

# 1 Introduction

The end of the Cold War has witnessed the gradual rise of a number of new regional power centres –Brazil, Russia, India, and China – that have the power to influence regional affairs on account of their recently enhanced economic, military, and political resources. Of the aforementioned countries, China’s rise has unquestionably received the greatest interest, owing to its vast economic and military potential, immense global economic, environmental, and political impact, as well as unique domestic political and social conditions. Thus China’s rise has naturally drawn increasing attention to its foreign policy, which has been transforming as a result of domestic development as well as changes in the post-Cold War international order.

When China’s economy started its take off after Deng Xiaoping’s assumption of paramount leadership, China’s new domestic priorities – economic growth, reform, and modernization – were accompanied by a radical turn in foreign policy that was adjusted to serve these domestic policy priorities. Deng realised that to ensure continuous economic growth and modernization, China would benefit from a stable and peaceful regional environment, as well as better relations with Western economic partners. Consequently, Mao’s isolationist and often confrontational policies were abandoned and Deng began fostering amicable relations with regional neighbours and the West.

Consequently, China became more deeply involved in international political and economic matters of regional importance, developed new relationships within Central Asia and gradually began mending fences with India and Russia. In addition, China began a steady integration into the network of global trade and financial institutions, which offered the rising economic power a greater say in trade matters, improved access to aid and economic data, and an increased sense of economic reliability and stability.

Steadfast economic growth and active regional foreign have soon elevated China to a position of a regional great power. For China’s neighbours and global powers alike, this has created both hope for more economic opportunities as well as anxiety regarding the impact of China’s continuing rise for their security and sovereignty.

Questions have surfaced globally over the nature of China's role as regional or even global great power, questions over whether China poses a security threat to their country (mostly a topic among American scholars) or, more broadly, whether China would become a wider threat to international security. As China's astounding economic growth and growing influence are shifting the country to a point where it has the "opportunity to do what it wants instead of what it must"<sup>1</sup> as Nicholas Kristof puts it, the question a great number of policy makers and analysts have been posing is whether China's expanding security interests will lead it to opt for solutions outside the existing international order; or integrate more closely with the current international system – its institutions, norms, and values. In other words, will China seek to overthrow the existing Western international order and strive for "[...] a drama that will end with the grand ascendance of China and the onset of an Asian-centered world order?"<sup>2</sup>

The debate has in general lines split between a viewpoint tending towards the realist line, and a widely neoliberal perspective. The realist and neo-realists international relations (IR) theorists have felt more need for concern over China's rise. This mainly stems from the historic-systemic viewpoint intrinsic to realism concerning the rise and fall of great powers. According to this view, throughout history, powerful states (having occupied different classifications such as hegemons, global powers, hyper-powers, or simply great powers) have risen from the dust of the old, declining powers to dominate the international system of states, ruling it as they see most beneficial for their interests as well as for upholding the system that serves their interests. The rise of new powers and the process of transition from a declining power to a rising one, as well as attempts by rising powers to stake their claim within the existing system of international relations has had defining effects on the character and structure, as well as the peace and stability of the international system. Because the structure of the international system is seen to be determined by power relations, and changes in the power balance destabilize the international system, China's rise has been seen as a destabilizing force, and a danger to the prevailing Western dominated international order.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristof, Nicholas D. 1993. "The Rise of China." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72(5): 59–74.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The alternate outlook foresees that China will integrate into the international system as a cooperative and constructive partner. This neoliberal viewpoint is supported by the view that China is rising in a vastly different international system from those that existed in the past, and thus renders China more inclined to be integrated into the existing system without bringing about instability or conflict.<sup>3</sup>

This new, globalized system of international relations is one enmeshed in a web of international organizations, transnational corporations as well as international non-governmental organizations, global media coverage and the Internet. As a result, states and people as well as their interests are now more closely integrated and their actions mutually dependent. Neo-liberal analysts therefore believe conflict and instability caused by China's growing power and influence is less likely to occur, because China will be drawn towards cooperation that guarantees economic, political, environmental and other benefits. In time, cooperation is expected to deepen, creating mutual interdependence and thereby Chinese integration into the existing international system that will mitigate international anarchy.

There is in the end no knowing how China will use its increasing influence and power to protect its interests and achieve its goals in the future. Although in many ways China has successfully integrated into the international system, a number of controversial issues have arisen regarding China's international relations. In addition a number of conservative China watchers have expressed concern regarding China's growing military spending which accompany the spread of China's economic and political interests. China's development into a great power is accompanied by contradictory developments, and it is not really certain what to expect of a China that has achieved an even more significant political military and economic global position. What is certain though, as John Ikenberry cautions, is that "the rise of China will undoubtedly be one of the great dramas of the twenty-first century,"<sup>4</sup>, pointing out, perhaps that China's rise, which has already had a great impact on our world is part of a drama yet without a certain ending, still waiting to be played out on the world stage.

