

China's Strategies under Neo-Realist Paradigm to Deter US in Asia

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ABSTRACT

China is now positioned to pose a potential threat to the United States and can challenge the US's unipolar dominance in the advent of Multi-polarity in the next millennium. This paper thus seeks to explore the complex systems of regional dynamics in Asia in a situation where China is a threat to this current world order. This study employs a neorealist theoretical framework in assessing China's approach to managing change in the international order as much as it seeks to challenge the hegemonic status of the United States in Asia. Since political power occupies a central place in world politics, the first stage of this study is the detailed theoretical analysis of neorealism. To analyze China's geopolitical desires and strategic planning, this paper examines China's increasing military, economic, and diplomatic operations. This research also looks at how the United States responds to Chinese ascendancy; more so, it focuses on how actors within the regional structure have shifted their strategies to engage or counter China. These findings bring more context into the shift of global power by revealing a vast array of relations between the region's countries: allies, competitors, and the balance of power.

Keywords: *Strategic Deterrence, Neo-Realism, Power Dynamics, Balance Of Power, Sino-American Competition, Security Challenges.*

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Introduction

The world is in steady transformation as states mobilize their resources and potential to achieve status in the international arena. In today's world, the emphasis is placed on developing a nation before striving to outcompete other great nations. They often change the existing socio-physical realities to suit their needs in one way or another. From a unipolar system that saw world governance under the American hegemony, the global structure is developing towards multipolarity. Several challenges to America's hegemonic status have arisen due to shifts in global dynamics, such as the rise of China (Deng, 2009). Many other states strive to set themselves up as great world powers. Power narratives in the twenty-first century are shifting radically in their course. Soft power is gradually becoming the preferred tool over the traditionally defined force or military power. Due to the dynamics of the new world order, which has tremendously changed the face of international relations and politics, Europeans, for instance, cannot rely on the might of their military might in the current world environment (Li M. , 2009).

Globalization has started a new era in the history of international relationships, which are now characterized by increasing interaction between the states, especially in the economic field. The growth of economic integration has been rated as one of the key causes of the decline in wars among states, primarily because of the growth of trade globalization. Therefore, China's rise to become one of the major players in global politics and economy has been deliberate and based majorly on achieving economic growth and development goals. The Chinese economy is mighty, thus affording it the capacity to meddle in Asia and globally. To achieve this, it adopted the policy of economic development and integration of countries in the region to alter the balance of power dominant before ASEAN. Economic integration, which China uses to build economic relations with Asian countries, is a diplomatic tool that turns economic dependence into a matter that prevents or controls conflict.

This research addresses two questions. In the first place, it explores how power dynamics are altering with the changing international power structure. In the second stage, it discovers what neo-realist strategies China relies on to challenge the US in Asia.

Research Methodology

This is qualitative research that focuses on secondary data collection. This chosen method analyzes the topic beneath the specified methodology through the available information and academic sources focusing on China's foreign policy strategies in the Asian region. It is crucial to note that the principal source of information collection and analysis of the identified subject and context is the comprehensive analysis of the existing secondary research. First, a literature review is conducted to ensure the most relevant information and primary sources of the reports, articles, books, and academic papers regarding neo-realism, power shifts, and China's foreign policy in the Asian region are gathered and combined in a detailed manner. Thus, this literature evaluation aims to lay the groundwork for developing the theoretical framework that acts as the study's framework.

Besides, this research benefits from secondary data, which sources official government documents, policy declarations, and speeches from the Chinese and the US governments. These materials provide different perspectives on the objectives and priorities of the two governments and the frames through which they present themselves and their actions in Asia and the region's actors. In this research paper, a theoretical analysis of the concept of power transition, together with the empirical evidence collected for the Asian region, is reviewed. In particular, it aims to contribute to understanding how China's role established the new hierarchy and its impact on regional interaction.

