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# The Making of a New Superpower: An Examination of China's Journey to Superpower Status

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The Making of a New Superpower:  
An Examination of China's Journey to Superpower Status

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## **I. Abstract**

This thesis aims to determine China's current role within the international system and whether or not it has achieved the status of a superpower nation and thus, the ability to shift global polarity. Due to China's recent economic success, scholars have been debating if China has already become a superpower, will become one in the future, or if it will never attain this status. This thesis will suggest that by observing the United States' journey to becoming a sole superpower after the end of the Cold War, and its consequential shifting of global polarity, it is possible to determine where China currently stands internationally. Through the comparison of China's economics, military advancements, and international involvement, to that of the United States during and immediately after the Cold War, it is determined that China is on the path to becoming a superpower and consequently, shifting the structure of the international system. However, through this analysis, it can also be determined that China has not yet attained the title of superpower. Although China's economic rise has given it some necessary factors to become a superpower in the future, it has not yet attained the criteria as displayed by the United States in the post-Cold war era.

## II. Introduction

China has recently captured global attention due to its economy's success and seemingly unending growth period. China has gone from being a nation that is completely isolated to representing one of the largest world economies. China's GDP in 2011 was growing at around 11% yearly, in 2018, it is still growing exponentially at around 6.8% yearly.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, this has caused speculation as to whether or not this economic growth is a strong enough factor to propel China to a superpower position, a nation that holds a sense of power and influence globally, within the international system. Moreover, is China's current position enough to transform global polarity to reflect a bipolar or even multipolar system? Polarity is defined as the number of superpower nations that hold the most power and influence globally. A unipolar system is when one nation is sole superpower in the world, while a bipolar system is when two nations hold superpower status and equally utilize their power and influence, and a multipolar system is when two or more nations hold superpower positions and the majority of power and influence internationally. In order to shift polarity, a nation must first obtain superpower status. This leads to the question of what determining factors are necessary for a nation to achieve superpower status, and furthermore, does China possess these factors or qualities? This thesis will examine three different determining factors required to reach a superpower role or shift polarity: economy, military advancements, and international involvement.

China's current situation will be compared and analyzed in reference to the United States' progression as an international superpower during and after the Cold War against the Soviet Union, following the Soviet Union's downfall. The United States after the Cold War is the most apt comparison to China, because it represents the most recent time that global polarity has

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<sup>1</sup> Subramanian, Arvind. 2011. The Inevitable Superpower. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(5), 68.

shifted within history. The United States during the post-cold war era, shifted polarity from a bipolar system where The U.S. and the Soviet Union shared power and influence, to a unipolar system, where the U.S. held a sole superpower position. During this time, the United States utilized an expanding economy, advanced military, and international involvement in order to progress its superpower influence internationally. This was expanded once the Soviet Union fell, leaving the United States as the sole superpower and shifting polarity into a unipolar system. China's current status is important because not only does it affect China's role globally, but it also impacts the entire global community by determining which nations hold power and influence internationally. Examining China's current economic, military, and diplomatic factors in comparison to the United States during the Cold War, determines that China has not yet achieved superpower status or shifted polarity, but has the ability to do so in the future.

In order to illustrate China's status as a developing superpower, this thesis will first discuss the various literature already formulated on this topic and explain how this thesis will differ and add to pre-existing literature. Additionally, it will then explain the framework that this thesis will operate within, specifically, which determining factors of achieving superpower status will be prioritized including economy, military, and international involvement in organizations and decisions. Following the framework, this thesis will next discuss a relevant case study, the United States, and its importance in terms of identifying the three determining factors: economy, military, and international involvement. After, this thesis will analyze China in comparison to the United States, and finally, conclude that China has not yet become a superpower or shifted polarity.

### **III. Limitations**

In order to fully understand the following information within this thesis, the limitations of the information must first be discussed. This thesis is subjective in the sense that the determining factors chosen to cause a nation to achieve superpower status may vary among different scholars. Therefore, the conclusion of this thesis depends on a subjective definition of a superpower nation and what exact traits are necessary for a nation to obtain this classification. Moreover, there is debate among scholars about the current status of China. Some hold that it has obtained full superpower status and shifted polarity, others contend that it has not yet done so, and finally some believe that China's "moment of fame" will be short-lived and insignificant. Furthermore, the three factors and variables this thesis utilizes are very difficult to measure conclusively. Despite these limitations, this thesis is still relevant and important because it illustrates a contemporary view of China and its role as a developing superpower through its growing economy, military advancements, and international involvement with other nations.

### **IV. Theoretical Framework**

In order to fully examine and understand China's role in the international system, there are various concepts and structures within international relations theory we must first understand. These concepts include the three frameworks of polarity, the index of economic dominance, and the determining factors in identifying a superpower. All of these are utilized extensively throughout this thesis in order to provide a consistent basis to examine a shift in a nation's status internationally, its ability to shift polarity, Specifically, in terms of analyzing China's development as a future international superpower both economically, militarily, and internationally.

## *Polarity*

The term polarity is defined as “the distribution of capabilities among the major structure-producing states”.<sup>2</sup> According to Grieco, polarity examines how power, influence, and other capabilities of a nation are compared across other states within the international system in order to determine the type of polarity structure our world currently operates under. With this definition stems the three constructions of polarity that are possible from this theory: unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar. A unipolar international system pertains to when one state or nation dominates power across the international system.<sup>3</sup> A bipolar international system differs from a unipolar one because it contains two nations equally dominating power over on the global stage.<sup>4</sup> Finally, a multipolar system defines a setup in which three or more nations exert dominance internationally.<sup>5</sup> To put this into perspective, an example of a unipolar system is the United States being the sole superpower within the world. An example of a bipolar system would be the United States and China sharing influence and dominance as the only two superpowers within the international system. Finally, an instance of a multipolar system would be three superpowers such as the United States, China, and Russia sharing power and influence globally.

