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### **CHINA'S ROLE AND STATUS IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY: SHOULD ITS RISE BE PERCEIVED AS A 'THREAT'?**

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#### **Abstract**

China has been making strides in numerous areas the entire world is still trying to grapple with and determine in what way China's economic growth, active engagement and participation in the world system will affect nation states. Without a doubt, this has added increasing pressure and brought complications for China in continuously explaining its economic growth to a number of actors who perceive its growth and active participation in international society as a "threat". In effect, China is still yet to define completely its new role in international society even today, and is still using its foreign policy principles and approaches in its participatory role in international society. Moreover, despite honoring its commitments to international society, it still plays a comparatively lesser role in the shaping and making of rules and regulations. Thus, rather than developing and creating new comprehensive policies geared towards shaping and making new rules and regulations to guide its action and roles in international society given that numerous changes have occurred in the world, such as more and more civil conflicts, humanitarian crisis and rogue leaders on the rise today, etc.; China needs to make changes to ensure that not only its voice is heard, but its rules and regulations are up-to-date, works and applicable along with its spoken voice. Based on these assumptions and debates, it is therefore reasonable to make an attempt to determine China's role and status in its involvement in international society and its rise to become a global power, given its participation in international society which plays a significant part in the way the world perceives China's rise. On this basis, the article intends to attempt to unravel China's role and status in international society, the limitations and challenges China faces and the perception of its threat in becoming a "rising" global power.

**Keywords:** China's Role and Status, International Society, Rise and Threat

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#### **1. Introduction**

The entire world has stood by and watch China transformed itself over the past years from a "weak and fragile" nation state to amassing abundant wealth through its economic growth and power of becoming a nation state to be contended within the international arena. With this economic growth and power China has found itself, being seen as a "threat", and has the dubious task of constantly having to explain that its growth is "not a threat", and neither should be perceived as a "threat" but be seen as a "peaceful rise".

In retrospect it is stated that "while Euro-American powers rose through violent imperial expansion, China is using 'scientific and technological progress to solve the problems of resources and the environment, therefore here lies the essence of China's road of peaceful rise and development according to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabo" (Callahan, 2005, pp. 701). Indeed,

the obvious question then is what is China's intention and if in fact its rise will continue to be peaceful or if China entertains underlining motives or if in actuality China's intention is essentially based on economic, scientific and technological advancement.

More than ever, given China's economic growth, its participation more and more in various international organizations and its success in science and technological advancement, it is not surprising that it is now a common occurrence in International Relations today to hear debates surrounding the question of whether China is rising, the rise of China and its power status, will the United States and China enter into conflict and whether China will surpass the United States to become a hegemon.

Accordingly, it seems the notion surrounding China's rise is just an "ideational" concept developed by scholars in an attempt to explain China's rising global stature. Ultimately, this might be true, but based on the physical evidence of China's huge influence in areas such as its soft power in diplomatic, cultural, technological, social, educational and its deepening cooperation with various developing countries, and establishing multilateral institutions in Asia along with instituting relationship with "many difficult countries", this is in fact questionable. What is more is that this show China's tremendous influence amongst developing countries, which essentially has made the West wary. More holistically China's economic growth, its large population and the guarded and mysterious "close door" functioning of its political system are additional factors that have made the world more curious and furthermore wary of the unknown.

## **2. Historical Overview: China's Journey to joining international Society**

Historically, China's journey to become an influential player in the international society was not immediate. According to Zhang (2005, pp. xi) "China's transformation from 'isolated' to 'globalized' has been a reflection of the Chinese government's desire to maintain sustainable long-term economic prosperity", which it believes can only be achieved through full integration into the global economy. While this further transition into the international fold has begun to reshape the internal priorities and commitments of the Chinese government, China in turn has begun to redefine the world economic order of which it seeks to become a part.

