

DEFENCE DIPLOMACY & NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Views from the Global South

EDITORS

Ian Liebenberg
Dirk Kruijt
Shrikant Paranjpe

China in a Global World

Ian Liebenberg and Justin van der Merwe

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of the growth of China as a political, military and economic power since its emergence as an independent communist state in 1949. China became a notable political force during the era of decolonisation (1950-1980) and one of the leading states within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Due to its relative economic development and substantial population, China became well-known for posing alternatives to Western domination. During the era of decolonisation, China's external involvement increased through its use of soft power and as a result of its support for liberation movements in Africa. The end of the Cold War saw the demise of the bipolar world and resulted in unipolarity. More recently, however, multipolarity has taken root through the rise or resurgence of non-Western emerging powers. Since 1990, and especially since 2000, China has moved from being a regional hegemon to a global power. This chapter describes the rise of China and its current status as an aspiring global hegemon. Although the chapter is mainly descriptive, it also provides some reflective and analytical notes on China's current and conceivable future role on the international stage.

Background

The Washington Conference of 1921/1922 recognised China's sovereignty and independence. From 1922, the area now known as China experienced violent Western colonial interventions, civil war, and contesting "Republics", before the emergence of the communist People's Republic of China in 1949, which became a notable power in the Global South. China grew in stature in global politics between the 1960s and 1990s, growth which accelerated from 2000. Today, it is one of the undisputed global political and economic powers.

The rise of modern China represents a unique historical trajectory. The Chinese civilisation went through tumultuous periods and several changes, ranging from the early rise of interactive communities (3000 BCE) and the Shang/Yin settlements (1700-112 BCE), through several dynasties such as the Chou and Ch'in period (1100-221 BCE), the Ch'in Empire (221-206 BCE), and the Han Dynasty. After the demise of the Han Empire, the Wei, Shu Han and Wu dynasties were overtaken by the Sui and T'ang dynasties (circa 500-756 CE). The *Sturm und Drang* that led to the creation of today's geographical region of China foreshadowed what was to come.

Over these periods of new orders supplanting or surpassing old ones, unique forms of writing, bureaucracy, legislation, and military organisation (including conscription) evolved. From 1211, periods of Mongol rule were interspersed with the growth of a gradually unifying China. Systems of administration developed, trade flourished, and literature and culture bloomed through both long-term internal developments and some infusion from outside, until the Mongols were driven out around 1400. The centralised rule and extensive (centralised) bureaucracies that have become key features in modern China began to develop in this period. The Ming dynasty brought further developments and unification, and the aims of foreign policy at the time were for the centralised state to maintain the security of a (presumably) uniting China, prevent further Mongol interference, and to retain and expand trade channels.

Gavin Menzies suggests that, following the expulsion of the last of the Mongols, Emperor Zhu Di built up an army of nearly a million and brought Japan and Korea under Chinese influence, and some would argue that this already augured well for a greater China. Zhu Di also dispatched a large armada of merchant and battleships, initiating a maritime tradition that was to grow significantly in the years to come (Menzies, 2003). Regarding grey diplomacy, these ambitious maritime ventures certainly brought China into the international picture as far back as the middle of the 1400s, if only briefly. The Ch'in dynasty marked further cultural growth.

In his work, *Africa in History*, Basil Davidson points out that trade between Africa, China and India developed between 900 and 1300 CE (Davidson, 2001:114, 193). The rise of Islamic expansion also played a role here (Davidson, 2001:72, 193). By the 1400s, trade between the East Coast of Africa and the Far East was well-established, though it was soon to be interrupted and violently taken over by the Portuguese (Davidson, 2001:194). The decline of the dynasties in China introduced the 'Western Challenge' or Western intervention from 1839 onwards.

As mentioned, the Washington Conference of 1921/1922 signalled the West's formal recognition of China's status. Despite international recognition, the country was to experience leadership and military rivalries, Japanese aggression, internal and external strife, and a civil war that lasted from 1945 to 1949. In 1949, a Chinese communist government came to power under Mao Zedong. The Nationalist forces withdrew to Taiwan and declared a republic, despite mainland China viewing it as merely a belligerent province. This remains a contentious international issue to this day.

In Beijing, a red star rises

Following the establishment of the People's Republic in mainland China in 1949, development and socio-economic transformation were both expected and demanded by

the Chinese people, and the political leadership that created these expectations had to address the pressing questions of modernisation, industrialisation and large-scale land reform. The decades 1949 to 1979 saw many developments, as the country experienced (sometimes contradictory) political developments, experiments in policy, intense leadership clashes, and elements of Soviet-style five-year plans. The period was also marked by economic policies that swung from a focus on industrialisation to land reform for the peasant population. The Hundred Flowers campaign (1956-1957) opened up criticism of Mao and brought great political turmoil. However, Mao survived. The Great Leap Forward saw attempts to build a rural industry, ending more in disaster than success (Service, 2007:331ff.), but Mao's image remained largely intact despite public criticism (Service, 2007:334). The so-called Cultural Revolution that arose with Mao's tacit consent, had to be reined in by the Chairman himself by 1969 (Service, 2007:339).