Scholars have differing opinions on the current global polarity status in respect to China’s development; however, the definition of polarity provided within international relations theory and literature, does not provide a list of determining factors that will constitute a shift in polarity if attained by a nation. So how is it possible to determine when a polarity shift occurs within the international system? In order for a nation to shift polarity, they need to be considered a global

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<sup>2</sup> Grieco, Joseph. 1988. “*Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism*”, *International Organization*, 42:3.

<sup>3</sup> Glaser, Charles. 2016. “*Realism*.” In *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 26. 4<sup>th</sup> ed.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

superpower as stated within Grieco's definition of polarity. This paper offers a unique set of criteria to examine how and when a nation becomes a superpower or increases their dominance, which ultimately, can result in a polarity shift. Specifically, the aim of this thesis is to determine where China currently falls within this process. The criteria which will be used is an growing and expanding economy, an advancing military, and a wider footprint in international involvement and decisions.

### ***Index of Dominance***

The index of economic dominance, as explained by Subramanian, is "a system that takes into account 3 factors to determine a countries ability of dominance...a country's gross domestic product [GDP], trade, and its status as a net creditor to other nations".<sup>6</sup> Here, Subramanian has given a structure which helps to explain how countries can increase their dominance, and in turn, their international influence. He furthermore defines economic dominance as "the ability of a state to use economic means to get other countries to do what it wants or to prevent them from forcing it to do what it does not want".<sup>7</sup> In order to exercise this sense of control or power over other nations, in the same way that superpower states do, the nation needs to have means such as a large economy, trade, health of external and internal finances, military strength, technological advancements, and a strong international currency. However, the index of dominance does not fully encompass the factors necessary for a state to become a superpower.

### ***Proposed Superpower Criteria***

Adding to the basis of the index of dominance, I arrived at my own proposed framework for determining if a nation had achieved "superpower" status. The index of economic dominance can be used to identify what means are required to exert economic influence over other nations,

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<sup>6</sup> Subramanian 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

but superpower nations also exert other forms of dominance such as military dominance or technological dominance, etc. in addition to the already identified economic dominance. However, in order to fully encompass the definition of a superpower nation, we must consider various factors required to achieve the other forms of dominance. These factors include an expanding and growing economy, military advancements, and participation in international organizations and decisions. In order for a nation to fully be considered a “superpower”, for the purposes of this thesis, they need to meet the criteria outlined by the three determining factors listed above. I will be utilizing this expanded structure of the index of economic dominance in order to examine China’s status as a superpower, and consequently, examine the shift in polarity that occurred along China’s new status.

Within this proposed framework for identifying superpowers, there are many subfields that can be applied to the three main determining factors. For instance, in terms of the economy factor, this involves comparing the GDP and purchasing power parity to other nations, identifying currency rates, addressing the average middle class, and analyzing trade balances. According to George Georgescu, a large population is a necessary feature of a superpower country because it can help increase its economy, military numbers, and involvement in international decisions.<sup>8</sup> Military advancements will consider weapon arsenals, actively enlisted and reserved soldiers, nuclear weapons and development of new weapon technologies.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the last factor focuses on a nation’s power and influence within international organizations and decisions. This could relate to its involvement in groups such as the United Nations, World

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<sup>8</sup> George, Georgescu. 2005. Can India and China Change the World Polarity?. *Revista Romana De Economie*, Vol 21, Iss 2, Pp 22-28 (2005), (2), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Grace, Y., Nancy Oluchi, I., & Joel, A. 2017. Technology and Power Play in the International System: A Study of the 20th and 21st Centuries. *Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education*, Vol 3, Iss 4, Pp 181-187 (2017), (4), 181.

Bank, International Monetary Fund etc. Moreover, this factor also examines a nation's involvement in treaties and trade agreements. This factor helps to determine how the nation being examined, in this case China, interacts with the rest of the world.

After applying China's current state through all the factors that determine a superpower, we will see that China has not yet achieved superpower status and therefore has not yet shifted polarity. However, with that being said, it also becomes clear that China is on track to become a superpower and is placing itself in a position to do so in the near future. These factors will illustrate that China still falls behind the post-Cold War United States in terms of economy, military, and power or influence within international decisions and organizations as laid out by the proposed framework. Therefore, China will not yet become the sole superpower within a unipolar world; however, it can still become a developing superpower within a bipolar or multipolar world.

## V. Literature Review

When examining China's current role within the international system there are three viewpoints on its "status" as a superpower country. These are the three beliefs that are already outlined by scholars in previous research. These scholars utilize their own factors to come to their own conclusions on whether or not China has become a superpower. Some scholars analyze China's position as the new economic superpower in the world.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, these same scholars believe that since becoming a superpower, China has also shifted global polarity into a bipolar system where China and the United States share the most power and influence over the rest of the world's nations. Moreover, they hold that China's economics alone constitute

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<sup>10</sup> Subramanian 2011.

Huang, Yasheng. 1995. Why China Will Not Collapse. *Foreign Policy*, (99), 54-68.  
George 2005.

China's new status as a superpower nation. A different examination of China by other scholars concludes that China will not become a superpower; rather, its economic boom and increase will eventually plateau.<sup>11</sup> According to this viewpoint, China's international success is to be short lived and will never have the potential to shift global polarity. The third and final position that scholars take on China's global role concludes that China will become a superpower, but it has not yet done so.<sup>12</sup> It boasts a growing economy, new trade initiatives, and a greater involvement in international organizations and military advancements; however, they have not increased enough yet to rival the United States stronghold on international power and influence. With time, these scholars conclude that the China will eventually surpass the United States, and when it does, it will shift global polarity into a unipolar or bipolar system.

### ***Emerging Superpower***

The first school of thought holds that China has already become a global superpower, but only in terms of its economy. According to Arvind Subramanian, China has already demonstrated its role as an international superpower on the global stage. Subramanian relies on statistical data and projections to make his argument that China is "already exercising forms of dominance," in terms of military and global economics.<sup>13</sup> In this work, Subramanian discusses how China's economic growth within the last 15 years has placed it on a track to "inevitably" become a world superpower. For instance, by 2011, China's economic growth alone combated

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<sup>11</sup> Hsu, Sara. 2017. Why China Won't Replace The U.S. As The World's Superpower. Retrieved October 13, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Casetti, Emilio. 2003. Power Shifts and Economic Development: When Will China Overtake the USA?. *Journal Of Peace Research*, 40(6), 661-675.

