



## Geopolitical and Global Power Shift: The Economic, Military, and Political Rise of China in the 21st Century

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**Abstract:** *The rise of China in the 21st Century is absolute, inevitable, and has been globally recognized. As the rising power in the international system, China has experienced significant economic growth, military capabilities development, and political involvement in the international setting. This study analyses the presence of China as a new great power is viewed as a threat to the United States' hegemony, especially in the Asia region. China's growing power will contest the US dominance in the region and drive the shift of major power both in the Asia region and the world. The study utilises a descriptive qualitative method with secondary data sources that were collected from books, journals, and other relevant resources. The findings from this study are China will continue to rise economically and become more aggressive militarily in dealing with international disputes, especially in the Asia region. Moreover, China has positioned itself as a central player in international stages such as the World Trade Centre (WTO) and the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping. As a result, this rise is more likely to clash with the US as the sole superpower, and potential conflicts are unavoidable.*

**Keywords:** *China's rise, Power Shift, China-US competition*

### INTRODUCTION

The rise of China as a new great power in the economic sphere, military development, and international political participation is absolute and inevitable. This significant and continued growth has been a challenge for the current superpower, the United States, as China is forecasting to overtake its hegemony in the coming decades, economically in particular. Thus, China will not grow and achieve its interest peacefully as it will face challenges from the US. Therefore, due to this competition, potential conflicts are more like to occur, especially in the Asia region.

Economically, China's persistent and spectacular economic growth of approximately 10% over the last three decades is considered a remarkable achievement in the history of major economies (Vuving, 2012). China began to grow economically after the end of the Cultural Revolution – a catastrophic period for China, where the state experienced the most horrific and miserable event with starvation and the death of millions of people. In 1979, post-cultural revolutionist of Deng Xiaoping, who took over the throne of the longstanding leader, Mao Zedong, renewed China's economic policy by being more open internationally. This breakthrough has led the significant growth of China's economy and continues to grow in recent years. China has now become the second largest economic power in the world after the existing hegemony of the US and has more influences both in the Asia region and globally. Domestically, the sustained growth of China's economy depends on high demands from its considerable increase of the middle-class population (Rosecrance, 2006). To strengthen its economy globally, China established an ambitious platform which is called the 'Belt and Road Initiative' in 2013 aiming to link China with other states in international trade agendas.

Moreover, with such spectacular economic growth, China is also pursuing its aim to develop and strengthen military forces capabilities. The Chinese government has allocated a vast amount of money for military spending. The allocated budget has increased significantly over the last three decades to around \$140 billion (Jung & Lee,

2017, p. 90). This development has led China to become a state with powerful capabilities in both economy and military, especially in the Asia region. In this regard, China wants to reach its national interests, which are national security and survival. An example of this is the ability of China in dealing with international disputes such as the dispute and conflict in the South China Sea. However, this massive growth of military has sparked high tensions among China's neighbouring states, and other states outside the region, particularly the US (Ross, 2006). For decades, the US has maintained its dominance in Asia. The Asia region becomes the most critical part of the world for the US to expand its power, economically and militarily. Hence, the US intends to preserve its superpower status and reluctant to have competitors. Thus, the US as the remaining superpower in the world views the rapid growth of China's economy and military as an imminent threat to its hegemony.

The emergence of China as a new greater power is not only strictly measured by the rapid growth of the economy and massive development of military capability, but also its active participation in political spheres on the international stages. For example, in addressing environmental issues, China involved in the Copenhagen Climate Change conference. The state was not only a participant but also took an important role by being a leader and defender for most developing countries (Schweller & Pu, 2011). Moreover, to contest the hegemony of the US in the international order, China created a joint economic platform which is called BRICS. It is an institution comprised of five developing states, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, and meets China's objective to enhance its influences internationally (Jones, 2013). Being a member of the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), however, show the readiness of China to engage in the current international agenda. Therefore, the involvement of China in international communities illustrates that the state wants to express its ability in leading the world and reach a greater influence.

China's transformation to become a more prosperous state along with considerable military power development and cast as an influential and prominent actor in international communities have left doubts among scholars. The most salient discourse among them is the question of whether China can pursue its growth peacefully or not. Another question that has emerged is the impact of China's rise in the Asia region. Regarding those doubts, China will not be rising peacefully because if the state continues to grow its economy massively, it will raise tensions between China and the US. Moreover, the superiority of China in the region will trigger its neighbours to counterbalance the power and likely to join the US containing China. With this high level of tension, the potential war is unavoidable.

