

# Rise of China in the International Politics

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**Abstract**-*The rise of China in the international Politics as a world power has been recognised by the world since it came into being in 1949. With its political leadership and consistent economic growth, China has been able to prove to the world its capabilities in different areas and as a responsible power in the world. It has been able to implement policies which have helped its growth and at the same time signed international/ bilateral agreements that have improved its image in the world politics in the last three decades.*

**Key Words:** China, International Politics

## Introduction

When People's Republic of China came into being on 1st October, 1949, it was weak and poor. It had endured seven years of war with Japan and another four years of civil war. Its economy was in shambles because of these wars and the high inflation due to the mismanagement of the monetary policy. The civil war was not over. The new regime faced resistance in the South and South west and the Republic of China, while vanquished on the mainland, held out to Taiwan, hoping to rebuild and renew the civil war. Britain retained its colony in Hong Kong, and Portugal continued to hold Macao.<sup>1</sup> Internationally also China's legitimacy was under watch as it was recognised only by eighteen countries in the first year of its existence mostly by the communist countries. None of the European major countries had recognised People's Republic of China. United States of America recognised China in 1950 when the Korean War began. It is also the signatory/ founding member of the United Nations in 1945. Later on became the permanent member of the General Assembly and the Security Council in 1971.

The rise of China from uncertain beginnings in the international order was shaped by the international environment. In the initial two decades the Republic of China was not recognised in the international system because of

which it could not advance its national security and development through the conventional means of diplomacy. The world economy at that time was dominated by USA. It was only after China became a member of the United Nations that it got recognition at the world forums and could achieve its international bilateral as well as multilateral relations with the other countries of the world which helped China to gain access to the world economy and establish trade relations in the world.

China's rise over the decades reflects a combination of two factors. One factor- and the one most widely credited – was the rise of power in the late 1970s of leaders whose priorities differed fundamentally from those of Mao Zedong, the man who had led the Communists to victory in 1949 and who dominated the People's Republic of China's politics until his death in 1976. In particular, the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping and the policies of reform that he began launched China onto its spectacular ascent in international affairs. The other factor was the emergence of an international context that made Deng's policies possible and effective<sup>2</sup>.

The national agenda of the 'New China' incorporated three major priorities- first was national unification second was the national development and the third priority was the

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transformation of the Chinese society. To achieve these goals the Communist Party of China was unified and was supported by the people and USSR also supported it. The Sino-Soviet agreement signed by Stalin and Mao in February, 1950 in Moscow brought with it Soviet assistance, advice and aid that helped the transformation of the Chinese economy, society, army and political order along Stalin models. With the help of the USSR, China started its economic development on the basis of Five Year Plans in 1953. China reformed its agriculture which led to the transformation of the Chinese economy, which later on helped in the transformation of the society as well. The political institutions in China were established on the basis of the Communist Party of China modelled like the Leninist Party in USSR having a monopoly over power. This monopoly helped it to have deep grass roots in all the Chinese political, social and economic aspects. USSR also helped China to modernise its army- the People's Liberation Army into a more professionalised military force.

The Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated in the late 1950s and mid 1960s but the Chinese were able to increase its military strength on the basis of the initial training received from the Soviets. The strained relations between the two communist countries had its impact on China in terms of its isolation from the world. The China's rising strength in the international affairs is conventionally associated with the reform policies launched in the early 1970s. Deng was appointed Chief of General Staff. Zhou Enlai reintroduced the four modernisations in January 1975 as a national policy to build a modern agriculture, industry, science and technology and national defence by 2000. The four modernisations had been first introduced in 1964 but were dropped with the introduction of Cultural Revolution.

Across the 1970s, Beijing's foreign policy discourse changed in step with its increasingly insider status in the world politics. The class-based revolutionary rhetoric gave way gradually to a more flexible foreign policy couched in terms of nation-state relations. Appeals to “proletarian

internationalism” gave way to policies defined on the basis of national interest. Calls to rally on “international united fronts” against “imperialism” by “superpowers”- terms that appeared in Lin Biao's formulations at the 1969 party congress. The emergence of these changes was constrained by two realities. First was the persisting polarization of leadership politics in Beijing, exacerbated by the struggle to succeed Mao. The other was the persisting limitations on relations with the two powers most important to Beijing- United States of America and Japan<sup>3</sup>. The relations between China and US normalised only after the visit of US President Richard Nixon in 1972 for a brief period. Tokyo had established diplomatic relations with Beijing during the visit of Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei in 1972 but full normalisation of relations could not be taken place until the peace treaty was concluded between them ending the WW II could not be resolved quickly.