During the revolutionary era of Mao from 1949 to 1976, China's engagement and participation in international institutions was non-existent and Chairman Mao was reluctant and basically rejected this idea totally, he was solely for complete isolation from the international community and non-association with the outside world; this in and of itself was mainly due to China's past historical experience with Western imperialism/colonialism, humiliation and invasion faced by foreign hegemony, hence Mao's strong stance on the need to protect its sovereignty and national integrity. However, this changed under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the reform and open door policy movement in the late 1970's, saw China's views on international society changed and remarkably it resulted in the country accepting and becoming increasingly involved in numerous International and Regional Organizations in areas such as economic, security, culture, environment, science, technology and politics, etc. At the same time becoming an active participant taking on responsibilities that come with membership, by having a voice, hence giving rise to the possibility of developing and rising to emerge as a regional power and next as a global power. Importantly, Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy at the time was guided by the idea that China should bide its time, hide its brightness, not seek leadership, but do some things, thus, accordingly the goal for the Chinese is not conflict, but conflict avoidance (Berkofsky, 2016).

But over the years, China's relationship with International Organizations/institutions in international society in the past and presently has not been an easy one, nonetheless most would say it has travelled a long and tedious road to becoming members of numerous influential and prominent international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Labour Organizations, World Bank, ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum to name a few. It was indeed a sharp turnaround in China's relationship with international society during the late 1970s and early 1980s, which saw strains between acclimating and the evolution of international society. For example: In 2002, China's formal accession to the World Trade Organization, its pending entry into the global economic

institution sparked fears and doubts and was a source of dismay of China's willingness and sincerity and willingness to fulfill its promises within and outside China (Zhang, 2005). Secondly, within China some were worried that China's 'dangerous liaison' with the World Trade Organization would cost millions of jobs and bring about the collapse of its agriculture and the premature demise of China's infant industries such as automobile and information technology (Zhang, 2005). While thirdly, outside China, many others questioned China's pronounced commitment to implementing World Trade Organization rules in reforming its highly regulated economy (Zhang, 2005).

Indeed, China realized quite early that a non-confrontational approach would be necessary to attract foreign investments and enhance trade in order to accomplish its goals and objectives of a peaceful and stable environment for economic development, hence it had to recognize the existence of international institutions; thus making it possible to compete in the world on a large scale and to establish its standing by portraying an image as an important nation state in the international arena by joining and participating in different international organizations in the international society. Thus, in 1971 before the opening and reform movement policy, the People's Republic of China (PRC) became a permanent member of the United Nation Security Council replacing the Republic of China (Taiwan) as a member, (Panda, 2011, pp.3).

Zhang (2011) states that China's image changed from a revolutionary country to a normal country in the 1970's when it became a partner of the status quo powers, that is, the United States, Western European countries, and Japan, in the international society when it joined the United Nation and other international institutions. Furthermore, this also attributed to the rapprochement with the United States which led to the normalization of China's relationship and with most of the Western countries; thereby enhancing China's acceptability as a member of the Western-dominated international society.

Importantly, in the late 1970's, early 1980's to the 1990's, there were numerous changes that occurred in the Chinese society followed with its domestic and foreign policy. Diplomatic relations with developing countries in the world were forged and joining and participating in international society became much easier. By and large, China has demonstrated and proven to be constructive and cooperative rather than a revisionist in some international society. This essentially highlights two of China's foreign policy goals; that of furthering economic development through cooperation and interaction with the outside world and the promoting of peace and stability by cultivating ties with other nation states on an equal basis. For example: the establishing and strengthening of diplomacy with numerous member countries within these international institutions and its huge economic growth through trade export.

### **3. Questioning China's Intention**

Arguably there is no doubt that China is seen as a status quo power in the eyes of many and as its relative power continues to grow, questions such as, is it possible that China will be satisfied with remaining "peaceful" or will it demand hegemon status resulting in conflict based on the concept posited by the power transition theory by Organski (1958), stating that war is most likely to occur when a challenger acquires parity; therefore, it is stated that wars are most likely when there is an approaching balance of power between the dominant nation and a major challenger. In addition, war is also most apt to occur; if the challenger is of such a size that at its peak it will roughly equal the dominant nation in power; if the rise of the challenger is rapid; if the dominant nation is inflexible in its policies; if there is no tradition of friendship between the dominant nation and the challenger; and if the challenger sets out to replace the existing international order with a competitive order of its own (Organski, 1958).

