there are varying interests and priorities by the countries.

Emerging Strategic Competition, Early Balancing Responses:

Other states have seen the need to react to the increase in influence of China by reversing their approach. This is an aspect of international system adaptation that can be found in many cases, as power changes are likely to influence other actors to behave differently. Among the most remarkable reactions to the ascendancy of China is the creation of strategic alliances and informal relations to preserve the level of power ratio.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is another example of such a response which involved bringing together the key Indo-Pacific democracies to enhance stability and collaboration. Although technically not a military alliance, it indicates that there is a common interest in China expanding its power and in maintaining a rules-based order. On the same note, Indo-US strategic collaboration has been enhancing over the recent years, where it is concerned with aspects like defense, intelligence sharing, and maritime security.

These trends draw to our attention the interactive character of international politics in which an action of any state affects the way the others behave. The Chinas ascent is hence not a single event but the process of a systemic change and participation by a number of actors.

Theoretical Framework

The emergence of China and its implication to the liberal international order demands a sound theoretical framework that will be able to articulate the complexity of international relations of the current times. There is not only one theoretical approach that can illustrate the complexity of the

Chinese society; therefore, this study employs an integrated approach of liberal institutionalism. When a system is like this, survival is the main goal, and states are influenced to maximize their strength in order to be secure too. Due to the increase in the capacity of China economically this country has converted the economic capacity into military modernization and strategic leverage. This can be seen in its growing defense spending, marine and missile development and the challenge to defend its periphery.

Liberal institutionalism, on the other hand, gives a more collaborative interpretation to the Chinese behavior. This approach stresses the influence of international organizations, trade interdependence and commonalities in the formation of state relationships. Liberal institutionalists also argue that the inclusion of China in the global economy has provided powerful reasons to stabilize and prevent war. The fact that China is a member of the institutions like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization is an indicator of its realization of the importance of collaboration.

The international institutions help to mitigate uncertainty, communication, and avenues of resolving disputes. The involvement in these institutions not only helps China enjoy the benefits of economic opportunities but also play a part in supporting the international system. An illustration is its interest in international trade that has rendered it a major stakeholder in the stability of the mainstream global economy. Any disturbances to this system would spell considerable ramifications on the development of China itself implying a motivation to cooperate. However, liberation institutionalism is ineffective to explain the strategic aspects of the Chinese actions. As much as China is interacting with institutions that exist, it is also trying to reform or complement them with initiatives like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Belt and Road Initiative. These attempts indicate that China is not only a passive player but an active actor, a maker of the international system.

Research Methodology

The research approach which will illustrates the research to give a detailed study of the rise of China in the international syste. It will also explain and how this rise impact the liberal international order. Due to the complexity of the topic, the qualitative approach is used, which will provide an opportunity to explore the theoretical orientations, policy trends, and empirical data indepth. Most of the data to be used in the research will be obtained through the secondary way by using articles on academic journals, books, policy reports and other publications by international bodies.

These are highly informative sources and they would be useful in the analysis of long term trends and patterns in the behaviour of China. Using secondary data will be especially suitable in this study, as it will provide the possibility to incorporate a variety of viewpoints, as well as analyze the various facets of the Chinese emergence.

The analysis of particular elements of the global strategy of China and especially Belt and Road Initiative is carried out by a case study approach. This would make it possible to take a closer look at the way in which China applies its policies in various regional settings, such as Central Asia, South Asia or Europe. The study may focus on specific cases, which implies that it may introduce real-life cases of the Chinese economic diplomacy and its subsequent implications.

Besides case studies, the study employs a comparative analytical approach and assesses the behavior of China in terms of various theoretical approaches. This would provide more depth and rigor to the analysis as it would be possible to determine the dynamics of the behavior and patterns which China exhibits. It also assists in pointing out the merits and weaknesses of each theoretical framework.

The study uses triangulation to guarantee the reliability and validity of the findings, using several sources to cross-check the information and check conclusions. This will minimise chances of bias and improve the validity of the analysis. The qualitative argument, e.g. economic indicators and trade statistics, are a subset of quantitative data where their argument is required.

Although the methodology is weak, it has a few limitations, as well. The study is also prone to sources of information and their quality since secondary data has been used. Also, there is a quick pace of international relations changes such that new developments might be undertaken after the study is carried out. These limitations, however, are alleviated by means of wide sources and analytical framework.