China's Rise through the History

The Japanese invasion of China continues into much of the mainland during the 1930s and '40s. This war would go on until 1945 and destroy the nation. However, this time was once in history. It was one of the impossible periods when the Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist Party of China allied on the same side against Japanese invaders as the Anti-Japanese Alliance (Chang, 2003). Most importantly, this kind of cooperation defeated these invaders and finally laid the foundation for the final liberation and victory over Kuomintang in future civil war. During the 1930s and '40s, China was experiencing a turbulent era of fighting both foreign aggression and itself. During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), China suffered enormously from violence perpetrated by the Japanese invasion and occupation of portions of Chinese territory. However, this interval also

featured a unique phenomenon of unity between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China (CPC), who put their ideological differences aside to defend against Japanese invaders jointly. Thanks to this unity, the Japanese aggression could be pushed back, which showed us a path of national cohesion (Smith, 2009). After the failure of Japan in 1945, the transition resumed and concluded with victory from your CPC since its creation while using the Customers' Republic, which was available as China (PRC) in near 1971. The KMT was forced to relocate its government of the ROC to Taiwan, with everywhere else on the mainland in communist hands.

China and the Bi-Polar World

China was reunited under the rule of communist Mao Zedong and established itself as a permanent integral part - with five acceded but unifying areas of Asia, consolidating its seat on 1 October as The State (PRC) China, the Chinese Communist Party. The PRC grew very close to the USSR in its early years, with their strategic alliance formalized through a friendship treaty and mutual assistance pact signed on February 14, 1950 (Ross & D., 2020). Projects such as the Anshan Steel Complex demonstrated that Soviet economic aid and technical expertise would continue to sustain China's early industrialization. Its entry into the Korean War after US-led UN forces helped prevent South Korea from reunifying with North Korea, showing it was allied to the Soviet Union. The PRC became a close ally of the Soviet Union during its first decade. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, signed in 1950, became an iconic incarnation of this relationship. China's first industrialization was sparked and sustained by Soviet economic aid and technical expertise. Large projects, including the Anshan Steel Complex and Daqing Oil Field, were built with Soviet help, providing a base for China's heavy industries. Indeed, during the Korean War (1950-53), China sided with North Korea against US-led UN forces and became more closely aligned with the Soviet Union (Kwarteng, 2018). However, ideological differences and territorial disputes ultimately caused the two Communist giants to fall out big by the end of the 1950s, influencing China's external posture too.

China in the Post-Modern World

The 1970s signaled a strategic turning point for China, recognizing its relationship with and normalizing diplomatic ties to the United States, most visibly in President Richard Nixon's historic visit to Beijing in 1972. The reconciliation started China's opening up to the West and veering

away from Soviet influence. 1978, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the leader got its start on a series of economic reforms, moving from a centrally planned to a more market-oriented system (Chan, 2014). These policies involved foreign investment and trade, laying the foundation for China's integration into the global economy. The 1970s, already notable for Chinese-U.S. normalization and the beginnings of economic reforms within China itself, reached an actual inflection point in terms of both North Korean initiative and American neglect by late last year. Richard Nixon's PRC visit on 21 February 1972 marked the beginning of China's opening to the West, thus lessening Soviet influence. In 1978, the leader Deng Xiaoping took power and began a league of people who had seen economic modifications, which also described reform in conjunction with opening up (Cooper, 2000). These changes helped shift China from a planned to a market economy. Such policies permitted foreign investment, decentralized economic decision-making, and introduced market mechanisms. These phenomena were accompanied by nearly unprecedented growth in human wealth. They marked the pivot points for China as a global economic superstar super-charged with lateral investment guaranteed to revolutionize everything about its economy across every social echelon.

China's Diplomatic Engagement and Alliance Formation

China's engagement in diplomacy is another compelling evidence of its neorealist stance on competition against the US. According to neorealism, countries only engage in alliances and partnerships to counteract an imminent threat or improve their security. China's diplomatic engagements can be regarded from this perspective because the country has engaged closely with many states across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These engagements have been mainly economic, political, and sometimes military, involving infrastructure investments, trade agreements, loans, and managed COVID-19 response strategies. From this perspective, qualitative analysis of such engagements, past policy documents, and chase data offer a lens through which policy formulation in alliances can be examined (Chan, 2014). Analysis of Chinese policymakers' rhetorical statements and responses from recipient states, especially given relevant data on triangulated interactions, underscores the Chinese strategy formulation in alliances. Analysis of historical documents on similar interactions can show the prevalence of evidential scenarios in forming bilateral relations.