Champion, Marc., & Leung, Adrian. 2018. Does China have what it takes to be a Superpower? Retrieved October 16, 2018.

Yueh, Linda. 2013. *China's growth: the making of an economic superpower*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Subramanian 2011.

that of the United States with China's economy growing at an 11% increase yearly and the US's holding at 2.5% yearly. Although China's current GDP growth in 2017 declined to 6.9%, and in the first quarter of 2018, 6.8%, it is still rapidly developing almost three times faster than the United States.<sup>14</sup> He discusses the relationship between money, power, and influence, and how with the economic position China is in, the only valid course of progression is for them to become a superpower. Furthermore, he adds that China has already begun to exhibit forms of economic dominance internationally. This has been exhibited through its growing involvement in foreign affairs and within International Organizations such as the United Nations and even various trade agreements.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, China has begun exerting its dominance as a superpower by undervaluing exchange rates and requiring US and European firms to share its technology before granting them access to its markets.<sup>16</sup> According to Subramanian and additional scholars, China has already become a "baby" superpower in terms of economic and international involvement.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, these scholars contend that China has already begun the process of exerting dominance through its economic gains, international involvement, and various trade deals.

### ***Regional Power***

The second belief on China's current international status is that China is not going to become a superpower, and therefore, will never have the opportunity to shift polarity. The collective rationale among scholars that have this view is that China is still considered to be too

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<sup>14</sup> "China Economic Update - May 2018." World Bank. May 31, 2018. Accessed December 16, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Huang 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Subramanian 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Yiping, Huang. 2015. The Silk Road Initiative: China's New Economic Diplomacy. China International Studies, 45.  
George 2005.

poor to become a superpower. Even with China's recent economic success, it is still decades away from catching up with the United States in terms of the economy. Additionally, these scholars hold that China's economic growth rates have plateaued to only 6.8% and will eventually implode, and furthermore, that China's growth rate is too unstable and unpredictable to continue at its current rate. According to Sara Hsu, "growth is slowing, and economic inefficiencies abound, as reform of the services sector has been monumentally slow".<sup>18</sup> In other words, China's economy was accelerating too quickly and has already begun to slow down, as exhibited by the latest GDP growth rates. Furthermore, China does not have the same support that the United States does internationally. While they do have a strong foothold among Asian countries, Western countries do not give them the same respect or value to China that they place on the United States. According to this perspective, China will be unable to claim its spot as a superpower without the backing of the Western world.<sup>19</sup> Finally, in terms of the nation's military, China does not come close to combating the sheer numbers of personnel or weapons that the United States does. Ultimately, according to this viewpoint, China has become a prevalent power in the Asia; however, as far as expanding its dominance to the rest of the world China will fail.

### ***Developing Superpower***

The final common belief on China's role on the global stage is that China will become a superpower, but it has not yet done so. These scholars believe that within the next 10-15 years China will be a global superpower sharing this status alongside the United States in a bipolar system.<sup>20</sup> According to this viewpoint, examining the political and economic advancements

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<sup>18</sup> Hsu 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Casetti 2003.

China has made over the last few decades “suggests that China will acquire power superiority over the USA within the next half-century.”<sup>21</sup> It is already clear that China is on the right path economically; moreover, it just need to continue to have an upward trending GDP, its purchasing power parity, and increase in trade. Moreover, China is turning its attention to developing its military and weapons in order to combat the United States who still controls these sectors globally.<sup>22</sup> The biggest threat to stopping China from its natural ascension to superpower status is “a declining and aging population” which would stall its efforts to expand economically.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, China has made significant efforts to become more involved in international organizations such as the United Nations. Additionally, it has begun entering trade deals and agreements with other nations, which has been beneficial in terms of increasing China’s sense of power and influence among the rest of the world. Without any significant changes to China’s current situation, they will continue to rise and eventually, surpass or become equivalent to the United States, making it either a bipolar superpower with the United States or a unipolar superpower where China is the sole dominant international power.

### ***Conclusion***

There are many divergent viewpoints among scholars as to what the current status and future of China is in terms of international polarity. This thesis seeks to identify when the transition from a regular country to a superpower occurs, and, more specifically, what factors are required in order to make this transition under China’s circumstances. This thesis will add to the discussion of China’s current status in the international system by providing a different framework composition in which to determine how and when a nation becomes a superpower.

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<sup>21</sup> Casetti 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Champion and Leung 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Consequently, this will allow us to apply China's current situation to the new framework in order to determine its position within the global community. While most scholars independently mention either China's economy, its military, or its participation within international decisions and organizations, they do not typically place these three different variables together in order to cohesively decipher China's current status. This thesis will analyze all three of these criteria and determining factors together: economy, military advancements, and participation in international decisions and organizations. The viewpoints of scholars discussed above are unable to come to a cohesive decision regarding China's current status because there has not been a clear definition of what constitutes a superpower or a way in which to measure a nation's power and influence internationally, thus leaving the definition of a superpower to be very open and subjective to individual interpretation. This thesis will determine what factors a nation is required to have in order to advance to superpower status and shift global polarity. This will inevitably prove that China has not yet reached superpower status or altered global polarity, but that it has the ability to do so in the near future.

## **VI. Importance of Case Studies**

In order to fully understand China and its current role within the international polarity system, we must first understand what it looks like when a nation shifts polarity. One of the most prominent and current examples of a global polarity shift is the United States during the Cold War. During this time, the United States shifted the global world from a bipolar system to a unipolar system. Using the Cold War as a case study is imperative because this is the most recent example of a polarity shift as it has not happened again since. By examining the US's role and what factors assisted in its ability to make a polarity shift, we will be able to compare these factors with China in order to see if China has shifted polarity as well. Through the comparison

of the two nations it becomes possible to determine where China currently stands in terms of polarity and superpower status.