This research is outlined in four sections. First, it provides a literature review explaining realism as the theory that is used to predict the action and reaction of a state toward others. In the international political system, the main characteristic of states is pursuing power to establish hegemony and protect themselves from threats. The theory will be analysed by looking at China's rise and its future relations with the US. After laying out the literature review, it discusses the most considerable factor of the rising power, which is the rapid growth of the economy. In the third section, it explains how China also puts heavy consideration into the development of its military capabilities and the actions in dealing with international disputes. The fourth section demonstrates China's incredible political power partaking in high level of international stages. Finally,

the research concludes that the continued massive growth of the rising power will destabilize international security and create a potential war in the future.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To predict how the world works and appears in the future, it requires a theory that explains a state's behaviour as the primary unit in the international system pursuing its interests and how other states will react accordingly. Three prominent theories are used by international relations scholars to investigate every phenomenon occurred in the world; they are realism, idealism, and constructivism. To grasp a comprehensive understanding and further studies about the phenomenon of the rise of China in the 21st century, I use realism as an explanatory theory of this study.

In realism, states are viewed as unitary and rational actors. Both terms have been characterised to them because sovereign states can determine their policy outcome in response to any issue, and capable of maximising their power to reach their interests (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). According to Morgenthau (1948), states primary goal is to gain greater power and establish hegemony in the world by negating the emergence of other hegemonic states. Moreover, survival is also considered as one of the essential characteristics of realism that is pursued by states. Morgenthau elaborates further that the fundamental structure in the international system is putting states more concern on security while competing with others in gaining power. Thus, states will do necessary actions to pursue their national interests (Morgenthau, 1948).

In international politics, the international system is defined as anarchy, which means the absence of central power (Kissinger, 1994). With this system, Kissinger argues that states as the main actors have offensive military capabilities to create tendencies of mutual fear within each other. This fear merely occurs because all states want to maintain their national security from potential conflicts by seeking and maximising power as their goal through strengthening military capabilities. Nevertheless, Waltz (1979) points out that the heated situation of increasing military strength leads to a circumstance that called security dilemma.

Security dilemma is known as a situation where a state is incredibly strengthening its military posture to achieve its national security, and other states who view this action as a threat will be reacting similarly. Moreover, Mearsheimer (2004) claims that such intentions derived due to the absence of "watchman" for states in the anarchy system. Therefore, the states assume that the best way to survive in this kind of system is by being as superior as possible to face threats from potential rivals.

To be a hegemonic and superior state means seeking no equal rivals and peers that would duplicate its strength. The purpose of states that have already obtained the hegemony status is to prevent other great power states to overtake their status quo. However, according to Mearsheimer (2004), the aim of being hegemonic for a state is not without obstacles. Mearsheimer explains that there have always been challenges from another state who is undertaking the same action and intending to be in the same level of status quo. For example, the United States, the country that has been the only superpower in the world since the end of Cold War. Even though it remains the hegemonic country, the US nowadays is facing challenges from the emergence of rising power, China, especially in the Asia region.

The power competition between superior states such as China and the US is an assertive phenomenon in international politics. Two major approaches can be used to analyse the states' behaviour in pursuing power; they are 'offensive realism' and 'defensive realism' (Rosecrance, 2006). The offensive realism assumes that the anarchic system provides a great incentive to expand security or power by seeking domination in the region to reach regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001). Whereas defensive realism encourages states to favour the status quo through the balance of power which is considered as the best path for security without arm racing, unilateral diplomacy, autarchy, and opportunistic expansion (Rosecrance, 2006). The defensive realism approach is more typified by realism perspective of Kenneth Waltz. Waltz (1979) argues that political structure and hierarchical system with the distribution of power are recognised as key characteristics of states' interaction in the international system despite merely focus on power and anarchy. He also emphasises on the concept of balance of power. This concept is understood as a tendency of states to retain their position in the international system by strengthening the military posture solely to balancing other powers and facing threats from rivals, not opposing them. Therefore, Schweller (1994) points out that balancing of power is profoundly projected to self-defence and self-protection of states.

