

# Literature Review: China through the Lens of Realism

## PART I: Introduction

China's massive growth has been paralleled by only that of the United States in recent history. In terms of strictly economic numbers, some predict China will soon surpass the United States (The Economist, 2013). Understandably, China's growth and future has merited a large amount of attention among International Relations theorists. The discussion about China's future in the international system has leaked over into popular media and become a conversation point for presidential debates. Mitt Romney made a point to challenge what he considered to be "soft" stances by President Obama regarding China (Lavender, 2012). Obama, on the other hand, showed an implicit skepticism towards China's growing influence by rejecting a bid by a Chinese company to possess wind farms in close proximity to a US navy base (The Candidates on US Foreign Policy Toward China, 2012). China is growing currently, has grown for decades, and is becoming an increasingly significant international player year after year. Not surprisingly, China has caught the attention of both political leaders and the popular media.

Yet discussions on China have not been limited to government officials or talk show hosts. Dating back to the well-known theorist, AFK Organski, China has been perceived by many as a potential threat to the US desire for hegemony in the international system (Organski, 1958, pp. 446). In regard to how China fits with International Relations Theory, there have been scholars in every distinct theoretical camp that have offered their expert opinion on how the US

should prepare for China.

Perhaps the most significant concern for many observers of US-China relations is that China will continue to grow, not only in economic strength, but in ambition. The question facing the general public and the United States foreign policy makers is this; “Will China challenge the status quo in a war-threatening way or will they be slowed/dissuaded to the point of peace?”

An intuitive truth of international relations and warfare is that major military advancement oftentimes require major funds. The economic growth that China has experienced over the course of the last 40 years, and how they will continue to in years to come, could play a significant role in enabling the future advancements of the military. Thus far, China’s economic growth has not taken place in isolation, rather it has furthered the development of the Chinese military simultaneously.

China’s economic growth has been furthered by a wide variety of factors. They had no shortage of cost-efficient labor when the winds of outsourcing came blowing their way. As technology and travel expanded, the economy became increasingly global rather than local, and China’s enormous cheap labor pool became extremely competitive when compared to the rest of the world. China became a primary source for labor when major companies in other states sought to maximize profit by lowering their labor costs. The high demand for China’s labor, among other industrial developments, helped to catapult China into rapid growth.

China went from being a state that was broken and poverty-stricken only half a century ago to what many consider an economic powerhouse in the present day. Interconnectedness made for a more competitive world and, because of their enormous cheap labor pool, China’s growth should come as no surprise. Yet it is possible that the exact same economic

interconnectedness and competitiveness that favored China could someday be their downfall. Although it is clear that China has witnessed a massive turnaround, the significance and strength of the new China is widely debated. While many economic numbers seem to line up in China's favor, not everyone believes that China is a soon-to-be dominant powerhouse. Although economic growth is significant, it may not necessarily threaten world security or translate directly to an increasingly potent military force or the development of weaponry. On the other end of the spectrum, there are some in the International Relations scholarly community, such as John Mearsheimer, that believe China's rise will be inevitably violent, nearly unstoppable, and that the US must do everything in their power to silence China's growing strength.

For many years, the threat of such a drastic Chinese rise to dominance, as suggested by prominent realist scholar AFK Organski, was disregarded as fear-mongering (Tammen, 2008, pp. 314). Up until the last two decades, literature about a looming rise of China was limited to only a few International Relations theorists. Despite warnings from theorists such as Organski, few scholars perceived that China's growth would be so rapid and substantial (Tammen, 2008, pp. 314).

The next several paragraphs will highlight areas of China's growth and international presence that have been perceived as either threatening or non-threatening. What is it that could be so noteworthy about China's rise and how has this been portrayed in popular media?

Of all that is going on in and around China, there are a few topics directly related to China that have caused angst amongst the international community. The first is China's current stance on nuclear weapons proliferation, specifically in North Korea. North Korea has become

an increasingly difficult state for the World to negotiate with and they have received a significant amount of attention from the US. The combination of volatile, polarizing leadership with the potential of unfathomably dangerous weapons is enough to make the US nervous. Despite the pleadings of the US, China has continued to interact with North Korea in commerce and aid. China has operated as a primary trade partner with North Korea and sent as much as 500,000 tons of food aid to the struggling state over the course of one year (Moore, 2007). While China sees the US as the cause for many of the problems related to North Korea, the US leadership has communicated that China is “propping up” the dangerous North Korean regime (Bull, 2012). For US political leaders, China’s refusal to discontinue connectedness with North Korea has been seen by many as implicit support for North Korea’s threats and weapons program. Obama candidly addressed China’s actions in 2007, saying that China’s leadership has been “rewarding bad behavior” in North Korea (Bull, 2012).

China’s on-going connection with North Korea has been significant in generating conversation and skepticism about the intentions of Chinese leadership as the growing state continues to rise. Although some perceive that China’s connection to North Korea could be an endorsement of the aggressive and volatile communist state (Bull, 2012), others view China’s actions as purely defensive (Xu, 2014). In either case, China’s relationship with North Korea has brought into question the motives of the rising state.

The second topic that has received major discussion in the US has been Mainland China’s relationship with Taiwan. Taiwan has enjoyed longstanding relations with the US and has benefitted from the support of the US in the transfer of weaponry. In the year 2010, the United States approved the selling of \$6.4 billion worth of weapons to Taiwan. Although China’s

relationship with Taiwan has been peaceful and somewhat uneventful in recent years, China-Taiwan relations still find a way into conversations about East Asian security. Many International Relations theorists postulate that a military conflict between China and Taiwan would inevitably bring the US along as well. For some in the US, the unwillingness of China to negotiate kindly with Taiwan is implicit disrespect for the US.

Next is the issue of weapons development in China. China's military, over the course of the last few years, has warranted a significant amount of conversation from the rest of the world. Political leaders and International Relations scholars have been vocal about China's military expansion and what it could entail for the future. The alarm caused in the international community regarding China's military is evident as recent as the 2014 Annual Report to the US Congress given by the US Department of Defense. In the Report, it is stated that China has continued to "pursue" military modernization with a concentration on strengthening military capabilities for local conflicts that could arise in Taiwan (Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, 2014). Military advancements are especially important when attempting to study China's rise through a realist lens. As one commentator, Robert Ross, states in a paper written in 2006, the capabilities of individual states have an enormous effect on international relations; a fact that he believes all realist scholars would agree with (S. Ross, 2006, pp. 359).

Finally, the issue that has received the greatest attention regarding China has been the massive economic growth that the state has enjoyed. Just over half a century ago, China was reeling from one of the most significant economic catastrophes in state history. Mao's "Great Leap Forward" led beyond poverty to mass starvation and the degradation of natural resources. Even up until the late 1970's, China was still on the bottom of the economic scale

internationally (Zhu, 2012, pp. 103). In the 35 years since that time, China has exploded with GDP growth at 8% per year to make the state the second largest economy in the world (Zhu, 2012, pp. 103). Measured strictly by GDP, China will likely surpass the US within the next few years (Giles). As recent as September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a tech startup from China, Alibaba, had the highest initial public offering (IPO) in world history (Mac, 2014).

Not only has China seen massive economic growth, but they have done it their own way. In contrast to what many scholars have historically predicted, economic liberalization has not caused a shift towards democracy. China has managed to adopt some free market principles without gravitating towards political democracy. Most recently, China was able to continue stable growth while the US suffered through a recession. The 2008 recession made the case to the world that the US economy was far from invincible while the Chinese economy was stronger every year. The US was no longer the great economic teacher for the world, and suddenly China appeared to hold the key to success in an increasingly competitive and globalized world.

For good reason, many international relations scholars have readjusted their attention to focus on China. The responses to China's growth by International Relations scholars have been multifarious, with every theoretical camp offering possible outcomes.

China's economic growth is pertinent to the international relations scholarly community, and realism more specifically, because many realist scholars posit that a growing economy will inevitably push China to challenge the status quo (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 390). On the other hand, some argue that China's economic strength will be too weak in the long term to enable the state to be a lasting threat to other major powers in the international

system, such as the United States (Chan, 2005, pp. 700-701) (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 42).

In a discussion on realism, it might be easy to overlook the importance of economic growth in China in order to devote more time and attention to China's military growth. Yet it is China's economic rise that has forced questions regarding China's desire to challenge the current status quo and expand territorially, militarily, and in influence. The significance of China's economic rise is explicitly made clear in the Australian government's 2009 Defence White Paper which said "That order is being transformed as economic changes start to bring about changes in the distribution of power" (Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2009, pp. 49). Mearsheimer, a prominent realist scholar, also referred to the economic growth of China as potentially having a significant impact on the international balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 381). Regardless of how the future of China will play out, it is evident that the state's economic growth plays an important role according to many scholars.

China's future is now one of the most significant talking points in international relations. For the US, China has emerged from being a state in crisis to a primary competitor. For the scholarly community, the rise of China has become a polarizing issue. International relations theorists land on all ends of the spectrum in regard to the future of China, with many theorists adamantly opposing the views of their colleagues. The issue has received contrasting critiques from within each theoretical camp. Liberalists, Constructivists, and Realists can all now be divided into pessimists or optimists depending on if they see China's future in the international system as antagonistic or peaceful (See Friedberg, "The Future of US-China Relations", 2005).

The remainder of this literature review will focus on the realist theory of International Relations and how it specifically relates to China. Realism has been chosen for the central focus

of this literature review for three main reasons. First, regardless of where a realist scholar lands on China's future, the ramifications are typically very drastic. As has been mentioned previously and will be detailed in the remainder of this review, many realist scholars are at odds on how China's rise will play out and how it will impact the rest of the world. Despite falling under the umbrella of realism, the sub-theories of realism-such as neorealism or classical realism-often have interpretations of China that stand in stark contrast to each other. In any case, most all realist scholars argue that the future of China will be of great importance for the rest of the world.