## **VII. Case Study: The United States**

### ***Historical Overview***

The Cold War was a non-combative war between the United States and the Soviet Union between 1947 and 1991. The US and the Soviet Union had both emerged out of World War II as the primary victors, however, following this victory, tensions began to build up between the two superpower nations and a race for supremacy unfolded. The Soviet Union wanted to maintain control of Eastern Europe and spread communism throughout the rest of the world. While the US wanted to fend off the spread of communism and strengthen its ties in Europe.<sup>24</sup> During the beginning of the Cold War, the world exhibited a bipolar international system with power and influence among other nations was held between the two superpowers: The United States and the Soviet Union. As the Cold War continued, the two primary actors utilized “political maneuvering, military coalitions, espionage, propaganda, arms buildup, economic aid, and proxy wars” in order to emerge as the sole victor.<sup>25</sup> Both countries were fighting for sole control of the international system in terms of influence and power. In other words, they were competing for control of a unipolar global system.

During the 1970s, the United States experienced a period of malaise. Although the United States appeared to be losing the war and its position as an international superpower due to economic and diplomatic struggles, it would soon regain its place as a prominent world power. The United States was able to revitalize its economy which allowed for it to resurface its

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<sup>24</sup> “The Cold War.” JFK Library. Accessed October 23, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

international prominence. The United States was revitalized mainly under the Reagan administration.

During the 1980s, the Soviet Union had been fighting a costly and resource draining war in Afghanistan and the Soviet economy was headed in a downward spiral. Due to the domestic turmoil the Soviet Union was facing, it was unable to battle challenges to its power in Eastern Europe.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, under President Bush's guidance, the Berlin Wall was torn down in 1989 which allowed the borders to reopen. With new free elections occurring, communism was expelled from Europe and with it so was the remaining hold the Soviet Union had in Europe.<sup>27</sup> In 1991, the Soviet Union officially collapsed and dissolved, making the United States the sole superpower in the world. Due to its poor economy, failed diplomacy, overuse of resources, and overextension of power the Soviet Union failed and lost, not only its title as a global superpower, but also its status as a nation. Ultimately, the United States emerged as the sole victor of the Cold War and shifted global polarity into a unipolar system. In order to understand how the United States was able to surpass the Soviet Union, we must examine it in terms of its economy, military and technological advancements, and diplomacy and international involvement.

### ***Economy***

The 1970s were less than optimal for the United States when considering both the domestic and foreign economy. During this time period, following the Vietnam War, the United States domestically was wrought with stagflation, high oil prices, and a poor economy. Internationally, the United States faced loses of allies, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and US citizens being

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<sup>26</sup> "The End of the Cold War." The End of the Cold War. 2000. Accessed October 24, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

taken hostage in Tehran.<sup>28</sup> As these events continued, and the economic situation in the US worsened, American power was questioned globally. US growth was paused by recessions and declines in total production, in 1960-61, 1970-71, and 1975.<sup>29</sup> The United States was considered to no longer be a major player in foreign relations with the word malaise being used to describe the position of the US in a global perspective.

With these setbacks, it became a common belief among other nations that American supremacy, which had been established after the World Wars, had officially come to an end. The Cold War was still going on during this time period; however, due to the economic and international struggles the US was facing, the Cold war “was frequently feared [by the United States] to be tilting in Moscow’s direction, amid a major Soviet military buildup and a string of successful advances.”<sup>30</sup> People thought that since the United States was no longer able to exhibit its power internationally or domestically; there was no chance for them to defeat the Soviet Union who had been increasing its dominance worldwide.

The difficulties that the United States faced during the 1970s actually had long term advantages. For instance, the United States’ decline actually inspired benefits both economically and internationally later on. For instance, the economic decline allowed for the long-term “spread of democracy and a human rights movement,” and it “debilitated and outstretched” the Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup> By witnessing how the period of economic decline contributed to the loss of American supremacy, it became clear how important a successful economy is in maintaining power and influence internationally. This was proven by the Soviet Union who, after being

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<sup>28</sup> Brands, Hal. 2016. *Making the Unipolar Moment*. Cornell University Press. Accessed October 24, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Cooper, Richard. 2008. Economic aspects of the Cold War, 1962-1975. WCFIA Working Paper 2008-0018. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

spread too thin fiscally, during both the Cold War and the USSR's military efforts in Afghanistan, faced a period of economic turmoil that eventually led to the downfall and disbandment of its nation as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

However, the United States, although faced a small period of economic decline, it was able to turn its economy around. Towards the end of the Cold War, it was averaging an annual growth rate of 3% from 1950-1990 in terms of its GDP. Additionally, in terms of GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP), in 1980 the US has a PPP of 12,533 international dollars and it increased to 23,848 international dollars by 1990. Furthermore, more and more Americans were now considered to be a part of the middle class during the Cold War due to the economic expansion the US was experiencing. Comparatively, the Soviet Union went from a 5% growth rate in 1950 to a 1% growth rate in 1990.<sup>33</sup> By having its economy decline, the Soviet Union also lost its status as a superpower and its legitimacy as a nation. Without the Soviet Union's economic turmoil and the US economy's revitalization and steady GDP growth rate, the United States would not have been able to surpass the Soviet Union and claim its position as the sole superpower under a unipolar system.

### ***Military and Technological Advancements***

The United States, during the Cold War began dramatically increasing its defense spending throughout the duration of the War. For instance, defense budgeting in the United States went from 38 billion in 1955 and gradually rose to 86 billion in 1976.<sup>34</sup> This constituted 5% of the national GDP. Ultimately, the United States was pumping more and more money into

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<sup>32</sup> "The End of the Cold War" 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Cooper 2008. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 8.

defense spending so that it could increase its power and influence globally, but also specifically in regard to the Soviet Union.