However, by looking at the current phenomenon of China's rise, its impact in the region and global, and the relationship with the US, offensive realism is a central and significant contributor to investigate the powerful rise of China. Offensive realists view the rise of China as a primary cause of instability in the world in the 21st century (Jung & Lee, 2017). The massive and continued growth of China economically, militarily, and politically is predicted to be a threat for the current superpower of the US. China can be a serious contender for the US hegemony, especially in Asia as China is continuously seeking more significant influence in the region by reacting more aggressively towards its neighbours in coping with territorial disputes such as the South China Sea conflict. Conclusively, realism theory explains that states interests' acquisition through power competition among states is likely to trigger potential conflicts. Therefore, a rising China is more likely to clash with the US to contest the hegemony, so that those actions will threaten international security.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research applies a qualitative descriptive method that explores the research problem through literature review. The research uses secondary data sources that were collected from various materials, including books, journals, reports, internet, and other written sources relevant to the research topic. The analysis undergoes several phases, from observing and identifying the issue, selecting data, conducting a thorough analysis, to concluding to achieve research objective.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### CHINA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

In the aftermath of the prominent of revolutionary economic leader, Deng Xiaoping, announced the economic reform policy to be more open to the international market in 1979, China experienced a steady and rapid economic growth. The increasing growth with an average 10% of GDP over last three decades (Vuving, 2012) has shown how spectacular the economic power that China possesses. According to the World Bank

(2018), China's growth in the economy is considered as the fastest and sustained development economically in world history. Moreover, the World Bank also points out that such growth has released China's burden because it has successfully reduced about 800 million people living in poverty. Nevertheless, China has also experienced stumbling blocks with the decrease of its economic growth since 2012 to 7.7% (Huang, 2016). However, even though this decline was noticeable, the growth of China is still impressive comparing to global standards. This endurance, in turn, led China becoming the second largest economic power in the world after the United States.

The significant contributors to the sustained and rapid growth of China's economy are attributed to two factors. These two significant factors are robust domestic savings that lead to massive foreign investment and fast national productivity growth (Morrison, 2018). First, prior to economic reforms, China's domestic savings was generated by the government, primarily from industries profits accumulation (Perkins & Rawski, 2008). However, during the economic reform period, China experienced a significant surge in its domestic savings and considered the highest compared to other major economies. Vuving (2012) describes that this growth boosted because of strong economic aspects which are corporates and household savings. He also points out that the increase of domestic savings led China to be a prominent foreign investor with the investment reached 33% of GDP lasting for more than three decades.

Second, another factor that has been a significant channel of China's economic growth is public productivity improvement. This improvement was heavily caused by the shifting of unproductive economic resources such the agricultural sector. To alleviate this burden, the Chinese government allowed farmers to migrate and work for more productive manufactures (Morrison, 2018). Moreover, Chinese economic policy to decentralise the economy brought positive impacts for growing productivity. It has driven the significant rise of private firms and nonstate enterprises which led to becoming more productive than government-controlled companies (Vuving, 2012). Furthermore, Cai (2017) argues that the development of new technologies and management skills set that brought by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) also contribute positively to China's economy. By this innovation, China enables to create the efficiency and effectiveness of its economy through access to the foreign market. Thus, this will lead the country to be more aggressive in the economic sphere either domestically or globally.

To maintain and expand its economic growth globally, China engages firmly in international economic collaboration through the establishment of the new global economy platform called 'Belt and Road Initiative'. This prestigious and ambitious project was initiated by the longest-served president of China, Xi Jinping, in 2013 when visiting Kazakhstan and approved by the Chinese State Council in 2015 (Huang, 2016). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or also known as the 21st century Silk Road was created with the primary goal of generating and expanding a large-scale of China's economic power covering Asia regions, Europe, Latin America, and Africa in the form of comprehensive cooperation including free trade and culture and social exchanges (Huang, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2017). Four principles embodied this Initiative; first, "openness and cooperation"; second, "harmony and inclusiveness"; third, "market-based operation"; and fourth, "mutually beneficial and win-win for all countries" (Huang, 2016, p. 318). Hence, these principles show that the BRI is inclusive, allowing any

parties who are interested in joining it, including Japan and South Korea. The Initiative also formed for commercial purposes, not political gains (Cai, 2017).