Besides, examining China's evolved strategy from its diplomatic past and present engagements is pertinent. Moreover, China's diplomacy emphasizes the various dimensions of neorealism when countries seek various endeavors and strategies to enhance power and security. Beyond military alliances, China's past and present engagement in economic endeavors and soft power portray the country's prioritization of a raft of allies using multiple tools of neorealism (Deng, 2009). Given that imperialism and globalization have been partially acknowledged and allowed by military alliances and sometimes subduing, China seems to observe this scenario as proof and valid strategies for improving neorealism. Therefore, diplomacy is a key area where China expresses overt neorealism by emphasizing efforts over threats to secure more allies to confront the US surpassing hegemon sovereignty.

Conducting in-depth analyses across these diverse dimensions can help establish a holistic understanding of China's neorealist approach to global power transitions and competing with the US hegemony. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies allows for a multifaceted consideration of China's strategic motivations, actions, and implications for the ongoing transformations in international relations. The focus on neorealism and the power transition theory applied while examining global power transformations in China's neorealist strategy of the US hegemony competition resulted in multiple findings and conclusions. Thus, the first finding is that states pursue power and security within an international anarchy. This circumstance motivates them to engage in such behaviours as forming alliances, power preponderance, projection, and conflict avoidance to secure their interests (Gompert, 2011). The example of China's power projection enabled by its BRI and coercive actions in the South China Sea serves as a message to this statement while outlining the dynamics and logic of the power transitions.

China's Neorealist Policy and Execution

When it comes to international relations, China pursues a neorealist approach. They are already a decision based on how the world is. When the Cold War ended, the entire world largely fell under either American dominion or contention. We had to see how China would keep safe and loud in this new world. China uses neorealism to determine how much power each state has over the other. Since China has a neorealist policy, the motive behind that is to look at their history and what they are going through. One of safety and one where our voices can be heard globally protects China.

Chinese with Neorealism (Freire, 2019). To know that the world is messy and not all one holier-than-thou hegemon. In this context, China is merely considering its interests within the system.

While neorealism does not speak directly of structuration as some other theories would, it nonetheless suggests how the most powerful actors in global politics define what China can do. Authoritarian China has realized that it must always be strategic in its approach towards the world. They tap into their economic and international relationships with other countries and the use of the military to remain safe while ensuring they can be heard. Well, there is neorealism in many of China's acts to see. For example, China constructed islands and military bases in the South China Sea. This implies that they want to be assured of being in power with this territory, not for safety, as it shows them. Take BRI as an example. Then, a vast plan to build routes and networks; China will make roads, bridges, etc., for many countries in this effort. That way, China can get allies and an extra set of hands in another country on a decision that remains to be seen. Ultimately, China seeks a world of great power spheres and behaves neo-realist. It is an effort to defend China and not cut it from the 21st-century world-making table (Norris, 2019). They do this through their economy, relationships with other countries, and being better militarily. It is reflected in Beijing's actions concerning subjects such as the South China Sea and its Belt-and-Road Initiative.

Accelerating Technological Advancements and Trade Initiatives

It made the development of Chinese technology go from a slow walk to a step in China's history that was not seen for over 1,000 years. The Chinese government rolled out programs such as the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Science and Technology Development (2006-2020) to shift its national strategy from a manufacturing giant to an innovation powerhouse. This identified industries' ideas in high technology, nanotechnology, and AM. To improve the nation's global competitiveness, China aggressively pursued indigenous innovation and reduced its dependence on foreign technology. Over the past several years, China has taken incredible leaps in industries such as artificial intelligence (AI), 5G telecommunications, and quantum computing. Influential international firms such as Huawei and Tencent have positioned China at the forefront of tech innovation, displacing US incumbents from their leadership roles. An excellent case in achievement is Huawei's strides toward 5G and bringing China to the spearhead of this new era, even under intense global political pressure (Agarwala, 2019). This is in addition to the country

investing hugely in AI research from China, such as the Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence, which clearly shows its aspirations to lead when it comes to new technologies.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Regional Power Dynamics

