

**China's Peaceful Rise Failing?**  
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***Should China wish to find its place in the world peacefully, its actions must reflect its intentions.***

China's desire to rise peacefully has faced some difficulties, but these problems have not come from without but from within. There is, of course, the distrust of its neighbors and the West to China's sudden rise; but there is also the manner in which China has exerted its influence in the South China Sea that has caused some concern. China's aggressive tactics over the maritime and territorial disputes have flown in the face of any peaceful intention.

### **The choices China face**

China's actions in the South China Sea have not doomed its future, however. Mistakes can be made and forgiven. In the long history of world powers to come and go, modern China's rise has been somewhat uneventful, which should not be taken as a sign of failure or misfortune. Little has been done that cannot be undone. It is not what China does today but what it will do tomorrow that will determine China's reception by the global community. Following this, China's rise can be framed according to three schools of thought.

The first is that China should aggressively pursue its rise to power using any and all available means, including force. This hawkish view is contrasted with another school of thought, which suggests that China should moderate its position, to move slowly in order to gain acceptance. This position argues that China is simply misunderstood, that outside perceptions of China are inaccurate and are to be gently corrected.

Between these two poles is the middle ground, the belief that China's rise is natural and that it will be accepted on the world stage without question. This position argues that, given China's history, its return to prominence was only a matter of time. As such, China should neither exert force in pursuant of its rise nor correct any perceived misunderstandings because all of this (China's rise) was to be expected.

Of course, all of this ignores the generally cool response China has received from much of the international community. There is very much an element of apprehension and reservation towards China's rise throughout much of Europe and Asia. For the US, China's rise is not so much a doomsday scenario, for both countries have relied upon one another economically, but a matter of security concern.

No matter which path China chooses, it will invariable come face-to-face with the United States, which has made a point to keep a close eye on China's movements. Given the US naval presence in the South China Sea and the Pacific, China's ability to reach out is somewhat limited. However, the present conflict in Syria and potential Israel-Iran war has provided a much welcomed distraction to the US for China. Should the US find itself drawn once more to the Middle East, the diversion of resources may provide China the breathing room necessary to expand its influence in the Far East.

## Every step earned

It should be noted that China's rise is not in question. Rather, it is the manner in which China rises and what happens after. If China is to one day become a leading, world power (assuming it has any desire to play such a role), it will have to conduct itself in a manner that is consistent with its message—that is to rise *peacefully*.

However, is it fair that an entire nation be judged not for what it has done but for what it may do? What other responsibilities do China's leaders have but to safeguard the peace and security of their people?

The problem lies in the assumption that the international community—or at least the Western community and China's immediate neighbors—will simply accept China's pursuit of its objectives, no questions asked. The assumption that China's rise is natural and should have been expected by the international community has undoubtedly been met with cries of arrogance.

That China, only emerging into economic prominence in the past decade, having remained a non-entity on the world stage for almost a century prior to this, to suddenly come out and claim its place on stage requires a second thought. Fairly or unfairly, nothing will be given to China for free. China's ascension will be challenged every step of the way, even said ascension cannot be stopped. But the notion that China could so easily assume any leadership role on the world stage on the basis of history alone, is simply too much to ask.

What has happened thousands of years in the past is divorced from the realities of today and what will transpire in the future. As such, China must continue to demonstrate its good intentions; and the South China Sea, Syria, and Iran are just some areas where the international community will watch China. Fairly or unfairly, China will have to prove itself at every turn.

## Working towards a New World Order

Despite all of this, China is unlikely to be ostracized in any fashion. The future of US-China relations may be one of tentative cooperation. Not an "arms wide open" form of partnership, but one based upon shared interests. Neither party has the stomach or will for conflict, for any conflict would hurt more than it would help. Presently, given differences between the US and China, we cannot expect either country to warmly embrace the other like old friends. However, at the very least, what we may see from the US and China is something akin to a business arrangement, a professional understanding.

Will there be a new world order? The US, past its prime and weakened, continues to push forward. Russia is still recovering and growing following the breakup of the Soviet Union, and China's reach is limited by its capabilities. Where will the world be in 10 or 20 years? Perhaps when time has come to past and we look back, we will see that nothing or little has changed. Or maybe there will be many big changes. Currently, any speculation is simply that—speculation, with fate and destiny conspiring against us.

What can be assumed with some certainty is that Russia will not disappear from the international stage, and China has many years ahead before it can be accepted without reservation into the global community.

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