

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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CHINA'S STATUS IN ASIA PACIFIC. ITS REGIONAL INFLUENCE AND THE EFFECTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Abstract:	<p><i>The text of the article aims to analyze the political–military situation in the Southeast Asia area. It will emphasize the role of the Chinese state in regional politics and its impact on the system of international relations from several perspectives. China's position is grounded in policies implemented internally and the foreign affairs directions adopted by the Chinese Communist Party. The circumstances and consequences of the sharpening Security Dilemma are fueled by the tensions created by the worsening relations between the PRC and other states in the Pacific Ocean, the arms race, and the American intervention in Asian geopolitical affairs.</i></p> <p><i>The Pacific area is a territory where many states are emerging powers, which in the last year of the century, have engaged in an arms race, which does not foresee a happy ending. One of the biggest questions of the century is China's weight in the Security Dilemma. China's regional rise has recently been a concern for the Great Powers. The processes taking place in the Pacific area can compromise international peace.</i></p>
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Introduction

The realist paradigm is one of the most influential in the theoretical and methodological approach to the analysis of international relations, despite the harsh criticism from many analysts and experiencing several periodic crises in the history of political thought.

Coming from the realist perspective, realism explains that states' tendency, as the main actors, is to seek and prove power through conflicts. Realism is rooted in Thucydides' ideas, as well as in N. Machiavelli (*The Prince*)⁸⁴⁴, T. Hobbes (*Leviathan*)⁸⁴⁵, Cardinal Richelieu (*Raison d'Etat*)⁸⁴⁶, and H. J. Morgenthau (*Politics among Nations*)⁸⁴⁷. These personalities have stated the following ideas about political realism:

- The main source of conflicts is the selfish nature of the human nature;
- Power is the only regulating authority of international relations;

⁸⁴⁴ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Penguin Classics, Milton Keynes, 2009, p. 10

⁸⁴⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Andrew Croke, at the Green Dragon in St. Paul's Church-yard, London, 1651, p. 12

⁸⁴⁶ Cardinal Richelieu, *The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu*, Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, Maryland, 2020, p. 9

⁸⁴⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, McGraw-Hill Education, New-York, 2005, p. 9

- Morality is subordinated to the state's interest, according to the concept of Raison d'Etat. The international system is anarchic because there is no mandatory central power. The states are regulating the international system. Unlike the liberalism adepts, who claim that states are driven by specific universal morals, the realists claim that inter-state relations are by nature, conflictual, due to incompatible interests;
- Morgenthau explains „interest” as an absolute standard of political action⁸⁴⁸.

Realists claim that the international system is anarchic since there is no binding central power. Therefore, the function of regulating international relations rests on the units of the system, meaning the states. The main interest of the state is the maximization of power, leading to the control of resources⁸⁴⁹. The power allows the security and survival of international actors, and the greater the power, the stronger the security. As a result, the international environment is an arena of a constant power struggle, a “zero-sum” game, in which the world is striving for an absolute win⁸⁵⁰. Currently, the system of international relations is facing one of the most difficult periods of its history, a new multipolar architecture is being built. We are witnessing the end of a long timeline of about 500 years, in which historically, economically, and financially, the political dominance belonged to the West. The international relations system was Eurocentric, the fate of the nations was decided by the “The Concert of the Great Powers”, which, was joined by the United States of America in the 20th century. Nonetheless, in the last 10 years, we have witnessed a radical change in the development of international relations. The world is in the process of reconfiguring geopolitical space. A new multipolar system is being formed, which will correspond to the 21st-century realities and needs. The development of the globalization process in different parts of the world has led to the emergence of new centers of power, especially in the Asia-Pacific area. The biggest example is China, which due to its rapid economic growth is among the first economies of the world and one of the influential powers of the system of international relations. In this context, it should be noted that China is in a continuous modernization, and it is important to note that this process is not implemented in a Western form but takes place in a unique shape⁸⁵¹.