From a realistic point of view, no one is able to predict or knows what the future holds, therefore if we were even able to garner the inside working of China's decision making policies in an attempt to determine China's future intentions; it's surely unlikely we would be able to discover such information. Firstly, given China's high level of confidentiality and secondly, that numerous internal and external factors do play a key and critical role in the outcome of the

future of any country's domestic and foreign policies decision making goals and objectives. Contentiously, is it fair to continuously question China's intention or should we wait and see the outcome of the future.

On the other hand, Buzan (2010) agrees that China has in fact done a really good job of pursuing a 'peaceful rise' over the past thirty (30) years, which he attributes to the fragile position China inherited from both the century of humiliation, and the oppositional revolutionary period under Mao Zedong. Which Buzan (2010) points out, China was later able to separate itself from the Soviet Union's influence and immensely transformed its domestic policy by the end of the Cold War, subsequently resulting today in China having a huge and vibrant economic growth to the extent of being perceived as a "threat". Indeed, there is no question that China's rise is inevitable given its large economic growth, and increase in its use of soft power in the international arena today. However, China's continued growth and rise are also mainly dependent on its interaction with the international society. Thus, what role does the international society play in China's peaceful rise?

According to Buzan, (1993, pp. 330) "international society is as a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which do not merely form a system, in the sense that the behavior of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements." Thus indeed, there must be interest, values, institutions and identity. Therefore, it is fair to establish that International Institutions within the international society signify an important and considerable opportunity for nation states around the world to participate, become members, use in their pursue of national interest and additionally are a way in which to influence others, gain access to loans, security, trade, recognition, power, etc.

Importantly, it should be recognized that surprisingly, China is still yet to outline completely its role in international society and depends solely on its foreign policy objectives and approaches in guiding its decisions and its concepts of order, which is based on the respect for national boundaries as, stated earlier. Nonetheless, it is obvious and clear that it has gathered a lot of influence within a variety of international organizations in international society, amongst developing countries and in essence, is in the midst of important evolution; such as the role and status it plays as a permanent member within the United Nation. Notwithstanding this, some would say that China has demonstrated an increasingly assertive and proactive stance within these organizations, which combined in some cases, has resulted in greater institutional power. While on the other hand others would argue that most of what China has done was driven not by China itself, but was driven solely by international pressure; therefore labeling China's attitude as more "reactive" rather than "proactive".

Across the board, China has become more effective in utilizing international organizations in international society to advance national interests, and to extract what it needs from these institutions. On an optimistic and upbeat note, however, China's growing role in international society does not only support its strategic foreign policy interests, but, it should be acknowledged and noted in a positive light that it is participatory role in these international society is also frequently productive and helpful for the organizations in which it participates.

As Odgaard (2013) argued China is a maker of international order in the international system in the way it proposes its own interpretation of the rules of interaction which is accepted by numerous states in the developing world, but this relatively does not imply that China is challenging the United States military and economic preeminence. Odgaard (2013) furthermore iterates that for China, the principal component of China's strategy is that of coexistence diplomacy, which overall has allowed China to become a maker of international order. Odgaard (2013) states that since the Cold War, peaceful coexistence has come to symbolize China's transition from self-reliance to proactive engagement in multilateral institutional settings, and China's repositioning from a taker to a maker of international order. But essentially in the end, it seems that with China's growing economy, no doubt its intention will continuously be questioned as it continues to rise in the international system.

#### **4. Theoretical Discussion**

Theoretically, China's perceived "rise", its role and status in the international system is sometimes two-folded and contradictory. Principally, the realist more or less perceives China's power capabilities and position in the international arena as a threat to the existing order. Mearsheimer (2014) states that survival is the number one goal of great powers; therefore every state in the international system seeks survival and therefore aims to acquire as much power as possible, based on several prerequisites. Thus, for example the use of diplomacy as a soft power for the offensive realist is seen merely as a tool that may help in speeding up China's rise; since fundamentally China can use dialogue and persuasion to convince countries such as the United States that it has peaceful intentions, while at the same time building its economic, soft power and military capabilities necessary to impose its will on the international system in the international society as a full-blown great power. Moreover, relating to this theoretical notion, this in fact shows China's growing strength, potential and its current development in its increase investments and its engagement in international society, as well as, its escalating presence in numerous developing countries such as in the African Continent, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia, etc. Significantly, China has developed a substantial amount of competencies and influences to become a strong aggressive challenger to the existing international system based on its increased participatory role and status in international society.