China's Economic Rise

The economic ascension of China is generally viewed as one of the most impressive changes in the modern framework of the global economy that has primarily changed the balance of power in the world and has reconstructed the form of the global political economy. China has come out of the closed centrally planned economy and evolved into what is a hybrid system and a combination between a market based economy and a state controlled system. Not only has this revolution led to fast economic growth but it has also made China one of the key participants in global trade, investment and development (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2021).

One of the main reasons that contributed to the economic achievement in China has been taking up an export-led model of development that has allowed it to become an integral component of world supply chains and a big manufacturing center. China has exploited its vast workforce and competitive production factors to bring in a lot of foreign direct investment especially that of the multinational businesses keen on exploiting its economic potentials. In the long run, this policy helped to industrialize, enhance technology and amass a lot of foreign exchange reserves (World Bank, 2020; UNCTAD, 2022).

The entry of China into World Trade Organization in 2001 was an important turning point in its economic growth which is an indication of its complete participation in the global trade system. WTO membership demanded Chinese to have various domestic reforms such as trade barriers reduction, opening of major sectors and improving regulatory transparency. Such reforms not only reinforced the economic institutions of China but they also made this country more credible as an economic partner among other countries around the world. This led to increased exports in China and the country got entrenched in the international economy (WTO, 2001).

Besides trade, China has engaged in heavy investments in infrastructure and technological innovation which has been instrumental in the continued economic growth. Large-scale infrastructure development, such as highways, railway, ports, energy systems, have increased connectivity and bringing about economic activity. Simultaneously, China has promoted more than ever innovation-centric development, spending substantial sums of money on research, and development and becoming a world leader in areas including artificial intelligence, telecommunications and renewable energy (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2021).

Nevertheless, there has been a variety of difficulties and contradictions to the economic ascendancy of China as well. Inequality, environmental problems, and increased debt, increase the risk of the unsustainable future. Moreover, the rising economic strength in China has resulted in a rise in the competition with other world giants, especially the United States. Commercial

conflicts, technological limitations, and the issue of economic security are now all the major aspects of the growing relationship between the US and China (IMF, 2021; Economy, 2018).
Although facing such difficulties, the economic power form of China is one of its major pillars of international impact. Its strategic capacity to utilize economic resources in strategic choices has seen it gain a foothold in other parts of the world and become more active in influencing the global economic governance. This two-sided participation in and influence on the global economic system highlights the complexity of the Chinese ascension.
Figure 1: China's GDP Growth (2000–2020)

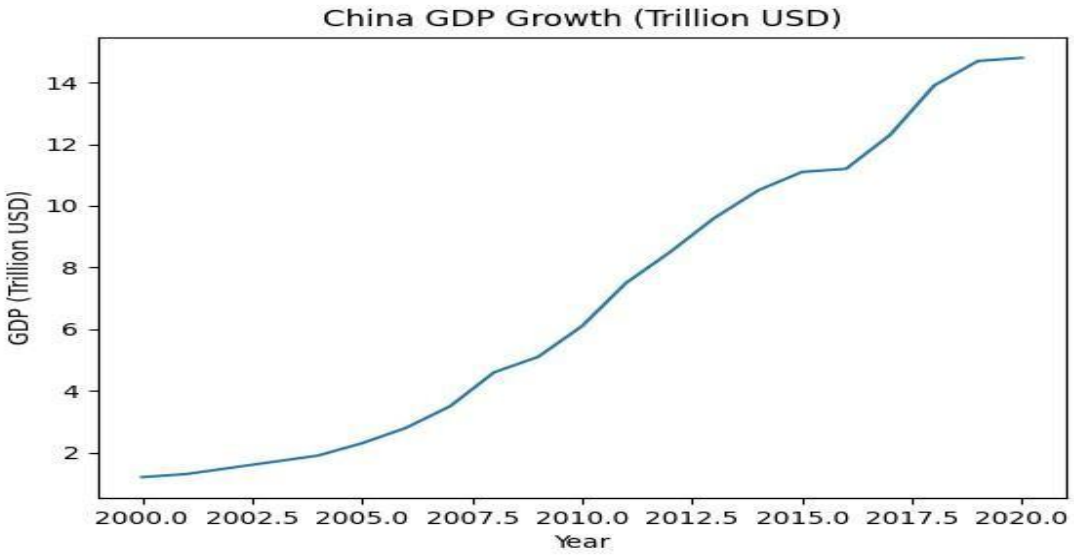

Figure 1: China's GDP Growth (2000-2020)