Despite these upheavals, during the 1950s, together with the Soviet Union, China represented a rising 'Red Danger' for the (liberal) capitalist West or its allies. The latter formed a military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while a Russo-Chinese treaty signed in February 1950 brought together the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. Other treaties signed during the visit of Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) to Moscow in 1952 further cemented these ties, and China soon announced its first five-year plan along the lines of a Soviet model (Calvocoressi, 1982:54). The Korean War during the 1950s seemed to draw China and the Soviet Union closer together and created greater distance from the United States (US) and its allies (Calvocoressi, 1982:58-60). The Cold War was in full swing.

However, relations between the Soviet Union and China were strained, despite their shared commitment to international communism. Calvocoressi suggests that, by 1956/1957, the relationship was 'ruffled by suspicion and friction' due to differences in strategy on how to spread the communist ideology abroad. The issue was further complicated by personal differences between Mao and Khrushchev (Calvocoressi, 1982:64ff.). The rising influence of China, its involvement in Africa, its links with Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania within Moscow's arc of influence, its move away from industrialisation and Marxism-Leninism (as perceived by Communist leadership in Moscow), and border clashes with the Soviet Union all played a role in creating distance between Moscow and Beijing (Boggs & Boggs, 1974:72-75; Lundestad, 1991:242; Service, 2007). So too did national pride, with Lundestad (1991:239) noting that,

... [t]wo countries as strong and proud as the Soviet Union and China could not see eye to eye despite their commitment to the ideology of communism ... China was not a major power at the moment, but the Chinese traditionally (assumed) that they are (a centre of the world) and believed in a great future.

To complicate matters, China opened itself to a rapprochement with the US (Dallek, 2007), and the overtures made by the then president, Richard Nixon, closely advised by Henry Kissinger, contributed to more tension between the Soviet Union and China. Kissinger and Nixon succeeded in the goal of splitting the Soviet Union and China, despite these two countries sharing similar goals. China gained international stature through this exercise and proved that it was an actor on the global stage, although in the politics of the so-called 'Third World' or the 'Global South', it had already achieved this stature. The ping-pong diplomacy of Mao and the Chinese leadership's choice to do their own thing were key reasons for the split with the Soviet Union (Dallek, 2007:267-268; Lundestad, 1991:239, 241).

Meanwhile, in the West, the ruling discourse and world view defined by political and military leaders was that the world was caught up in a Cold War between 'rational' liberal capitalism and 'irrational' communism. Much of this was underpinned by the mentality of the US and its allies of being the benevolent masters of world politics – global guardianship or *Herrschaft*. The US had been the undisputed Western and global economic power since World War I, and its economy already outstripped that of Britain by 1900, further benefitting from the two World Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) which brought social dislocation and havoc to Europe, but were never fought on American soil. The US enjoyed a certain privilege during this time due to its relative isolation, and status as a supplier to those at war, stimulating massive economic growth and the start of a military-industrial complex that would grow in decades to come (De Wet & Liebenberg, 2012:247-249).

Red stars in Africa

The Soviet Union became involved in anti-colonial struggles and wars of national liberation in Africa, sometimes by choice, sometimes by imposed conditions (Eidelberg, 2015:35ff.). By contrast, China mostly followed a soft approach of infrastructural development in exchange for geopolitical influence against the West and the Soviet Union. The China-constructed Tanzam railway, linking Tanzania and Zambia, bears testimony to this. A capital-intensive project, the line was surveyed in 1968, work started in October 1970, and the ambitious venture was completed by the middle of 1976. Completing a railway over 1,800 kilometres through challenging environments from rainforests to near desert was an engineering milestone, and the Tanzam enterprise raised more than an eyebrow in the West (*New York Times*, 29 January 1971; *Chinese Economic Studies*, 1977:27).

During 1970, the Peoples' Republic of China also ventured into less-soft diplomacy on the African continent, albeit tentative. One example is the case of Angola, which lapsed into civil strife in 1975 after the hasty withdrawal of the Portuguese colonisers and interference by the US, apartheid South Africa and Zaire, a chosen proxy of France, Belgium and

the UK. Mozambique and Angola saw independence arriving when the authoritarian regime of Caetano fell in Portugal in 1974 and was replaced by a leftist government. The Soviets and China supported the Mozambican liberation movement FRELIMO, although Mozambique was not 'a primary Cold War battle ground' (Ciment, 1997:15). However, Angola was to become something of a test for the foreign policy of a rising China.

China chose to support one (and later two) of the three then feuding Angolan liberation movements. The Chinese sent approximately 100 advisors to Kinshasa to assist Holden Roberto's Front for the National Liberation of Angola (FNLA) movement (Ciment, 1997:46; Meredith, 2005:313). Roberto was both corrupt and close to the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Gleijesus, 2002:238-239; Shubin, 2008:45, 63), but despite him being on friendly terms with the US, he remained open to involvement from China. Roberto visited Beijing in 1973 and persuaded the Chinese to supply FNLA with arms and instructors (Meredith, 2005:313), and Shubin observes that this added to the highly complex situation in Angola as the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) had earlier also visited Beijing (2008:59-60). The matter of Chinese involvement was also discussed by Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, George Bush, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping (Shubin, 2008:59-60). Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping were deeply critical of the American government's support of apartheid South Africa, and South Africa and the CIA were already part of a messy equation (Shubin, 2008:59, 60). The Chinese withdrew their advisors when, to their surprise, they discovered that the CIA and South Africa were already assisting Holden Roberto in the field. The situation in Angola was confusing due to the intermingling of colonial, neocolonial and liberation struggle interests, personalities, social ideals, and contending ideologies.