Deng's policies of 1978 on development transformed the Chinese people, economy and politics. Deng was of the opinion that movements like Cultural Revolution must not be allowed to reoccur. He also believed that China's reputation in the world had changed and also there was a transformation in the world economy. Deng opened up the Chinese economy to the world and relook at the relations between the economy and the state. He reformed the agricultural and industrial policies in the 1980s. He had also created special economic zones to attract international players to the Chinese markets and provided tax-free benefits. As a result of these policies, foreign business was throughout China by the 1990s.

With the surge of the economy, China also started to readdress its security challenges. In the early 1980s China worked upon to improve its relations with USSR. At the same time China was trying to have cordial relations with USA and Japan during this period. Deng also tried to modernise the PLA in 1985. A primary focus of the PLA's modernisation has been reduction in forces. The decision to reduce the size of the military by 1 million was completed by 1987. Staffing in military leadership was cut by about

50 percent. Subsequently, the PLA was reduced by a further 500,000 during the Ninth Plan (1996-2000) and another 200,000 by 2005<sup>4</sup>. Thus the economy was growing and at the same time modernisation of the army laid the foundation for the rise of China in the later decades. One of the main focus areas in China's 11th Five Year Plan has been the development and launch of communication satellites with increasing service life and enhanced bandwidth, to cater to the increasing needs of its burgeoning civil and military customers<sup>5</sup>.

China improved its bilateral relations with USSR in 1989. The events of Tiananmen Square in 1989 derailed the process of having good relations with the world- sanctions were imposed on China and consequently, its economy suffered. In December, 1991 USSR collapsed leaving the world to be a unipolar with the dominance of United States of America for a while. At the same time Deng was also becoming old and the Communist leadership was passing to new leaders who were not as strong. China was passing through a dilemma at this juncture because of the changing international order. China was looking at the changed international order with caution. China also tried to blunt the American dominance during this period by having multiple partnerships with various other powerful nations like Russia, France, Japan, Germany etc. China also started flexing its muscles in the United Nations in the late 1990s. China started supporting the multilateral organisations during this period like the ASEAN, in Central Asia, China collaborated with Russia to create the Shanghai Five in 1996, which was in 2001 reorganised as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Now-a-days China is an established world power. For almost last three decades China has emerged as an economic power in Asia and the world and at the same time the economies of the Asian region has also seen a tremendous growth. Today china has emerged as the fourth largest economy in the world after United States of America, Japan and Germany. China has evolved a new scientific concept of development, which puts people first and attaches importance to sustainable growth.

China has attempted to pursue a new mode of growth, characterised by a sustainable, peaceful and cooperative development. China's development, like in many other developing countries, is a great historic experiment of modernisation in the post-industrialisation era. Peace, harmony, development and cooperation are the defining values of Chinese domestic, foreign and security policy making. The prevailing phrases of 'Beijing Consensus', 'China's New Diplomacy', and 'China's New Security Concepts', have frequently appeared hand-in-hand with the phrase, 'China's Rise'<sup>6</sup>.

The new leadership of China, which assumed its position at the beginning of the 21st century, repeatedly emphasised that it intends to pursue relations with its neighbours in the spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit. It means that in pursuit of its ambitious goals of national development set at the 16th Chinese Communist Party Congress in 2002 and needing peaceful regional environment for their implementation, China decided to abolish its previous model of keeping controlled level tensions in relations with its many neighbours in favour of building benign relationships with them<sup>7</sup>.

In pursuit of this new foreign policy and security model, China decided to repair its highly strained relations with the ASEAN countries. The most contentious issue in their relationships was the dispute over the territory of Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, which sometimes led to confrontations. China took many steps to improve relations with the ASEAN countries on the basis of mutual cooperation, partnership and benefit. In this regard, China signed an agreement with the ASEAN countries in 2001 to establish a joint free trade zone with them by 2010. China also reduced import tariffs on a number of commodities imported from these countries. In 2002, China signed a framework agreement on economic cooperation that further advanced their ties. In the same year China and ASEAN signed an agreement, the Declaration of the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea, which rejected the use of force as a method of resolving territorial disputes among them. China also joined the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and

Cooperation in 2003 as the first major non-regional power<sup>8</sup>. All these measures were appreciated by the ASEAN members and started to cooperate with China.