Second, literature supporting or refuting realism in regard to China has been extensive, dating back to Organski more than 50 years ago. Although initial realist scholars who voiced concerns over China and anticipated the weak state's rise were regarded as fear-mongering outliers, recent history has proved their predictions to be legitimate (Tammen, 2008, pp. 314). Currently, there appears to be more scholarly research and debate surrounding the realist approach to China than any other traditional International Relations Theory.

Third, realism has been chosen for this review because of how polarizing China's rise has been within the Realist community. Regarding China, realist scholars have landed on all ends of the spectrum in relation to how China should be viewed and how the Chinese rise should be interpreted. Even for scholars who claim to have a nearly identical theoretical basis, the implications on how China should be managed can be entirely different. Many recent realist scholars, such as Kirschner and Mearsheimer, argue that the exhortations of their opponents regarding China are not only incorrect but dangerous. The realist community has experienced sharp debate with some realist scholars strongly opposing the views of colleagues within the

same theoretical camp. The prevalence of realist thought in US foreign policy, the extent to which realists have theorized regarding China, and the high level of polarization among realists regarding China makes for a very interesting literature review.

A topic as broad as the rise of China could undoubtedly elicit a wide variety of discussion. The central focus of this literature review, however, will be limited to providing both a synopsis and analysis of how the International Relations theory of realism, and its various sub-theories, interpret China's recent growth. The review will investigate the similarities and contrasts amongst realist scholars on the topic of China as well as attempt to detail the various strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

## PART II: Realism Overview

In order for the reader to grasp the discussion in part 3 and the arguments made in part 4, it is important to understand the fundamental tenets of realist thought. Although the specific offshoots that fall within the overall theory of realism will be revisited in regards to their direct application to China, it is valuable to understand basic differences and the progression of how the multiple interpretations of realism have formed over time. Realism has been an integral part of International Relations Theory for hundreds of years, evolving and segmenting into various trains of thought.

The history of realism can be dated back thousands of years, although it has only been developed extensively over the course of the last century. In the eyes of many, Thucydides is perceived as the founding father of realism (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010). It is Hans Morgenthau, however, who made some of the most significant initial contributions to the structure and

study of realism. Beginning with Morgenthau's work in the mid-twentieth century, realism was reinvigorated in International Relations and began to take a more distinct form. Morgenthau brought what he saw as concrete laws to realism, establishing six principles as guidelines on how international relations take place. While recent realist scholars have ventured from the initial theories posited by Morgenthau, his views and insights laid the groundwork for the more recent takes on realism. Following Morgenthau's contribution, the study of international relations from a realist perspective found new life and has grown drastically as a result.

At its root, realism could be considered a mindset or attitude more than a structured theory of international relations. Robert Gilpin refers to realism as being a "philosophical disposition" (Gilpin, 1986, p. 304). Yet all versions of realism make at least three statements regarding natural state and trajectory of international relations. Realism in its original form, known as classical or traditional realism, was much more a philosophy than an actual theoretical framework. In the centuries since its inception, realist theory has taken a variety of forms and been further developed as a cohesive way of thinking about International Relations. Initially, realist theory made a few statements about the world. The first is in regard the international system. According to realist theory, the world is anarchic and is a breeding ground for competition as states seek to make sense of how they will relate to the rest of the world. The second key component of all realist theory is that states are primarily self-interested. In addition to the state desire for security, realist theorists often communicate that human nature is power-hungry or selfish. In the work of many realist scholars, human nature is seen as innately evil. According to Morgenthau, international relations is shaped by the "presence of evil in all political action" (Morgenthau, 1946, p. 203). While power is sometimes sought to

establish security, it can also be pursued as an end in itself. Finally, a major tenet of almost of forms of realism, especially classical realism, is the importance of the state in international relations. While other theoretical frameworks may endorse the importance of interdependence or institutions such as the United Nations, realism argues that international relations primarily operate in state-to-state interactions. Realism is primarily focused on the desire of humanity to achieve its own security. Realist theory views the state as the primary actor in international relations. Realist theory typically disregards the significance of institutions, a central actor in international relations according to liberalism.

Morgenthau went on to argue that hegemony was unrealistic and that the international community had only two options if it wanted to establish peace. In the first scenario, the international system can be peaceful if states have clearly defined, non-confrontational national interests and are able to agree to allow each other to pursue those interests freely. The second option is to form some sort of international agreement to silence the desire for power expressed by any individual state. Although Morgenthau's ideal world seems unattainable and his theory pessimistic, it was an enormously valuable addition to International Relations Theory. Morgenthau sought to move beyond wishful thinking and blind utopianism by openly looking at the harsh realities of international affairs and state interaction.

As realism has developed, a couple of theories have been added to the framework. In particular, the security dilemma and balance of power theory have both received a decent amount of discussion from classical realists. Neither the security dilemma or balance of power is unique to classical realism, but the interpretations can vary from one sub-theory to the next. The security dilemma delves into an issue that is important in every tenet of realism;

uncertainty. According to the security dilemma, states possess military capabilities and can develop said capabilities for a wide variety of reasons. Although some states may pursue military growth for entirely self-protective reasons, it is impossible for other actors in the system to be certain of the self-protective, non-confrontational motive. Because of the intimidation and fear that growing militaries bring to other states, it is likely that the other states will respond either with some sort of military action or the increase of their own military strength. The security dilemma posits that the constant increase of weaponry and military will only increase tensions and potentially lead to conflict because the states cannot be certain that they are safe.

One concept that seems to work its way into each theoretical camp within the broader scope of realism is what is commonly referred to as “balance of power theory.” Although balance of power theory is visited in some form or fashion every strand of realism, it is primarily a component of neo-realism. In regard to the balance of power theory, neo-realists espouse that a *bipolar system*, consisting of two major powers, is the best way for the security remain peaceful.

Neo-realism was initially championed by Kenneth Waltz and diverges from classical realism in a few important ways. First, classical realism sees human evil and selfishness as the primary driving force of international politics. While neo-realists oftentimes take a similarly pessimistic view on the international system, they do not necessarily think as negatively about human nature. Neo-realists argue that global conflict and dissension arises primarily due the difficulty of managing interstate relations in a world that is naturally in a state of anarchy. The next difference is the way that neo-realists actually see individual states. While classical realists

talk often about status-quo powers and revisionist powers, neo-realists see no difference between the two(<http://www.e-ir.info/2009/07/23/comparing-and-contrasting-classical-realism-and-neo-realism/>). Finally, neo-realism looks only at the systemic and structural aspects of the international system, making no suggestions on how states *should* act.

Furthermore, neo-realists believe that the changes in polarity and power balancing are an inevitable function of international relations. In their view, balance of power theory does not exist to explain how states should pursue a peaceful system but simply explains how the system will automatically interact in the pursuit of security. In the primary doctrinal book of neo-realism, *Theory of International Relations*, Waltz states that an individual may “behave as [he] likes to. Patterns of behavior nevertheless emerge, and they derive from the structural constraints of the system” (Waltz, 1979, p. 92) Like realist scholarship that preceded it, neo-realism could be seen as much more explanatory rather than normative. That being said, Waltz does attempt to take steps towards “problem-solving” in international relations theory (Waltz, 2008, p.50). He critiques previous realist theorists who posited “critical theories” of international relations that spoke on the state of world affairs without making any attempts at positing a solution (Waltz, 2008, p. 50). While Waltz’ neo-realism makes statements about the “inevitable” aspects of international relations, he also takes steps towards offering international relations solutions scarcely seen realist scholarship.

In attempt to offer some help to states in future interactions, Waltz self-admittedly over-emphasizes the importance of structures and state-centrality in international relations. While neo-realism does make some strides towards offering helpful insights to managing inter-state relations, the theory still follows previous realist work in being primarily explanatory.

In recent history, a number of structural realists have emerged with a different view on the international system and how conflict and international chaos can potentially be avoided or minimized. Specifically, John Mearsheimer took basic fundamentals of neo-realism, emphasizing the importance of international structures, and adapted them to create a theory known as offensive realism. The differences in offensive realism as compared to other theories have an extremely significant impact on the practical implications for foreign policy. At its core, offensive realism argues that states must maximize their power and authority in order to establish security (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 21). Differing slightly from traditional structural realism, offensive realism returns to a focus on security rather than survival and does not believe great powers can or will coexist. In addition to focusing on international relations from a broad perspective, Mearsheimer has also offered critiques and scholarly analysis of China's growth. Mearsheimer's work will be revisited and further explained throughout the remainder of this literature review. According to offensive realism, the only truly safe place in the international system is one of dominance. As a result, Mearsheimer believes that every state will inevitably pursue greater security without finding their pursuits satisfied until they are entirely dominant in the system they operate within.

Contrary to Mearsheimer and other offensive realists, Kenneth Waltz has long argued that the desire to establish hegemony actually decreases the chances for security, or survival for that matter, and that states ought to pursue the balance of power. While Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer are both structural realists, their views of international relations diverge in a number of key places. Waltz directly counters Mearsheimer by saying that power maximization is not the goal of the state (Waltz, 1979, pp. 126). In his opinion, states are

focused on survival and preservation of their place in the system (Waltz, 1979, pp. 126). While both see IR theory and power balancing as systemic, and while both see balance of power theory as explanatory, Kenneth Waltz takes a different approach than Mearsheimer. He believes that states are more secure when they act defensively rather than offensively. Offensive realism, according to Waltz, promotes self-endangering efforts by states to pursue a role as a hegemon. The pursuit of such authority, Waltz argues, jeopardizes state security and will ultimately be balanced out by other states in the system.

Before moving on the final subtype of realism that will be briefly introduced, there is one aspect of the realist subtypes thus far discussed that must be highlighted. Neo-realism and classical realism oftentimes show very little respect for the other major theories in International Relations; liberalism and constructivism. Mearsheimer provides ample evidence of the disdain by many realist thought leaders regarding constructivism and liberalism. In addition, Waltz has also written and spoken on the shortcomings of the other theories, specifically expressing what he sees as weaknesses in the value of international institutions. According to Waltz, the international institutions spoken of highly by liberalists is only a façade put forth by major powers as an attempt to further state interests.