Ciment noted that, '[i]f politics make strange bedfellows, then Angolan politics positively made for bizarre ones' (1997:119). For a moment, the US and apartheid South Africa (exploiting the Cold War mythology for their benefit) seemed to work together with Communist China, with a tactical consensus on some version of anti-Sovietism. In making a rational calculus, China eventually backed out, becoming aware of the complexity of such a Kafka-esque involvement. The Chinese leadership withdrew from the engagement with the FNLA and narrowly prevented an international debacle with itself as the loser.

Angola was not the only case where China became involved. At times, it also supported the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) during the liberation struggle against the minority regime of Ian Smith in then Rhodesia (Shubin, 2008:158-159).

Back home in the 1980s: Lessons learnt, future visions

A connection between lessons learnt, foresight and the will to succeed through action (or praxis) can change a political context from idealism to one of achievement. Despite

human rights abuses and authoritarianism, Chinese leadership through the Communist Party managed a collective of people and made important decisions aimed to enhance the economic future of the country. While there were several challenges and human suffering from 1950 to the 1960s, China increased its influence on the international scene during the 1970s, establishing a platform for what was to come.

In 1976, Deng Xiaoping succeeded an ailing Mao. Changes were needed and as a result, he introduced the Four Modernisations, which were goals to strengthen the fields of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology. The plan aimed to coordinate and integrate China's internal and external policies in complementary fashion, and if successful, would see a rejuvenation of China's economic power and stature in the global community.

The four modernisations were to change China from an actor in the Global South to a major force in international economics, and a growing actor in international politics. With significant experience on 'how not to do it', and a commitment to building a united China as a force to be reckoned with, the initiation of the four modernisations was a well thought-out strategy linking domestic challenges and the international context with China's national interests. From an outsider's perspective, this approach may be seen as linking (and perhaps intertwining) socialism and state-sponsored enterprise, and complementing this with continuous adaptations to macro- and micro-economic needs.

Some argued that the new economic approach was not capitalism as seen in Western contexts. Chinese theorists suggested that it steered clear of simplistic solutions such as 'pure' capitalism and 'pure' communism. (Pan, 1987; Yiwei, 1988; Jiatun, 1991; Congming, 1991; Wenming, 1984). Lu Congming echoed these sentiments, suggesting that a re-assessment of socialist and capitalist thought could achieve a theoretical, and hence a practical, working economy that responds to internal needs and external interests (Congming, 1988:25ff.; see also Jiatun, 1991).

Since the 1970s, and particularly since the late 1980s/early 1990s, China demonstrated a strong upward trajectory, with agricultural reforms from 1980 already adding value by midway through the decade (Wenming et al., 1984). This was also part of what its state elite had viewed as 'Greater China' (Hoogvelt, 1997:217). In the late 1980s, Lynn Pan suggested that China demonstrated a unique development trajectory in comparison to Western states, wondering 'Would China become the world's next colossus?' (Pan, 1987:238).

China, 1990-2020: Economic power and the global political economy

Samir Amin argues that, since the formation of what is commonly called the 'Washington Consensus' (a set of agreements between the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and US Treasury Department), the world economy has been dictated by

liberal-capitalism through a Western (core-state) consensus, and alternative pathways to the dominant capitalist paradigm were not popular (Amin, 2006:168). He argues that China and Russia (and other so-called Third World countries) found themselves confronted with the dominance of capitalism, and the marginalisation of alternative economic pathways, namely socialism (Amin, 2006:168). However, Western-style capitalism faced its own problems. As the dominant system, it too did not achieve economic equality. On the contrary, it deepened class differences and increased the gap between rich and poor both globally and regionally (Amin, 2006; Chomsky, 2007; Martin & Schumann, 1997; Keulder, 1996; Hoogvelt, 1997). As neoliberal globalisation has spread across the globe, characterised by liberalising markets, trade openness, deregulation and privatisation, the situation has worsened (Amin, 2006; Chomsky, 2007; Dyer, 2006). Other alternatives were needed.

However, questions persisted over the extent to which China was actually proposing an alternative system, or whether it was merely repeating the prevailing Western-led system, albeit with Chinese characteristics. By the end of the 1990s, China acted boldly on the international stage by adopting its 'going out' policy in 1998, and shortly thereafter joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. In contrast to its stated ambitions of providing an alternative to the dominant system, there are two initiatives intimately tied to China's global ambitions which demonstrate its acquiescence to global capitalism: BRICS, and the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative, founded by Xi Jinping in 2013, who prioritised foreign affairs after becoming president earlier in the year.

