

Rise Of India And China In The View Of Neo-Realism And Neo-Liberalism

Posted on July 27, 2022

Introduction

The power struggle is the most prominent aspect of the international arena. States compete with each other in developing their materialistic capabilities, such as wealth, military, and economy, for their survival and relative gains (Waltz, 1988). In this regard, China's economic rise and transformation have initiated a debate in the political sector about the consequences on the international system, especially when China surpasses the US economy (Gabiella, 2016). Many political scholars have attempted to predict China's behaviour either as a revisionist power challenging the global hegemony of the United States or a power that will preserve the status quo of the United States in international politics. A very similar situation will occur if India grows exponentially in terms of its economic strength. Therefore, the following essay explains the effect of the economic rise of these two countries on the international system and the hegemony of the United States from two different perspectives: [neorealism](#) and [neoliberalism](#).

Perspectives of Neoliberalism and Neorealism

Realism is a theoretical approach to understanding the behaviour of different states. Many realist thinkers argue that state behaviour is determined by human behaviour, which is opposed by neorealists who consider that state behaviour is driven by the anarchy in the international system that urges them to seek more and more power as compared to their rival states. There are several assumptions that neorealists believe in while explaining the internal relations between the states. These include an anarchic international system, uncertainty in the states, behaviour, and fundamental objective of survival of the states, which are rational actors (Doyle, 1986). Neoliberalism also adopts some of the core assumptions of neorealism, such as that states are the main actors in the international system. The main contradiction is that neoliberals do consider the importance of international institutions and non-governmental organizations in shaping the states' behaviour, although they both state that the international system is anarchic. However, both theories highlight the importance of relative gains.

Based on the underlying assumptions discussed above, China's economic rise, according to the neo-realist school of thought, will be rationally followed by a military buildup that will greatly challenge the US hegemony. Therefore, neorealists believe that China's rise will pose a great threat to the current international regimes that will ultimately destabilize the global economic and political systems (Scott

& Wilkinson, 2013). Moreover, China's Threat Theory explains that with a consistent rise in its economy, China will pursue its national interests more assertively, ultimately creating a strong competition between China and the US to maintain the balance of power. This situation will be very similar to that of the United States and Russia during the Cold War, which led to an ideological hegemonic war (Waltz, 1988).

However, the Chinese government has responded effectively to this theory and has attempted to normalize its relations with the United States to project its image as a peaceful country and build a supportive international environment. However, Mearsheimer, a prominent neo-realist scholar, argued that such diplomatic actions and statements can not be verified empirically and, therefore, the true intentions of the Chinese leaders cannot be known precisely from such verbal attempts (Gabiella, 2016). Moreover, as neorealists believe, it is empirical for China to influence the Western imperialist economic regime to completely eradicate poverty, and therefore, it will attempt to utilize its already built economic power to use other regional countries for its interests.

In contrast, the neoliberalism perspective presents a quite different view of the Chinese economic and political rise. As explained earlier, neorealists share some of the core assumptions of neorealism that portray states as rational and unitary actors interacting in an anarchic system that always pursues their national interests. Neoliberals give significant importance to international institutions such as "The International Monetary Fund (IMF)" and "The World Trade Organization (WTO)" that set particular norms, rules, and principles for states to behave accordingly. Therefore, they see China's economic and political rise more optimistically and peacefully (Gabiella, 2016). However, they also believe that the narrative of China will challenge the global hegemony of the United States, as argued by Ikenberry, a neo-liberalist.

On the other hand, the great economic interdependence of both countries in the existing liberal international system will prevent them from threatening the multilateral international regime itself. Therefore, from a broader perspective, the neoliberals argue the supportive relations between China and the United States to safeguard their mutual interests without challenging the strategic dominance of one another. Furthermore, as argued by Kissinger (2011), the war between the US and China is highly unlikely considering their economic interdependence, military rivalry, and huge size.

The relationship between India, China, and the United States is not as straightforward for the scholars of both schools of thought. According to neorealist theory, the nature of the relationship between India and the United States will largely be determined by the prevailing conditions of the international systems (Gabiella, 2016). For instance, the neorealist perspective portrays China as a great threat to the United States that will use India as its regional agent in Asia to contain their common enemy because the rise of China, considering its disputed border with India, is a threat to India regional superiority in South Asia as well. However, no long-term alliance between the United States and India has been suggested by neorealists, nor do they support the rhetoric of natural alliance under such circumstances, considering the vast difference in the ideological and cultural values between both states. Thus, the projected alliance between India and the US will endure as long as the similar

international situations of rivalry between China and the US remain.

In comparison, neoliberalism provides more explicit details of the relationships between India and the United States as it considers not only the rise of China as the main driver for the partnership but also the different economic and cultural contacts between both countries under the principles of the different international institutions (Gabiella, 2016). It also allows for the causal efficacy of low-level economic links between businesses, private individuals, and organizations in states, achieving their relative and absolute gains (Doyle, 1986). Therefore, unlike neorealists, neoliberals believe that relations with India will not adopt any aggressive attitude towards the United States even when China does not remain a strong mutual enemy due to its various social and economic contacts with the US. Moreover, the United States is heavily interested in maintaining strategic relations with India to contain Asia other than China, such as Russia. Hence, both countries believe in sustaining and promoting economic, political, and business relations unless circumstances change significantly in the international arena between China and Pakistan. All these aspects are not considered by neorealists when defining Indo-US relations.

Conclusion

Neorealism and neoliberalism prospect the rise of China and India in two opposite ways. However, they both lack a precise understanding of their relations with the United States. Neorealists do not consider the independence of the countries on each other and the highly crucial role of the international institutions, while neoliberals forget to incorporate the regional military actions of China and India that exhibit their aggressive nature.

References

Doyle, M. W. (1986). Liberalism and World Politics. *American Political Science Review*, 80(04), 1151-1169. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1960861>

Gabiella, D. (2016). How Does Neo-liberalism Explain the Likelihood of China's Threat towards the United States' Hegemony in the 21st Century *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 4(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v4i1.840>

Kissinger, H. (2011). *On China*. Penguin Press.

Scott, J., & Wilkinson, R. (2013). China Threat? Evidence from the WTO. *Journal of World Trade*, 47(4), 761-782. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258225302_China_Threat_Evidence_from_the_WTO

Waltz, K. N. (1988). The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18(4), 615. <https://doi.org/10.2307/204817>