([https://www.princeton.edu/~slaughtr/Articles/722\\_IntlRelPrincipalTheories\\_Slaughter\\_20110509zG.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/~slaughtr/Articles/722_IntlRelPrincipalTheories_Slaughter_20110509zG.pdf)).

More recently, the realist dialogue has progressed with the development of what has come to be known as neoclassical realism. Unlike previous subtypes of realism, neoclassical realism does not always disregard the value of international institutions, economic interdependence, and other non-systemic factors.

Perhaps the most significant contribution that neoclassical realism offers to the discussion on realist theory is an attempt to provide foreign policy recommendations. While neorealism and classical realism operate mostly as explanatory theories with a pessimistic outlook, neoclassical realism critiques the often fatalistic mindsets of its two predecessors. Many neoclassical realists, including some that will be cited in the remainder of this paper, express frustrations with the refusal of realist scholars to offer any hope of positive progress in the international system.

Additionally, neoclassical realists are able to take a more optimistic outlook because they do not support the notion that international relations are entirely driven by power, self-interest or systemic issues. Unlike many other realist scholars, especially advocates of neo-realism, neoclassical realist scholars have argued that factors such as domestic politics, internal strife, or interstate interdependence can all impact international relations. Neoclassical realists argue that it is possible for internal ideology, political policy, and economic ties to minimize the impact of the quest for power.

Looking over the history of realism and its development over time, the theory has gradually evolved as each new form of realism has come into existence. Beginning with classical realism, the theory was mostly pessimistic, primarily explanatory, and more a way of thinking about the world than a structured theory. Scholars like Morgenthau and the arrival of neo-realism helped to develop a realist framework through which international relations could be interpreted. Waltz began the shift from realism as purely descriptive to a more normative theory of how the “problems” of international relations could be “solved” (Waltz, 2008, p.50). Most recently, neoclassical realism took the core concepts and frameworks developed in the

previous phases of realism and added a fresh, optimistic outlook on the world that incorporated the significance of political and economic influences on the way states interact.

### PART III: Review of Realist Literature on China

With the economic growth and military development of China over the last several decades, a number of scholars have theorized and debated regarding China's pending rise to strength in the international system. As has been mentioned previously, China has experienced radical economic growth even while the US was experiencing a difficult economic season from 2008 through 2012. China's military expansion has moved forward in close alignment to economic progress. In 2014, while the US announced that military spending would remain flat in upcoming years, China's official military spending increased by 12% ("At the Double", 2014). China is expanding in both military and economy at a pace unseen elsewhere among major powers in the present day.

Realism, in particular, has received a disproportionate amount of attention with a number of scholars espousing passionate theories on how China's rise may adversely affect the world. While some scholars have received a great amount of attention for fear mongering theories about inevitable conflict between world powers, many other scholars have pushed back against the idea that China will rise to world dominance or that such a rise would be accompanied by violence.

As the discussion regarding China has continued, a number of realist sub-theories have been represented by the scholarly community. Each individual sub-theory holds some commonality to connect the theorists back to realism but, in many cases, these sub-theories

stand in clear opposition to each other when applied practically. The upcoming portion of this literature review will address the different theories existing within realism by reviewing the work put forth by the most notable scholars for the respective sub-theories.

## CLASSICAL REALISM

While classical realism is mostly underrepresented in the recent discussion regarding China, it is possible to take the work of notable classical realists and apply it to the situation. Classical realist scholars who are true to the premises of the classical realist argument will ultimately come to very negative conclusions about the rise of China. As has been mentioned previously, Classical realism operates primarily as an explanatory theory and is rooted in the belief that human nature is basically evil. Morgenthau typically came to grim conclusions based in his belief that the desire for power was a characteristic of humanity and not a result of an individual's surroundings or environment. As a result, Morgenthau concluded that any situation in international relations would only serve to expose the evil at the core of humanity. Furthermore, it is likely that Morgenthau or Thucydides would look at US-China relations with skepticism, believing that China's growth will only serve as a breeding ground for self-interest and expansionist tendencies.

In fact, if Morgenthau was able to look at the current state of international relations, he would see both the US and China as threats to world security. In Morgenthau's view, hegemony is dangerous because of the immensity of the responsibility and because of the evils of human nature. He would likely say that the US and China are both helplessly bent on their own self-

interest to the point that an extraordinary amount of power allotted to either state will only be to the detriment of the international community long-term.

Morgenthau's ideal world is one where information is perfect, state intentions are clearly understood by all parties involved, and interests do not severely conflict from one state to the next. Self-admittedly, Morgenthau's view on politics is grim. So much so that he refers to the true political nature of humanity as being something that "the human mind" is incapable of looking at "straight in the face" (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 15).

Although Morgenthau ought to be respected for his contributions to the development of realism, recent additions to the theory that give more weight to the influence of international systems are also valuable in understanding the international playing field.

## NEO-REALISM

Neo-realism, as has been previously discussed, goes beyond the historical realist belief that human nature and the quest for security are at the root of international relations. In neo-realism, human nature's insecurity or quest for power is amplified under specific structural conditions in the international system. The theory of Neo-Realism was originally championed by Kenneth Waltz. As it was a pivot from traditional realist theory and a critique of other major theories, Waltz was oftentimes very pointed in confronting opponents. Waltz argued throughout his career as a scholar that the driving forces for international relations are systemic and uninfluenced by international institutions, interdependence, or domestic politics (Waltz, K. N. (1998)). For example, in an article entitled "The Balance of Power and NATO Expansion", Waltz takes aim at the liberalist idea that international institutions can contribute to peace. Instead of furthering positive relations between states, Waltz argues that international

institutions exist only to be exploited by major powers in an attempt to further expand their control and influence over the international community. In Waltz words, “most international law is obeyed most of the time, but strong states bend or break laws when they choose to.” (Waltz, K. N. (1998))

In recent years, a number of scholars have taken the concepts presented by Waltz and adapted them to create differentiations of neo-realism. John Mearsheimer brought offensive realism to the neo-realist camp, a response to traditional neo-realism, and has caused quite a stir regarding East Asia. In fact, perhaps no scholar has elicited so much discussion in relation to the China issue as Mearsheimer. Although Mearsheimer is certainly not the first scholar to espouse structural realism, he is perhaps the most recent and most vocal when it comes to China.

AFK Organski, a scholar mentioned earlier in this review, shared some element of common ground with neo-realists in that he emphasized the impact of systems and structures of power in international relations. Yet Organski strayed from neo-realists, such as Waltz, on the balance of power by arguing that true security can only be found atop the international system and that states will not be satisfied until they reach that point (Waltz, 2008, p. 189). Organski’s primary argument, known as power transition theory, argued that the international system becomes more prone to conflict as the ground evens between major powers (Tammen). According to Organski, it is this process of power transition that causes insecurity and, oftentimes, a bit of irrationality in the decision making of a state’s leadership. What Organski brought to the scholarly community was in conflict to what had previously been suggested by realists (Tammen, 2008, pp. 314). While many realist scholars had argued for the important of a

balance of power, Organski flipped the thinking on its head by arguing that it is when power is asymmetric that security truly becomes possible (Tammen, 2008, pp. 314). According to traditional balance of power theorists, conflict arises when the balance of power is altered and a state seeks to expand or grow in power. In such case, the other states are expected to step in and exert a sort of “balancing effort” to bring the increasingly powerful state back into alignment with everyone else. Organski countered the traditional train of thought, communicating that the system becomes secure when a dominant state exists. Organski’s view of the primary power was not that the power must necessarily act as a hegemon or world police. Rather, in Organski’s theory, it is only necessary that the power is both dominant and satisfied. It is important that the state be dominant, controlling the greatest weapons and posing the strongest military threat, because it would run off potential conflict. It is also valuable, according to Organski, for the dominant power to be satisfied with their current control and territory. When the world’s major power was able to be both dominant and satisfied, Organski believed that peace could actually be achieved. Furthermore, he believed that China would inevitably surpass the United States and become the world’s preeminent power (Organski, 1958, p. 446).

For Organski, the idea of a dominant China or a dominant US was not the problem in and of itself. The problem, according to Organski, was the potentially painful process that the states may need to endure in order for power to transition. For peace to be maintained over long periods of time, the only solution in Organski’s system was for the major power to squelch any threatening growth of other states.

Mearsheimer, another prominent structural realist, has been unwavering in his belief

that China would inevitably seek a rise to power that would threaten the US (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 381). The key area where Mearsheimer strays from other neo-realists is in his belief that the only structure where states can truly feel secure, at least in regard to their region, is when they are in a place of dominance (Kirshner, 2012, pp.53). Mearsheimer has accomplished a unique feat in international relations; he has managed to either inspire or frustrate almost every international relations scholar who has engaged the issue of China's rise. Mearsheimer has easily become the most polarizing figure in realism when the topic of discussion is the future of China.

The strong response to Mearsheimer is likely not rooted in his theories as much as the implications that he draws for US foreign policy. Mearsheimer is passionate about the direction of US foreign policy and he believes that the recent decision-making is incredibly dangerous. Robert Kaplan, a personal friend of Mearsheimer, has said that Mearsheimer is reluctant to accept anything that comes from Washington D.C. regarding China (Kaplan, 2011).

Mearsheimer shares a common belief with most realists, being that he sees human nature as a primary culprit in international relations. Beyond this point, however, an observer will begin to see differences from one realist scholar to the next. Mearsheimer argues that states are incredibly insecure and that the only way to establish security is to pursue greater power. Because states can never truly be secure, says Mearsheimer, they will continue to accumulate power until they are dominant in the system. (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 383)

Mearsheimer argues that, while states seek to become dominant in the system in which they operate, it is not possible for a state to actually become a world hegemon (Mearsheimer,

2010, pp. 388). He believes that the necessary projection power required for China to insure world dominance across the Pacific Ocean is simply unattainable (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 388). Instead, he said that it is likely that China will seek to establish itself as the regional hegemon for East Asia, an effort that Mearsheimer says will undoubtedly cause conflict between the two preeminent world powers (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 389).

