

China Rising: Friend or Foe?

Written by Helena Baillio

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HELENA BAILLIO, MAR 24 2010

A rising power is considered as the emergence of a new, major power that potentially can play a prominent role in the international system. This status is achieved through increased military, economic, political, or other factors relating to the domestic environment in comparison to other states. The rising state's global effect is unpredictable. The end result may be positive, as in the case of the United States as a major power, but can also be detrimental, as was seen with the rise of the Soviet Union. Foreign policy is often affected and leaves great uncertainties in the global environment. Dominant powers historically have been challenged by the emergence of another rising power. Therefore, it is essential that we consider what type of challenge the rising power of China may pose.

Demographically, development has been unequally distributed in the rural and urban areas. In addition, the population of China alone equates to twenty percent of the world's total population. Not only does population growth lend to high unemployment rates, but its population is aging and unable to sustain itself. Land is scarce and resources are increasingly limited. In Germany, population growth combined with lack of adequate resources is what motivated Hitler's attempts at world domination. China, however, experiences a state of political instability that would not support any attempt at such an effort. Its rich economical position is subject to foreign policy that also influences its behavior. These challenges combined with the political nature of the China have been deemed "dragon's ailments" that will not support its efforts towards a self-sufficient state.

How does China's rise to power affect the United States then, and much more the humanitarian objectives of the international system? The international system is currently a unipolar or hegemonic system with the United States playing a dominant role in international affairs. With China rising as an economic power combined with its authoritarian political system and realist perspective, it threatens the globalization efforts and democratic beliefs of not only the U.S., but the international system as a whole. Should it expand its reach and deepen its economic roots, then its contrasting structure would conflict with and infringe itself in a way that would ultimately lead to war.

There is opposition regarding China as a looming threat as it advances economically. It is viewed by some that the Chinese are taking steps towards globalization as they are becoming more active in their regional and global affairs. China knows that it cannot challenge the United States dominance, so it ultimately has no choice but to accept its position as a global partner. Alternatively, another view is that China's economic growth will provide it with an array of instruments with which to try to exert influence on other countries and carry out a strategic competition with the United States. The majority also supports the desired outcome of China's rise to bring about a more liberalized, democratic, and capitalist China that is a responsible member of the international system.

Nations have recognized that non-state actors are instrumental in the pursuit of globalization efforts by providing expert advice, training activities, national and international partnerships, and various other support systems. The utilization of international organizations can be a powerful tool in shaping the world. Their activities can be highly effective in managing issues such as governance and humanity. As Intergovernmental Organizations aim for the betterment of society as a whole, their impact on foreign policy is significant. As states desire membership into these organizations, as exemplified with China's enduring efforts to obtain membership into the World Trade Organization, they often conform their policy to represent that of the terms and expectations of the Intergovernmental Organization. As International Organizations are often vast in their membership base, they allow for a means of communication and interaction amongst states through common ground of which might have otherwise been unavailable.

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IGO's have increasingly become involved in the affairs of nation-states and international relations, and have not so much failed but have taken advantage of opportunity by allowing the contributors of non-state actors. Nongovernmental Organizations are transnational in nature and consist of private members rather than states. Their focus is on specific tasks, beneath the level of which the state or Intergovernmental Organization might work. Their impact on the international community, however, is significant as their capabilities of influence can be powerful. Because of their targeted specialties and transnational nature, they tend to be able to involve themselves in areas that others may not as they do not threaten the sovereignty of the state.

Multinational Corporations are sometimes the most powerful, as they can drive the economy of a nation. Their large economic contribution often allows them power to manipulate policy, especially in developing nations. These giant corporations, while intending to capitalize on market opportunities, often find themselves greatly affecting the welfare and government of the environment in which they conduct business. In fact, the MNC can play the role of a non-state actor, as in recognizing human rights responsibilities. Companies like Allied Health Professionals, MAP International, and Hightowers Petroleum are examples of non-state actors taking a global initiative by joining forces with the UN through organizations such as the Global Compact Society. Organizations such as these can be used as effective tools in emphasizing the necessity for human rights issues as we progress in our relations with China.

Additionally, the use of public diplomacy can be well suited to prevent conflict from occurring in nations that are dispositional to future conflict. Through positive message making and reinforcement, the United States could penetrate the ideology of China which would *"tell America's story; engage in dialogue with the rest of the world; resolve misunderstandings; build international relationships; and work together in a spirit of friendship and common purpose. (Waller, p35)"* Conveying our message prior to conflict will grant ease of access to the population as we attempt to influence their behavior and perceptions. By incorporating public diplomacy into policy in the absence of war, the United States could prioritize human rights, gaining international support and recognition granting it a sort of soft power. This would produce a 'rally round the flag' effect in the international community deepening relations abroad and allow for it to further promote a positive relationship with China.

The United Nations is an example of an international organization that works to promote Human Rights through various organizations and nation-states through development programs, democratization efforts, and operational activities. By establishing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), it has provided a framework for nations to support its goals and various activities in a uniform treaty on a global scale. One of the biggest challenges faced by an IGO, however, is the ability to communicate its norms in a multi-cultural way that is viewed as acceptable for all societies. By establishing a set of universal principles, inclusive of core-values such as fairness, equality, universality, and non-discrimination, we are able to minimize the cultural, religious, and political differences that divide nations. These values not only consist of what is considered international norms, but are representative of national and local norms that cannot be ignored. These uniformly unite all cultures through the UDHR. Upon that foundation, all countries have accepted the UDHR regardless of their participation in individual treaties. The United Nations has defined humanitarian affairs as a key issue in their policy, and their incorporation of the relinquishment of poverty and hunger, and attending to the international health crisis as set forth in the Millennium Development Goals. Although States retain sovereignty, it has come to pass that humanitarian aid overrides states sovereignty in times of crisis, as sovereignty can be forfeited.

To predict the result of China's rising and the humanitarian impact is a daunting and impossible task. One can only consider previous trends in both the history of China and those of previous rising powers. Considering the instability of China's government combined with its authoritarian politics, we can assume China to pose a threat, but the ability for them to survive economically in a head on collision with the United States seems unlikely.

As a power such as China come to rise, it can at its discretion take the role of a rival, a partner, or disguise itself and ultimately be both. The rise of the United States resulted in a complete change in the international system that had a positive ripple effect on international relations. In contrast, the rise of the Soviet Union spurred a conflict that costs the lives of many and challenged the international system to a tremendous degree. Agreeably, we must consider all sides and take into account the many possibilities and outcomes. Although a threat may not currently exist, it may very well become a reality if ignored. Therefore, an emphasis on human rights through public diplomacy and positive

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interaction with both China and the international community may be the key that opens the door to building positive relations between the United States and China in the future.

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