On the flip-side the defensive realist essentially would believe that China should possess the necessary power and cultivate it to ward off aggression. Accordingly, Mearsheimer (2014, pp. 21) states that defensive realism sees great powers as concerned mainly with figuring out how to survive in a world where there is no agency to protect them from each other; thus they quickly realize that power is the key to their survival. The defensive theory states that diplomacy in China is a useful tool to convince countries such as the United States and other great powers that it is not challenging them by making allowances for their demand for global security management without compromising its own interest in becoming a dominant power in East Asia (Odgaard, 2013). Importantly, China has realized that its perceived "rise" must continue to be a cooperative one and also is dependent on other states within the West, Asia and moreover the world at large. Consequently, many would say that the defensive realism would in fact require China to use its role and status in international society such as accepting the norms and rules in organizations such as the United Nation Security Council, World Trade Organization, etc., and the maintenance of its economic development to ensure that it does not challenge and upset other powers in the international order.

Certainly, from the framework of the liberalist perspectives, they tend to place emphasis on cooperation, peace and institutionalism; thus, the strengthening of global economic and institutional ties is critical in the reduction and the possibility of conflicts. Principally the liberal believes that the integration of China into the global economy reduces the threat of a confrontational China, yet on the other hand, it also worries about China's political system and ideology. As seen, China has to struggle with the West who believes that democracy is the best political system and it is in essence the key to peace in the world. Fundamentally, this assertion is based on a claim, which states that democracies are in general in dealing with all kinds of states, are more peaceful than are authoritarian or other non-democratically constituted states (Russett, 1993). However, as we also see the liberals generally advocates policies geared towards economic engagement and multilateral institution. In regard to China the Liberals encourage the promotion of cooperation necessary to defer and discourage the use of force against each nation state opposite to the realist theory that posits the argument surrounding confrontation. By and large, some scholars also believe that the increase of trade and tying of China's economy more tightly to that of the world will ensure China's hesitation in the initiating of war for fear of economic consequences.

Odgaard (2013), however, states that diplomatic influence is the use of diplomatic power to make impact on the common frameworks that regulate international behavior. In essence, diplomatic power is a position in multilateral institutions and likewise that diplomatic influence is very powerful and would give a nation state such as that of China the ability to use such positions for further integration into the international system. From the Liberalist notion

China's membership in the United Nation Security Council and World Trade Organization in the international society can be seen as two such examples of China's acceptance of the liberalism theory in China's increase engagement in the numerous different institutions, thus strengthening, establishing and stabilizing its role in these Western dominated institutions, which has given more rise to questions as to its rise as a global and regional power.

In reality, as noted there are diverse explanations derived from the different schools of thought in the justification of China's perceived "rise" in international society and the challenge it poses to the world. In sum the liberal and realist ideas are undeniably different. However, China will continue to take a less aggressive approach and continue its integration and influence in international society.

##### **5. China's role and status in International Society**

China's role in international society and its economic growth is considered a significant achievement which has given China added strength and strengthen its position and participation in international organizations. As seen participation in international society do allow and gives a country, moreover, China the opportunity to influence others, increase and expand its access to trade, technology, economic and security in its peaceful rise.

Arguably, there have been arguments surrounding international society and the possibility that as the years goes by, it will evolve from the Western influence on which it was created and founded to reflect the priorities, needs and interests of a wider range of countries. Not so long ago, China did not have a seat when the rules, norms and regulations were created for international institutions in international society, but China today do have a seat at the "table" and base on its economic growth, science and technological achievement China is truly getting bigger. As we are seeing China is indeed using its rising influence to shape the international system in a peaceful manner. Admittedly, it's undeniably that based on China's action, obviously it has become a rising global stature in the international society. Essentially, and of potential great impression is China's ability to change its influence towards the emergence and building new institutions.

Subsequently, according to Buzan (2010), China's peaceful rise, if possible, will be extremely difficult, which he attributes to the fact that China must accept and conform to the values within the international societies moreover changing its image and the role of the primary international institutions in particular those of democracy, human rights and environmental friendliness. However, the world has witnessed tremendous changes since the late 1970's to now of China's gradual peaceful rise through successfully getting into international society. However, with the numerous changes that occurred and is occurring in the world today the international society have changed and evolved from the old system of sovereignty, non-interference, balance of power to a new system which encompasses and also takes into consideration human rights, democracy and environmental issues, etc. China has more or less accepted some of these institutions of international society, and at times resists them, while at other times makes attempts or wants to try to reform them.