During the early 1960s, both the United States and the Soviet Union began building up its weapon arsenal which included nuclear weapon development. This new form of weapon could annihilate either superpower giving new meaning to the term “mutually assured destruction”. Both the United States and the Soviet Union began racing to build up and perfect missiles and atomic bombs in order to secure a position as the sole world superpower.<sup>35</sup> This military and arms buildup led to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States suspected the Soviet Union to be placing ballistic missiles in Cuba so that they would be able to launch them at various US cities from a closer distance. The crisis generated a world in which “a single planet shared by superpowers who shared the means of wiping each other out.”<sup>36</sup> The US responded by sending naval ships to surround Cuba in order to prevent more Soviet Union military supplies from coming into the country. The US also demanded that the weapons be disassembled and its sites destroyed. Eventually, after thirteen days, the Soviet Union agreed and the missile crisis ended; however, the arms race continued.<sup>37</sup> The demonstration of military power and weapon advancement used during the Cold War contributed to a new form of nuclear warfare, one that would influence global polarity. Without advancing its militaries, both the United States and the USSR would have been unable to compete with one another for the position as the sole global

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<sup>35</sup> Nye, Joseph S. Jnr. 1990. “The Changing Nature of World Power”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 105:2, pp. 177-192.

<sup>36</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis. 1972. *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>37</sup> “Cuban Missile Crisis.” JFK Library. Accessed October 24, 2018.

superpower following the Cold War. Therefore, in order to stay in the race, they both had to advance and increase its militaries.

Typically, the weapon and military advancements within the Cold War refer to nuclear weapons; however, there were also many advancements in submarine technology in the United States. For instance, the United States built the first operational ballistic missile submarine.<sup>38</sup> This advancement allowed the United States to advance its military by advancing its navy. The United States also constructed the Lockheed U – 2 which was an espionage plane designed to compile intelligence on the Soviet Union’s geography, military, and weapon technology, including its missile sites early on in the Cold War.<sup>39</sup> Without these advancements the United States would not have been able to stay in the fight against the Soviet Union for the sole superpower status in the world. In order to keep power and influence, you need to actually be the most powerful. For the United States, this meant competing on a nuclear military and technology level with the USSR. Had the United States not participated in the nuclear arms race and advanced its technology, the Soviet Union would have risen to the top and defeated the United States.

### ***Diplomacy and International Involvement***

In addition to economy, military advancements, the United States’ diplomacy and international involvement also played a large role in its efforts during the Cold War. As previously mentioned, the Soviet Union was trying to spread communism throughout Europe in its attempts to expand its ideology across the rest of the world. The United States utilized alliances and treaties in order to halt the USSR’s spread of communism. For instance, the United

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<sup>38</sup> Douglass, John. 1999 "The Cold War, Technology, and the American University." University of California Berkeley. Accessed November 19, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

States formed a treaty known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, whose purpose was to form an alliance among the Western allied countries in order to halt the expansion and possible invasion of the Soviet Union.<sup>40</sup> This agreement consisted of 29 countries all agreeing to work together to stop the spread of communism and Soviet control. Additionally, the United States also enacted the Anzus Pact with Australia and New Zealand in 1951, various bilateral agreements with Japan and South Korea, and the Five-Eyes intelligence sharing alliance between the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the United States also entered with five other nations into the European Economic Community which was completed in 1970, which “would become a trading entity larger than the United States, with a single negotiating authority.”<sup>42</sup> The goal of this community was to reduce tariffs between nations and inspire support among the nations against the expansion of the Soviet Union. Having all these allies and trade agreements allowed the United States and other European nations to unite against the Soviet Union, eventually, contributing to its downfall. Ultimately, this illustrates the importance of diplomacy and international cooperation among nations in order to propel a state to a superpower status. In order to hold power and influence internationally, other nations must also recognize that power and influence in order to be considered a superpower. Through these trade agreements and alliances, the United States was able to obtain sole superpower status.

### ***Conclusion***

By examining the United States’ path to becoming the sole superpower of a unipolar system, we are able to determine which factors were important for them to achieve this status.

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<sup>40</sup> Haglund, David G. 2018. "North Atlantic Treaty Organization." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed November 1, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Champion & Leung 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Cooper 2008. 13-14.

During and following the Cold War, arguably the most important determining factor in the US's development was its military buildup and innovations. Without a successful nuclear program and increase in funding to combat the Soviet Union's, the US may have lost the Cold War and given up all its international power and influence to the Soviet Union. Additionally, another key player is economic stability. During the 1970s decline, the United States' was having domestic problems with its economy. The country faced high stagflation and high prices which contributed to its decline internationally and on the war front.<sup>43</sup> However, once the market revitalized in the 1980s the United States was back on track to overcome the Soviet Union. Without the market bouncing back in the 1980s, the United States would not have been able to contest the Soviet Union's rise and it may have lost the Cold War. Moreover, with the economic increase, the US was able to assist in economic aid to allied countries during the Cold War. Diplomacy played a part in the United States' success as it spread the concept of democracy and contradicted the spread of communism by the Soviets. Without influence abroad, the US would not have been able to spread democracy or combat communism.<sup>44</sup>

Through the utilization and increases in military, developing economy, and international involvement, the United States was able to overcome the Soviet Union in the Cold War and shift global polarity to a unipolar system, where only the United States held the title of superpower. Without these contributing factors, the Soviet Union likely would have continued to spread its power across Europe and eventually the rest of the world. The United States took control of the international system as the sole superpower holding the majority of power and influence among other nations. This study of the Cold War allows us to see which factors were necessary to make this shift possible.

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<sup>43</sup> Brands 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

## VIII. Case Study: China

### *Historical Overview*

China was not always the globalized nation it is today; instead, China was previously associated with isolation, being closed off from the international world. China originally had dynasties, which were headed by various emperors who had received the heavenly mandate. These governments were set up into three parts: the civil administration, the military, and a censorial system; however, all authority was held with the emperor, which meant that people didn't have rights. China believed they did not need or want any influence from foreigners. The isolation from the international community meant that China did not export or import which dramatically constrained its economy at some points.<sup>45</sup> Other times, however, China was actually the world's largest economy with initiatives like the Silk Road, even though China was operating under a closed-door policy.

