

Does China Matter?

This question has an immediate answer but a far more complicated explanation. Of course China matters. Any state with a population of 1.33 billion, covering a landmass of 9,326,410 sq km and with the level of exports and currency reserves that China holds must 'matter' at least to some relative degree given the global focus on labour, territory, cross continental trade and free markets.¹ As explained further below the global credit crisis has appeared to confirm China's place as an important actor in a global political system within which it now willingly sits.

However, there has been a strong argument that China matters less than is conventionally thought and is, in the words of Gerald Segal, merely a 'middle power' with only regional importance.² His argument that China only matters because of a theatrical illusion of power perpetuated by Western attention attracted much academic attention in 1999 and was the subject of an edited volume reassessing the initial brief work in 2003. It is from the template left by that work that a further assessment is made to see whether China can really be considered the "small market" and "middle power" that Segal claimed and how its political influence can now be translated into power.

Beneath such a simple question lies three sub questions that will be addressed here. The first is to whom China matters, the second is in which areas it matters and finally how can we translate the political capital into eminence. It will be argued here that China matters, but that it does not matter to an equal degree in all capacities or to all parties for the same reasons. Despite huge improvements China is also a long way from having the kind of influence, even regionally, that the United States has in the Western hemisphere. However, this influence is increasing both politically and economically led not by simply a theatrical illusion but by a real exchange of capital into political influence. With economic strength a greater cultural presence will occur as we are already seeing with the importance of the Chinese language. Of course, on issues such as human rights, the global financial crisis and regional politics Beijing is already able to exert influence but it is the degree to which it can do so effectively that provides the biggest questions here.

Skip forward a decade from the original articles publication and we see a very different global climate. Previously the significance that Beijing has had relied on its fast growing economy and its increasing interaction and cooperation with the global community, this existed mainly as potential but China has since embraced the rules of the modern multilateral international system, even creating its own in the SCO.³ As will be illustrated later China's military and consequently coercive power is relatively restricted meaning it relies on the ability to develop soft power capabilities abroad. In a political sense China's role regionally has grown substantially where economic growth has been used as the means in an effort to expand Chinese interests, especially in areas such as Central Asia. Despite this both cultural and ideological aspects of Chinese soft power have failed to have large-scale international success

¹ Information taken from CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html> (Accessed 5th March 2009)

² Segal, G (1999) Does China Matter? *Foreign Affairs* 78, No. 5 (Oct), pp 20

³ The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was founded as a mutual-security governmental organisation in 2001 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Except for Uzbekistan, the other five countries had been members of the Shanghai Five which was founded in 1996. After the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 2001, the members renamed the organization and has it has developed it has embraced both economic and cultural factors as well as supplying the institutional framework within which to carry out military exercises.

although it has allowed Beijing to form greater ties with both Latin American and African states which will also be discussed further later.⁴ This essay views four factors through the prism of China's modern development to categorize the importance of the state in the international system.

Political

As has been recently shown by US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's visit to Asia for the Strategic Dialogue, China matters to the world. The political implications of a strong and assertive China cannot fail to matter to the major powers and this is quickly becoming reality and not just potential. What will be interesting is to see how a modern, market-led economy reconciles itself with the words of past leaders who insisted that China would not become a superpower and would reject the hegemony that comes with it.⁵ It is the contemporary eagerness to shy away from taking the role and responsibilities of a developed major power that is unsustainable for Beijing and a cause of concern for scholars of China as they see the CCP not taking responsibility globally in accordance with their development.⁶

As Kim attests China is inescapably part of the solution to the world's problems.⁷ On issues such as climate change, the credit crisis and global security hotspots such as North Korea and Iran China plays a key role, often as a counter weight to Western interests. On the environment China leads the other developing nations with potential, Brazil and India, in the so called "gang of three" against a perceived attempt to unfairly stunt the industrialization of developing nations in the name of a climate change that the developed nations were almost solely responsible for.