According to Mearsheimer, a state can never really understand the actions or intentions of other states (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 383). As a result, harmless maneuvers or political decisions made by the US will likely be perceived as threatening simply because they are difficult to interpret. Mearsheimer gives a number of extremely valuable examples of how specific US actions could send the wrong message to China, causing them to respond in an unnecessarily confrontational way. He states that the Obama administration continues to support the age old American foreign policy of world leadership and primacy (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 385). He cites rhetoric by American political leaders who claim that the US is the most significant nation in the world and is more important than any other in contributing to future peace in the international system (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 386). As Mearsheimer attempts to communicate, such strong rhetoric from the US leadership and major US influencers can only be interpreted negatively by the Chinese.

He also states that the US military could easily be perceived as directly threatening to China (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 385). In a discussion on realism, it is extremely important to give attention to the military capabilities of both China and other key actors that the state will continue to interact with throughout the growth process. As of 2010, the US was spending almost as much on military defense as the rest of the world (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 385). Not

only is the US defense disproportionately strong, the power projection of the US is also extreme. To make the situation worse, the US has invested a large amount of resources in projecting power into Asia; an uncomfortable truth for China (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 385). Furthermore, Mearsheimer states that the US has located aircraft carriers in East Asia and brought a substantial amount of weaponry to Taiwan (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 386). Even if the US efforts are entirely defensive, it is almost irrational to think that China will not feel threatened. Regardless of the lip service given by the US, it is difficult for China to interpret US actions as anything other than offensive.

In one rather convincing example, Mearsheimer communicates how Chinese interactions with Australia could possibly develop into a security threat for the US (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 394). If China continues to find it important to their national interests to pursue control of the South China Sea, then Australia will likely feel the need to seek support from the US out of fear of China and a desire to have access to the South China Sea as well (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 394). If the US cooperates with Australia and provides any sort of backing, the actions could easily be misinterpreted by China as antagonistic (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 394). Even in this simple example, China may see the US decision-making as threatening to their security. According to Mearsheimer, it is situations such as the hypothetical scenario with Australia that could breed conflict and will inevitably lead China to seek greater power over the international system (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 394).

Mearsheimer also looks to the past behavior of the United States and how it could be perceived by China. The importance of past behavior is contested, but the US has certainly provided ample reason for China to be skeptical moving forward (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 386).

The US has repeatedly taken advantage of China, threatened China, and gotten overly involved in East Asian affairs (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 386). The United States has essentially given the Chinese leadership every reason they could ever need to be wary of the relationship.

Mearsheimer's argument is primarily rooted in the idea that states are constantly looking to establish security while simultaneously being uncertain about what it will take. In his short journal article, *The Gathering Storm*, Mearsheimer makes a pivotal statement that explains the bulk of his argument. Mearsheimer states that "unlike military capabilities, which we can see and count, intentions cannot be empirically verified" (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 383). As a result, Mearsheimer believes that states will never truly feel secure, the main end of states in his theory, until they have pushed away all potential threats and attained a place of dominance.

Before moving forward to investigate the critiques of other scholars regarding Mearsheimer's work, there is one clear bias in Mearsheimer's work that is not necessarily a reflection of reality. Although he makes a good argument regarding the security dilemma, he makes assumptions regarding China's strength and overlooks weaknesses in the United States' ability to police the world. Without any supporting argument, Mearsheimer states that the world has been mostly pacified by the United States over the course of the last few decades (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 381). Like many theorists, Mearsheimer appears to think that a correlation automatically implies a causal relationship. Regardless of whether the world has been pacified as of late, it is wrong to assume that the United States is responsible. As an example, the United States' efforts to police the Middle East have not necessarily been successful. It is possible that the United States' attempts to police the Middle East have done

more to further instability than reduce it. In dealings with Iraq, the United States sent a message to the entire international community that they were willing to overstep state authority without international support if they believed that an area was being governed harshly or incorrectly. In the wake of the overthrow of the Iraqi government, the state and region as a whole has only become more volatile. The power vacuum created by the removal of Saddam's Iraqi regime became the breeding ground for a number of violent and dangerous groups to seek power. Although it is hard to estimate how far-reaching the negative consequences of US involvement truly are, it is safe to say that the original objectives that the US set out to achieve have not been accomplished successfully or in a stabilizing way. Contrary to statements made by Mearsheimer, what has happened in the Middle East exemplifies the weaknesses of US policing efforts.

Mearsheimer takes his theory, which some scholars agree with, and applies it to US foreign policy in a severe way. He argues, in an admittedly blunt way, that it is impossible for China to rise peacefully. Disregarding any other motive besides the quest for security, Mearsheimer communicates that states can never be slowed by economic interdependence or international institutions. Mearsheimer believes that the US foreign policy has been dangerously clouded by the thought that transparency between states can prevent conflict. According to Mearsheimer, the US is basing their foreign policy, to some extent, on the idea that cooperation can bring peace and that China is not necessarily building their military in an offensive way. Mearsheimer believes that both theories are deeply flawed. As has been mentioned previously, Mearsheimer disagrees vehemently with the value of international institutions, saying that China will pursue its security interests first and foremost. In regard to

China's military being built only for defense, he says that the argument is only wishful thinking because "it is difficult to distinguish between offensive and defensive military capabilities". In addition, he fears that the US will cooperate with a somewhat peaceful China, all the while enabling their growth, only to see a fierce and power-hungry leader rise to the helm of China's leadership in 5 to 10 years. Furthermore, Mearsheimer believes that the world cannot depend on the current or past actions of China to predict the future. He states that "past behavior is usually not a reliable indicator of future behavior because leaders come and go and some are more hawkish than others" (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 384).

He anticipates that, if China continues to rise, they will be unrelenting in securing regional hegemony and will likely desire to force the United States out of the area completely. According to Mearsheimer, the primary reason that China has not already begun to threaten the status quo is because their military capabilities are not yet at a level that makes such an effort reasonable (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 385). He believes that China will model the US rise, constructing their "own version of the Monroe Doctrine". He states that China will undoubtedly seek to secure the South China Sea, an effort that he thinks is already in motion. He goes on to communicate that China's interests in their region are reasonable and very similar to those expressed by the US regarding the Americas. In making his point, he refers to work done by scholar Robert Kaplan on how geography relates to power. Kaplan agrees with the concept that the US actions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century will likely be mirrored by China in the near future. Although Kaplan differs on policy implications, he agrees with Mearsheimer that China will seek to protect its own interests by establishing control over the South China Sea and pursuing the role of sole hegemon in East Asia. Kaplan sees the potential for conflict and views Mearsheimer

as both a friend and mentor. The two diverge, however, on how they believe China should be treated. In Kaplan's view, a certain amount of assertiveness should be allowed from China; he argues that the US should not antagonize China by squelching their every effort. Instead, the US should allow for some Chinese authority in the region while simultaneously keeping watch over China's expansion. In his own words, the US and the international community at large must "walk a thin line" in how they relate to China. Kaplan and Mearsheimer differ in how they believe China's growth ought to be handled but they align in the view that China will inevitably seek to affect the status quo, mirroring the actions previously taken by the US in the last few centuries.

Mearsheimer's foreign policy advice on how China's rise should be managed is perhaps the area where he has received the most significant backlash. In an attempt to persuade the reader, Mearsheimer asks "Why should we expect China to act any differently than the United States over the course of its history? Are they more principled than Americans? More ethical? Are they less nationalistic than the Americans? Less concerned about their survival? They are none of these things, of course, which is why China is likely to imitate the United States and attempt to become a regional hegemon".

In addressing how the world, and in particular the US, should view China he states that the world is a dangerous place and politics are "nasty". He says it is of no value to tell pretty stories, communicating that no amount of good will can avoid the security competition brewing in Eurasia. Mearsheimer's foreign policy recommendation is that China be contained and their rise intentionally limited because, as he says, China cannot rise peacefully.

In the final page of his book *Tragedy*, Mearsheimer concludes his work saying ""Neither

Wilhelmine Germany, nor imperial Japan, nor Nazi Germany, nor the Soviet Union had nearly as much latent power as the United States had during their confrontations ... But if China were to become a giant Hong Kong, it would probably have somewhere on the order of four times as much latent power as the United States does, allowing China to gain a decisive military advantage over the United States.”

It is clear that Mearsheimer sees China as a threat and he wants foreign policy decision-makers to perceive China’s rise as he does.

International Relations theorist Steve Chan has attacked Mearsheimer’s argument on many fronts. In his article, “Is There a Power Transition Between the US and China?”, Chan critiques Mearsheimer’s argument before it even begins. That is to say, Chan critiques Mearsheimer’s presupposition and the foundation on which his argument is built. Rather than address the actual “power transition theory” on theoretical terms, he investigates the nature of China’s rise and in what ways the massive state is actually rising. Chan gives a clear and concise definition of power transition theory, stating that it “contends that the danger of a war among the great powers is the greatest when a latecomer dissatisfied with the international status quo overtakes a once-dominant state”.

Chan voices his primary problem with power transition theory on the second page of his article; the measurements used to indicate whether power is actually accumulating or transition are woefully insufficient. He goes on to mention a number of methods by which China’s power could be measured, all of which seem to come up with very different answers.

Specifically, Chan mentions that it is not enough to simply state that China’s economy is growing. According to Chan, much of the Chinese economic growth has the potential to be

short-lived. If an observer really wants a glimpse into the future of a state's economy, says Chan, then the individual ought to look at the prevalence of information technologies. Gone is the day when amounts of coal or steel could be seen as valuable indicators of economic strength. Chan states that China can be deceiving in that they have outlandish size and economic numbers, but they lag behind on important developments like information technology. In further communicating his point, Chan writes that the US had 33 times more personal computers per capita than China as of 2011. Furthermore, he says "American Internet users outnumber their Chinese counterparts by almost 20 times".