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, China began to struggle immensely both politically and economically. Traditionalists were terminating any efforts of reform and the military was unable to "stand up to foreign adversaries"<sup>46</sup>. With the Japanese and Europeans advancing on China, the traditional political system failed in 1912. Sun Yatsen, a political reformer, organized groups that implemented dramatic political change. With this new reform, China entered into its Republic government system. Sun-Yatsen's successor claimed China's government as a nationalist party. After much rebellion and civil war, Mao was able to gain control of China under the communist party by founding the People's Republic of China. Under the communist party, all property is

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<sup>45</sup> Hayes, Louis D. 2015. *Political Systems of East Asia: China, Korea, and Japan*. London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

publically owned, general welfare of everyone is considered, and calls for the uprising of the industrial proletariat were made.<sup>47</sup>

During the nation's time under Mao's rule and the revolutionary era, from 1949 to 1976, China's "engagement and participation in international institutions was non-existent and Chairman Mao was reluctant and basically rejected this idea totally, he was solely for complete isolation from the international community and non-association with the outside world."<sup>48</sup> This isolation was mainly due to Mao's distrust of the Western world from China's experiences with imperialism and invasions. He wanted to keep China blocked off from any outside influence that would damage or harm the national identity China had. China's economy went through serious upheaval after Mao introduces the Great Leap Forward reforms, which caused massive malnutrition and death among the people. His idea was that instead of exploiting typical western economic models, he would use "the people as his main economic resource" which was ineffective.<sup>49</sup> However, this all changed when the next leader of China took office, Deng Xiaoping.

Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping was able to introduce reforms that enable China's economy to boom, making it what it is today. He called to change the agricultural system, revived individually owned businesses, and state-owned enterprises were enabled to make decisions regarding the operation of its own businesses.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, he implemented the open-door policy in 1978 which allowed for trade and economic growth on an international level. Once China opened up through the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, the rest of the world began to see

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<sup>47</sup> Hayes 2015. 31.

<sup>48</sup> Sterling, Dahlia Patricia. 2017. "China's Role and Status in International Society: Should Its Rise Be Perceived as a 'Threat'?" *Eurasian Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 5, Iss 4, Pp 23-33 (2017), no. 4: 23.

<sup>49</sup> Hayes 2015. 73.

<sup>50</sup> Sutter 2015. 75.

China as a global influencer.<sup>51</sup> This shift in perception and the continued growth of the Chinese economy, diplomatic efforts, and technological advancements has led for the world to now see China as a rising superpower that has the ability to shift polarity.

### ***Economy***

China's economy has gathered the attention of the entire international community within the last 20 years, due to its excessive and unyielding growth. According to China's economic statistics and growth patterns, it is "already considered to be an economic superpower" within the international community.<sup>52</sup> It has certainly obtained status as a regional great power within Asia, but in terms of being a global superpower, China is set to overcome the United States within the next 10-15 years. According to Champion, it already "has a larger economy than the United States...the gap is only likely to grow" given China's expansive population.<sup>53</sup> For instance, when examining the nation's gross domestic product, or GDP, if China continues to grow at the same rate it has been, it's GDP will hit 35 trillion by 2023, compared with the United States whose GDP is projected to reach only 23 trillion by 2023.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, in terms of GDP measured by PPP, China currently averages 23,300,000 million.<sup>55</sup> This has sharply increased from its average PPP in 1990 which was contrastingly 1,732,756 million. This illustrates the exceptional growth among the Chinese economy within the last 30 years. Although this growth has somewhat slowed within the last 10 years with the GDP growth percentage falling to 6%, the economy is still growing steadily and quickly. For reference, the US economy only grows at around 2% every year; China's is almost three times that.

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<sup>51</sup> Sterling 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Champion & Leung 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> "GDP, PPP (constant 2011 International \$)." World Bank | Data. 2018. Accessed December 17, 2018.

However, China's economic success is largely due to its large population and due to various government programs and regulations aimed at slowing the population growth rate; its population is set to sharply decline significantly.<sup>56</sup> This decline will ultimately limit the number of acting consumers within China's economy and may result in an economic decline as well. Ultimately, China's current economic status if it remains the at the same growth rates will eventually surpass the United States, but if the growth rate falls due to the slowing population rates, it will not be able to surpass the United States in an effort to become the sole superpower.

### ***Military and Technological Advancements***

In terms of status, technology, and growth, China has been developing its military exponentially in order to compete with other nations, mainly the United States and Russia. With that being said, China's military has not been significantly tested since the Vietnam War in 1979; therefore, it is difficult to assess how effective or successful its advancements have been. According to Champion, China has increased its defense budget which now places it as the second highest funded military in the world following that of the United States. China's budget as of 2017 was 228 billion dollars, whereas the United States was a remarkable and overwhelming 610 billion.<sup>57</sup> While there is still an incredible large gap in terms of military funding, China has been steadily increasing its funding every year rising from 19 billion in 1989 to 228 billion in 2017.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, China's population has contributed to its military growth in soldiers, growing to over 2 million active duty personnel. Moreover, China is increasing its military presence worldwide by establishing its first military base last year in Djibouti and implementing plans to establish more worldwide.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Another important aspect to China's military growth is through its new military technology and expansion of its weapon arsenal. China controls over 162 bombers, around 2,000 tactical aircrafts, about 600 helicopters, 57 attack submarines, and 280 nuclear warheads.<sup>59</sup> The expansion of weapons and technological advancements is key to determining whether or not China will be able to combat the expansive United States military. Currently, the United States still hold more power than China in terms of military; however, China is steadily closing the gap between the Chinese and US military.