Membership of the UN Security Council gives China the power to enforce and delay resolutions that aim to promote Western values. Although, as Segal notes, France and Russia have used this forum far more to counterbalance the dominant power since the end of the Cold War. China has simply attempted to maintain the status quo within the organisation by objecting strongly to the motion that Japan would join the Security Council and to protect the general idea of state sovereignty on issues like human rights and the environment. China's willingness to engage with multilateral frameworks has supplied the CCP with a valuable tool to stunt foreign pressure on its human rights and to maintain an advantage over Japan politically. Indeed Mark Leonard recognizes this describing the UN as a "powerful amplifier of the Chinese worldview".⁸ As Beijing increasingly became involved in these institutional frameworks it consequently increased its interdependency with the global markets and specifically with the major Western importers.

Unlike Russia, which enjoys the ability it has to overtly frustrate plans by both the EU and US, China tends to opt for a conciliatory posture on most issues. It is prepared to veto resolutions

⁴ As an example we see Hu Jintao's latest trips to Africa and Latin America in which deals were signed on the construction of infra structure projects such as the 35,000 capacity stadium that China has donated to Costa Rica and the cross Africa rail network starting in Angola. The New York Times describe this as a Chinese version of globalization. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/19/magazine/19china.html> (accessed 15th March 2009)

⁵ Van Ness, P. in S. Kim (1998) *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, pp.151. Deng Xiaoping's speech at the UN in 1974 guaranteed that China would never become a superpower and if so it would soon be removed from its position.

⁶ Kim, S. in Buzan, B. (2003) *Does China Matter: A Reassessment*, pp.42

⁷ Kim, S. in Buzan, B. (2003) *Does China Matter: A Reassessment*, pp.47

⁸ Leonard, M. (2009) *Unrestricted Warfare*, http://www.adbusters.org/magazine/79/unrestricted_warfare.html (accessed 11th March 2009)

when it has to maintain its own vital interests but ideally Chinese diplomats prefer to hide behind the Kremlin, therefore avoiding attracting undue attention from the international community. For example, during the build-up to the war in Iraq, although China opposed military action it allowed France, Germany and Russia to lead international opposition whilst itself taking a backseat. With the debate on enlarging the UN Security Council (UNSC) membership China has encouraged African countries to demand their own seat with a veto. It was this move that effectively destroyed Japan's hopes of a place as Beijing framed any expansion of UNSC membership in such a way as to make cross continental and therefore unacceptable to the US.⁹ We see here that rather than explicitly confront states over this issue China prefers to work on subversion and subdivision to maintain its interests. Another example of this is that Beijing has been willing to encourage the Organization of Islamic States to weaken the new Human Rights Council by demanding certain religion related exceptions. This can be called China's 'subtle' diplomacy and has so far been extremely effective in maintaining favourable international conditions for China's development.

China's power internationally does not simply lie in its ability to frustrate, delay and veto policies that would infringe directly upon its own interests. It is also highly involved in regional development in Africa as it cultivates a soft power base. However, by the same token Beijing finds it difficult to actively develop and change things internationally. Where China's power lies is that it can cause serious harm to the global system and to individual states through error, mistake or ill judgement. This is an essential point that Segal makes which remains valid today, he saw the West consistently seek to please a China that many have previously perceived to be a 'maverick' in a singular group of one. As explained in greater detail below China has the ability to make life extremely difficult for the West.

So, to whom does China matter politically? Beijing can, and tries to, be all things to all people. It matters both as an Eastern priority of Russia's major power politics and as an alternative political sponsor for third world countries. Segal's argument that China has now lost its 'beacon' status that Maoism had given it is now seemingly collapsing as it provides this alternative to states both in Africa and Latin America in exchange for access to resources and non recognition of Taiwan.¹⁰ Unlike Western sponsorship, which is accompanied by a raft of conditions and criteria, Beijing simply asks for acceptance of the one China policy and favourable trade conditions. We also now see the West as a strategic partner in tackling the credit crisis and as a willing co-operator on climate change, although it shares a position of disagreement with the 'gang of three' in Brazil and India on how to approach climate change.¹¹

From the perspective of human rights, China matters, it represents one extreme of a polarized global order. Attempts to shame China internationally over its human rights record have tried to bring the leadership into line with a desired set of universal norms and values conducive to a liberal society.¹² The question in China is how related is legitimate leadership to moral authority and how can the relationship between state and society reflect the importance of state relations with the international community. So far no amount of shaming or Western media coverage has caused Beijing to change its policy.