Background about China

The last years' events have shown themselves to be an incentive to change the international point of view regarding the People's Republic of China (PRC). Previously, the PRC was not a subject for discussion, but the political and economic development has raised the impact of China on international relations. China is one of the fastest economic growing powers in the world⁸⁵². Still, the growth of China calls for insecurities from other governments. At the base for the insecurities, are China's Government decisions in the external affairs domain, taken to strengthen its military abilities, as well as for the consolidation of its economic position in the region and worldwide.

There should be considered multiple factors which have contributed to the current position of China today. From the regional perspective, China plays one of the main roles in the Asia Pacific area. The state is investing a generous number of resources into the development of the regional infrastructure, such as roads, railways, bridges, ports, and airports in different Asian states, therefore, contributing to their economic and social enhancement⁸⁵³. Moreover, China represents one of the biggest economic partners for multiple states in the region, so, consequently, we can understand that China has an important vote in the decision-making process in the economic field of those states. China's influence on trade policies is manifested also within the commercial agreements, signed by multiple governments, such as Pakistan, Iran, the Russian Federation, and

⁸⁴⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1962, p. 92

⁸⁴⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Six Principles of Political Realism: International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, Robert Art&Robert Jervis, New York, 2005, p. 11

⁸⁵⁰ John Hulsman, *A Paradigm for the New World Order*, Palgrave, Basingstoke UK, 1997, p. 38

⁸⁵¹ Karen Brutens, *Velikaya geopoliticheskaya revolyutsiya: promezhutochnyye itogi*, “Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn”, Ministerstvo Inostrannikh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moskva, No. 12, 2015, pp. 60–62

⁸⁵² The World Bank, *World Bank national accounts data about GDP growth (annual %) – China*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN> (9.11.2023)

⁸⁵³ World Finance, *How China uses infrastructure as a means of control*, <https://www.worldfinance.com/featured/how-china-uses-infrastructure-as-a-means-of-control> (11.11.2023)

so on⁸⁵⁴. For example, during the Astana Economic Forum, Vice Minister of Commerce, Fu Ziyang and the Executive Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Union signed the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement between China and the Eurasian Economic Union⁸⁵⁵. In May 2015, the President of China, Xi Jinping, and the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin signed a Joint Statement of Docking Cooperation between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union⁸⁵⁶.

China's military potential plays another factor in maintaining this state's position and influence. In recent years, China has actively strengthened its powers and defense potential. PRC, owning a large army and well-trained navy, can directly or tacitly influence the political situation in the area⁸⁵⁷. The last decades, according to some authors, have known a peaceful development, only regarding the military agreements previously signed by the United States and its allies and China during the postbellum years. As the latest news shows, there are several states, based on their economic growths, indicate that they also pretend to have the title of Great Power in the Pacific: South Korea, Russian Federation, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan⁸⁵⁸.

The sudden growth of the Chinese economic potential has allowed Beijing to gather enough resources for modernizing and improving its military abilities, which transformed this state into a serious geopolitical player in the Pacific region. As an effect, we see other stable powers from the Pacific start adopting policies to equalize China's development status. My experts have concluded that Asia Pacific is still in geopolitical transition, due to the latest events. These events consist of an upsurge in military competition, arms races, and the possibility of a catastrophic military conflict⁸⁵⁹.

During the "Cold War" period, International Relations experts concluded that the Asia Pacific area was "ripe for rivalry" due to the risk of increasing military competition⁸⁶⁰. China's ascension in the economic global field, which has led to an augmentation of expenses for military modernization, has consequently created a vicious circle of arming⁸⁶¹. The speed of these actions amplifies the insecurities and the threat potential of each state. In case of a worse scenario of a conflict on a bigger scale in the Asia Pacific, the effects could be disastrous for the global economy and world order.

