

China's Ascendance to Global Superpower: Implications and Prospects

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Abstract: As it is known to all, China's economic performance has been impressive, leapfrogging to the world's second-largest economy, which weighs heavily on international politics. However, its military power requires more efforts to help it take off, especially its overseas base construction. Politically, China matters a lot in international politics as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The future will see Chinese citizens and the global community benefited when China turns out to be a global superpower. In that case, Chinese citizens will find themselves in a greater country where there are improved economic well-being, lower poverty rates, increased employment opportunities, and a growing middle class. Meanwhile, they will live a safer country both inside and outside. For the time being, China faces competition from the United States, but its steady economic growth and political influence make it highly likely that China will become a superpower in the future. All in all, China's rise promises positive outcomes for its own people and the international community. This paper explores how possible that China will grow to a global superpower from economic, military, political and cultural aspects, at the same time, what would happen for those who live in China, as well as what would happen on a global scale, if China were to be become a leading superpower.

1. Introduction

The term “Superpower” first debuted as a concept by William T.R. Fox, an American international relations scholar. This term, economically, is meant to say that a country or nation is in strongly influential worldwide. [1] There are four distinct elements under which superpower status can be assessed, namely, economy, politics, culture and military all justify if a country is strong enough. [2] In terms of economic power, in recent years, Chinese economy has seen that economic interactions, growing trade surplus, and dominance in heavy industries had enabled Chinese economy to soar. This allowed China to be smooth in its way to be a dominant power within the global economy.

While China is currently considered a global superpower, it is still below other nations such as the US and Russia. It has been well documented that with its rapid development, China has become a significant challenge to America’s dominance. While both nations have attempted to maintain economic interdependence and rely on healthy competition to drive innovation, the underlying reality is that China has emerged as the world's second-largest power and is actively striving to claim the top spot. In response, we have seen the US being steadfast in their attempt to retain their leadership position, and thus is determined to maintain its high-standing influence in foreign affairs. [3]

Therefore, the clear trajectory of growth that has been seen in the Chinese economy in recent years has opened up the possibility of China surpassing the ranks of other superpowers such as the US, the UK and Russia. China's overly rapid pace of development has led to thoughts about what the implications of its rise will be in the future.

2. Assessing China as a Superpower

As mentioned above, a global superpower can be assessed by looking at its successes and status in terms of its economy, military, political standing and cultural viewpoint. In order to assess the feasibility of China becoming the leading superpower, it is important to first look at these four aspects. Success in these four areas would be an indication that China is capable of stepping above America

to become the number one leading superpower in the world.

2.1. The Economic Situation in China

A strong economy provides a stable foundation for a country to exert both power and influence globally, thus enabling a nation to invest in military modernization, develop advanced technology, expand its diplomatic reach, and shape global trade and investment patterns. As the world's second largest economy behind the US, China has experienced sustained high economic growth rates over the past number of years.

The advances that have been made in terms of the Chinese economy have been clearly seen through their leading position in heavy industries such as steel and shipbuilding.[2] In addition, China is well known for the wide reach that their nuclear, space and cyber capabilities have.[1] Therefore, China has a strong economic weight brought about by their status as a large trading power and manufacturer, which this allows it to have a certain degree of international political leverage. With many countries dependent on Chinese trade and investment, China is in a beneficial position of international reliance.[4]

Therefore, it is clear that on the economic side of things, China satisfies the requirements needed to be considered a superpower. Having such a robust international trade mechanism and high-quality goods reputation puts it in the position of exerting economic power over other nations.

2.2. China's Military

The second element to be considered is China's military power. Through endeavors such as developing a new generation of strategic and tactical missiles and building a highly capable navy, China has been working towards modernizing their military. However, based on the fact that China has had to resort to buying military equipment such as advanced aircraft from Russia and weapons from other foreign suppliers, it is clear that its industrial base is weaker than it should be. [2] In addition, China only has one overseas base, which is a naval facility in Djibouti staffed with 400 Chinese marines.[1]

Therefore, we can see that when looking at China's military power, it falls short of being considered the military expected of a leading superpower. In order to become the leading superpower, this is something that would have to be improved upon by China. China has made some efforts in this area this far, with the Chinese navy now adding aircraft carriers and other blue-water vessels to its fast-growing fleet. On top of this, China is reportedly looking to add more overseas bases in the Pacific Ocean and Africa.[1] Following this, China may be better placed to be considered the leading superpower in terms of their military power.

2.3. Political Standing in China

Throughout the last three decades, China has gained increasingly more international political influence. In particular, its position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is a notable strength to be used for its benefit in international politics.[2] China has effectively leveraged this position to engage in mediation and strike a balance between different global interests.

3. Implications for People in China

If China was the leading global superpower, this would have a distinct positive impact on the people that live in China. Firstly, it would be reflected in their economic well-being. Secondly, they would have a heightened sense of security arising from both the strong economic landscape and from the enhanced military protection afforded to them. Finally, individuals would feel a stronger sense of purpose.