⁹ Kim, S. (2003) Does China Matter: A Reassessment, pp.43

¹⁰ Segal, G. (1999) Does China Matter? Foreign Affairs 78, No. 5 (Oct), pp 18

¹¹ Economy, E. in S. Kim (1998) China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era, pp.

¹² Wachman, A. (2001) Does the Diplomacy of Shame Promote Human Rights in China? pp. 259

Of course, perceptions of China in the West have greatly changed over the last few decades. From an emerging communist state, to a reformist counterweight then on to an oppressive dictatorship following Tiananmen Square and, finally, now to an economic miracle. As the potential turns to collateral will we see the balance of power between East and West change? The cyclical fashion of conflicting interests followed by rapprochement that Sutter notes directly affects China's importance to those in the West and therefore the Western-led society.¹³ Of course the logic that he suggests indicates a decline to follow in US-China relations but Beijing has begun to pursue greater involvement with developing countries, for example Latin America and Africa with both benefiting from an alternative economic model of development

Economic

It is in the sphere of economics China can be said to matter the most. The method used by Segal to quantify growth is immediately problematic.¹⁴ Growth patterns that were relevant in the late 1990's have now become obsolete as China's unique rise has seen its ascension to the World Trade Organisation in 2001 after 15 years of negotiation and its assertiveness over the West's role in the credit crisis. However, it is reasonable to distrust the officially released growth statistics which often show questionable statistics in order to avoid undermining the rule of the CCP. Whether China has really been able to achieve its annual 8%, vital to its sustained growth, over the last few years is not yet known but the mass unemployment indicates that it may have fallen behind.

Whatever its growth rate this year we can place China's economic importance in the context of the current financial crisis. As previous theses were placed in the aftermath of the 97/98 Asian financial crisis so this is framed by the current credit crisis. Much has been said of the effect that this may have on the Chinese economy as unemployment rises and many workers return to rural areas having been made redundant in the cities. Officially, the urban unemployment rate has hit 4.2%. But this does not include the large migrant workforce who are not registered in cities or towns. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences puts the actual percentage at 9.4%, and expects it to rise significantly in coming months.¹⁵ In February of this year Commerce Minister Chen Deming accepted that "the chances of possible social unrest increase" with high unemployment.¹⁶ As China is hit harder and the potential for domestic unrest increases so the paradox is that China matters more and more.

So if China, like the West, is in such a dire financial situation than how can it be of great importance and truly matter? As of 2004 China represented the fourth largest trading partner of the US with a trade deficit of more than \$100 billion US dollars.¹⁷ The Chinese export-led economy is extremely important for the importing West including the European Union and any vulnerability to production strongly affects the ability to trade with China. In addition China holds the worlds largest supply of the dollar outside the US. Recently, leading CCP officials have warned for the first time that Beijing may use its \$1.33 trillion of dollar reserves as a political weapon to counter pressure from the US Congress on issues such as the

¹³ Sutter, R. (2003) Why Does China Matter? The Washington Quarterly, pp. 79

¹⁴ Harris, S. in Buzan, B. (2003) Does China Matter: A Reassessment, pp. 58

¹⁵ As reported by The Guardian newspaper, 25 January 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/25/china-globaleconomy> (accessed 15th March 2009)

¹⁶ Bowler, T. China warns of unemployment risk, BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7915372.stm> (accessed 15th March 2009)

¹⁷ Sutter, R. (2003) Why Does China Matter? The Washington Quarterly, pp. 78

manipulation of currency and human rights. China matters because it is now in a position to use its economic power as a weapon and a means to achieve its own interests.