Belt and Road Initiative (Deep Regional Case Study and Strategic Analysis)

Belt and Road initiative (BRI) was initiated in 2013 and is one of the main materials of the Chinese global policy that integrates both the economic and geopolitical interests. BRI is often termed as one of the most ambitious projects in terms of infrastructure and investment projects ever in global history, with intentions to increase connectivity as well as facilitate economic cooperation in Asia, Europe and Africa. By establishing a system of routes by land and sea, the project aims to restore the ancient Silk Road and establish new trade and investment ways (Rolland, 2017).
In Central Asia, BRI has been working on the development of transportation corridors and energy infrastructure, making the region the main link between China and Europe. The investments in railways, highways and pipelines have had a beneficial impact on the countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan as they have contributed to the economy and integration of economies. Nevertheless, these projects have pushed China into greater influence in the region, which calls into doubt the dependency and strategic leverage (Rolland, 2017).
In South Asia, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been a BRI flagship project, comprising of large-scale energy development, transportation development, and industrial development. CPEC is actually not just contributing to economic development of Pakistan it is also giving China strategic access to Arabian Sea in the form of port of Gwadar. This connectivity also makes China less dependent on traditional sea-ways especially the Strait of Malacca and it increases its energy security. Simultaneously, CPEC emphasizes the duality of BRI being both an economic and strategic project (Rolland, 2017; Wang, 2011).
The European investments by China have been concentrated into ports, railways and logistics systems enhancing trade between Asian markets to European markets. China has been working towards increasing its economic influence in the region as evidenced in projects like the

development of ports in Greece and the rail links in the Eastern part of Europe. Although these investments have helped in the economic development, they have also come into the limelight regarding transparency, governance and political power (Economy, 2018).

In general, BRI indicates the capability of China to combine economic goals and strategic factors. China not only encourages the development of other countries, but also enhances its political and economic relationship by funding and building infrastructure projects in other countries. The initiative has however not been without criticism especially when it came to issues of debt sustainability, environmental consequences, and lack of transparency. These issues serve as an indication of the necessity of balanced evaluation of BRI considering the opportunities as well as its challenges (Rolland, 2017; Economy, 2018).



Figure 2: Regional Distribution of BRI Investments

Multilateral Organizations: SCO, BRICS, and APEC

The participation in multilateral organizations can be also viewed as another significant aspect of the Chinese approach to the international relations allowing the nation to gain influence and at the same time impart the model of international collaboration. China has aimed to consolidate its place in the international system and influence the global governance through organizations like the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Foot, 2006; Qin, 2018).

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) among other aspects is a major player in regional security and collaboration specifically on the Central Asian front. SCO started being formed in 2001 which is devoted to solving the problems of terrorism, extremism and the stability of the region. In the case of China, SCO gives China an opportunity to enhance its relationship with other states and advance its strategic interests within the region. It also enables China to offset the power of other powerful nations and affirm the position as a leader in the region (Stuenkel, 2015). BRICS consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa is a group of emerging economies aiming to reform global financial institutions and enable a more equitable distribution of power. China tries to increase the voice of developing countries in international governance and encourage the idea of taking action like the New Development Bank, through BRICS. This indicates the wider approach by China to multipolarity and less dominance of Western institutions. APEC forum shows that China is dedicated to the integration and cooperation in the region as far as economics are concerned. Being the one of the largest economies of the Asia-Pacific region, China occupies the main place in enhancing openness of trade and economic cooperation. China can connect with a variety of the economies in the region and enhance their economic relationships through APEC (Nye, 2011; Qin, 2018).

Collectively, these organizations depict the dual nature of China to work amid the current structures and at the same time advance different structures. The strategy will ensure China is able to increase its influence without necessarily destabilizing the current international order, leading to its slow changing (Qin, 2018).