But there is no doubt that China's presence in the international society and role is very much felt, specifically in international institutions such as the United Nation Security Council and regional multilateral institutions which, coupled with its principles of absolute sovereignty, non-interference and peaceful co-existence is used in making final decisions to ensure and preserve the right of states to exercise authority over their external and internal policies to achieve stability. Generally it is noted though that China tends to encourage and promote the use of diplomatic strategy in its role and status in international society such as that of the United Nation's decision to use force; which China opposes given its concept of peaceful coexistence, principles of sovereignty, principles on international agreements, hence the method and approach of voting taken as a United Nation Security Council member either abstaining, no vote or vetoing used as a form of power to influence its role.

Odgaard (2013), likewise have stated that Beijing is emerging as a maker rather than a taker of international order, this assumption is specifically based on China's success in reinterpreting the United Nation Charter's provision by opposing the Western approach of the

use of force; to that of China's idea of peaceful coexistence and that of its commitment to mutual non-aggression and non-interference in the internal affairs of others thus encouraging and promoting a method of respecting a country's sovereignty and the use of force requiring the consent from the host government unless proof exists of a threat to international peace and security.

Importantly China's role and status in international society such as being a permanent member in the United Nation Security Council is that it does have a voice and as a permanent member its determination in the maintenance of peace, security, cooperation and development are clear, felt and seen. However, in a negative way as stated earlier power politics, self-interest and motive on the other hand, sometimes do occur and take a back seat to peace and security when there might be an urgent need for the use of force in order to attain stability in a country. Additionally China has used its role in international society as a rising power in the United Nation Security Council to propose the use of diplomatic means using the approach or method of persuasion, negotiation, dialogues and supporting of regional bodies and organizations such as the Arab League and African Union and admittedly China's recognition that these organizations should truly play a leading role in the decision making process when there is a threat to international peace and stability and likewise in the implementation stage of conflict management rather than the use of force by the United Nation Security Council. For example: China using its veto powers against the United Nation Security Council drafts resolution against the use of force in Syria on the grounds of respecting a state sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Undoubtedly, as a perceived "rising" power China has to ensure its continuous involvement in its role in international society by engaging and attaching more and more importance to deepening and expanding its commitment with countless international organizations. Notably, even with China's admissions to international society over the years, the western society have and still dominate the international society in terms of power, membership, the setting of rules, values, norms, legal obligations and authority in international society through international institutions. For example, the establishment of the United Nation Security Council Charters and General Assembly that set the legal obligation of humanitarian intervention by the use of force in the nation state.

According to Buzan (2010), the question of China's relationship is not with any particular state, but its relationship to the social structure of international society as a whole, both globally and regionally. Additionally, Buzan (2010) queries by asking what kind of international society China would like to see and be part of. In addition, Buzan (2010) further points that scholar such as Shi argued that China does not have a system of clear and coherent long term fundamental national objectives, diplomatic philosophy and long term or secular grand strategy and this is the number one cognitive and policy difficulty for the current China in her international affairs. Moreover, Buzan (2010) posits that it is not clear what kind of understanding China has of international society at the global level. Without knowing that, it is difficult to see how China is trying to place itself in this game.

Primarily, China's role in international society has also been transcended in its frequent interactions in environmental institutions. Although a new participation in climate change regime, China has made increasing efforts in addressing climate change. Without a doubt China has major issues with coal and carbon dioxide emission leading to serious pollution problems in the country and causing added health issues which is a major challenge, but it has made strong efforts in its participation and cooperative role in institutions that deals with climate change despite its ability to make effective change in this area which are limited, yet still growing slowly.

More than ever, China will continue to play its role in international society, not only in respect to its national interest, but also in regards to peace, scientific and technological development, security, regionalism and the use of diplomacy as a tool as an influential power in developing countries in offering financial aids, grants, cultural and infrastructural assistance in its role as a "rising" power.