### ***Diplomacy and International Involvement***

Finally, the last important determining factor in achieving superpower status is a nation's international involvement. As discussed in the historical overview, China used to be incredibly isolated, never utilizing trade or alliances. They were a closed-door nation and preferred to accomplish things domestically rather than become globalized. However, under new leadership, China opened its borders and began to interact with the rest of the world. Foreign businesses were now able to invest in the Chinese economy.<sup>60</sup> The open-door policy strived to open up China's borders to the rest of the world and make China a "globalized" nation while remaining to its communist ideals. Through Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China began "accepting and becoming increasingly involved in numerous International and Regional Organizations in areas such as economic, security, culture, environment, science, technology and politics, etc".<sup>61</sup> China is now involved in diplomacy matters, voicing its opinions on global issues, and becoming members in various international organizations. This was just the beginning as China has now become even more involved in international organizations, treaties, and trade agreements. For

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

instance, China is now one of the top troop contributing nations to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Additionally, it is now one of the top contributors to the United Nations. China falls just behind the United States. The United States contributes 28.5% of the United Nations total budget.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, China has become a leading member of the free trade agreement in Asia known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. This agreement instituted free trade amongst China and 10 other nations, excluding the United States. This newfound sense of international involvement has made China a prominent nation in international organizations. This is important because it allows other nations to perceive China as a nation that holds power and influence internationally, which ultimately contributes to its ability to be viewed globally as an international superpower.

### ***Conclusion***

This assessment of China's history in terms of domestic and foreign policy efforts is necessary in order to determine the current status of China in terms of superpower status and polarity. Now that we have gained an understanding of China's path to success by examining China's current situation in terms of the economy, military, and diplomacy efforts, we can compare China to the United States during and after the Cold War in order to determine if China has similar attributes to shift polarity. By examining China in terms of the preceding determining factors, we will find that China has had an incredible rise in power and influence globally, and they have already begun to shift polarity into a bipolar system.

### **IX. Analysis**

Through the discussion of the United States during its efforts in the Cold War, it can be illustrated what factors are necessary in order to shift global polarity. The United States' time

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

during the Cold War provides us with a relatively refined model or foundation in which to test if other nations have the same ability and accompanying determining factors necessary to become a global superpower and in turn, shift the international polarity system. This is the best model to test for superpower status because the Cold War is the most recent example of a time in which a nation achieved superpower status and shifted polarity. For the purposes of this research assessment, we will study China's current situation in reference to the United States during its shift to a sole superpower within a unipolar international system following the Cold War. We will then be able to see if China is likely to be successful in achieving superpower status and shifting polarity.

In the previous case-study section, this thesis discussed both the United States during the Cold War era and modern China in terms of the theoretical framework provided under section II. According to this framework, the main determining factors that contribute to the rise of a nation to superpower status is the expanding economy, military advancements, and international involvement. This section aims to discuss how the current position of China within the global community reflects that of the United States during the Cold War.

### **Economy**

The economy is often considered to be the most important factor in establishing a sense of dominance within the international community. Strong economics can help a nation to increase its power not only domestically, but also helps to increase its interactions within foreign countries. The United States recognized during the Cold War that it would not succeed without a expanding and growing economy. Although the United States went through a period of economic decline during the 1970s, it rectified the declining economy quickly and with few long term

detrimental effects.<sup>63</sup> By doing this they were able to remain competitive during the Cold War against the USSR. Ultimately, the United States' recovered and flourishing economy outran that of the declining Soviet Union who was battling a costly war in Afghanistan.

China is currently in a similar position as to that of the United States as its economy is growing at a rate that is on track to become the largest economy in the world within the next decade. According to Subramanian, by the year 2030, "China will account for around 20% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and the United States will hold just under 15%" of the global economy.<sup>64</sup> The United States currently holds the world's largest economy boasting the highest GDP compared to any other nation. It currently, in 2018, has a GDP per capita of 59,531 thousand.<sup>65</sup> Comparatively, China will generate 15% of world trade, over double the United States."<sup>66</sup> With these statistics, it becomes clear that China has the ability to overcome the United States hold on economic power, if its rates and statistics continue to skyrocket in the same manner they have been. The United States economy "grows at an average rate of 2.5% every year", whereas China's has been averaging a "6.7% growth rate during the last 2 years."<sup>67</sup> These undeniable statistics help to illustrate how China has already become an economic superpower. However, does this mean that it has ability to become a fully-fledged superpower in more areas than just economics? As illustrated by the United States during the Cold War, a good economy is a key factor in a nations ability to become a superpower and shift polarity. When examining China, and its economy, it's clear that they certainly have the ability to become a superpower in terms of its economy, just as the United States did during the Cold War.

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<sup>63</sup> Brands 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Subramanian 2011.

<sup>65</sup> "GDP per Capita (current US\$)." World Bank Data. 2018. Accessed December 17, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Subramanian 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## **Military and Technological Advancements**

The case study analysis of both the United States and contemporary China revealed striking similarities in its advancements in military and technology. During the Cold War, as was discussed within the analysis section, the United States advanced its warfare through both weaponry advancements and technological advancements. The military advancements included the development of nuclear programs, the invention of the combat submarine and various other warfare technology. These advancements ultimately aided the United States in its efforts to defeat the Soviet Union and emerge as the sole superpower of the international system. China's case study also revealed advancements both militarily and technologically. For instance, China has become the second leader internationally in defense spending, running up to that of the United States. China went from spending only 19 billion dollars on defense initiatives in 1989 to now spending 228 billion dollars in 2016.<sup>68</sup> However this is not yet comparable to the 610 billion dollars the United States spends annually on defense programs.

Additionally, the China has already surpassed the United States in numbers of military personnel, flight bombers, attack submarines, and heavy unmanned aerial vehicles.<sup>69</sup> These advancements are largely due to the large population China has and its recent increase in the economy. For example, having more people in the country allows for more people to enlist and having a large and successful economy allows China to allocate more spending towards defense and technological advancements. Utilizing spending to increase its military presence, technology, and defense initiatives puts China on the right path to becoming a superpower, but will they ever truly be able to rival the advanced and expansive military of the current United

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<sup>68</sup> Champion & Leung 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

States in the same ways that the United States dominated over the Soviet Union during the Cold War?