The point Chan intends to make is that the greatest wealth and power in the future will be dependent on economies with IT development and the most advanced, irreplaceable, competitive human capital. As of right now, China's numbers have been bolstered by a massive labor pool and industrialization that is behind the most developed states. Although China's human capital is large in quantity, it is not necessarily competitive with the world. Indeed, China's key advantage has been the cost-efficiency of its workers. Yet economic growth will not work in favor of the labor advantage in China because the cost of living will inevitably increase and the needed worker compensation will grow right alongside it. If China is unable to translate their gains to the development of human capital, then their economic growth will likely become stagnant and eventually decrease. As Chan says in the conclusion of his article, his argument does not guarantee that China will not overthrow the US and become the world's primary hegemon. What Chan is communicating is that, as he says, "whether this possibility comes to pass will depend on China's ability to develop its human capital and undertake technological innovations".

Chan makes a strong argument for the future of the Chinese economy. Truly, with the China's incredibly large population and territorial expanse comes the difficulty and managing human capital at a high level. The very factors that once played to China's benefit, a large labor pool and low cost of living, may now work against China as they seek to develop such a massive number of people, many of which are uneducated or poorly educated.

Yet there is one point that Chan appears to have missed in his argument. While his insight on the weakness of China's economy is legitimate, it is new information to most people. Many observers would perceive that China's economy has exploded and, as was mentioned earlier in this review, may soon dwarf the US economy in terms of GDP. The looming danger will be whether or not China is actually able to recognize their economic weakness or if the economic weakness will not show itself in full for many more years. As Mearsheimer communicates, China's pursuit of altering the status quo will not be guided by actual economic strength but by the perception of strength. Indeed, states are not empowered to seek greater power by the strength and sustainability of their human capital. Rather, growing powers become revisionist states when they *believe* they deserve more or *perceive* that they have the strength to seek greater security. As Dr. Dan Blumenthal communicates in his article "Deterring China," it is possible for a state to misinterpret their strength and attempt to assert themselves on states that are, in reality, much stronger and more stable (Blumenthal, 2009). If China is certain that their strength now matches that of the US, then it will not matter how many economic weaknesses the state has when it determines its foreign policy. While Chan makes a strong argument for why China could struggle long-term, he does not make it clear whether those weaknesses have been understood by China's leadership. Furthermore, the importance

of his economic measurements, which state that China is roughly two decades behind the US, rests in China's recognition that they do not yet deserve the opportunity to alter the status quo. For if China does not understand their weakness then they will continue to act as if they are a major power with long-term aspirations.

## NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

The neo-realist ideas posited by Organski, and Mearsheimer regarding China have received severe backlash from a number of NeoClassical Realist scholars. Even scholars who agree on some elements of what Mearsheimer has offered oftentimes are frustrated by his policy recommendations and his passionate stance on the containment of China. Mearsheimer argues that the pursuit of positive relations or cooperation should take a backseat to security concerns. He argues that the US would be better off harming US-China relations in the pursuit of containment than trying to foster cooperation.

Neoclassical realists differ from Mearsheimer and Organski on a crucial point; they do not believe that the quest for security is the only driving force in International Relations. One author in specific, Robert Ross, believes that scholars in who align with Mearsheimer have influenced the foreign policy of the Obama administration as of late. In his article entitled "The Problem with the Pivot," Ross argues that the mentality of the government has changed towards China in a negative way. He states that the government has, primarily out of fear, chosen to address China by increasing US presence in East Asia.

According to Ross, the fear that the US has in regard to China is unwarranted. He argues that China's military development is comparatively very far behind the US and should not yet be perceived as a security threat. Due to a number of weaknesses in China's military strength,

as well as technological advancement, Ross believes it is foolish to assume that China is on an accelerated path towards world dominance. While Ross does not see China as extremely powerful, he does see how they could have a negative impact on the international system if they so desired (Ross). Ross believes that US security is not necessarily in question regarding China, but he believes a heavy-handed approach on China could give the US a host of other problems to deal with (Ross).

Unlike Mearsheimer, Ross does not think that the main issue regarding China is US security and power transition (Ross). In regard to US supremacy, Ross has not yet seen evidence that convinces him that China can overthrow the world's most dominant power (Ross). What Ross is afraid of is that foreign policy decision makers will decide to act strong towards China in an unnecessary, antagonizing fashion (Ross). Ross' main point is that China is essentially not a problem for the US unless the US foreign policy antagonizes China (Ross). According to Ross, recent actions by the Obama administration have increased the likelihood of conflict in East Asia and contributed to instability in the region (Ross). The decision to be more heavy-handed has been perceived only as expansionist and threatening in the eyes of the Chinese (Ross). Ross believes that it is time for the government to revert back to the more cooperative, hands-off policies that he claims were present in previous administrations (Ross). What the current administration seems to misunderstand, in Ross' opinion, is that China's activity in East Asia is not a threat to US security (Ross). Instead, the government is only angering a state that poses no major security problem but will likely be a needed partner for US goals in the future (Ross).

Ross comes to his conclusions about China based on their weaknesses rather than their strengths. While he does not perceive that they will become a dominant power, he recognizes

the significance of the Chinese state and decides that the US should avoid amplifying tensions between the two states. Because China is not all that powerful, according to Ross, it is better to minimize hostilities rather than antagonize China so that the state does not become an international annoyance.

In addition, a primary aspect of Ross' view on US-China relations is that the two are geographically positioned in a way that will be mutually beneficial (Ross). According to Friedberg (who will be referenced extensively later), Ross could be considered a realist optimist because of his belief that China and the US do not necessarily need to interfere with each other even if China ascends to hegemony in its respective region (Friedberg, 2005, pp. 28-29). Because the two states "spheres of influence" do not overlap, Ross posits that it is possible for the two to exist in positions of high power without conflict (Ross, 1999, pp. 81-118).

Other neoclassical realists, including Jonathon Kirshner and Thomas Christensen, have also aligned with Ross in saying that a heavy-handed approach to China could do more harm than good.

Of the scholarly work that was studied for this literature review, no theorist had a stance as adamantly against Mearsheimer as Kirshner. In an article entitled "The Tragedy of Offensive Realism", Kirshner spends several pages analyzing the various problems he sees with Mearsheimer's argument. While Mearsheimer argued that a soft, cooperative approach to China will be dangerous and potentially lead to the US being overtaken, Kirshner argues the exact opposite. According to Kirshner, true danger will spring up from theorists and politicians who, agreeing with Mearsheimer, believe that China's rise must be slowed or stopped at all costs (Kirshner, 2012, p. 53). Kirshner is admittedly not a fan of structural realism and harkens

back to a number of ideas put forth by classical realism. Unlike Ross or Chan, Kirshner believes that China is emerging and should be considered a truly threatening power (Kirshner, 2012, p. 53-54). Yet Kirshner disagrees entirely with the concept that structural transitions must automatically bring conflict and, as a result, necessitate heavy-handed responses from the international system (Kirshner, 2012, p. 59).

Kirshner does not entirely reject the notion that structures of power have influence on international relations; rather, he argues that structures are only the beginning of how the international system should be understood (Kirshner, 2012, p. 60). In Kirshner's view, his form of realism offers a much more hopeful and much less severe alternative to that of Mearsheimer. According to Kirshner, the structural realism espoused by Mearsheimer seems to give no option but to smother the growth of other states in every situation (Kirshner, 2012, p. 59-60). Kirshner, on the other hand, believes that his theoretical basis for viewing China allows for the accommodation of rising powers (Kirshner, 2012, p. 58-61).

What Kirshner offers in regard to what is thought to be an impending doom facing the US is entirely different than the work contributed by Steve Chan. While Chan took shots at structural realism and fear-mongering theories regarding East Asia by saying that China's rise is an illusion, Kirshner comes to his conclusions on more of a theoretical basis. At the root of Kirshner's robust argument is the idea that China's interests are multifaceted. Rather than simply looking at power structures, Kirshner invokes the study of international complexities and China's unique historical background (Kirshner, 2012, p. 61). Kirshner believes that part of the attractiveness of Mearsheimer's argument as of late has been its simplicity. Kirshner admits that his explanation of international relations is not as clean or concise, but he believes it is a

much more holistic approach to understanding China's future (Kirshner, 2012, p. 70).

Kirshner, unlike some hardline classical realists, believes with Mearsheimer that changing power dynamics and systems could result in a serious problem (Kirshner, 2012, p. 54-55). Yet he differs from Mearsheimer in at least three ways. First, Kirshner says that there are motives driving actors beyond the pursuit of absolute security. According to Kirshner, states must be viewed as political beings in addition to actors set on survival. Second, while Kirshner believes that China is dangerous, he does not agree that China's rise must necessarily bring war (Kirshner, 2012, p. 59). Third, he believes that a deeper understanding of the previous two points should provide a basis for less drastic, simplistic policy recommendations for the US (Kirshner, 2012, p. 53-55).

While Mearsheimer argued that only specific structures have the potential to provide for a peaceful international system, Kirshner believes that it is possible to increase security without the presence of a hegemon (Kirshner, 2012, pp. 53-55). Furthermore, Kirshner takes issue with the idea that states can only protect their security through becoming the dominant power in their respective region (Kirshner, 2012, pp. 62-63). While Mearsheimer says that it is right for states to pursue a bid for hegemony, Kirshner believes that such an attempt to accumulate power is essentially suicide for most states (Kirshner, 2012, pp. 62-63). In such case, the bid for hegemony is not increasing security; it is undermining it entirely (Kirshner, 2012, pp. 62-63). Kirshner's argument against structural realism in this case exposes the danger of Mearsheimer's oversimplified explanation of international relations. Because Mearsheimer is so committed to the philosophy that only certain structures can provide for peace, he fails to see that the very structure he is endorsing can be to the detriment of the state. Kirshner aptly

mentions that Mearsheimer's attempts at defending his stance often only reinforce the weaknesses in his argument (Kirshner, 2012, p. 62). As Kirshner and other neoclassical realists argue, there appear to be unique political situations, beyond simple structures, that have an impact on world peace and security (Kirshner, 2012, pp. 54-55).