Realistically, China's increase participatory role in international society and the establishment of international multilateral institutions will inevitably invite much more demands and expectations from China in relation to other developing countries and that of Asia. But its

membership in most international organizations is not a very active one in many, as stated, aside from when it seeks to diligently protect its national interests. This all suggests that China is not ready, or primarily maybe not in a position or does not want to take the leadership role more actively and will remain reluctant in taking over the world economy any time soon despite its growing economy.

## **6. Challenges and Limitations China faces in International society**

Despite China's extraordinary and notable economic development growth in its rise from the past years to becoming the fastest growing importer of energy and raw materials to currently being perceived as a "threat", this has certainly not come without numerous challenges face not only in its participatory role and status in international society, but also at home in addressing social development issues relating to its population growth, human rights issues, environmental protection, health care and high jobless market, etc.

Scholars undeniably have confirmed that in relation to challenges faced in the international society; China has had its full membership in the global international society continued to be contested, as many still questions China's sincerity and willingness to accept the responsibilities that are associated with "Great Power status". Which in turn China has likewise continuously and aggressively contests the international society in its attempt to impose their Western values to persuade them to comply with issues of human right matters, nuclear non-proliferation, humanitarian intervention, political system of democratization, etc.

Additionally, China has had the challenge of its effort and attempt in creating solutions to the problem within the international society such as that of NATO's use of force which China opposes and strongly believes that the state should make decision that affects them solely on the basis of respecting and promoting state sovereignty or approval which should be granted by the United Nation for the use of force rather than intervening in a crisis affected country without the United Nation Security Council's and General Assembly legal approval.

The rise of China as well has brought with it tremendous pressure and massive expectation from developing and developed countries in its challenge of comprehensively articulating its role in international society in the area of diplomatic planning and institution building in dealing with diplomacy. But according to Odgaard (2013) diplomacy coexistence-style entails moderation, compromise and leadership. These requirements involve taking the lead in reconstructing international order on the basis of revisions to existing political frameworks, taking into account the interests of secondary and small powers. For Shambaugh (2011) China's diplomacy has truly gone global. It is stated that over the forty years, China has travelled the path from a nation isolated from international community to one thoroughly integrated into it.

Scholar Shambaugh (2011) states that China's international diplomacy is displayed in various ways; on some occasions, it has been accommodating, pragmatic, confident, cooperative, constructive, decisive, friendly, proactive and globally oriented. While on other occasions, it has been assertive, truculent, difficult, combative, hypernationalistic, narrowly self interested, uncooperative, reactive and occasionally aggressive. On others, Chinese diplomacy seems confused, contested, uncertain, passive and risk-averse. Hence, Shambaugh (2011) further states that, China has been a "status quo" rather than a "revisionist" power; that is, it sought to integrate itself into the existing international system, to take advantage of the system but not to overturn it. Thus, essentially China's diplomacy is hesitant, risk-averse, and narrowly self-interested and China often makes known what it is against, but rarely what it stands for; thus in essence it often stands aside or remains passive in addressing international security challenges or global governance issues.

## **7. Understanding China's "rise"**

Principally, China's rise has instigated different, varied interests and discussion from that of being seen as threatening, therefore it should be curtailed, contained, engaged and to that of mistrust in relation to its rise and role in international society. The question then though, is



whether China is the only country that is perceived as a threat in the international system. Most have added that given that China is not a democratic country, then this also adds added pressure to its "rise" being questioned.

It seems logical that there is still the perception of many countries in not understanding the significance of China's rise, in addition, remarkable that many countries still do have a high level of distrust for China. Notable though, China's economic growth and its "rise" has been taken in a positive light by other countries in the world, while for countries in the west its image has suffered a lot in which negative views are expressed from countries around the world. By and large, China's "rise" has in fact led to fears and concern that it will soon overpower its neighbors and surpass for example, that of the United States as a global hegemon, of which China thinks there is no need for concern amongst nation states in the international order.

No doubt to be sure, having relative power and widespread opinions of China as seen as an aggressive and expansionist power, the world need to recall that China's foreign policy has not changed much over the years and in actuality remains the same; but for now it seems it is on a quest of serving and accomplishing its national interests, gaining national and international recognition and portraying an identity of a responsible nation state to other countries in the international system. Admittedly, the West's perception of China is based on the unknown; thus China's rise consequently being interpreted and perceived as a "threat", as well as difficulty in comprehending and determining China's intention. Notable, with the debates and discussion the United States will on no account allow another rising power to threaten its interests.