The China-Pakistan strategic partnership which started as early as 1951 has continued to grow and both nations have enjoyed the mutually beneficial relationship. It is the largest defence supplier to Pakistan. China has been supplying weapons to Pakistan since 1960s. China has extensively supported Pakistan in building up its nuclear capabilities. China's continued missile technology assistance to Pakistan has contributed largely in Pakistan's ballistic and cruise missile capability build-up. The Chinese assistance in missile transfer technology to Pakistan accelerated after Pakistan's nuclear test in May 1998. The Chinese support to Pakistan has strained relations between India and China.

India had cordial relations with china in the 1950s. Both the Indo-China relations suffered a setback when China attacked India in 1962. The visit of then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988<sup>9</sup>, first visit of the Indian PM after Jawaharlal Nehru in 1954 marked a turning point in the Indo-China relations after the 1962 war. It is necessary for both the nations to have strong bilateral relations as both the growing powers in Asia. Both are aspiring to be the leaders in the region. Both the nations have to come to terms with the disputes and settle them amicably to grow peacefully in the region.

China relies on “3M” strategy to show its strength i.e. Military build up that would create access and capabilities to forward base its military presence and engage in military partnerships with countries that are isolated in the international community, the whole objective being to secure its interests in the vital sea-lanes of communication. It has created its own “string of pearls” in the Indian Ocean region to secure its trade and energy sea-lanes. Multilateralism has come with its aggressive economic presence and the pro-china regional initiatives like the SCO and East Asia Initiative that aggressively elbow out India, Japan, and the United States of America. Multi-polarity with its strategic engagements with Russia and other states aims to

counter attempts by the US and its other allies to contain China's regional and global aspirations<sup>10</sup>.

In the late 1990s and to a greater extent, in the early 2000s, Beijing demonstrated that it could under the right conditions, learn from external feedback. China experimented with several rhetorical and theoretical frameworks for its foreign policy. In 1997, Chinese leaders outlined a “new security concept” which defined security as mutual, not zero-sum, and emphasised participation in multilateral institutions. China's “peaceful rise” associated with scholars said to be close to Hu Jintao, laid out three core principles for Chinese foreign Policy:- China's rise to wealth and power depends on its own continued economic reform; China's rise will take a long time; and China's rise cannot be accompanied at the expense of other nations<sup>11</sup>.

China's position in the space technology can be judged by the fact that it is next only to US and Russia in the number of satellites in orbit. China had a total of 58 active satellites in the orbit in Jan 2010 compared to 437 of the US, 94 of Russia and 21 of India<sup>12</sup>. China plays a larger role in global trade and investment. It conducted about US\$ 2.5 trillion in total international trade in 2009 and it was the world's largest exporter of merchandise. It was the second largest merchandise importer. China's total international trade was equivalent to nearly 60 percent of its GDP. Partly as a result of its role in manufacturing assembly and reprocessing trade, China runs a large trade surplus. China's current account surplus was about 4.7 percent of its GDP in 2010, down from its recent peak of 8.7 percent of GDP in 2007<sup>13</sup>.

China has been able to keep up its education levels at par with the west. The Chinese universities have been able to produce a large number of science graduates and engineers, doctors and social science students but there is a question mark on the quality they have been producing. China has been attracting lot of foreign direct investment. China has been exporting heavily to United States of America which is also improving the Chinese economy and at the same time impacting the US economy. China's surge is a new phenomenon for the world.



China is a competitor for the Western and European companies in the field of energy and metal markets. China has also ventured into buying energy stakes in oil and gas fields all over the world. Despite the heavy investment by the US companies in the China, disputes have cropped up regularly relating to market access, protection of IPRs. Today, after nearly two and half decades of close economic relations, there is cause for worry rather than complacency because Chinese companies are venturing out to the US and other industrial countries and trying to buy up their most important companies<sup>14</sup>. China has been rising as a region power as well as the world power steadily for almost last three decades. It needs to be seen if it can carry on this growth as the rising power in terms of economy, military, political and social and at the same time contain the wide disparity within the country as well as peaceful rise in the Asian region and the world.

**Notes:**

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