The BRICS alliance is probably the strongest proponent of what today is commonly called South-South relations, the origin of which can be traced back to the NAM, and the partially China-led Bandung Conference hosted in Indonesia in 1955 between African and Asian heads of state. Building on this, the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) alliance of prominent emerging economies was founded in 2005. The term 'BRIC' was initially coined by Jim O'Neill from Goldman Sachs in 2001, by which he hoped to capture the prominent emerging economies from the non-West, whose markets had vast growth potential and substantial populations. For example, in 2013, the BRICS accounted for 42% of the global population and 40% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2015:87). The BRIC states started hosting formal annual summits from 2009, and in 2010 South Africa was invited to join the group, making it 'BRICS'.

The most significant achievement of the bloc thus far was the creation of a New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014 to help finance infrastructure projects in the BRICS countries and within their respective regions. This bank, along with the China-controlled Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund, supposedly heralded a challenge to the prevailing Washington Consensus. Proponents of this argument suggest that the emerging powers, led by China, are attempting to challenge Western capitalism

by replacing it with a Chinese model of development, or 'Beijing Consensus'. The goal is also to challenge the hegemony of the dollar with the renminbi.

However, despite this goal, the NDB (at least initially) chose the US dollar as its preferred trading currency (Johnson, 2015:209), as did the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). The CRA is a framework which assists the BRICS states to manage their short-term balance of payments problems. However, it too resulted in a further strengthening of the IMF, as if a country seeks a loan in excess of 30% of its borrowing quota, it would be required to take out a structural adjustment loan and subject itself to conditionality (Bond, 2016:613). Some have also questioned the viability of the NDB with regards to its ambitions and extent of required infrastructure, as it possessed a total strength of \$100 billion against the World Bank's \$250 billion (Bertelsmann-Scott et al., 2016). Although the increased use of local currencies (not the US dollar) in trade and financial deals is cause for some optimism, in short, the creation of an alternative financial system to substantively challenge the prevailing Western-led one seemed unlikely.

China's OBOR initiative was devised to recycle some of China's accumulated capital and to repurpose the construction materials based in its state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and it was hoped that this would increase exports and further globalise the renminbi. OBOR is therefore an amplified version of China's 'going out' policy that was launched in the late 90s to increase capital outflow whilst seeking to further expand the reach of Chinese companies (Rolland, 2017:130).

OBOR's land and maritime routes (spanning East, Middle and West Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa) comprise a series of parallel and interlinked features, including inter-continental railway routes, freeways, ports, and energy pipelines. OBOR comprises over 60 countries, including 4 billion people and a market share of approximately one-third of global GDP (Ferdinand, 2016:950). OBOR presents an opportunity for Chinese companies to invest in developing industrial, manufacturing, and special economic zones and parks (Du, 2016:31), and as centres for manufacturing, these parks will serve as distribution nodes along the many transport corridors of OBOR. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) will be the dominant *modus operandi* of OBOR, and Chinese credit will be extended to Chinese contractors to carry out the work of OBOR in these countries (Hayes, 2017:1). China-employed financial instruments (issued by the Silk Road Fund, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and NDB) will fund Chinese projects in these territories, stimulating their markets, and even creating new ones.

However, OBOR faces several difficulties, not least of which are the significant security challenges. OBOR traverses areas where the Islamic State (IS) has been involved, and passes through the war-ravaged Iraq and Afghanistan. The safe passage of capital, goods and people along OBOR routes is also contingent on security in the seas around the Horn

of Africa, and in states such as Somalia in East Africa and Yemen in the Middle East, where piracy poses a constant threat. On land, one has to contend with groups such as Al Shaabab.

There are mixed views on how China should deal with these security threats (Swaine, 2015:9). In certain quarters, it is believed that the Maritime Silk Road is closely linked to China's goals of transforming into a substantial maritime power. As Liang (2015, in Sidaway & Woon, 2017:596) contends, it is hoped that OBOR would turn the Peoples' Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) into 'a robust blue water naval capability dedicated to sea lines of communication defense'. Others believe that it is essential for China to establish contacts and ensure friendly ports and turnaround facilities based in other countries, as this will extend the range of possible Chinese maritime activities (Chaturvedy, 2017). The so-called String of Pearls is a strategy in which China is allegedly attempting to secure a series of compliant ports and installations which would ensure their dominance over the South China Sea and beyond. Based on this, it seems that China may be reconsidering its stance on non-interference and non-intervention (Mustafic, 2017:117).

In a similar vein to the BRICS alliance, many have argued that OBOR is a bold attempt to insert Chinese characteristics into broader capitalist development as a challenge to the Washington consensus. From this perspective, OBOR is calculated as a broader geopolitical gambit to challenge the Washington Consensus, similar to the way in which the Marshall Plan was a US-led reconstruction of Western Europe after World War II.

Although OBOR would signal a substantial advance by a growing global power, what is overwhelmingly more likely is that OBOR will fit into the Western-led system of accumulation, particularly when assessed against broader trends concerning the BRICS reinforcement of this system (Van der Merwe, 2018; Van der Merwe, Taylor & Arkhangelskaya, 2016). Chances are slim that OBOR will do anything other than reinforce the status quo concerning the broader systemic level and its preferred means of accumulation. The changes being rung in by OBOR are effectively style over substance, or just more of the same.

In 2018, China has assumed the role of globalisation and free trade enforcer, taking over this role from the US, whose withdrawal from international engagements is owed to President Donald Trump's trade protectionist policies and all-out trade wars with traditional allies such as Canada, the European Union, and China. The single most talked-about item at the 2018 BRICS summit in Johannesburg was trade openness, and China came out strongly against US trade protectionism.

