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PECULIARITIES OF THE CHINESE APPROACH TO THE FORMATION OF THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT
The Chinese approach to the formation of regional and global security systems is an intricate play of soft power, economic ties, and strategic diplomacy in the quest to come up with a safe environment for national development and broader global stability. Anchored on the Confucian ideal, the Chinese security strategy premises itself on harmony, stability, and the least amount of conflict. Economically, China uses the condition of being the first trade partner with quite a good number of countries to construct networks of influence and cooperation, especially through large-scale projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative. On the diplomatic level, China's vision is one of multilateral global governance, seeking to reform international institutions better to fit the plural and interlinked characteristics marking the contemporary world. This often contrasts with the Western security paradigms based on military alliances and interventionist policies. At the regional level, China seeks stable relations with its neighbors and regional security through devices such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and energetic participation in forums related to ASEAN. However, behind its rise are also challenges and tensions, especially on territorial disputes and growing military capabilities.
KEYWORDS: *China, regional security, global security, security system, foreign policy, international relations, multilateralism, cooperation, non-interference, common security, Belt and Road Initiative, Community of Shared Future for Mankind, peaceful development, strategic partnership, global governance.*

INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, securing an ordered and stable world order has been one of the primary themes in the theory and practice of international relations. The plight facing conventional security wisdom in today's global village, with its unprecedented degree of interconnection, catapulting technological change, and constantly shifting power dynamics, is hardly equaled. It is in this light that the challenge of coming to grips with the ever-altering path major powers take toward security is positioned centrally in treading through the complexities of the 21st century.

With the status of an emerging power and an extremely old nation with a special kind of political system, China's importance to the security architecture of the world cannot be underestimated. Its fast-growing economic and military power, coupled with its lively engagement in international affairs, has raised significant attention and produced never-ending debate concerning the nature of its approach towards security. If the traditional models of security, centered on Western countries, relied mainly on alliances, military power, and unilateral actions, then China's approach to security would be radically different in its emphasis on multilateralism, cooperation, and a common future for humankind.

The current article reveals the peculiarity of the Chinese approach to building regional and global systems of security. These are the cardinal principles underpinning Chinese security thinking, driven as they are by emphasis on mutual respect, non-interference, common security, and peaceful development. Such principles, from a historical perspective of China's experience and basic understanding of the interdependent nature of the world today, have been manifested through a series of initiatives or policies oriented toward stability and cooperation within its region and globally. The article spells out, within the context of China's security vision, an active engagement in regional mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum, to mention but a few.

Moreover, through multilateral institutions like the United Nations and the G20, the institution works towards a more integrated and fair international order. This article also examines the role of China's "Belt and Road Initiative" and the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" in promoting interdependence through infrastructural development and cooperation across continents, leading to a community with shared economic gains and security. It is also relevant because of the fast-growing influence of China in global affairs and the debate over its approach toward security that continues to dominate discourse.

MAIN PART

Basically, a regional security system is the institutional framework that some countries create when they are geographically proximate to one another, with the sole aim of seeking attention to problems of security interest and their ensuing stability . Most of these systems emanate from shared interests, threats, or the desire for collective defense. What may force countries to form such systems includes historical ties, cultural similarities, economic interdependence, and geopolitical considerations. One of the prime characteristics of

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regional security systems is an emphasis on cooperation and coordination among member states. This might operate through joint military exercises, shared intelligence, coordinated responses to security threats, and an overriding process of diplomacy in conflict resolution[1]. For instance, one of the leading regional security systems is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which covers the NATO region of North America and Europe. The NATO members are committed to collective defense, which means that an attack against one of its members is an attack against all. The concept of collective defense helps deter potential aggressors.

Other regional security system functions include providing a platform to fight non-military threats such as terrorism, organized crime, and cyber threats[2]. In that respect, the capacity of the member states to counter such challenges is enhanced through sharing of resources and expertise. Regional security systems usually also play an important role in peacekeeping and management of conflicts by offering mechanisms for mediation and dialogue, thereby preventing or managing disputes. However, regional security systems are not free of problems. Different national interests, political ideologies, and strategic priorities may cause frictions between the member states, which would eventually cause the effectiveness of the system to erode[3]. Furthermore, there is the likely impact of an external power over regional security dynamics, which may further complicate any efforts aimed at securing autonomous and coherent system maintenance.

The global security system is the harmonized effort of the international community in addressing security-related challenges that supersede or cut across national and regional boundaries[4]. Contrary to regional security systems, the global security system creates a robust framework that attempts to integrate manifold dimensions of security threats related to traditional military conflicts, transnational terrorism, cyber warfare, climate change, pandemics, and economic instability. The global security system is essentially anchored by international organizations and treaties providing for inter-state cooperation and coordination. The United Nations is the chief pillar underpinning the global security system. Its Security Council performs a key role in maintaining international peace and security. Furthermore, the UN plays a major role in facilitating diplomatic negotiations and imposing sanctions, mandating peacekeeping missions, and holding a framework within which states take up any security concerns to address through dialogue and consensus[5].