3.1. Economic Well-being

With its status as the leading global superpower secured, Chinese citizens would enjoy a high-quality economic well-being. The result of this would be a large reduction in the levels of poverty present across China and a subsequent overall increase in the standard of living. Furthermore, the

expansion of industries and job opportunities would provide employment and income stability for a significant portion of the population. Additionally, the economy of a leading superpower would make great strides towards facilitating the growth of a financially healthy middle class. This would lead to increased consumption, improved access to goods and services, and enhanced social mobility for many individuals within Chinese society.

3.2. Sense of Security

Becoming the leading superpower would bring a profound sense of security to Chinese citizens. Making use of its robust economy and strengthened military power, China would be able to establish a solid national security infrastructure. With substantial investments in military modernization, defensive capabilities would be improved, thus safeguarding the well-being of its citizens. This security would not only stem from the strength of the economy but also from the recognition of China's influential position in international affairs.

3.3. Individual Sense of Purpose

As a result of China fostering a leading economy, another knock-on effect would be with regards to individuals' sense of purpose. With more funding and resources comes more opportunities for education and employment, thus empowering individuals to pursue their own passions and aspirations. More diverse career options and business opportunities will be created and the improved access to both information and resources would allow individuals to develop their personal interests, thus giving individuals a sense of purpose that is personal to them and their own hopes and dreams. In addition, thanks to China's growing international influence, individuals would be able to access international exchanges, collaborations, and cultural interactions more easily, thereby broadening their perspectives and opening doors to new possibilities.

4. Implications for Everyone Else

China's economic situation holds implications that transcend its borders and have global repercussions. The remarkable economic prowess that China has possessed has not only influenced global trade and investment patterns but has also sparked concerns regarding geopolitical implications and its growing influence. Initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative have extended China's reach, further amplifying its impact on the international stage. In addition to its economic significance, Chinese culture has long been believed to possess a transformative power capable of shaping civilization. This historical perspective emphasizes the profound influence of Chinese culture and its potential to bring about positive change in society.[5]

4.1. Cultural Connections

In addition, to hard powers such as politics and military power, the cultural "soft power" exerted by China can be an indication of its superpower status. China today has become a major tourist attraction, with various events and activities drawing in tourists from across the globe. A positive image of China has been constructed through the hosting of international events such as the Beijing Olympics 2008 and the World Expo 2010.[6] This has built a sense of cultural resonance with China, and its cultural connections contribute to its superpower status and its ability to influence and engage with nations on a cultural level.

4.2. Improved Perception of Chinese Culture

Xi Jinping once said "We should popularize our cultural spirit across countries as well as across time and space, with contemporary values and the eternal charm of Chinese culture." This is the primary purpose of Confucius Institutes, which are aimed at promoting Chinese language and culture.[6] In recent years, there has been an increased quantity of students learning Chinese and engaging with Chinese literature and media. China becoming the leading superpower would increase access to such cultural resources, thus encouraging more people to learn Chinese. From the establishment of National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in 1987, to the setting

up of the first Confucius Institute in Seoul, South Korea in 2004, the Chinese government has initiated several opportunities to engage in Chinese-related courses across the globe.[6] The popularity of such activities prove that the Chinese language is viewed as a valuable language to be able to speak at a time where China has such strong economic power.

4.3. Potential Sharing of Opportunities

As a leading superpower in terms of the economy, China is set to become an increasingly popular diplomatic partner. In particular, small nations will be attracted by the many benefits that exist when cooperating with the world's largest economy.[7] As a member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), China has already begun to take actions that encourage global economic equality.[8] For example, several years ago, China made an agreement with the other BRICS nations to establish a New Development Bank, which has largely been used to fund infrastructure projects.[9] This shows China's dedication to using its position as a superpower to benefit the global society as a whole.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, China's rapid economic growth has allowed it to become one of the world's most powerful nation. Its development in recent years has drastically improved the living standards for Chinese citizens, thus eradicating poverty in several areas. China's incredible economic progress has placed it firmly on a path towards achieving a leading superpower status. This economic transformation holds the promise of bringing a wealth of benefits and positive outcomes that will significantly improve the lives of Chinese citizens.

Based on the complex relationship between prosperity and superpower status, it is hard to say for certain whether or not China can truly become the leading global superpower.[10] Tough opposition from the US government may indicate that as China grows, so will America. However, it is safe to assume that a strong foundation has been laid in areas outside of the economy, such as military capabilities and diplomatic reach. With further development, the possibility still remains for China to surpass the US as the leading superpower.

As we have seen throughout this essay, there are many positive outcomes that would arise from China's leading superpower status. Whether it's economic or cultural, the benefits for Chinese citizens are significant. In addition, we can clearly see the positives that would be created for our global society, as China's prosperity has a knock-on effect on all nations across the world.

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