Following on the heels of Ross and Kirshner, Thomas Christensen also believes that overzealous US efforts in China will be mostly negative over the long-term (Christensen). Christensen is unique in comparison to Ross and Kirshner in that he has a somewhat positive outlook on how the US government is currently handling the emergence of China (Christensen, T. (2008)). He posits that the Chinese growth in the international system does not necessarily have to be a problem unless the US makes it one.

Christensen rests his argument on two primary ideas. First, he argues that China is a conservative power that has acted mainly out of fear (Christensen). Second, he states that the US will actually benefit from China becoming increasingly assertive in the East Asia region. (Christensen)

In his article, "The Advantages of an Assertive China", Christensen gives a number of examples of what he sees as China's conservative mindset being revealed. He looks at recent events that have led many in the international community to fear China and seeks to explain how they can be understood as the outworking of China's conservative mentality. In one example, he writes how China began using a strikingly more nationalistic style of rhetoric in the last five years (Christensen). In alignment with his theory, he attributes the altered Chinese attitude to an attempt to gain national support during a time of economic stagnation (Christensen). Understanding the massive changes that have taken place in China over the

course of the last 30 years, it would not be surprising to find that many Chinese citizens are discontented. Indeed, if the US moved entirely towards socialism in the course of 30 years, then the response would almost surely be very negative from the American population. The unique situation for China is that the major changes that the state has undergone have brought in unprecedented results. The economy has exploded, jobs have been created, and China is now a major international player. It seems very possible that many potential dissenters regarding China's changes have chosen to remain silent due to the success that the state has enjoyed. It does not seem unlikely that the government might fear the public response if suddenly economics-the balm to public uneasiness- began to implode. According to Christensen, the increase in nationalist rhetoric was an attempt by China to appease the population's unrest during a time where the economy was temporarily struggling (Christensen).

Christensen also uses the Chinese relationship with North Korea to serve as evidence of a conservative China (Christensen). Many in the international system and the US leadership specifically, have seen China's continued interaction with North Korea as dangerous.

Christensen, on the other hand, thinks it actually shows that China acts in a perceivably threatening way only when they fear their security is in question (Christensen). In regard to North Korea, Christensen argues that almost everyone understands that China does not want an empowered North Korean state pursuing nuclear proliferation (Christensen).

North Korea plays an important role in China's security in a number of ways. First, North Korean failure or nuclear proliferation could have drastic effects on regional security and the stability of China's key trade partners. Second, North Korea is one of the few remaining states in the region with a similar political system to that of China. Many scholars have suggested that

China hopes to use North Korea as a “buffer state” to keep the emphasis of democratic imperialism off of China’s government. Third, China has a large number of former North Korean citizens currently residing within Chinese territory that could cause internal strife if they believe China is treating their homeland unfairly. Finally, a North Korean collapse could be the migration of millions of displaced, poverty-stricken, conflict-prone people leaving the failed regime. (Moore, 2005, pp. 1-29)

In Christensen’s opinion, China’s long-suffering relationship with North Korea is evidence that they must be a conservative power (Christensen). For the reasons previously mentioned, China certainly has reason to keep watch over North Korea’s stability. In Christensen’s words, “A truly assertive great power would not allow a small pariah state to hijack its foreign policy in such a fashion” (Christensen).

Christensen’s argument is persuasive perhaps most significantly when compared to Mearsheimer. According to Mearsheimer, a rising China should pay little regard to the economic and political threats that North Korea poses. Rather, the primary driving motive for China’s decision-making should be to establish security in East Asia by putting the potential dangers in North Korea to rest by way of force. As Christensen communicates, China’s actions appear to reflect a rational self-interest that looks at the relationship with North Korea holistically, making decisions that appear more apprehensive and uncertain than dominant. In reality, it appears that China has chosen a conservative and balanced approach to North Korea.

Christensen clearly exemplifies neoclassical realism. Although he recognizes that structural changes may affect China’s perceived security, he also believes that there are a number of political and ideological factors that could alter China’s course. Christensen is no

different from Ross and Kirshner in saying that the wrong US approach to China could amplify potential security threats for both states.

The second main argument posited by Christensen is that an assertive China can actually be a very valuable asset for the world (Christensen). The concept that an assertive China would be tolerable is primarily rooted in the way he perceives the rising China's mentality. Because he sees the state as basically conservative, he states that China can be assertive without necessarily causing damage to the international community (Christensen). In defense of his argument, he says that China and US can both benefit greatly, for a number of reasons, from stability and consistency in Iran (Christensen). Christensen also argues that China's increased assertiveness in East Asia could provide stability in a way that the US is incapable of due to proximity (Christensen). In both cases, it is in the best interests of both the US and China to work together. If China is truly a conservative power, as Christensen says, then their assertiveness could be beneficial to the international system as a whole.

Two additional neoclassical realists have offered substantial amounts of literature on how the negative implications of realism may potentially be muted or outweighed by other contributing factors. The two authors, Friedberg and Goldstein, each offer some similar thoughts but also add a number of unique insights to the discussion regarding China's future.

Friedberg offers a look at numerous theories regarding China and how he believes they converge in his 2005 article "The Future of US-China Relations". In the article, Friedberg sets out to give the best possible answer to the question "is conflict inevitable". In Friedberg's article, he divides the theoretical perspectives in six distinct categories; Realist Optimism, Realist Pessimism, Liberal Optimism, Liberal Pessimism, Constructivist Optimism, and

## Constructivist Pessimism.

Unlike some other theorists, Friedberg writes as if he sees at least some amount of value in each viewpoint. He states on page 11 of the article that it will likely require a combination of all theories to find a holistic answer (Friedberg, 2005, p. 11, Friedberg, 2011, p. 1). In discussing what he calls realist optimists, including scholars such as Goldstein and Ross, he supports the idea that China's growth may likely stagnate in the future (Friedberg, 2005, p. 28-29). In alignment with the realist optimists that he writes about, he sees underlying weaknesses in China and communicates that China must make important changes if they hope to make their current growth sustainable (Friedberg, 2005, p. 24-25). Friedberg appears to agree with realist optimists on these points, saying that "China's continued weakness, in short, will help to keep the peace" (Friedberg, 2005, p. 25). While Friedberg seems to think a strong China could cause tensions, he supports the realist optimist thought that China's decision to avoid political liberalization or weak human capital may keep China from growing much more (Friedberg, 2005, p. 25).

Friedberg certainly expresses realist sentiments when he infers the security dilemma as a potential threat to positive relations between China and the US (Friedberg, 2005, 22-23). He does not shy away from the idea that the US-China relationship is threatening (Friedberg, 2005, p. 23). In a recent book, he states that the current relationship is one of tension where the idea of easy resolutions is only wishful thinking (Friedberg, 2011, p. 1). Furthermore, he establishes himself as a realist, to some extent, by stating that the current problems facing the United States and China directly result from structural changes in the international system (Friedberg, 2011, p. 1). He clearly articulates how realist principles are at work, arguing that the US believes

that the status quo is being adversely affected while China is seeking to gain increased influence that they believe is rightfully theirs (Friedberg, 2011, p. 1). The systemic changes, according to Friedberg, are the perfect storm to multiply tensions between the two states (Friedberg, 2011, p.1-2).

He specifically points to the current situation in Taiwan as an example of the security dilemma at work, saying that China may only desire to keep the status quo as it is and prevent Taiwan from breaking free (Friedberg, 2005, p. 22). Yet in trying to keep Taiwan at bay, China may issue threats or make other decisions that could be perceived as offensive (Friedberg, 2005, p. 22-23). In such a case, it is likely that the Taiwanese government would seek help from the United States which would undoubtedly raise concerns amongst China's leadership (Friedberg, 2005, p. 22-23). In that situation, it is possible that relations quickly become volatile simply due to misunderstandings. In addition, Friedberg also mentions that other actions by the US as of late could easily be perceived as threatening to the Chinese (Friedberg, 2005, p. 23-24). As was discussed in the work of Mearsheimer, it is very possible for tensions to rise due to the uncertainty of a state regarding their opponent's motives.

In addition, Friedberg picks a number of ideas from other theoretical camps in the process of piecing together his own argument. He identifies what he sees as a somewhat conservative mentality in China's current leadership; an idea that has been strongly championed by Thomas Christensen and Robert Ross (Friedberg, 2005, p. 26-27). He states that China has transitioned from the communist ideology that characterized the government 50 years ago and can no longer be seen as a revolutionary power (Friedberg, 2005, p. 27). Friedberg says that, regardless of military capabilities, "China's ambitions are such that the

prospects for conflict with the United States should be limited” (Friedberg, 2005, p. 27).

After having discussed each theoretical framework in short, Friedberg gives personal thoughts on how he believes the US-China relationship will function in the future. In expressing his own opinion, he gives three potential scenarios. The first, which he entirely dismisses, is what he refers to as “simple preponderance” (Friedberg, 2005, p. 40-41). Simple preponderance is the idea that one primary theory will take priority over the rest and will ultimately guide relationship (Friedberg, 2005, p. 40). According to Friedberg, the most likely theorists to hold such a view are liberal optimists or realist pessimists (Friedberg, 2005, p. 40). In each case, the supporters of the two theories believe that their ideas are so concrete and irreversible that they cannot be effected by other factors. For example, a purist realist pessimist, such as Mearsheimer, would argue that states will seek security to the point that no other factors could ever slow down the process (Friedberg, 2005, p.41). Simple preponderance carries out the basic, uninterrupted implications of a theory without giving any value to other influences.