Through this project, China's economic collaboration with a vast majority of developing states can be considered as an assertive way to enhance its economic ambition. China enables to promote its "China-model" market policies through the massive export of its goods (Cai, 2017). Through this policy, China is asserted to gain huge benefits economically. Moreover, the BRI reflects China as a more significant contributor to the international economic system and as self-defence since China was excluded from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) by the US (Huang, 2016; Cai, 2017). Interestingly, the BRI also drives China to pursue broader willingness, which is not only sustaining and expanding its economic power but also intends to take greater responsibility in the global economic system. This intention has brought the Chinese government to create a new financial support system which is known as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

The Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was formed a month after the launched of the new silk road project – the Belt and Road Initiative. This financial institution plays such a significant role in ensuring many economic integrations program running well through this Initiative. As a substantial financial support system, the AIIB provides significant funding to build a various form of infrastructure in a way to successfully connect China with the BRI member states for trading market purposes (Mishra, 2016). For example, several projects that run under the AIIB supervision are high-speed railroads, railways, and seaports. Notwithstanding, the function of the AIIB has been a replacement of the International Monetary Funding (IMF) and World Bank as two experimental primary international funding systems. Both of IMF and World Bank have contributed dominantly to the global economy since the end of Cold War and had primarily been controlled by the US (Huang, 2016). However, these two largest monetary institutions are now suffering and experiencing the slow pace of development due to the declining of the US economy as the leading international economic system.

Nevertheless, the BRI and the AIIB have been considered as the counterbalance power of the US economic hegemony, especially in the Asia region. For decades, the US viewed Asia as a strategic partnership region for trading and market economy. In contrast, nowadays, the hegemony of the US with its pivot to Asia has been challenged by the emergence of rising power – China (Cai, 2017). Undoubtedly, China will be maximising the BRI and the AIIB to accelerate its power and leadership in the region to maintain its continued and absolute economic growth.

## **MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS**

China's rapid rise in the economy since the last four decades has been influential for the economic development of Asia and the world. Concomitant with economic growth, China is also pursuing its massive power development militarily. Jung & Lee (2017) point out that after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, China started its military power modernisation with significant increase in military budget to be around \$140 billion, which was used to modernise its military equipment and troops training expenditure. They elaborate further that with such colossal spending, China has made considerable achievement in possessing high-tech and sophisticated weapons, noticeable progress towards submarines, aircraft carriers, and intercontinental ballistic missiles. On the one

hand, it is arguable that by strengthening its military capabilities, China becoming more assertive in the region as a great power state. On the other hand, it will increase the worried level of its neighbours and spark potential conflicts with the United States.

China has successfully developed its military posture for decades and most likely to continue growing. Nevertheless, the rise of a state to be a great power should not be disproving surrounded challenges. Hence, the rise of China has raised concerns among neighbouring countries in the region and outsiders, especially the US. As China becomes more aggressive, potential conflicts with its neighbours such as Japan, a unified Korea, Russia, India, and including the US is inevitable (Waldron, 2005). This mainly because China is projecting to contest the US-led order in Asia. Two critical factors that could trigger dangerous consequences: territorial disputes and the US alliances.

There are at least two prominent territorial challenges that surfaced between China and its neighbours including the US. First, the case of Taiwan unification. China still and will always claims that Taiwan is a part of its mainland while Taiwan has demanded independence, and its ally, the US, did the intervention by saying that Beijing and Taipei are distinct and impossible to be reunified (Heath, 2017). However, China remains with its stance and proceeded by undertaking necessary actions to pursue its interest. For example, strengthening its military strategy of “anti-access/area denial (A2/AD)” from external threats by deploying more the People’s Liberation Army Forces (PLAAF) together with high-tech weapons, and doing sizeable military exercise by sending warships against Taiwan (Jung & Lee, 2017; Heath, 2017). If the tension is rising and China cannot control its aggressive action in dealing with the dispute, the military conflicts are likely to happen.

Moreover, another challenge is the South China Sea dispute, which is proclaimed as the most heated and conflictual issue globally. Rosyidin (2017) investigates that the tension in this disputable Sea is not solely about the potential natural resources that lie under the Sea, yet strategic geographical location also a consideration. He is also forecasting that this issue tends to accelerate international conflicts and could escalate to war. Many countries will be suffering from this dispute, especially the Philippines as the main claimant, and the US as the long last hegemony in Asia. Jung & Lee (2017) articulates that the Philippines and the US are allies and more likely to conflict with a rising China as they share common interest militarily through the formulation of a joint military exercise and establishment of the military bases in the Sea.

To prevent a conflict, international organisations through the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague has put the objection on China’s claim in the Sea and favoured the Philippines (Rosyidin, 2017). Unfortunately, China rejected and against the decision and continued its aggression. It is massively building artificial islands, constructing military bases, and deploying military forces with large procurements in the South China Sea (Heath, 2017; Rosyidin, 2017). Indeed, with this approach, China is seeking a great power militarily to balance other powers, including the US, and successfully gaining its interest in conquering this disputable Sea.