As the renowned scholar Mahbubani has noted, developing economies such as the BRIC states may be suffering just as much as Western economies with mass unemployment and decreasing production centres.¹⁸ However, if growth can be maintained whilst others such as the US, Britain and even regionally in Japan are sinking into negative figures and recession then China can position itself in such a place as to benefit the most from improved conditions once the global economy begins to normalize.¹⁹

As an example of China's recent assertiveness economically is how prepared it now is to challenge the established order. At the Davos economic summit this year Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, along with Russian leaders, openly criticized Western policies and the "unsustainable model of development characterised by prolonged low savings and high consumption" that have been characteristic of the Western system.²⁰ This implicit accusation has triggered a new round of political and economic competition between the CCP and new US administration over manipulation of currency and human rights.

As emphasized above China also matters to the developing world where it is ploughing investment into infrastructure projects and trade deals. For example between 2000 and 2007 Chinese trade with Latin America rose from \$12.6 billion to \$102.6.²¹ Exports between Africa and China have also risen markedly with the International Monetary Fund reporting a 40% increase from 2006 to 2008.²² The political legitimization that this is creating is one driver as countries that accept trade agreements often submit to an agreement of non-recognition of Taiwan. Also entwined with the political and economic gains are resource management imperatives to ensure favourable supplies of oil, gas and metals to China in the future. The major incentives that Africa has for this cooperation is the development of transport links continentally but for China these also supply the export route for Angolan and Nigerian oil and metals.

Some claim that China does not matter economically as it is a primarily export led economy based on US spending. As those in Beijing have forged closer ties with leaders in Delhi, China has found itself a diverse market for exports. Complimentary economic systems with India focused on the information technology market and China on goods production fosters an independence between the two reflected in their cooperation not just economically but also over issues such as the environment. So, China is strong economically and is now diversifying its interests internationally with a greater focus on a multivectoral foreign policy. Economically China matters, and will continue to do so.

¹⁸ Mahbubani, K. (2009) *The New Asian Hemisphere: the Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*. In economics, BRIC is an acronym that refers to the fast growing developing economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. The acronym was first used by the bank holding company Goldman Sachs in 2001. It was argued that, since they are developing so rapidly, by 2050 the combined economies of the BRIC countries could eclipse the combined economies of the current richest countries of the world.

¹⁹ Pilling, D. *Unlucky Numbers*, Financial Times, Tuesday February 10th 2009

²⁰ Seager, A. (2009) *China pins blame for financial crisis on America*, The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/jan/28/china-blames-america-for-credit-crisis> (accessed 17th March 2009)

²¹ Shambaugh, D. *Beijing's thrust into Latin America*, International Herald Tribune, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/20/opinion/edshambaugh.php> (Accessed 13th March 2009)

²² *Africa's Burgeoning Ties with China*, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2008/03/wang.htm> (accessed 18th March 2008)

Military

Segal argued in 1999 that China constituted a “strategic foe” to the US and that it was “ludicrous to claim, as Western and especially American officials have constantly done, that China matters because the West needs it as a strategic partner”.²³ He sees China through the realist lens and ultimately as a non-status quo nation state and therefore anything but a Western partner. Times have changed, as has China’s willingness to engage with the West. However, one sign of tension is in the sphere of arms and military exercises. It is here that China is separated and even at odds with Western policy makers.

The emphatic argument that China’s military does not matter in a world dominated by the US and a few other multilateral organizations was at the time a fair appraisal. Especially when considering the global dimensions we must establish that at best China’s military is ‘second rate’ with little capacity to deploy forces abroad in the same way as any other members of the UNSC. However, its capabilities are more than sufficient to control any domestic problems and to pose a threat to the existing equilibrium. It is for this reason that despite technical limitations we can still perceive China as being of high importance within the Asian strategic puzzle at the very least. Although US expenditure on arms often reaches double that of China, Beijing is making inroads in catching up with the advanced nations. This is shown primarily in the consecutively increasing expenditure by the CCP. From 1993 onwards the corresponding data regarding percentage of GDP used to purchase or develop arms illustrates a steadily accelerating program.²⁴ In 2006 US intelligence estimates that 4.3% of GDP was invested in arms development and trade, this figure is far higher than domestic reports indicating an unwillingness of Chinese officials to call a spade a spade and admit its program.²⁵ Following the embargo placed upon China by the West after the Tiananmen Square massacre Russia has been the major beneficiary of this increased expenditure as China has been forced to almost entirely buy arms and technology developed in Russia. It is in this context that a Moscow/Beijing security nexus is emerging and is one major area where China does matter greatly as a strategic partner of Russia.