Economic growth, defence and international status

D'Anieri, a US-based political scientist, argues that 'China's booming economy has probably brought more people out of poverty than any global development scheme,

but development also contributes to the economic and military might that many fear' (2014:298). Despite some 'heat-up' (a decline in sustained growth of 10%) in 2011, China's macroeconomic policies contributed to relative global economic stability, and the country accumulated massive holdings of foreign currencies, including US\$4 trillion (D'Anieri, 2014:298), in comparison to just over US\$2 trillion in 2010 (D'Anieri, 2014:308). This phenomenon is expected to continue, as the Chinese central bank buys US bonds that in effect fund the massive US trade deficit, argues D'Anieri (2014:298).

Chinese expenditure during the 1970s was hard to calculate and estimates by prominent economists suggested that defence expenditure could have been US\$4–5 billion, assuming that China had a 4–5% growth rate. Others suggested US\$10–12 billion, while the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency at the time estimated that the expenditure might have been as high as US\$15 billion (IISS [International Institute for Strategic Studies], 1976:50), although this is likely an inflated figure or overestimation.

Between 1977 and the mid-1980s, the four modernisations were conceptualised in China. During the late 1980s, IISS reports that, despite an economic growth rate of approximately 8%, defence spending in China declined (IISS, 1989:147). At the time, the total armed forces of the People's Republic stood at 3.2 million men and women, of which the army represented 2.3 million (around a million conscripts on two-year stints). The navy staff consisted of about 300,000, and the air force had 470,000 (IISS, 1989:147ff.). IISS argues that, given the available budget and perhaps also due to doctrine, the military posture of China resulted in a territorial 'defensive force and lacked the ability, facilities and logistics capabilities for protracted, large-scale military operations outside China' (IISS, 1976:48). However, the same publication noted 'that China is gradually acquiring a greater logistic capacity' (IISS, 1976:48).

By 2012–2013, the IISS reported that China was making wide-ranging efforts to improve its military capacity, mirroring the country's economic growth, and the Chinese Defence Paper, issued in April 2013, stressed that the armed forces should be 'commensurate with China's international standing' (*The Military Balance*, 2014:206). The paper also pointed to the need to enhance maritime power. Restructuring, professionalisation, modernisation and diversification, including the armaments industry, were prioritised (*The Military Balance*, 2014:207). The PLA was to undergo a qualitative revolution in equipment, while maritime power was not to be neglected. However, there were challenges.

Following the 'overheating' of the economy in 2011, Chinese economic growth slowed to 7.8%, down from 9.3% in 2009, and monetary policy had to be tightened. The Chinese defence budget for 2013 was set at US\$112 billion. When defence spending accelerated, it was carefully monitored to keep increases in line with the comparable expansion of the overall Chinese economy (*The Military Balance*, 2014:209). Simultaneously, as China became

more integrated into the global economy from the late 1990s, production capacity and market-networks were extended. Since 2007, policy requirements were set by the Chinese defence industry regulator and in 2014, the active defence force (all arms of service) was set at 2.3 million (army, 1.6 million; air force, 200,000; navy, 398,000), while the number of staff in the Strategic Missile Forces was 100,000 (*The Military Balance*, 2014:209). Like elsewhere on the globe, large-scale investments were made in cyber-warfare and counter cyber-warfare capabilities.

Concerning economic engagement, defence and international status there are a further three areas discussed in this chapter. The first matter relates to the little-known entry of China into a new 'space race' between competing global powers and the associated quest for control of airspace. Involvement in space is also seen as an arena that powers can enter only once they have graduated into the league of developed or rich nations. Advanced technological and scientific development and competitiveness are also precursors for entry into space, and China scores highly in these spheres. The other two areas relate to China's growing ambitions both in its immediate region but also further afield, and the tensions and responsibilities that arise from this. China's relationship with Russia in historical perspective was covered in the discussion thus far, so its regional rivalry with the other regional power, India, will briefly be discussed. Lastly, China's involvement in Africa has grown exponentially – both as an economic power and, increasingly, as a military one as well. Therefore, we end off with China's involvement in UN peacekeeping initiatives in Africa, as this appears to be the chosen mode in which China chooses to operate militarily within Africa.

A red star in space

The space race, as it was commonly referred to at the time, started during the Cold War, and the two leading competitors were the US and the Soviet Union. Expertise for developing missile construction, existing military knowledge, and practical platforms for development were taken over from a defeated Nazi-Germany in 1945, when German rocket experts from Germany surrendered to the Allied Forces and started sharing their knowledge of rocket science. Other Germans scientists offered their services to the Soviet Union. The space race between the Soviet Union and the US became one of the defining aspects of the Cold War era and complemented the search for military power and dominance by these two superpowers (Cordesman & Kendall, 2016).