As mentioned in the introduction, referring to China, its successes in different fields have made the international society revise its attitude and considerations regarding this state. Mearsheimer, a neorealist adept, has written several articles in which PRC is mentioned. He also expresses his theories regarding the possible outcomes of where China's fast enhancement leads. Furthermore, he mentions that "China won't become a power to confirm the existing status-quo, but it would become an aggressive state which will pretend to consolidate its hegemony and power in the area"⁸⁶². There is a counter-opinion that supports the pacifist intentions of China's policies. It mainly claims that the PRC won't recur for expansionism, unless it is done for cultural purposes, under the plan implemented by Imperial China⁸⁶³.

⁸⁵⁴ China Briefing, *China's Free Trade Agreements Framework*, <https://www.china-briefing.com/doing-business-guide/china/why-china/china-s-international-free-trade-and-tax-agreements> (11.11.2023)

⁸⁵⁵ Ministry of Commerce People's Republic of China, *China and Eurasian Economic Union Officially Sign Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement*, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/201805/20180502746079.shtml> (11.11.2023)

⁸⁵⁶ Ministry of Commerce People's Republic of China, *China and Eurasian Economic Union Officially Sign Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement*, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/201805/20180502746079.shtml> (11.11.2023)

⁸⁵⁷ Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power*, W. W. Norton&Company, New York, 2015, p. 335

⁸⁵⁸ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 55

⁸⁵⁹ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 54

⁸⁶⁰ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2014, Vol. 39, No. 2, p. 55

⁸⁶¹ Aaron L. Friedberg, *Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1994, p. 5

⁸⁶² John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton&Company, New York, 2001, p. 14

⁸⁶³ Ronan Tse-min Fu, David James Gill, Eric Hundman, Adam P. Liff, G. John Ikenberry, *Correspondence: Looking for Asia's Security Dilemma*, "International Security", Oxford University Press, Oxford, Vol 40, No. 2, 2015, p. 184

If we were to examine the current situation through the circumstances that the rise of China presents to us, scholars predict a conflictual future. As realism expresses throughout its theory, according to human instincts, it's people's nature to seek power and fight to express superiority. So, in conclusion, the human known tendency to desire dominance over other people when gaining more power leads us to expect leaders to adopt expansionist policies. PRC's policies show the true intentions of the Chinese government, at least for now we are talking about the regional outcomes. China is driven by self-made beliefs that affect its orientations, goals, and purposes⁸⁶⁴.

Regarding China's military investments. In the last 25 years, the PRC has known a great development in the military aspect. It has considerably increased its military expenses to improve its warfare quantitatively and qualitatively⁸⁶⁵. Militarization involves declaratory policy statements, media commentary, and operational commitments⁸⁶⁶. Since 2000, The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has experienced improvements in its warfare programs⁸⁶⁷.

Chinese officials are arguing that all these actions are taken only to fulfill its "active defense"⁸⁶⁸. But still, Beijing may construe any affronts to its "sovereignty and territorial integrity" as an "attack"⁸⁶⁹. Specific to China is its transparency when it comes to military programs. In the last few years, the PLA has been endowed with aircraft carrier programs, stealth aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, submarines, medium-range ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons, and cyberwarfare capabilities⁸⁷⁰.

As for China's neighbors, PLA represents an imminent threat objective, because China might be in a long-term strategic plan with no awareness of the destabilizing consequences of regional and world order. These unknowing factors contribute to the appearance of a process with irreversible results⁸⁷¹.

The Security Dilemma

The main outcome of the arms race and excessively implemented military enhancement policies is a highly discussed subject, which is driven by insecurity, fear, uncertainty, and mistrust. In other words, it's the upcoming security dilemma, which even though now is affecting mainly the Far-East part of the world, could be involving the entire world in the following years. The security dilemma itself represents situations where each party involved, takes actions for defensive purposes, driven by insecurity and uncertainty regarding the other states' intentions, but prefers to avoid destabilizing competitions and mutual arming⁸⁷². The result is a disastrous situation that could be fixed, only if each of the involved parties is restrained from proper action and would express their defensive intentions⁸⁷³. The Security Dilemma itself is a consequence of an anarchic environment. The changes that are occurring at a political and economic level have made scholars expect an exacerbation of the military competition which could evolve into a catastrophic conflict.