Although China currently holds the second largest defense initiative in terms of spending, the United States still has them beat by a relatively large gap. For instance, according to Champion and Leung, “China still lacks the carrier fleets and other equipment to project power to all corners of the globe, and can’t yet produce a top-flight jet engine.”<sup>70</sup> Moreover, when it comes to nuclear power, China does not come close to rivaling the United States. Currently, the United States holds approximately 6,450 nuclear warheads as of 2018, whereas China holds 280.<sup>71</sup> Instead, China has focused on developing new warhead technology including hypersonic missiles and cyber and artificial intelligence. Finally, China does not combat the United States military presence worldwide. Currently the United States “operates 516 military installations in 41 countries around the world...China established its first official overseas base last year.”<sup>72</sup> The sense of military presence internationally gives the United States a strong advantage when it comes to retaining its sole superpower status in a unipolar international system. If China wants to gain its superpower status it needs to increase its military presence and authority internationally.

China has been steadily developing its military by increasing spending, personnel, and warfare technology. Even though these developments have not yet sustained it in its fight to surpass the defense programs of the United States, it is steadily approaching the military numbers that the United States currently asserts. This suggests that even though China has not become the largest military defense country in the world yet, if it continues on the path it’s currently on, it will likely hold this title in the future. Conclusively, its advancements indicate

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

that China does have the capability to become the leader in military, which would allow it to become the next international superpower and shift global polarity away from the United States; however, it must first continue building on its defense, military, and technological initiatives.

### **Diplomacy and International Intervention**

International presence, or a nations involvement in various international regions, as mentioned previously, is a defining factor in any nations ability to become or maintain superpower status. In order to be considered the most powerful and influential nation in the world, you must have power and influence in other nations to make them believe you can assert superpower dominance. This ideology was true for the United States during the Cold War in regard to its development of alliances and the formation of treaties such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO's "primary purpose was to unify and strengthen the Western Allies' military response to a possible invasion of western Europe by the Soviet Union."<sup>73</sup> NATO enlisted the assistance of 29 nations to help combat the expansion of the Soviet Union and its ideals. The United States also implemented the "Anzus Pact with Australia and New Zealand in 1951, bilateral military agreements with Japan, South Korea, and the Five-Eyes intelligence sharing alliance between the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand".<sup>74</sup> These alliances ultimately helped the United States defeat the Soviet Union and lead to its collapse. Additionally, through the institution of these treaties and alliances the United States was able to establish a sense of soft power and US presence within these nations. This helped the United States to assert its superpower status legitimacy across the world.

When applying the success of the United States to modern day China in terms of international presence and diplomacy, China is currently working to obtain the same influence

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<sup>73</sup> Haglund 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Champion & Leung 2018.

and dominance internationally as the United States had during the Cold War. As mentioned within the case study section, China recently reached a free trade agreement with 10 other nations, known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).<sup>75</sup> The agreement was led by China and has placed them in a position of power as the leading nation in Asia. The agreement has allowed China to start implementing its power in foreign nations and increasing its international presence within the global economy.

One of the biggest and most important initiatives China is currently working on is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This will prove to be one of China's most important foreign policy strategies as the BRI will "strengthen infrastructure, trade, and investment links between China and some 65 other countries that account collectively for over 30 percent of global GDP, 62 percent of population, and 75 percent of known energy reserves."<sup>76</sup> This policy effort will connect China to Central and South Asia, into Europe and Northern Africa. China has made membership to this initiative open to any country or international organization. The overall goal of the BRI is to "reduce trade costs and improve connectivity, leading to higher cross-border trade and investment and improved growth in the region."<sup>77</sup> Ultimately, this initiative will help to connect China with the rest of the world. Moreover, it will institute their presence and influence among these other 65 countries willing to participate in the BRI.

Additionally, China has recently become more involved in international organizations and diplomacy efforts worldwide. For instance, if we look back to 20 years ago, China had almost no role in the United Nations. However, now China is the largest troop contributor to the United Nations and contributes the second largest amount of the United Nations budget – over

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<sup>75</sup> Jozuka, Emiko. 2017. "TPP vs RCEP? Trade Deals Explained." CNN. Accessed November 1, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> "Belt and Road Initiative." World Bank. 2018. Accessed December 17, 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

10%.<sup>78</sup> Having an influence in the United Nations allows China to be assist in making international diplomacy decision and exhibit its power within the global community. China's newfound involvement in international organizations and its accompanying demonstration of international power and influence is a key factor in confirming China's superpower status.

These improvements along with increases in foreign policy spending, under President Xi, place China on the right track to expanding its global presence and power within the international system. Similarly, to China's situation with military factors, they are doing everything they can to develop and advance its international diplomacy and presence. If China continues growing at the rate it currently is, it is possible that it will have the ability to achieve superpower status and rival the United States for sole custody of the international polarity system.

## X. Conclusion

After examining contemporary China vis-à-vis the United States during the Cold War, it becomes clear that although China does possess the tools and factors it needs to affirm its superpower status, it has not occurred yet. When observing the determining factors necessary for superpower status that the United States used to shift polarity during the Cold War and become a superpower, it became clear that China had not yet so. As stated previously, comparing China to the United States during the Cold War is imperative because the US, immediately following the Cold War, is the last time in history that a nation has shifted polarity. China has placed itself on the international radar due to its dramatic and rapid success with one determining superpower factor – the economic factor. China's economic success and increases has earned it the title of an “economic superpower”; however, that title does not necessarily give China a claim to be

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<sup>78</sup> Champion & Leung 2018.

considered a fully-fledged superpower. In terms of military and technological advancements and international diplomacy and interaction, China still falls short of the current sole superpower – the United States.

Although China has not yet achieved a full superpower status, it is advancing in terms of the determining superpower factors: growing economy, advancing military, and greater participating in international decisions and organizations. If China continues to grow and advance these factors, as it has been within recent years, and maintain the rates of development, China will be able to achieve full superpower status and one day possibly shift polarity to a unipolar world where it is the sole superpower. With China's current situation, it has the tools, but just needs more time to develop them to the level of a superpower nation. Therefore, this study opens up the research community to revisit and reexamine, within the next 15-30 years, China's role within the international system. During a future visitation of China's role internationally, it is highly likely that China will continue to have an expanding economy, continue increasing and developing its military and defense, and continue asserting its presence within international decisions and organizations. This will allow China to attain superpower status, and shift international polarity to demonstrate China as an economic, military, and diplomatic superpower globally

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