China entered the space endeavour rather late by sending a satellite into space in 1970, followed by a successful soft landing on the moon in 1976. Since 2000, China's space activities have developed at a greater speed. In 2009, the Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Commanding Council said that, 'space is a ... commanding height for international strategic competition ... and means control of the ground, oceans and electromagnetic

space ... [thus having] a strategic initiative in one's hands'. The Chinese Defence White Paper (2015) refers to space as the 'commanding height in international competition', and the Chinese government therefore took an intense interest in preparing for fighting 'informationised wars', as well as developing an array of anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) weapons, i.e. kinetic kill, directed energy, co-orbital capabilities, and an advanced manned space programme (Cordesman & Kendall, 2016).

Current competition between China and the US has broad civil and military implications, as it relates to power projection, national status, and pride (Cordesman & Kendall, 2016), and there is no need to add that a modern and expansive space programme forms part of 'China's Space Dream' as articulated by President Xi Jinping, and acts as a crucial pillar of international prestige. In March 2003, through their Shenzhou programme, China launched the first manned mission (Shenzou 5), while Shenzou 7 saw a three-person crew launched into space and China's first spacewalk. In 2016, nine more taikonauts went into space (Cordesman & Kendall, 2016), and in 2012 the first space docking took place, with Spacelab Tiangong. By 2016, a second space lab, Tiangong 2, was launched into orbit. China also executed a second soft landing on the moon following the earlier attempt in 1976 (Cordesman & Kendall, 2016), and the landing of Mars rovers and deep space exploration are underway. China combines civilian and military objectives in their space approach, and arguably currently boasts the most robust and dynamic space programme.

Petra Ebeling (2016:16) remarks that, in being so advanced, 'China has become a world class player in the field'. Its cooperation in space with Russia is good, although USA/China cooperation is at a low ebb for various reasons. Ebeling suggests that China would be an affordable and logical partner for the European Space Agency (ESA), which became involved in the Tiangong-1 project, and could participate in the latest space technologies (Ebeling, 2016). However, Tellis argues that, at its heart, Chinese interests in space and counter-space measures are rooted in their strategic needs and not haphazard government choices (Tellis, 2007:41ff.; see also Polpeter, Anderson, Wilson & Yang, 2016).

Closer cooperation between China and ESA will most likely become a contentious matter for the US. Kulacki (2014) points out that the USA space programme, whether for (deep) space exploration, delivery of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), ASAT or other military purposes, is becoming increasingly hamstrung by financial constraints, due to the US's immense deficit and continued indebtedness to other global actors (Cordesman & Kendall, 2016; Polpeter, Anderson, Wilson & Yang, 2016). Ebeling (2016) points out that, despite China being a latecomer to highly diversified and specialist goal-driven space projects, the Chinese influence is set to grow at the expense of the US's prestige. The reasonable result would be China-US tensions mounting as the US realises that its self-assumed world hegemony is being challenged within a context of its declining capacity.

Notes on the region

China is a significant regional power, sharing this status with India and Japan. For this discussion, we will focus on China and India, as the two regional hegemon share extensive borders. In discussion with one of the authors some years ago, Shrikant Paranjpe referred to India as an 'apologetic hegemon'. However, times are changing, and both India and China are now regional hegemon with a global presence, and no longer need to be apologetic.

In 1954, India and China signed the Tibet agreement, while an Indo-Soviet Treaty was signed in 1971 (Paranjpe, 2013:72, 74). In 1974, India became part of what is known as the Nuclear Club, and today India has a clear capacity for a weaponised nuclear programme. Since the establishment of NAM, India has always played an important and frequently leadership role, acting as a spokesperson and leading member of NAM. Simultaneously, India cooperated with the USSR regarding military agreements and the arms trade.

However, some changes took place. During the late 1990s and early 2000s some closer interaction marked the relations between the US and India (Kamdar, 2007:200). Kamdar refers to this interaction as new strategic partnership (or cooperation) between the US and India, including booming trade and, 'gave Americans the idea that India is exclusively focused on the US', but cautions that, 'Nothing could be further from the complex reality of today's geopolitics' (Kamdar, 2007:275). Kamdar goes on to note that 'India is not going to play junior partner to America's military and corporate research apparatus' (2007:278), as India holds influential soft and hard power capacities. The country may not want to seem to be leaning towards the US (Kamdar, 2007:200), and remains open to trading with anyone on the global scene.

For example, India seems to be rebuilding its relations with Russia. India participates in a multipolar world economy, with trade partners such as the European Union, especially France and Germany, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin-America (Kamdar, 2007:277). The country has extensive trade ties with the Middle East and countries in the Arabian Gulf region (Kamdar, 2007:263), and is an important political, economic, and military player on the global stage. Within the region, India and China seem to have found well-rationalised reasons for peaceful existence, and little change in this domain is foreseen in the medium- and even long-term. India is aware of the need to live in peace with its northern neighbour, and in November 2006, Chinese Premier Hu Jintao visited New Delhi, where the two countries agreed to boost bilateral trade to US\$40 billion by 2010, a figure long surpassed.