Realists pay special attention to the balance of power in the international arena, which is currently changing in several areas of the world. In the realist view, the ultimate principle of international relations is power, and each state seeks to maximize it. Through the balance of power, international politics becomes a "zero-sum" game, in which somebody's win means a loss for the opponent. This is occurring in Central Asia and Asia-Pacific where China has started to increase its presence. The modernization program of the Chinese

⁸⁶⁴ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 57

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 66

⁸⁶⁶ Michael O'Keefe, *The Militarisation of China in the Pacific: Stepping Up to a New Cold War*, "Security Challenges", Institute for Regional Security, Kingston, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2020, p. 95

⁸⁶⁷ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 57

⁸⁶⁸ Adam P. Liff, Andrew S. Erickson, *Demystifying China's Defence Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate*, "The China Quarterly", Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Vol. 216, December 2013, pp. 821 – 823

⁸⁶⁹ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 66

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 67

⁸⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 68

⁸⁷² John H. Herz, *Idealist Internationalism, and the Security Dilemma*, "World Politics", Princeton University, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1950, p. 157

⁸⁷³ Ronan Tse-min Fu, David James Gill, Eric Hundman, Adam P. Liff, G. John Ikenberry, *Correspondence: Looking for Asia's Security Dilemma*, "International Security", Oxford University Press, Oxford, Vol 40, No. 2, 2015, p. 184

armed forces, the space, maritime, and ballistic missile components, causes a series of concerns. In this sense, the traditional drivers of US military supremacy in the Asia-Pacific region can be called into question⁸⁷⁴.

From the Chinese realists' perspective, they believe that Beijing must maintain its sovereignty in its domestic politics and requires a strong, modernized army. Moreover, Beijing needs a rigid foreign policy, oriented towards the defense of national interests. Many experts believe that China is slowly turning into a state whose actions are aimed at changing the international *status quo*. This process gained momentum following the global crisis of 2008-2009, which strengthened China's economic position⁸⁷⁵.

Sino-American Rivalry

An explanation for the actions taken by China in this critical situation is for it to diminish the military superiority of the United States. Also, the Chinese Government criticizes all the US efforts done to "constrain the development" of China, because the USA declares itself a Great Power in the Asia Pacific⁸⁷⁶. PRC has engaged itself in the process of realizing its defensive purposes through different tactics. From the realist paradigm perspective, the US-China relations are reaching a dangerous level, where the main objective is the open race for power and the formation of alliances. Under such conditions, any incident could cause a large-scale conflict for example in the South China Sea or Taiwan.

Of course, neither the US nor China wants the uncontrolled escalation of a conflict. However, the intensification of the military capabilities of both sides and the intentions of the leaders has their destructive logic. Inside US intelligence and the military, where the planning horizon is not limited by the election cycle, concerns about China's growing potential are far greater than in political circles. The picture is even more different if we look at the struggle of interest groups in the US Congress. Many Republican congressmen share the ideas of realists in international relations and are supporters of a hard line in relations with China, which is seen as a competitor. For example, Randy Forbes has formed the "Congressional China Caucus" in Congress, which unites members of Congress who are concerned about China's global growth⁸⁷⁷.

An analysis of the official US documents regarding China from the last two decades shows us that the concern for China is growing. In 2008, the Office of the Director of National Security started to operate with the term *multipolarity of international relations* in its reports. In 2011, the Security Strategy of the USA exposed a great concern for the modernization of China's military forces. It is also mentioned that the US will demonstrate the will to resist and allocate resources to ensure regional and global security⁸⁷⁸. In this context, in November 2011, Hillary Clinton published the document "*America's Pacific Century*". The Secretary of State stated that "*The future of international politics will be decided in Asia, not in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the US will be at the center of these events*"⁸⁷⁹. Taiwan, in this policy, becomes the place where the military-strategic and political intensity in American Chinese relations escalates.