Overall views on China as stated are that of containment, engagement and the added perception that China is a difficult country to control, in which we have seen where the United States of America had tried on multiple occasions to dictate to China in addressing concerns such as human rights issues, democracy, the manipulation of its currency and environmental issues, etc. Legro (2007) states that the point here is not to pursue what has come to be the perceived wisdom in dealing with China's unknown future intentions. Moreover, Legro, (2007) asserts that if the goal is to incorporate China into the international system in a way that makes the system operate in a fashion acceptable to all, however, it is important to reinforce those Chinese leaders and movements that have staked their legitimacy on the positive aspects of integration. However, the wary reaction to China's economic growth in a sense is understandable to a degree, but unnecessary.

In a way, it is understandable that the United States as a great power would acquire a sense of wariness and concern over China's growing economic growth and rise in the international system. Legro (2007) claims that for "rising China", the problem is not just about power, but purpose and China has consistently stressed that its development as a major power will be peaceful and non-obtrusive.

It is also plausible that a dominant country with great power status will never remain the same; change as we have seen transpire when World War I and II occurred; thus, it is foreseeable that the possibility exists that a challenger might arise to challenge the international order. Nothing remains constant in the global arena and everything changes at a certain point over a period of years. Leaders with different personality traits willing and ready to fight and die at the expense of others have risen and fallen, countries bent on acquiring its national interest without the respect of state sovereignty and the new and all important races towards acquiring space technological advancement are all changes that are guaranteed will occur and have occurred in the international system amongst states. Thus, if not China, it could possibly be another country in the international system struggling to explain and defend its economic growth and "rise".

Importantly, whether China's rise will be peaceful or conflictual is a question that is quite vocal amongst many scholars and policy makers. Mearsheimer (2004) asked an important and straightforward question regarding China's "rise": can China rise peacefully? Mearsheimer (2004) also answered no; China's "rise" will not be peaceful, basing this assessment on the notion that if China continues its impressive economic growth and continued participatory role in international society over the next few decades, the United States and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war; and most of its

neighbors, such as India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, and Vietnam, which Mearsheimer (2014) predicted will join with the United States to contain China's power.

Theoretically, Mearsheimer (2014) furthermore claims that survival is a nation state's most important goal, because a state cannot pursue any other goals if it does not survive. Hence the basic structure of the international system forces states concerned about their security to compete with each other for power and ultimately the goal of every great power is to maximize its share of world power and eventually dominate the system.

## 8. Conclusion

It is quite obvious that China will continue immersing and integrating itself much more in international society because it sees the benefit of being a member of international organizations within the international society. The question though is whether China will be able to make changes to the norms, values, orders and rules within these international societies to suit its foreign policy objectives. As a member in international society a nation state does have a voice and can be heard, however the challenges are plentiful and the limitations are great in making changes without the support of other member countries. But in reality if the motivates and self-interest exist that suits these members then the support can be garnered from other member countries and the region, which occurs more often within such international community as the United Nation.

Consequently, despite the limitations and challenges China faces; there is no question that China is "rising" and will continue to "rise", but rather than being perceived as a "threat" its "rise" should be seen as peaceful, given that China has not made any attempt to give the world the impression that it has any intention of becoming a super power. Then again, although China has a long history, the world still does not know much about China and its inside function, thus the unknown is seen and perceived as a "threat".

On the other hand, China's "rise" is seen as a "threat"; but the possibility does exist that perhaps China does intend to challenge the status quo based on its philosophy of "hiding one's capabilities and biding one's time", thus China might be waiting for the right moment; as well as China genuinely does not have any intention of becoming a superpower, as stated by the former Chinese President Hu Jintao. But China's major concerns might be in ensuring the protection and improvement of its country and national through its foreign policy objectives. Finally, China's peaceful "rise" is possible, but it is also dependent on its continued interaction and participation within the international society, diplomatic ties and relationship established with the world to facilitate its "rise".

At the end of the day, no one knows what the future holds and we will all have to wait and see what China will do; the all-important question is will China continue to rise peacefully, will it become a regional or global power.

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