Furthermore, in pursuit of its leadership in the region, China now is a major threat to its neighbours. China believes that to be a real hegemony in the region is only by weakening the neighbouring states, especially the US alliances (Waldron, 2005). One

of the reasons why China heavily targets the US alliances is that their tendency to maintain a close relationship with the US even though they are benefited immensely from China's economic cooperation (Jung & Lee, 2017). Japan as an example. The tension between these two countries is rising and undeniable since Japan is one of the prominent allies of the US as well as viewed as another major power in the region. The situation has been worst due to the presence of the US military base in Japanese territory (Rosecrance, 2006). This circumstance has even resulted in a security dilemma and peace threatening, yet it vulnerable to foreseeable potential military conflicts.

### **POLITICAL INFLUENCE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATIONS**

International order is critically engaging over the relationship between actors and institutions. In this sense, an actor plays such a significant role in maintaining the existence of the order (Jones, 2013). Since the end of Cold War, the international order was characterised by the dominance of a single power actor. However, in this decade, the emerging of other great powers has brought challenges to the single power. China as the emerging power can be a potential stumbling block for the old single power – the United States.

The rise of China as a new emerging power has inevitably influenced by two significant factors: rapid economic growth and massive military posture development. The rise has put China as a serious contender to the US legitimacy and posing a threat to its interests, particularly in the Asia region (Schweller & Pu, 2011). However, besides these two critical aspects, a rising China has also posed challenges to the US-led international order. It can be clearly seen from China's political influences in international agenda through active participation in multilateral institutions such as the UN, ASEAN, BRICS, the WTO, and Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change.

China's attraction in multilateralism has reflected the integration of current China's diplomacy in the region. Before the 1990s, China was reluctant to form multilateral cooperation; instead, it strengthened the country's relationship bilaterally. However, post the mid-1990s, China turned into more open to international institutions. It takes active participation in "the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus One (ASEAN plus China), ASEAN plus Three (ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)" (Schweller & Pu, 2011, p. 54). By actively cooperating through these institutions, China becomes a crucial player in the region, cultivating in reaching its aim to overtake leadership position from the US.

Besides, to maintain its influence in international stages, China seeks greater power status both domestically and globally. At this stage, China initiated the formulation of BRICS as an economic development institution that comprised of five different rising powers namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. BRICS is formed to contribute positively for world's economic development as their combined economic size accounts for 43% of GDP and 18% of world income and will surpass G7 economies (Chatin & Gallarotti, 2016; Cheng, 2015; Nayyar, 2016). The vast capacity of commercial sources will lead BRICS to take an important role to get involved in global governance through aids providing, especially in developing states. This objective is plausible due to the global recognition of the decline of the US-led financial institutions, including the IMF and World Bank, which led to the uncertain development.



Notwithstanding the economic sphere, this institution has evolved into a political realm that marked with the first formal annual meeting in 2009 (Nayyar, 2016). Through this summit, BRICS leaders set focuses on global issues, including climate change. Hence, together with the institution, China involved in Copenhagen Conference of Climate Change in 2009 (Cheng, 2015) to resolve this world burden. In such conference, China took a critical and significant role as a leader and defender for other BRICS states (Jones, 2013). China's leadership is evidently portrayed how it played such a vital role in the international stage. Thus, it is arguable that this transformation represents an assertive balancing of power China economically and politically in the world.

In a way to project its power, China also used international organisations as a bridge to gain political influence. The decision to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as an example. In 2001, China entered the WTO because of economic reform that began after the cultural revolution in 1979. By joining this international institution, China seeks not only accelerated economy in the global system but also "a seat at the bargaining table to influence the rules of the game" (Schweller & Pu, 2011, p. 54). For example, China sought to amend various rules in the WTO aimed to overcome the hegemonic of the US-led economic order and replacing with its interests (Pandit, 2016). This goal helps China enhancing its material power and concomitant with leading China to become more assertive, thus, it can pave the way of its great power status.

Furthermore, China continues to promote its status as a great power and pursuing legitimacy in international affairs. For more than twenty years, China has been actively involved in the UN peacekeeping mission (Schweller & Pu, 2011). Asia Report (2009) points out that as one of the UN Security Council (UNSC) members, China brings more benefits to the UN peace and conflict resolution missions. Although other Western states still provide a vast amount of money, they disengaged with peacekeeping mission commitments by merely sending a few personnel. However, China is doing the reversed action. It deploys a large number of troops for the mission along with the robust financial support that considered as the second largest among the UNSC members (Asia Report, 2009). Thus, following what Chinese leaders often suggested for "China to take greater responsibilities" (Huang, 2016, p.318), the increase of China's roles and influences internationally reflect its effort to cultivate the ambition of becoming a major responsible power in the world.