The arms trade between the two has been an anchor of the strategic partnership since 1989 and has evolved into greater cooperation in the military field with the SCO sponsored Peace Missions conducting joint military exercises in the Far East.²⁶ US sources have insisted that they see nothing threatening in these manoeuvres despite the unconventional use of troops and tactics to combat their alleged target of separatism. Essentially, these arms and the quick modernization pose little direct threat to any state except Taiwan but seek to reaffirm Chinese regional authority and strong posture. Ultimately, it is China that will decide whether conflict or stability prevails in the Taiwan Straits. In addition to this Beijing plays a vital role in attempting to steer the North Korean issue to a positive conclusion.

Although all reports suggest that the US will maintain its military superiority over China for quite some time we still see the trend of a closing gap. For now this asymmetrical military cache gives America an advantage and an ability to follow “liberal institutionalist options” to work with China using preferential economic frameworks and status quo maintaining

²³ Segal, G. (1999) Does China Matter? Foreign Affairs 78, No. 5 (Oct), pp.31

²⁴ The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4> (accessed 13th March 2009)

²⁵ Information taken from CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html> (accessed 13th March 2009)

²⁶ Lo, B. (2008) Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics, pp.48

security agreements whilst retaining a realist option. On a regional level China's stock of ballistic weapons has drawn complaints from both Japan and India as to the tension that it is creating and effective local hegemony that it is perceived to be seeking.²⁷ Cooney has concluded that the US and China may have different definitions of "peaceful coexistence" and there may be a need in the future to clearly outline both spheres boundaries from which to coexist.²⁸ This is not even to mention the existing stock of nuclear warheads that will surely grow in significance as the post Cold War superpowers reduce their vast stocks to more manageable quantities. As the only holder of nuclear weapons in East Asia this supplies legitimacy for China as a regional military hegemon.

Considering the apparent rise militarily, when looked at through the realist paradigm there is no indication that China could deploy a force abroad and impose itself upon another power. This gives credence not only Segal's argument but also to other scholars who have more recently characterized China's military capabilities as mattering in a geostrategic sphere but being somewhat reduced in the international field.

Culturally

Finally, the impact that China has on global culture must be considered and aggregated with the above factors because it supplies the sociological context in which to place China in the global system. Segal doesn't deal with this extensively save to claim that China has a limited influence compared to that of the West and even Japan, which is a reasonable statement considering the domestic focus of Chinese civilization.²⁹ Modern US cultural influence can be found in the proliferation of 'super brands' such as McDonalds and Coca Cola as well as Hollywood which has spread far beyond its domestic origins. In addition European ideals of liberalism and democracy have become almost the default system for global multilateral frameworks. Asian values have been difficult to define and consequently an effect on global culture is equally difficult to find. Of course Chinese food has spread globally accompanying immigration. Cinema and literature have also proved popular globally; of course the Olympics in 2008 provided a perfect opportunity for China to make its mark through a showpiece event.