Taiwan's Case

The best example would be the analysis of the disputed territory, Taiwan. The Taiwan issue has been an old problem between China and the United States of America and has reemerged as a high-profile problem on the agenda of Sino-US relations⁸⁸⁰. The geostrategic position of Taiwan and its military potential have given

⁸⁷⁴ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 65

⁸⁷⁵ Nabil Hudda, *Interpreting the Rise of China: Realist and Liberalist Perspectives*, April 3, 2015, <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/04/03/interpreting-the-rise-of-china-realist-and-liberalist-perspectives/> (12.11.2023)

⁸⁷⁶ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", Vol. 39, No. 2, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2014, p. 55

⁸⁷⁷ John T. Bennett, *China's Tough Talk Gives Boost to Washington*, "U.S. News", 30.03.2012, https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/dotmil/2012/03/30/chinas-tough-talk-gives-boost-to-washington?google_editors_picks=true (12.11.2023)

⁸⁷⁸ Richard L. Kugler, *New Direction in U.S. National Security Strategy, Defense Plans, and Diplomacy*, "Institute for National Strategic Studies", Center for Technology and National Security Policy, Washington DC, 2011, pp. 17-18

⁸⁷⁹ Hillary Clinton, *America's Pacific Century*, „Foreign Policy”, <http://foreignpolicy.com/-2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/> (12.11.2023)

⁸⁸⁰ Weixing Hu, *Trump's China Policy and its Implications for the 'Cold Peace' across the Taiwan Strait*, "The China Review", The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, Hong Kong, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2018, pp. 62

these two powers a reason to fight. Following who holds the influence over Taiwan, that state would hold the title of the Greatest Power in the Pacific, because as some experts claim, Taiwan itself represents a defensive barrier against Chinese expansionism, but if China were to annex the island, Taiwan could become a launching pad for Chinese aggression⁸⁸¹. Each of them claims this territory to achieve their own defensive and/or offensive military goals⁸⁸². Still, it would be necessary to address the political importance of Taiwan as well, not only the military benefit.

The position of the island in the Philippines Sea also adds to the motifs of influence. The geopolitical position of this territory could be a worthy pretext for a conflict to start. China claims this area, introducing the argument of the unified Chinese nation, not clearly expressing all the supposed reasons, including the west side of the Philippines Sea. The United States' goal is to freely operate in the Philippine Sea without China's interference, with the help of the US allies, to perform "containment" against China⁸⁸³. The military value of Taiwan is very important to China and motivates reunification beyond the purely nationalist impulses that are most referenced⁸⁸⁴.

The unification of the Chinese nation would offer scenarios for all the parts involved, China, Taiwan, and the United States. Because each of the states has different interests in the area, it would have more than slightly distinct outcomes. To take the first scenario, the one before unification, it is worth pointing out that the United States has already installed submarine detectors against Chinese submarines⁸⁸⁵. Limiting the possibility of Chinese navy and submarine access in the area is giving the US the possibility to surveil the entire region of the Philippines Sea without China's interference.

Considering the next one after the nation unification, gaining control of this territory would allow China to install military bases in several coastal places, including the ports of Taiwan⁸⁸⁶. If China ends up annexing the whole Taiwanese territory, the Chinese submarines will have a green light to enter the sea without meeting any of the American barriers, because they would be banned from patrolling among those islands. There is still speculation that if China indeed annexes Taiwan, it will use it as a launching zone for future attacks, using advanced technologies. The American alternative would suppose the fact that it would limit any Chinese expansion, and to not accept any compromises⁸⁸⁷.

Taiwan, besides being an important region from a strategic point of view for China, has also interdependent economic links and their lack would considerably compromise China. Taiwan is one of the biggest producers of microchips, used in the warfare construction industry, which benefits both the US and China. Still, economic interdependence does not always guarantee peace. Unfortunately, sometimes, like in this case, it only adds fuel to the fire in any scenario. It is lacking and its presence predicts a compromising future. US-China economic, ideological, and security competition further intensifies, rather than coming to an end. This is because cooperation would be seen as self-harming when the two countries are locked in a zero-sum competition for global leadership⁸⁸⁸.