## CONCLUSION

China's rise that is evident with the robust growth of the economy and military development is inevitable. However, international participation is a factor that cannot be ignored to examine the emergence of China as the new leading power in the world. As a result, the international world feels threatened by this phenomenon. This fear merely caused by the primary goal of China to pursue its dream to become the great power and being a dominant regional and global player.

The presence of Deng Xiaoping as the predecessor to the government after the Cultural Revolution endorsing a new economic policy resulted in an improvement in the Chinese economy. In this regards, Deng Xiaoping issued an open-door policy intended to open cooperation between China, foreign capital, and private-owned enterprises. As a result, China experienced an increase in production activities and was able to

accommodate many workers. Moreover, the Chinese government also improves the state's welfare by permitting low-income farmers migrating to the city to get higher income. Purchasing more private and non-state companies are also considered as factors of China's rapid economic growth.

In the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative as the leading economic platform to expand economic power by linking China with other Initiative member states, China entrusts the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank as the primary source of financial institution. The AIIB will be a provider of funds to meet the demands of required states' infrastructure development, including roads, agricultural development, improvement in the airport sector, as well as ports and railways to realise the objective of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, which makes China a centre of transportation and trade in Asia. Furthermore, the AIIB enables China to build economic corridors with other states to further strengthen economic cooperation and facilitate the acquisition of mutual benefits as the goal of economic development.

Military power is also a key consideration in rising China as the new great power in the world. A vast amount of money that spent by the Chinese government to renew its military equipment such as high-tech weapons, submarines and warships show the central actions of balancing other powers, especially the United States. The US pivot to Asia that has lasted since the end of Cold War is facing a significant challenge with rising China. Notwithstanding, China does not directly contest the superpower, but the continued rise and its core interest to be a leader in the region will spark tensions between the two. With such development, China is well-prepared to counter unexpected attacks or threats from other countries, including the US.

Several shreds of evidence articulate China's behaviour and military actions in dealing with international disputes. Instead of approaching diplomatically, China prefers to undertake military step in the case of Taiwan. This step was taken to protect Taiwan from external challenges, primarily the US interference, and bring it back as a part of the mainland. Likewise, it also happens in the dispute of the South China Sea, the issue that could bring about the potential conflict between China and disputable states such as the Philippines and its ally, the US. The driven factors are China's action in building artificial islands and military aggression such as establishing the military base in the Sea. In addition, military power also used to weaken the US centred alliances in the region to successfully pursue its interest as a dominant player replacing the US.

China's rise as a new superpower is inevitable and absolute. Beside economy and military, politically engagement in international society drives China to be more influential in the international stage. Being a central player or rule-maker is China's primary objective. Creating BRICS as a multilateral organisation to support the development in developing states and initiating its transformation to political sphere is a clear example. To go further, it has not limited itself as a seat member in the WTO yet seeking to manage the organisation by amending existing rules that favoured Western states to most China-centric standards. The role of China internationally is being more critical with the heavily active participation in the UN peacekeeping missions. Characterised as a large funding provider and troops sender have made China more assertive in achieving its goal.

Notwithstanding the rapid development in the economic, military, and political influence, the rise of China was perceived, especially by the US, as a decisive threat to its hegemony and world peace. Because China is continuously growing economically and being more aggressive militarily, the tension is notoriously rising between the two states. As the second largest economic power, China enables to pursue its dreams even if it must pay too much cost such as rising a conflict. Therefore, there are no single reasons for China to limit itself in gaining greater power to face challenges while proceeding its interests.

Hence, power is critical in leading the world. Thus, states as central actors in the international system aiming to persistently gain greater power to achieve their interests, which are national interest and survival. In this regard, power competitions among countries are unavoidable. On the one hand, the US will ignore the emerging of China as the new great power since the character of the hegemonic state is negating the presence of a rival. On the other hand, the rise of China is continued and inevitable. China will be maximising its power to reach the goals and balancing the US power, if not surpass it in the coming decades. Concerning these respective interests and examining empirical and contemporary facts, if the tension is rising between these two major powers, conflicts are more likely to happen in the next future and will be threatening the world peace.

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