Quasi-Unilateral World Order Or The Rise Of A Prospective New Empire

Analysing the future shift in the balance of power from Pax Americana To The People’s Republic of China

The end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, heralded a new “quasi-unilateral” power structure in the world: The United States of America. Herfried Münkler has rightly pointed out in his “Empires: the logic of world domination from ancient Rome to the United States”, how the personal decisions of a leader and the ideological orientation of his advisors influence the future of a state, nation or empire. For instance, the current Trump administration followed by a rapid increase in the developments of PRC, envisaging the continuation of a unipolar world order (that is with USA at the centre), seems rather difficult.

The new power constellation

John Humphrey and Messner Dirk in there, “China and India as Emerging Global Governance Actors: Challenges for Developing and Developed Countries” highlight how Charles Kupchan (a member of the US Council on Foreign Relations and an important policy adviser of the Clinton administration) assertion “Globalisation is Americanisation”, might soon become a thing of the past [1]. [1: John Humphrey, and Messner Dirk, 'China and India as Emerging Global Governance Actors: Challenges for Developing and Developed Countries.' IDS Bulletin 37, no. 1 (2006), 108, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/8421/IDSB_37_1_10.1111-j.1759-5436.2006.tb00253.x.pdf?sequence=1.]

This can be analysed by simply taking a look at the price tags of most of the goods in the markets these days. From huge chandeliers to tiny plastic containers, from fire crackers to candles, from clothes to jewellery, from makeup brushes to electronic gadgets, almost everything around, is annotated as “Made in China”. In fact, the “star-spangled” US Flags are also made in China.

“Every shipment of imports brought into the U.S includes a detailed invoice that shows the price, quantity and category of goods being imported, as well as any tariff that’s been applied. The national flag of the United States even gets its own code: 6307909825. TheF invoices show that in 2017 the U.S. imported 10 million American flags. Of those, all but 50,000 came from China” [2]. Interestingly, in the ongoing US-China trade war, the first thing one would assume is that the nationalist Mr. Donald Trump would impose huge tariffs on the very “symbol of patriotism”, the American flags. However, this really isn’t the case. [2: Jay L. Zagorsky, “Trump’s tariffs don’t apply to American flag imports from China – but they should,” accessed October 4, 2019, https://theconversation.com/trumps-tariffs-dont-apply-to-american-flag-imports-from-china-but-they-should-106659.]

The “Made in China” tag suffices to show the overarching grip of Chinese products on the world market. One couldn’t agree more with Münkler on the fact that the expansion and the stability of an empire depends primarily on its Financial and Economic strength other than

military robustness. Over the years, China's economic development has been remarkable. However, with the ongoing trade war, its GDP growth slumped to the lowest in 27 years. But what is noteworthy is that despite of such barriers, Beijing would not give up on its imperialist ventures. The "nine-dash line" is important in this regard. The south china sea encompassing Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam, is one of the busiest waterways. Even though there have been constant arguments in the UNCLOS (The United Nations Convention on The Law of the Sea), China continues to exercise its historical right over the south china sea by illegally creating artificial islands and installing missiles around the archipelago. Apart from harnessing economic interests from the archipelago, it also discreetly tries to fulfil its ambition of becoming a global naval superpower.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is also quite significant as it "aims to strengthen infrastructure, trade, and investment links between China and 70 other economies. It consists primarily of the Silk Road Economic Belt, linking China to Central and South Asia and onward to Europe, and the New Maritime SFilk Road, linking China to the nations of South East Asia, the Gulf Countries, North Africa, and on to Europe" [3]. [3: Somik V. Lall, and Mathilde Lebrand, "Who Wins, Who Loses? Understanding the Spatially Differentiated Effects of the Belt and Road Initiative," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8806, (April 8, 2019): 2 http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/292161554727963020/pdf/Who-Wins-Who-Loses-Understanding-the-Spatially-Differentiated-Effects-of-the-Belt-and-Road-Initiative.pdf.]

Thus, slowly and steadily, PRC tries to expand its "communist empire" in every possible direction. What is to witness, is that will it be able to survive against the "democratic (soft) empire".

Conclusion

Through the means of its subtle, low-key, discreet ventures, the "Chinese dragon" seeks to make its presence around the globe. It seeks to engulf an age-old megalomaniac empire: the United States. But the question is whether this expansion via the nine-dash line and the belt and road initiative lead to an "imperial overstretch" in the decades to come. Or whether this greater than ever "Ageing Population", will even be able to stretch at all in the decades to come, and instead usher in an unstoppable decline.

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