The Strategic Cooperation of the QUAD and Indo-US (Integrated Analysis).

Due to the emergence of China, other big powers especially in the Indo-Pacific region have responded heavily. The rise of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), comprising the United States, India, Japan, and Australia is among the most significant ones in this regard. QUAD is a strategic initiative to balance power in the region and have a free and open Indo-Pacific (Friedberg, 2011; Christensen, 2015).

Although QUAD is not a formal military alliance, it can act as a coordination framework among like-minded states, prioritizing the spheres of maritime security, economic resilience, and technological cooperation. Its appearance is a sign of increasing apprehension around China being more assertive, especially in the South China Sea and in the Indo-Pacific at large (Christensen, 2015).

Along with QUAD, Indo-US strategic cooperation has become more potent over the last few years, especially with the signing of such agreements as LEMOA, COMCSA, and BECA. These treaties improve military interoperability, sharing of intelligence, and coordination of logistics and the two nations are able to respond more efficiently in dealing with the challenges faced in the region. Such collaboration is a form of adaptation in the liberal international system, whereby alliances and partnerships are employed to ensure stability and counter balance new power players. The combination of QUAD cooperation and the Indo-US cooperation demonstrates the changing nature of the international system, in which individual states are trying to find equilibrium between competition and cooperation as a response to the emergence of China (Christensen, 2015; Friedberg, 2011).

China's Foreign Policy in the South China Sea

The foreign policy of China in the South Chinese Sea is a facet of Chinese ascent which is most vital and disputed in that it is a revelation of strategic, resourceful and political interest convergence. The area is exceptionally significant because of its wealth in the form of natural resources e.g. oil and natural gas deposits and also because of the fact that it is one of the most active maritime trade routes of the world. The South China Sea is a critical artery to international trade owing to the passage of about one-third of world trade through it. As a result, the dominance of this territory has a huge impact not only to China but to the global community (Kaplan, 2010; Hayton, 2014).

The claims of China in South China Sea are founded on the so-called nine-dash line which covers a great part of the area and intersects the claims of a number of Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. These conflicting claims have given rise to a history of disputes which have escalated in recent years owing to heightened assertiveness of China (Hayton, 2014).

In realist terms, the actions taken by China could be interpreted to be those of ensuring that its strategic interests are safeguarded and that its influence in a region that is crucial in its economic and security goals is extended (Hayton, 2014).



Figure 3: (Artificial Islands and the Nine Dash Line Claims of China In the South China Sea):[including the spratly Islands, Fiery Cross Reef, Mischief Reef, and Subi Reef).

Origin: Modified to be used in an academic example of the information on regional maritime disputes

China has also constructed artificial islands and militarised the controversial zones and this is one of the most striking features of China policy in the South China Sea. These changes have permitted China to gain a better physical presence in the area, of which it has been able to project power and spy on maritime traffic. The use of military resources such as radar, missile launchers, and airstrips gives even more emphasis to the fact that China found the means of ensuring the safety of its claims. Although China asserts that they are simply defensive measures, their neighbors and other powerful countries have been concerned that possibly, there will be war. In the light of liberal institutionalism, the South China Sea conflicts underscore the constraints of the world institutions that are in place in solving such intricate matters of territories. Even though there is a legal framework, e.g., the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to address maritime disputes, implementing it is a major problem. The case of the 2016 court decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration denying the claims of China in the nine-dash line is an example of the challenges related to ensuring the observance of international law. The issuance of the ruling and the rejection of it by China indicates the tension between the national interests and legal norms. China considers itself as a country with a rich past that has been making claims to the region which shape its attitude towards the conflict. Meanwhile, the attitudes of other states and their perception of the actions of China influence the overall patterns of the conflict. Indicatively, the activities of China tend to be viewed as aggressive by the neighboring countries which result in mistrust and formation of regional alliances. The issue about South China Sea is also a representation of the larger trends of strategic competition between China and the United States. The United States has focused on the role of freedom of navigation and undertook naval operations to oppose what it considers to be excessive claims in the seas. These missions are supposed to enforce international law and to keep international lanes open on the seas, yet they also help to create tension between the two superpoweries. The fact that there are outside actors only worsens the situation, making the South China Sea the centre of great power rivalry. To summarize, the foreign policy of China in South China Sea indicates how is the interaction between power, law and identity in the

international relations. It points to issues in coping with conflicts in a multipolar world and emphasizes the necessity of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. The results of such conflicts will be far reaching on the regional stability and the future of liberal international order.