Soft or smart diplomacy and new responsibilities: UN peacekeeping

With its return from relative isolation during the early years of Communist rule, and given current security developments, the Chinese started getting involved in United Nations (UN) peace deployments. By 2014, small numbers of personnel were or are

deployed in Cote d'Ivoire (UN-UNOCI), Western Sahara (MINURSO), and Cyprus (UNFICYP), while larger numbers are seen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO, 220 members), Lebanon (UNIFIL, 343), Liberia (UNMIL, 564), South Sudan (UNMISS, 340) and 233 members with UNAMID Sudan (*The Military Balance*, 2014:239-240). Between 2014 and 2018 the picture changed again. From just over 2000 soldiers deployed in 2014, the figure went up to over 3000 in 2015, then saw a drop, but for 2016 to 2018 it remains over 2000. By January 2018, the numbers deployed on peace missions counted for 2,634 (ISDP Backgrounder, 2018:3). China became the third largest contributor to the UN budget, the second largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget, the 12th highest provider of peacekeepers and the largest contributor of troops for peacekeeping in the UN Security Council (ISDP Backgrounder, 2018:3).

China's involvement in Africa intertwines with its role as a rising global hegemon, and foreign policy, defence diplomacy, resource procurement and national interests are closely connected. China has become a major economic actor on the continent of Africa, and largely diminished the stake that the US, France and the UK held (Neethling, 2015). Neethling (2015:8) also notes that:

China offers its African partners a mix of political and economic incentives and drives home the message of a win-win situation ... (China) increased its footprint in Africa [but] adheres to a strict policy of non-intervention (or non-interference) in the affairs of African states.

The lack of socio-political stability or absence of peace in Africa also touches China's interests. Quoting Wang, Neethling indicates that China's attitude towards UN peacekeeping changed from 'ardent opposition in the 1970s to avid support in the 2000s' (Neethling, 2015:11). However, more correctly, China had little choice in the matter. Part of this increased involvement has to do with economic reasons, as stability is good for business, while part is to demonstrate global responsibilities and diplomacy (Wang, quoted in Neethling, 2015:11). Moreover, an inescapable reason for increased involvement in these operations is to respond to global expectations and UN insistence that member states participate in peacekeeping efforts. Neethling makes some deductions about China's involvement in UN peacekeeping: (1) Beijing's emergence in the field (including Africa) stands in direct relation to China's growth and international influence; and (2) China's peacekeeping involvement on the African continent stems from the need for stability in Africa as a central trading partner of China.

China's involvement on the African continent is generally pragmatic, and its drive for influence is in the main underpinned by soft power. With the spread of China's international influence, it is likely that China will become more involved in UN peacekeeping, particularly in Africa because, from whichever perspective one views China's growing role, it will have to take part in future global multipolar governance.

Conclusion

China remains a substantial power in regional and global circles. The latest indications from the country indicate that it is preparing to play a greater role in world affairs, as suggested by its OBOR initiative, which represents its boldest global undertaking yet. However, the extent to which China has the appetite for such a role remains unknown. China's rise has also caused shifts in geopolitical contours which have led to new sites of struggle and contestation, such as outer-space and Africa, as well as growing regional tensions, and China will have to pay increasing attention to these areas if it is to manage and negotiate these challenges effectively. Implicitly, those who fear China's rise also fear its concurrent military rise, but whether its growing economic and political clout is associated with an increasingly belligerent military presence also remains to be seen. How are we to interpret this rise, and to what lengths will it go to continue on this trajectory? The comparative global experience of superpower behaviour leaves much to be admired, although whether this will be tempered by a more multipolar world is also uncertain.

References

- Amin, S. 2006. *Beyond US hegemony? Assessing the Prospects for a Multipolar World*. London: Zed Books.
- Ball, P. 2015. Railways in History and the TAN-ZAM/TAZARA project. *The Heritage Portal*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- Bertelsmann-Scott, T., Friis, C. & Prinsloo, C. 2016. *Making sustainable development the key focus of the BRICS New Development Bank*. Pretoria: South African Institute of International Affairs.
- Boggs, J. & Boggs, G.L. 1974. *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Bond, P. 2016. BRICS banking and the debate over sub-imperialism. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(4): 611-628. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1128816>
- Calvocoressi, P. 1982. *World Politics since 1945* (4th edition). London: Longman.
- Chaturvedy, R.R. 2017. China's Strategic Access to Gwadar Port: Pivotal Position in Belt and Road. *RSIS Commentaries*, No. 005. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.
- Chomsky, N. 2007. *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. London: Penguin Books.
- Ciment, J. 1997. *Angola and Mozambique: Postcolonial Wars in Southern Africa*. New York: Facts on File Inc.
- Cong, L. 1991. *Basic Contradictions of Capitalism. China: Issues and Ideas*. Beijing: Beijing Review Press.
- Conming, L. 1991. Modern Capitalism Reassessed. *China: Issues and Ideas*. Beijing: Beijing Review Press.
- Cordesman, A.H. & Kendall, J. 2016. *Chinese Space Strategy and Developments*. London: Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- Dallek, R. 2007. *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*. London: Allen Lane.
- Davidson, B. 2001. *Africa in History: Themes and Outlines*. London: Phoenix Books.
- De Wet, F. & Liebenberg, I. 2012. Conflict and Economic Consequences: Comparative notes on 'going to war', in T. Potgieter & I. Liebenberg (eds.), *Reflections on War: Preparedness and Consequences*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media. <https://doi.org/10.18820/9781920338855>
- Du, M. 2016. China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative: Context, Focus, Institutions, and Implications. *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance*, 2(1):30-43. <https://doi.org/10.1163/23525207-12340014>
- Dye, T.R. 2002. *Power and Society: An introduction to the Social Sciences* (9th edition). New York: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Dyer, G. 2006. *Future Tense: The coming World Order*. London: Serpent's Tail.
- Ebeling, P. 2016. China's Space Program: How cooperation between China and Europe changes as China's space program advances. Unpublished MA thesis, Leiden University.
- Eidelberg, P. 2015. Tempest in a Teacup? The Angolan War as 'Cold War' template. 1975-1989, in I. Liebenberg, G. Risquet & V. Shubin (eds.), *A Far-Away War: Angola, 1975-1989*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.
- Ferdinand, P. 2016. Westward – the China dream and 'one belt, one road': Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. *International Affairs*, 92(4):941-957. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12660>
- Fuquan, T. 1990. The United States: A debtor Nation. *China Issues and Ideas* (Special edition dedicated to world debt challenges). Beijing: New Stars Publishers.
- Gleijesus, P. 2002. *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Hayes, N. 2017. The impact of China's one belt one road initiative on developing countries. *International Development*. 30 January. <https://bit.ly/2QfH80Q> [Accessed 27 July 2019].
- Hoogvelt, A. 1997. *Globalisation and the postcolonial world: The New Political Economy of Development*. Hampshire: Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25671-6>
- ISDP Backgrounder. Institute for Security and Development Policy. Stockholm: ISDP. <https://bit.ly/2INQ1L7>
- IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies). 1976. *The Military Balance 1975-1976*. London: IISS.
- IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies). 1989. *The Military Balance 1988-1989*. London: IISS.
- IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies). 2014. *The Military Balance 2014*. London: IISS.