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<sup>3</sup> Lanteigne, Marc. 2005. *China and International Institutions: Alternate Paths to Global Power*. New York: Routledge, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ikenberry, John G. 2008. "The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87(1): 23-27. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080101faessay87102/g-john-ikenberry/the-rise-of-china-and-the-future-of-the-west.html>.

A major reason for difficulties in conducting research on China's future role as a global great power behaviour lies in the above described concentration on regional affairs, as well as the prevailing economic focus of its foreign policy. The first decades of opening up have not created many opportunities for evaluating the impact of China's global rise in terms of global strategic issues and collective security and responsibility. Since the 1980s, the underlying goal of China's foreign policy has been to bolster its economic growth, economic integration, and economic cooperation. This approach has been coloured by a preference to avoid tackling issues that would exact compromises on matters of national importance, while also trying to avoid confrontation with the West. While concentrating on economic cooperation and integration, China was careful not to set any precedents that could harm its own sovereignty, including shelving a number of territorial disputes during the 90s to avoid controversies.

In its diplomatic rhetoric, China's international relationships since the 1950s have been based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. These principles include non-interference in the affairs of states and sovereignty as crucial rules for China's establishment and conduct of international relationships. Thus, during the first decades of opening up, China integrated into and cooperated actively with mainly international and regional economic and financial institutions, but did not become active in security-related issues,<sup>5</sup> as it would have required greater collective responsibility and compromise on the issues of sovereignty or non-intervention.

In recent years, however, increasing economic growth has greatly expanded the realm of China's foreign policy interests, as well as capabilities. On the one hand, this has been the result of China's increasing economic growth and interdependence with the world; while on the other hand, China's foreign policy has increasingly been under pressure from growing need for foreign resources to support its economic growth. As a result of these two important factors, China is now considerably more dependent on global economic and political developments and it has changed the nature of the foreign policy issues the Chinese government is faced with.

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the Taiwan question

The thesis here is based on the belief that China's increased dependence on imported resources creates new strategic issues for China's foreign policy and thus provides new opportunities for evaluating the strategic impact of the rising China not only on regional, but also on the wider world order.

The thesis here will make use of these developments to analyse how China has chosen to deal with these new strategic issues and subsequently ask what China's approach to resolving its energy security issues shows about China's approach to foreign policy and as an extension its behaviour in the international system as its power and capabilities grow. In conceptual terms, the thesis analyses how a rising power, with greater capabilities and power for taking action, deals with its increasing interests on a global scale and furthermore, how this impacts on the international order. More specifically, the thesis seeks to debate on the question of whether a rising great power necessarily challenges the existing international order, causing instability and friction, in order to achieve its interests; or is it possible that the rising power chooses cooperation ahead of competition, acts within the scope of the existing order to achieve its goals and, furthermore, finds it beneficial to integrate into it rather than oppose or challenge it or the existing hegemony.

For these purposes, the proposed thesis will examine how China's rapidly increasing energy dependence has influenced its foreign policy. The aim is to evaluate how China deals with the new threats presented by growing energy import dependence and, in so doing, works to gain further insight into how China, as a great power with increasing interests, influence and capabilities, acts within the existing international order.

China's choice of policies is intertwined with the theme of global responsibility of great powers, a topic that has been increasingly often invoked with relation to the rise of China. The thesis will contribute to the analysis of whether China is moving towards becoming responsible stakeholder within the international order. This would mean complying with existing rules and norms that protect peace and freedom, as well as accepting greater global responsibility for one's actions as well as problems facing the international community and its people. If China was diverging from such responsibility and was mounting a significant challenge to the norms and values of the

Western liberal international order, there would be a valid concern over the character of the rising China and the stability of the international order.

The aim of the research is thus not only to assess Chinese foreign policy behaviour through its approach to energy supply security, but also to analyze foreign policy behaviour in the context of China's rise to get an idea of how the 'drama of China's rise' may eventually impact on the stability and security of the existing international order. The thesis at hand will contribute to discussions regarding China's rise and its impact on the international order and stability.

With these aims in mind the thesis will be divided into five chapters. After this brief introduction, the thesis will continue with a literature review, dealing with China's rise and its impact on the international order, trying to introduce the parameters of debate, from the Western as well as the Chinese viewpoint. In addition, the chapter raises the concept of international order in political theory, a requisite task for building up a robust theoretical framework for analysing China's impact on it. The subsequent chapter explores the underlying motivations of China's energy security foreign policy necessary to gauge the importance of the energy security issue to China on a number of different levels. Such motives emanate from its domestic circumstances as well as China's direct energy security threats and threat perceptions, which will both be discussed with the view of determining the importance of the concept of energy security for China. Chapter four will progress toward a detailed analysis of China's approach to enhancing its energy supply security to ascertain the methods China has chosen to deal with the threats it perceives from energy dependence, and how that has influenced the character of China's foreign policy. The last Chapter will concentrate on the impact of China's energy security foreign policy on the international order, taking the research in the previous chapter as a basis for the analysis.