Liberal International Future.

The Chinese ascendancy has brought a lot of uncertainty to the future of the liberal international order, and thus, scholars and policy makers have included various possibilities in their discussions. These two situations are not mutually independent, but they are various forms of possibilities that can arise, based on the relations between China and other powerful nations, especially the United States (Ikenberry, 2011).

Another potential option is the further evolution and modernization of the liberal international order under which China will be integrated into the already existing institutions, as well as form a part of their development. In this case, the order is still essentially the same but more inclusive and representative of the changing power relations. The fact that China is a member of organizations like the UN and the World Trade Organization implies that it acknowledges the merits of collaboration and might want to change the system internally, instead of destroying it completely.

It would entail the establishment powers taking up the initiative to accommodate the interests of China, to co-leadership (Acharya, 2014; Nye, 2011).

The second case is the development of a multipolar order, where there are multiple power centers.

In this equation, China, the United States, and other major players like the European Union, and India are influential in determining global governance. Instead of one powerful actor, the system is characterized by a balance of influence between some actors. This may promote further competition as well as a possibility of collaborating on concerns that promote mutual interests, like, climate change and economic stability around the world (Allison, 2017).

The third scenario is that of disintegration of the international order, where competing blocs are formed and each has its rules and institutions. This situation has been mostly linked to the increasing competition between China and the United States that resulted in establishment of distinct economic and political spheres of influence. This type of fragmentation may weaken international collaboration and may escalate the possibility of war especially where there is overlap of interest (Economy, 2018).

Alternatively, there is the chance that a China-based order will be developed whereby China indicates the controller in the global governance systems. This would entail the growth of programmes like the Belt and Road Initiative as well as enhanced influence of the other institutions that favor China. This is not a very likely result in the near future; nevertheless, it cannot be totally excluded, especially when the economic and technological potential of China keeps on increasing. All these scenarios have different implications on liberal international order. The combination of various factors is likely to affect the actual outcome, such as economic trends, technological advancement, and political decision-making. Notably, the future of the order will not only be determined by what the Chinese do but also the reaction of other states to its emergence.

Conclusion

The emergence of China is a radical shift in the international system, changing its balance of power and undermining the principles of a liberal international order. This study has attempted to give a detailed study of this phenomenon ensuring that both theories and facts are combined to give us a rich perspective of how China has played its part in world politics (Acharya, 2014;

Ikenberry, 2011). By utilising liberal institutionalism the paper has shown that the Chinese behaviour can not be well explained under one theoretical approach.

The case study of the economic emergence of China and its moves especially the Belt and Road Initiative helps to understand to what extent economic power can be employed as a means of strategic power. Although these efforts present immense developmental and connectivity possibilities, they bring forth key issues related to dependency, leadership, and sustainability.

The involvement of China in multilateral institutions, including SCO, BRICS and APEC, also reflects its bilateralism in that it continues to comply with the current frameworks, but still enhances alternatives. This policy enables China not to challenge the status quo but to increase its influence indirectly, and it is gradually changing it (Rolland, 2017).

Simultaneously, the foreign policies of china in the South China Sea bring forth the dilemma of working together and competing. This has made the region a point of contention and has thus highlighted the challenges of dealing with conflicts in the multipolar world. The reactions of other states such as the QUAD formation and the intensification of the Indo-US ties are indicative of more general attempts to adapt to evolving power relations (Stuenkel, 2015; Qin, 2018).

It is unclear what will happen to liberal international order in the future. The scenarios presented in this study indicate that this system may get changed majorly in terms of adaptation, multipolarity, fragmentation or transformation. It will be determined by interactions of other major powers and how they will balance the competition without losing the cooperation (Hayton, 2014;

Christensen, 2015).

To sum up, the upsurge of China does not mean that the liberal international order is finished but it is transformed into an evolving and dynamic order. This transformation can only be understood in a multidimensional and holistic way by realizing that power, institutions and ideas have to interact to determine the future of global governance (Nye, 2011; Acharya, 2014; Ikenberry, 2011).

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