The accepted argument has been that China is concerned primarily with insulating itself from Western influence rather than extending cultural ideas. Goodman uses the example of the CCP blaming the BBC for its encouragement of protestors during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, therefore tightening access to outside news sources.³⁰ However we must now determine that his argument bears little credence as China seeks once again to find partners and influence in the developing world. Mao Zedong's model of ideological expansion is now being replaced by a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy under the modern leadership. What we now see is a new force at work that begins to negate the Goodman model above. China's exportation of the thesis for alternative development that it is now delivering to Africa and Latin America in exchange for non recognition of Taiwan and favourable access to resources is bringing with it cultural influence. For example look at Chinese workers in Angola who are now forming their own distinct community within a West African state or at the idea promoted in Costa Rica that economic development can take place without having to

²⁷ Sutter, R. (2003) Why Does China Matter? The Washington Quarterly, pp. 81

²⁸ Cooney, K. in Sato, Y. (2007) The Rise of China and International Security: America and East Asia Respond to the Rising Power, pp. 56

²⁹ Segal, G. (1999) Does China Matter? Foreign Affairs 78, No. 5 (Oct), pp. 34

³⁰ Goodman, D. in Buzan, B. (2003) Does China Matter: A Reassessment, pp.78

submit to Western terms and conditions on clauses such as human rights and free trade agreements.³¹ No longer motivated by an ideological thrust for proletarian revolution Chinese diplomacy is now boosted by ideas of non-use of ideology in foreign affairs and, of course, non-interference. Beijing also emphasizes its preference not to use terms such as aid in establishing contact with developing nations.

Another major issue is that of the ethnic Chinese living abroad. It has widely been perceived previously that the overseas diasporas were far less culturally tied to China than, say, the remote Indian community or those ethnic Pakistani living in Western Europe. The mass rallies in support of China following the Olympic torch run protests are an example of these communities demonstrating cultural ties.³² These may have been state sponsored and mostly local students studying abroad but they still identified the potential of communities abroad to work for the interests of China when mobilized. It is regionally that the overseas Chinese have created the largest cultural impact encouraging trade and supplying a large quantum of liquid assets, something that Goodman measures as being "1.5 to 2 trillion dollars".³³ With such a large stake concentrated mainly regionally in South East Asia an economic influence is unquestionable, Segal even recognized that up to 80% of inward FDI was from ethnic Chinese abroad.³⁴

Of course China has a traditional stake in the culture of the Asian region. Chinese civilization provided the building blocks for the characterization of written language and also the Confucian ideals that underpin much of East Asian values. It is whilst bearing this in mind that we must view the region as being traditionally within a cultural influence of China. However as we see no universally agreed Asian value system it is difficult to trace a cultural effect globally.

Conclusion

The argument that China creates a theatrical illusion of power seems to be corroborated to some degree by the questionable accounts of economic growth and percentage of GDP spent on arms. However, to claim that China is therefore a second rate power based on situation-specific economic data serves only to undermine attempts by Western leaders to formally integrate Beijing into the global political economy. It must be conceded that China uses certain tactics within multilateral frameworks to gain the best possible results and maximum leverage for itself, but is this not just a component of international politics? However, it is also true that China is important perhaps more for its ability to disrupt through error than an active ability to positively affect change on the international stage.

So, in a political sense China matters. Since the CCP have embraced multilateral structures and ditched the previous focus on bilateral arrangements no major global change can take place without Beijing's consultation. On the environment, credit crunch and efforts to stop the hijacking of cargo ships in East Africa China plays a pivotal role. However, it still fails to have the kind of influence over states that the US is able to command and if this is one of the factors that we are to judge importance on than it cannot claim much globally. But of course this is

³¹ Chinatown, Africa – Video Documentary (2008) http://current.com/items/89565630/chinatown_africa.htm

³² Chinese in France to rally in support of Olympics, China Daily, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-04/18/content_6628544.htm (accessed 15th March 2009)

³³ Goodman, D. in Buzan, B. (2003) Does China Matter: A Reassessment, pp. 82

³⁴ Segal, G. (1999) Does China Matter? Foreign Affairs 78, No. 5 (Oct), pp. 13

explicitly not an aim of Beijing's foreign policy and the CCP seek to gain voluntary support for programs of mutual interest. This soft power promises to develop further as the Chinese alternative development program is exported further and the infrastructure projects invested in such as the pan African rail network near completion. With this will come voluntary support in the international sphere and for the strictly multipolar world order that has been the constitution of the SCO since its inception in 2001.