Conclusions

The rise of China is one of the most important events with outcomes for the world order. The rise of China and rapid economic development throughout the Asia Pacific has consequently worsened and destabilized military competition⁸⁸⁹.

⁸⁸¹ Brendan Rittenhouse Green, Caitlin Talmadge, *Then What? Assessing the Military Implications of Chinese Control of Taiwan*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2022, p. 15

⁸⁸² John J. Mearsheimer, *Taiwan's Dire Straits*, "The National Interest", Center for the National Interest, No. 130, April 2014, p. 33

⁸⁸³ Victor Teixeira, *The United States' China Containment Strategy and the South China Sea Dispute*, "Central European Journal of International and Security Studies", Metropolitan University Prague Press, Prague, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2019, p. 170

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16

⁸⁸⁵ Owen R. Cote Jr., *Assessing the Undersea Balance Between the U.S. and China*, "MIT Security Studies Program, Working Paper", February 2011, pp. 10-13

⁸⁸⁶ Peter Howarth, *China's Rising Sea Power: The PLA Navy's Submarine Challenge*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 38

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 17

⁸⁸⁸ Henry Kissinger, *The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order*, "Wall Street Journal", 3 April 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-pandemic-will-forever-alter-the-world-order-11585953005> (10.11.2023)

⁸⁸⁹ Adam P. Liff, John Ikenberry, *Racing toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 60

The regional ascension of China has become a subject of worry for the Great Powers. The processes that are occurring in the Pacific area can compromise world peace. Mearsheimer and other authors support the idea that the Chinese ascension became dangerous because it launched the chained reaction of excessive arming. Still, China's counterargument is the fact that its goals only aim to rebalance the American influence in the Pacific. China's position could be characterized by a defensive realism, rather than by an offensive one. Coming from the study case example, the one exposing the Taiwanese importance, the sole danger that China presents to the United States is the fact that it would compromise some activity fields with the allies and use the geopolitical benefits Taiwan is presenting⁸⁹⁰.

The United States and its allies should instead be competing with China in economic diplomacy⁸⁹¹. Even though the Chinese state has not shown its full power yet, nor its hegemony from the political point of view, China has manifested itself from the economic point of view at its fullest. China holds membership in multiple international organizations, such as the UN, WTO, and SCO⁸⁹². China could become a prospering source for the Far East⁸⁹³.

The goal, however, should not be to prevent or preempt China's activities but to incentivize Beijing to provide more transparency and accountability in its lending⁸⁹⁴. Using economic tools, including building closer trading relations and providing foreign aid, has been China's second main means to wield influence in the Pacific⁸⁹⁵.

China continues to play a generally constructive role in the key international, political, and economic institutions. "China has determined that in most circumstances - and at least for now - its needs are best met by seeking to shape the current global framework from inside the tent". The Chinese Communist Party holds the highest positions in multiple international ports. This fact serves as a worrying reason for the experts because China would be able to use this position in ports not only for peaceful reasons but also to fulfill its military goals⁸⁹⁶.

The most promising solution would be integrating China into the multipolar international system, at its full power and capacity, rather than isolating and limiting it from its expansionist policies, to reach a stable and safe situation in the region, because that would benefit the whole world. Being part of the solution is better than being part of a problem.

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⁸⁹¹ Thomas J. Christensen, *No New Cold War: Why US-China Strategic Competition Will Not Be like the US-Soviet Cold War*, "Asan Institute for Policy Studies", 2020, p. 42

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⁸⁹⁶ Isaac B. Kardon, Wendy Leutert, *Pier Competitor: China's Power Position in Global Ports*, "International Security", The MIT Press, Cambridge, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2022, p. 41

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