In the second scenario presented by Friedberg, he presents that possibility of what he calls additive effects (Friedberg, 2005, p. 41). Additive effects happen when two theoretical factors work together to produce a specific outcome in international relations (Friedberg, 2005, p. 41). For example, if China is a conservative power that places little value on disrupting the status quo, then they will likely be more accepting of international institutions and see economic interdependence as something that ought not to be jeopardized. In the previous example, liberal optimism combines with realist optimism to produce a cooperative China. The example is a hypothetical scenario that captures the essence of the “additive effects” that

Friedberg speaks of.

The third and final scenario that Friedberg mentions is what he refers to as offsetting effects (Friedberg, 2005, p. 42-43). Friedberg explains offsetting effects as the idea that two conflicting factors will offset each other to maintain a steady balance in the US-China relationship (Friedberg, 2005, p. 42-43). For example, maybe China feels that the US is threatening Chinese interests by stationing a larger number of active troops in South Korea. Despite China's discomfort, they choose to remain calm because of the value of the economic relationship that they share with the US. In such case, the motives for China's foreign policy have offset, leaving the state's leadership somewhere in between.

In explaining his personal opinion, Friedberg combines the last two scenarios (Friedberg, 2005, p. 43-44). He states that it is likely that certain tendencies of the Chinese leadership will conflict or converge with others to guide China's future decision-making (Friedberg, 2005, p. 44). Although he admits nervousness due to the implications of realism, he says that other forces ought to mute the most severe effects. In his words, "a number of the factors to which the optimists point seem likely to continue to act as a brake on what might otherwise be an unchecked slide toward mounting competition and increasingly open confrontation" (Friedberg, 2005, p. 43). He goes on to say that the influences mentioned in all of the theoretical frameworks will likely create a US-China scenario that consists of "constrained, or bounded, competition" (Friedberg, 2005, p. 43-44). In Friedberg's opinion, it is likely that future relations between the US and China will be characterized by constant "ups and downs", with severe outcomes being muted by other opposing forces (Friedberg, 2005, p. 43-44).

Friedberg, like other neoclassical realists, sees a number of influences at work in the

current US-China relationship. Although he certainly agrees that structural changes breed conflict and tension, he does not simply stop theorizing at that point. He points to recent interactions between the US and China as evidence that the two are willing to act cooperatively on a level that major powers have not always been in favor of historically. While China and the US have political differences and systemic factors that could breed conflict, they also have reached a level of interdependence that appears to be minimalizing aggressive behavior. (Friedberg, 2011, p. 2)

Although Friedberg offers a very positive perspective on US-China relations compared to many scholars, he does see some potential for danger (Friedberg, 2011, p. 3). He articulates how China's rising power coupled with the rejection of political liberalization could quickly become a dangerous threat to the United States (Friedberg, 2011, p. 3). He doesn't see the avoidance of conflict as guaranteed and refers to the relationship as the most important issue facing the United States leadership in the future (Friedberg, 2011, p. 2-3).

Specifically, he points to two factors that could exacerbate the relationship. The first is the growth of nationalism in China. It is possible, according to Friedberg, that during China's rise a large amount of nationalistic sentiment will characterize the state's foreign policy. In such a situation, China could become a very difficult state to negotiate with. Second, Friedberg says that poor management of China's rise by the US could also worsen the situation. Friedberg points to recent rhetoric by "high-ranking figures still on recent duty" as being increasingly tough towards the US (Friedberg, 2012, pp. 34). While he sees sustainable relations between the US and China as likely, he indicates that the path could have roadblocks. In summary, Friedberg states that "relations between Washington and Beijing may worsen before they

improve” (Friedberg, 2005, p. 44).

Avery Goldstein offers a similar perspective to that offered by Friedberg but also contributes a few different ideas as well. Of all the scholars cited in this literature review, Goldstein is perhaps the most optimistic. Goldstein appears genuinely hopeful about how the Chinese rise can be interpreted and approached by the international system. Unlike Mearsheimer, Goldstein does not simply assume the rise of China but analyzes thoroughly the ways in which China actually is rising (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 38). In addition, Goldstein recognizes some evidences in China’s military development that would suggest a less conflict-prone mentality (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 38). He sees China’s military efforts as non-threatening to some extent and not necessarily geared towards world dominance or offensive power. He also believes that International Relations Theory provides an ample basis for dealing with actors like China (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 38). Unlike Organski, he does not see China’s growth as inevitable, he does not see China’s growth as damning for the US, and he does not see it as a problem that is unsolvable. He states that China had assets that uniquely valuable in fostering growth and gaining influence (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 36). Of these assets, he mentions rare resources, enormous population, and expansive territory (Goldstein, 1997, pp.36). Despite having a great foundation for growth in the past, Goldstein is not certain that China currently has as strong of a basis for growth in the future. In contrast to what built China’s initial growth, the modern economy is increasingly based on advanced information technologies and highly developed human capital. As was true of Steve Chan, Goldstein does not appear content simply say that China is “powerful” and leave it at that. He goes into some detail in an attempt to analyze how it is that China is truly powerful beyond simple stats like GDP (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 40-41).

While he does not discredit the argument that China has experienced an economic “miracle”, he says that China’s capabilities and long-term strength may not necessarily be built on an extremely firm foundation. In particular, China’s military growth has been somewhat overestimated according to Goldstein (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 42).

Both Chan and Goldstein are commendable for moving beyond simplistic explanations of what it actually means for a state to grow. In the modern day where weapons technology has advanced, population size has increased, and economics are deeply intertwined globally, it is hard to put a clear definition of state growth into common circulation. Chan and Goldstein seek to understand what it actually means for China to grow and investigate the likelihood of that trend continuing before entering full force into theoretical solutions and/or possibilities. Goldstein mentions that China’s military growth ought to be intriguing to the US because of how little effort they have put into projection power (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 42-44). Although it certainly exists, it has appeared that China’s main military spending has centered on defense and maintaining stability in the region (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 43-44).

Although he is skeptical about just how strong China’s rise is, Goldstein goes on to analyze a number of theoretical perspectives concerning the implications of China’s ascent, beginning first with the “power perspectives”. The most popular of the power perspectives, according to Goldstein, are balance of power theory and power transition theory (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 64).

According to Goldstein, the policy recommendations that flow from these two structural analyses are serious and potentially dangerous (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 64-66). Goldstein argues that balance of power theory has a few weaknesses regarding China’s situation. In some

situations, as in the US or Western World, it is thought that historical conflicts will dissuade the desire to revisit confrontation again in a multipolar system (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 67-68).

Goldstein goes on to cite Friedberg, saying that China does not have the historical background that would likely slow potential conflict (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 67-68). In addition, China does not necessarily need the support of allies in their region and would likely not consider it threatening to offend them even if the region was multipolar (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 68). He considers both aspects to be potentially threatening as China grows (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 68).

In addition, he states that the security dilemma is only intensifying between China and its region (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 68). In making his point, he looks at China's growing military capabilities, how they are defended by China's leadership, and how they are viewed by the world (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 68-69). The point he makes seems to be in alignment with current events as China has consistently voiced that their military is for defense purposes only while the rest of the world grows increasingly skeptical. Goldstein goes on to briefly detail a number of other theories regarding China including institutionalism, regime-related theories, economic interdependence, and nuclear deterrence. The first two, as communicated by Goldstein, seem to have very little to offer in favor of a peaceful Chinese rise (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 70-71). Both of the mentioned regime-related theories have negative implications when applied to China (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 70). Institutionalism is presented as a concept essentially rejected by China's leadership (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 71). Goldstein states that China has repeatedly been more interested in managing conflict by way of bilateral interactions rather than multilateral engagement (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 71).

On the other hand, Goldstein's interpretation of the final two theories offers a positive

view of China's future (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 72-73). Of the two theories, Goldstein states that nuclear deterrence or "nuclear peace theory" offers the most convincing argument for future peace with China (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 73). In Goldstein's opinion, nuclear proliferation essentially insures that all wars will be cold wars in the future (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 73). Because of the guarantee of mutually assured destruction, it is extremely unlikely that a state possessing nuclear weaponry will enter into unrestrained conflict with another nuclear state. Goldstein stands firmly on the belief that nuclear proliferation will ultimately prevent another World War involving the US and China (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 73).

In regard to economic interdependence, he points out that China's rise has been primarily by way of economic growth (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 72). They have not built their state through geographic expansion or military development; China has burst onto the world scene as a competitor primarily by way of economic growth (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 72). In light of China's focus on economics, it seems very unlikely that China would enter into a conflict or series confrontation with a state that is important in their economic success or stability.

Goldstein joins with Chan by communicating that China is rising at a pace that is behind the more developed world (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 75). Although they have enjoyed an economic explosion, the innovation they have experienced is two or three decades behind what is taking place in the United States (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 74-75). While the recent IPO of Alibaba is a testament to an awakening of IT in China, it is significantly behind and, more importantly, the processes for encouraging such innovation are extremely underdeveloped.

Goldstein concludes by saying, like Friedberg, that institutions and interdependence may have "muting" effects on the impact of the security dilemma, power pursuits, and power

transition. Goldstein holds that conflict can exist without war due to the development of nuclear weapons (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 76). In his opinion, it is possible to overestimate both China's growth and the potential danger that China poses to the United States (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 76). Over-reaching responses by the US, according to Goldstein, could serve to amplify the severity of the future relationship rather than bring peaceful resolve (Goldstein, 1997, pp. 76).

The common theme among all neo-classical realists is issues in international relations are typically complex and cannot be view only through a structural lens. In many cases, neo-classical realists strongly resent the drastic claims made by structural realists like Organski and Mearsheimer. For the most part, the gloomy picture offered by structural realists is countered by some element of optimism in the writings of neo-classical scholars.