One of China's neorealist approaches to counter US hegemony is the Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI is the most well-known international network of infrastructure projects in Asia, Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. It was launched in 2013 to enhance global cooperation, trade, and development. According to neorealism, all sovereign states finally seek power and security, and BRI is nothing more than a new tool to accomplish power-oriented objectives. In other words, it is grounded on economic coalition building. By sharing financial resources and experts, China increases its economic influence in target countries (Mobley, 2019). Qualitative analysis of policy documents and economic evidence reveals the strategic background of China's investments, showing that they are primarily oriented towards states with perceptible levels of US influence. When investing in infrastructure such as ports, railways, or energy projects, China fosters economic dependency and earns political influence over target countries. Moreover, the BRI initiative is designed to undermine the Western-based global economic status quo, closely aligned with neorealist theory. China has not been controlling the post-war global economic order as a rising hegemon, but the status quo was precisely designed to prevent such rises.

The dominance of the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund directly empowers the United States, allowing it to challenge Chinese objectives (Gong, 2020). By crafting its financing systems, China reduces the need to rely on US-based institutions, cultivating an international atmosphere that favors Chinese policy dominance. A quantitative approach to the phenomenon of BRI can also offer valuable perspectives. Analysis of investment flows or targeted trade areas can offer valuable insights, considering regional trade as an analysis area, which forms a straightforward method: it is possible to observe, for example, how investment priorities change from country to country in the Chinese vicinity. At the same time, monitoring the changes in trade routes or dependence openly demonstrates to what extent BRI changes existing power relations (Boni, 2021). Thus, neorealism is a valid theoretical perspective for comprehending China's foreign policy. Besides the findings on policy goals specific to the country, as presented above, the theory also offers a comprehensive model to understand China's foreign policy about international politics and struggles.

Conclusion

A keen awareness of the balance of power has characterized China's ascent in the international arena. During the Cold War, China navigated the bipolar world order with a strategy to maintain its sovereignty and avoid subjugation by either superpower. This period of strategic autonomy laid the groundwork for China's contemporary foreign policy, which continues to emphasize independence and the avoidance of entanglement in alliances that could limit its maneuverability. China's engagement in multilateral organizations and regional forums reflects its neo-realist approach. China's involvement in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other economic forums allows it to present itself as a leader in regional development, further strengthening its geopolitical position. The early 20th century saw China grappling with internal turmoil and foreign domination, leading to prolonged instability. The leadership of Deng Xiaoping was instrumental in this transformation, as he introduced economic reforms that shifted China from a centrally planned economy to a more market-oriented one, setting the stage for unprecedented growth and modernization.

China's neo-realist approach to competing with US hegemony in Asia is multifaceted and strategically nuanced. Rooted in the principles of realism, which emphasize the anarchic nature of the international system, state sovereignty, and the perpetual struggle for power and security, China's strategy reflects a calculated response to the shifting global dynamics and the constraints imposed by its historical, geopolitical, and economic context. This economic foundation has been critical in supporting China's broader strategic objectives. By leveraging its economic might, China has extended its influence across Asia and beyond, often through initiatives emphasizing mutual development and win-win cooperation. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a cornerstone of China's neo-realist strategy. By investing in infrastructure projects across Asia, Africa, and Europe, China aims to create economic dependencies and foster political goodwill. The BRI reflects China's understanding that economic power can be a potent tool for geopolitical influence. By improving connectivity and fostering economic ties, China seeks to build a network of relationships that enhance its strategic depth and reduce its vulnerability to external pressures. The economic interdependence created by the BRI not only boosts China's economic prospects but also binds participating countries closer to China, aligning their interests with Beijing's strategic objectives.

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