- Japan Science and Technology Agency (JSTA)/Center for Research and Development Strategy (CRDS). 2014. *A Comparative Study on Space Technology in the World 2014*. Tokyo: JSTA/CRDS.
- Jiatun, X. 1991. *Reunderstanding Capitalism. China: Issues and Ideas*. Beijing: Beijing Review Press.
- Johnson, R.W. 2015. *How long will South Africa Survive? The looming crisis*. Jeppetown, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.
- Kamdar, M. 2007. *Planet India: The Turbulent Rise of the World's Largest Democracy*. Toronto: Simon & Schuster.
- Keulder, C.J. 1996. *Trends in the Modern World Economy and Democratization in Peripheral States*. Pretoria: HSRC Publishers.
- Kulacki, G. 2014. *An Authoritative Source on China's Military Space Strategy*. Chicago.
- Lumumba-Kasongo, T. 2015. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and Africa. *Africa Development*, XL(3):77-95.
- Lundestad, G. 1991. *East, West, North, South: Major Developments in International Politics, 1945-1990*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.
- Martin, H-P & Schumann, H. 1997. *The Global Trap: Globalisation and the Assault on Democracy and Prosperity*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Menzies, G. 2003. *1421: The Year China Discovered the World*. Toronto: Bantam Books.
- Meredith, M. 2005. *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball (with Toronto: Free Press).
- Mustafic, A. 2017. China's One Belt, One Road and Energy Security Initiatives: A Plan to Conquer the World? *Inquiry*, 2(2):107-134. <https://doi.org/10.21533/isjss.v2i2.87>
- Neethling, T. 2015. China's international peacekeeping contributions and the evolution of contemporary Chinese strategic considerations. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 37(2):7-27.
- Pan, L. 1987. *The New Chinese Revolution*. London: Amish Hamilton.
- Paranjpe, S. 2013. *India's Strategic Culture: The Making of National Security Policy*. New Delhi: Routledge.
- Pollpeter, K., Anderson, E., Wilson, J. & Yan, F. 2017. *China Dream, Space Dream: China's Progress in Space Technologies and implications for the United States*. New York.
- Rolland, N. 2017. China's 'Belt and Road Initiative': Underwhelming or game-changer? *The Washington Quarterly*, 40(1):127-142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2017.1302743>
- Service, R. 2007. *Comrades: Communism – A World History*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Shubin, V. 2008. *The Hot 'Cold War': The USSR in Southern Africa*. London: Pluto Press.
- Sidaway, J.D. & Woon, Chih Y. 2017. Chinese Narratives on 'One Belt, One Road' in Geopolitical and Imperial Contexts. *The Professional Geographer*, 69(4):591-603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2017.1288576>
- Swaine, M.D. 2015. Chinese views and commentary on the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative. *China Leadership Monitor*, 47(2):3.
- Tellis, A.J. 2007. China's Military Space Strategy. *Survival*, 49(3). Washington: Carnegie Endowment. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330701564752>
- Van der Merwe, J. 2018. Reintegrating Africa and the Middle East into China's system of accumulation, in X. Li (ed.), *Mapping China's One Belt One Road Initiative*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92201-0_8
- Van der Merwe, J., Taylor, I. & Arkhangelskaya, A. 2016. *Emerging powers in Africa: A new wave in the relationship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40736-4>
- Wenming, S. 1984. *On rolls the Green Revolution*. Beijing: Guoji Shudian.
- Yiwei, J. 1988. *From Enterprise-based Economy to Economic Democracy*. Beijing: Beijing Review Press.