From this perspective we see China as mattering politically especially to the developing world as not only a supplier of aid but also a valuable tool of representation at the UN. China is important also for Russia and even Iran. As these states try to balance the power of the West China is a valuable ally. Economically, China's potential is quickly beginning to turn into capital and however unrealistic the domestic growth estimates of 8% may be if Beijing can weather the current storm with reasonable growth rates it will be in a perfect position to exploit the international market once the tide turns.

It is following the development of both economic and political influence that we will see the consequent rise of China culturally. Yes, Western influence globally may currently be more pronounced than in Asia but we are now quickly moving toward a time when far from viewing everything through the Westcentric model we will see a world centred regionally and not with a single international hegemon. China matters, simply because it has to. The influential US diplomat George Kennan, who developed the theory of containment, predicted that the world would never be unipolar and academics such as Samuel Huntington have predicted the rise of China for quite some time. Above, the key reasons why China constitutes an important actor have been illustrated and it has been concluded that it matters. Though this author believes that the idea of a China threat is more hyperbole than reality it is true that in a realist zero sum view the rise of any country supplies a threat to the existing order especially if that nations strategic goals externally include the promotion of an alternative model of development sometimes at odds with Western interests.

Bibliography

Baylis, J. & Smith, S. (2006) The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations, Third Ed, Published by Oxford University Press, UK

Buzan, B. & Foot, R. (2004) Does China Matter? A Reassessment, 1st Edition, Published by Routledge

Carpenter, T. (2000) China's Future: Constructive Partner or Emerging Threat?, Cato Institute, July 25

Cooney, K. & Sato, Y. (2007) The Rise of China and International Security: America and East Asia Respond to the Rising Power (Asian Security Studies): America and Asia Respond. 1st ed. Routledge, August 31.

Eichengreen, B. & Wyplosz, C. (2008) China, Asia, and the New World Economy, OUP Oxford, February 21

Engardio, P. (Ed) (2006) Chindia: How China and India Are Revolutionizing Global Business, McGraw-Hill Professional, November 1.

Goldstein, A. (2001) The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging Choice, The China Quarterly, No. 168 (Dec), pp. 835-864, Published by SOAS

Huntington, S. (2002) The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order, New Ed. Free Press

Kim, S. (1998) China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era, 4th Ed. Westview Press Inc

Lampton, D. (2001) The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy the Era of Reform, New Edition, Stanford University Press

Leonard, M. (2008) What Does China Think? Published by Fourth Estate Ltd, United Kingdom

Levin, M. (2007) The Next Great Clash: China and Russia Vs. the United States, Greenwood Press

Lo, B. (2008) Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics. Brookings Institution, U.S.

Mahbubani, K. (2008) The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East, 1st Ed. Public Affairs

Segal, G. (1994) China's Changing Shape, Foreign Affairs 73, No. 3 (June), pp 43-58

Segal, G. (1996) East Asia and the "Constrainment" of China, International Security 20, No. 4 (Spring), pp 107-135

Segal, G. (1999) Does China Matter? Foreign Affairs 78, No. 5 (Oct), pp 24-36

Spengler, O. (2007) The Decline of the West. Abridged Edition. Oxford University Press Inc, USA

Sutter, R. (2003) Why Does China Matter? The Washington Quarterly 27, No. 1, pp. 75-89

Wachman, A. (2001) Does the diplomacy of shame promote human rights in China? Third World Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Apr), pp. 257-281

Yahuda, M. (2004) The International Politics of the Asia Pacific Since 1945. 2nd Ed. Routledge

Zhao, Q. & Guoli, L. (2008) Managing the China Challenge: Global Perspectives. 1st Ed. Routledge

US Government, (2007) Annual Report to US Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, (accessed 13th March 2009)

Taiwan R.O.C. Gov (2007) Statistical Yearbook of the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission, (accessed 15th March)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>

<http://www.ft.com/world/asiapacific/china>

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/20/opinion/edshambaugh.php>

http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_database1.html

http://current.com/items/89565630/chinatown_africa.htm

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk>

<http://www.imf.org>