## PART IV: Personal Critique

In closing, there are a number of questions that arise regarding realist theory and the future of China after embarking on a project as expansive as this one. This literature review is still likely to be considered only precursory to the advanced scholar, and it is almost certain that the statements made in the next several paragraphs will be adapted and molded in the years to come. I do not pretend that my knowledge in tr is anywhere near completion; rather, it is only in its beginning stages. For the remainder of the review, however, I would like to offer a few critiques of the theories presented in this research and offer a small amount of insight about the future.

Perhaps the most polarizing figure in regard to the discussion on China is John Mearsheimer. His bold stances on offensive realism have garnered praise and elicited harsh critique. After studying his arguments, there are a number of questions that it appears he has

misunderstood or failed to answer.

First, is China's current situation as valuable for historical comparison as Mearsheimer may indicate? Is it possible that the intensity of interdependence has increased to the point that China must consider the partnership with the US as key to their survival as a state? Mearsheimer argues repeatedly that the examples of history indicate that China will not be slowed by any influence because the central driving force in international relations is the pursuit of security. Mearsheimer's view of a secure system, one equipped with a "satisfied dominant power", will supposedly remain the end goal of the state regardless of how many other reasons the state has to simply calm down. Because of what he has seen historically, he believes that China will continue to pursue security at all costs.

It appears to me that Mearsheimer has taken an extremely simplistic concept and attempted to fit it into a number of scenarios throughout history. Even in the case that his theory has been somewhat accurate in the past, he does nothing to take into account any international complexities that may inhibit his ideas from becoming reality in the US-China relationship. Without necessarily recognizing how vital the US now is to China's security economically, he assumes that China would run right over the US if they ever had the power to do so.

Mearsheimer argues that states must act as offensive realists because, well, everybody else is doing it. Yet this communicates that the problem is not in fact solved by offensive realism; it is caused by it. In the case that the US and every other state does NOT take Mearsheimer's advice and agree that offensive realism is normative then there is hope for the system. Indeed, if he feels the need to convince the US to act more like an offensive realist, is

there not the possibility that other states are not acting all that much like an offensive realist? The very fact that he would need to convince the US foreign policymakers to act as offensive realists calls into question his assertion that everyone will automatically act in such a way. Truly, if everyone was an offensive realist, as his argument states, then he would have no need to encourage the US to adapt their foreign policy and he would have no reason to fear the “danger” that could result if the US chooses not to act as an offensive realist. Why tell the US to be an offensive realist? Everyone is! Why be nervous about the failure of the US to value offensive realism? It is unavoidable! If, indeed, the US is in danger of not becoming an offensive realist in foreign policy (due maybe to politics or the historical bent of US citizens towards liberalism) then is it not possible that China could be weak on offensive realism also? Could China, as he fears about the US, become somewhat apathetic about silencing other states? The argument that Mearsheimer makes may very well be true, but if it is true then two truths should be gleaned: 1) First he has nothing to fear in US foreign policy, their inclination toward offensive realism and silencing China is inevitable and 2) His writing is essentially useless as his theory will be carried out regardless of what any policymaker, economist, or institutionalist has to say. In either case, there appears to be a disconnect between the theory posited by Mearsheimer and his anxiety of the US stance toward China.

Mearsheimer also seems to miss the benefits of China’s rise if the two states are able to collaborate in some fashion and simultaneously stay out of each other’s way. As was mentioned earlier, recent events have exposed an element of weakness in the US ability to police the world. An assertive China that has entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with the US, founded on interdependence, could become a stabilizing force in the Eastern part of the world.

As is mentioned by Christensen, China's value to the US could be incredible if the two learn how to give and take regarding each other's needs.

The previous statements fall in alignment with a number of recent critiques of Mearsheimer's work amongst the scholarly community. While realist theory has been explanatory and pessimistic for a long time, it is Mearsheimer's work that has received the most harsh pushback in recent years. It is possible that his contributions have been rejected so vehemently because of the policy recommendations that he believes align with his version of offensive realism. Indeed, Mearsheimer's arguments are exemplary models of the type of thinking that scholars like Christensen, Ross, and Kirshner are fearful of. For it is possible that those US foreign policy leaders who align with Mearsheimer will act in such fear of the implications of offensive realism that they worsen the relations with China in an unnecessary and unbeneficial way.

While China's leadership has become increasingly assertive and pointedly vocal in international communications, their military actions and decisions abroad do not bear evidence of an aggressive threat. It appears likely that China is not acting so much as an offensive power in the pursuit of world dominance. Their weapons development, interactions with North Korea, and attitude towards Taiwan reflect that they are not fighting to achieve hegemony. They have been willing to modify aspects of their economic plan that are extremely similar to US economics and have engaged in international diplomacy, such as the 6-party talks, that were somewhat against their own desires. In the past, as has been noted by Friedberg in his article "The Next Phase in the 'Contest for Supremacy' in Asia," China has ramped up rhetoric towards the US only to retreat to silence and apathy when facing resistance from the US. While China

does not appear to be surging towards world dominance, they have certainly sought to assert their own significance in the international community. In agreement with neoclassical realists, it appears that China's leadership is taking into consideration a number of factors beyond the systemic level of international affairs when making decisions. Furthermore, it seems that China's choices are not simply a bid for hegemony driven by a quenchless thirst for certain security.

Implicit in this new knowledge of China's motives is the reality that China's leadership is susceptible to positive or calming influences in their decision-making as well as those that may increase state volatility. Although the offerings by many realist scholars regarding the security dilemma and China's desire for what appears to be deserved respect, it is possible for China to advance while not seeking to upend the United States. In agreement for other authors, specifically Friedberg, I conclude that a number of offsetting factors will effect China's decisions in a way that will protect the US from war. Of the potential offsetting influences, nuclear proliferation and economic interdependence appear to be the most impressive. What Mearsheimer appears to miss on the topic is the immense threat that a failed US state poses to China. Perhaps the one specific contributor to prolonged periods without political upheaval in China has been the growing economy. If economics began to struggle, it is likely that the government would immediately experience the backlash of the public on a scale that US citizens cannot fully comprehend. Indeed, past experiences of economic turmoil in the US pale in comparison to what China has experienced in just the last 65 years. Chinese leadership would inevitably feel great pressure from the vast population and it is possible that domestic upheaval would ensue. For China's leadership to maintain stability and peace, economic success is

paramount. Yet China has become so closely linked to the United States that the economic futures of both economies are closely intertwined. China's government has shown their understanding of the US significance by making decisions at times to aid the US economy or fund the US debt despite what may have been in the best interest of their own economy. It appears that China has recognized that US stability is one of the primary economic issues for China's success. The increased interdependence and the factors influencing China's decision-making, added to recent actions by China's leadership, indicate that economic interdependence could potentially be a balm for conflict.

The state is not necessarily a unitary force independent of other influences. As is the nature of politics, those who have the most at stake in the financial future of China and its economic ties to other states also, not coincidentally, possess the greatest influence of political decisions in the state. As long as China and the US continue to develop their economic relationship, there will be many key influencers in China who will value their selfish business interests more than state nationalism or security.

Much of what I am arguing aligns closely to the work presented by Friedberg. What Friedberg offers that is especially valuable is the freedom and flexibility to drift between multiple theories based on whatever appears to reflect the present reality. Unlike Mearsheimer, Friedberg is not so unwaveringly committed to a particular theory that he is incapable of seeing how the world changes over time. Although he agrees with many of the presuppositions and foundational elements of realism, he points to evidences in recent history of China and the United States choosing to consider the interest of one another for the sake of preserving peace and economic stability. Mearsheimer would certainly not anticipate that such

an interaction would take place, at least not over any extended period of time. Although history has shown that military security is typically the primary goal of the state, the world is not the same as it always has been and economic relationships are increasingly important.

Furthermore, both China and the United States have suffered major economic struggles at times in the past century and would likely see future economic chaos as a security threat as significant as anything posed by an aircraft carrier. Friedberg allows for the additional influences of economic interdependence and constructivist theory, a decision that appears to lend itself to a more holistic understanding of the US-China situation.

In addition, the development of nuclear weapons has brought the concept of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD) to the forefront of the discussion regarding international security. No longer will World Wars be determined only by who has the larger army and who is able to damage the other state to the point where surrender is inevitable. In the new age of nuclear weapons, a third world war involving China and the US would bring with it the possibility that both states could be irreversibly damaged in a matter of hours.

The development of weaponry and growth of economic interdependence between the two states are influencers for which we have no exact precedent in world history. To apply historical principles to emerging relationships in the modern day, as Mearsheimer has, without attempting to understand the implications of a changing world is an irresponsible way to look at international relations.

The increased interdependence and the factors influencing China’s decision-making, added to recent actions by China’s leadership, indicate that economic interdependence could potentially be a balm for conflict.

Finally, I would like to briefly revisit the contributions of Steve Chan. Chan takes an entirely different approach from the other scholars reviewed herein. His attempt to dissect the so-called rise of China is a bold, yet needed, addition to scholarly conversation. Although China has experienced astronomical growth in terms of GDP, the actual mechanism for promoting the growth does not appear to be particularly strong. China's economy has grown on the backs of industrialization and a massive, cost-efficient labor class. As communicated thoroughly by Chan, China is still lagging behind in terms of informational technology and human capital. The inevitable difficulty of seeking to grow an economy founded on a strong labor class is the reality that economic growth automatically weakens the competitive advantage of the labor class. As the labor class generates more economic growth, the income per capita also increases making the labor class less cost-efficient and less attractive. In order for any economy to have long-term strength, it is necessary to make the important transition from unskilled labor to well-developed human capital. As of right now, China appears to be lagging behind.

Perhaps the mistake that Chan makes is not realizing that China can decline or become insignificant economically while simultaneously threatening the status quo. Although Chan is correct in his depiction of China's weaknesses, it is still possible for China to become so overconfident or self-interested that they begin to advance militarily in a way that is threatening to the world. Friedberg appears to merge the work of Chan with realist theory well, arguing that China may very well regress but ought to be treated with great caution in the meantime.



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