Another key element of the international security system is international law, which is reasoned by norms and rules that regulate state behavior[6]. In this regard, agreements like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Paris Agreement on Global Climate Change are ways through which an attempt is made to deal with certain questions about security at the global level. The main purpose of the treaties was to avert the risk of conflict by establishing cooperation and compliance with such issues and promoting sustainable development. The contribution of the different levels in the security of various non-state actors, such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations, helps to support global security. These are institutions that complement the effort to handle the security challenge by making provisions for humanitarian needs, advancing human rights, and pursuing economic development[7]. It can't be denied that a set of challenges is felt within the global security system. The complexity and diversity of the threats to security demand holistic and coordinated responses that are hard to realize, for the simple reason that states have different interests and capabilities[8]. Power imbalances, geopolitical rivalries, and an inability to enforce these many various actions further complicate the ability to ensure global security. Added to this is the eruption of non-state actors in the forms of terrorist organizations and cybercriminals that post very new challenges, which the state-centered approach to security is not well positioned to handle.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The tributary system, which characterized China's foreign relations for centuries, provides an important starting point toward grasping its historical security approach. This type of system established a hierarchical order within East Asia, based on the concept of "Heaven's Mandate" and the emperor as the "Son of Heaven." The tributary states acknowledged the preeminence of China and subordinated themselves to its authority by paying tribute and, in turn, receiving imperial recognition, protection, and trade privileges[9]. The tributary system basically dealt with regional security and paid more attention to the local area in the vicinity of China. It encompasses the entire region of East Asia, including such vassal states as Korea, Vietnam, Japan, and many others. Contacts with those states beyond this region existed but were

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low in number and not that well systematized. It made sure that there was stability within the Chinese sphere of influence, and it came out as the dominant regional power. While it had been extremely successful in keeping regional stability for centuries, the tributary system nonetheless retained some very serious limitations. It was, after all, a hierarchical and rather rigid system, open to constant challenge from would-be rising powers. The gradual decline of the Qing Dynasty during the 19th century and increased interference from Western powers cut down the very fragility of this security order. Thus, it was unable to eventually survive due to the inability of the system to adjust itself into the changing global scenario.

What made the security dilemma of China in the Cold War different and peculiar was that it created a "two-front" threat with both the United States and the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union presented a territorial threat with its expansionist ambitions in Central Asia and the ongoing border conflict with China, the US represented an ideological and military opponent of gigantic might with its global reach and growing presence in East Asia.

The initial orientation that China had taken up with the Soviet Union, moulded in the years immediately following World War II, began to dissolve due to ideological differences and territorial disputes. This ideological chasm widened in the 1960s as China began rejecting Soviet interpretations of Marxism-Leninism and challenging its leadership among the communist bloc. This ideological split opened the avenue for a series of border clashes in 1969 that would further strain relations. In such a two-front threat environment, strategic ambiguity would be the overall strategy that China would embrace. The approach would introduce deliberate obscurity over its alliances and intentions to deter both superpowers from intervening in Chinese affairs. The strategy served China pretty well, as it could retain some amount of flexibility while safeguarding independence and pursuit of national interest.

China was an avid promoter of nonalignment during the Cold War years, seeking closer ties and forging alliances with other developing nations to try to challenge the power balances in place then. Its membership in the Non-Aligned Movement in 1964, among other newly developing countries of that time, like India and Egypt, raised the role of China in international affairs. The strategy enabled Beijing to exploit the rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union over influence in the Third World and attracted political and economic benefits. Mao Zedong's "Three Worlds" theory in 1974 solidified China's strategic outlook in the era of the Cold War[10]. It divided the world into three groups:

- The First World: This group encompassed developed capitalist countries, led by the United States[11].
- The Second World: This group encompassed socialist countries, led by the Soviet Union[12].
- The Third World: This group encompassed developing countries, representing the majority of the world's population[13].

China attempted to assume the role of superpower of the Third World, building solidarity with fellow developing nations and opposing the prevailing global power relations. In that respect, this theory has it that China aspires to play a leading role in the shaping of the post-Cold War world order and be at the forefront in supporting the aspirations of developing nations. The theory of "Three Worlds" enabled China to build alliances with other developing nations in the world while challenging the superpowers. It provided China with the possibility of postulating itself as a champion for the oppressed and an alternative to the existing strategy. Chinese diplomacy was therefore very effectively positioned by setting it as one of the major players in the global political field and building relationships with a wide array of countries around the world.

China began to build a network of alliances with the Third World in its interests and international support. This approach helped to counterbalance the influence of the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, weakening their hegemony and giving shape to a multipolar world. The theory of the "Three Worlds" proved to be quite an effective way to gain China's legitimacy in the international arena and mobilize support for its interests. Though aligned with the Soviet Union, China had started looking toward a strategic opening with the West since the early 1970s. With the completion of the Sino-Soviet split, and also afraid of Soviet expansionism, China slowly moved closer to the US. It was actually a surprise that in 1972, President Richard Nixon visited China, which turned out to be a milestone in the bilateral relationship of the US with China and set it onto a new course of cooperation. It is in this context that this strategic adjustment could enable China to play off US-Soviet rivalry and maximize the security of balance of power[14].

The end of the Cold War paved the way for a new age of international relations characterized by the rise of a multipolar world. With the Soviet threat to China's borders coming to an end, China could begin to shift its attention and resources toward economic development and international status. It was in this new context that there began a basic shift in Chinese security thinking, most clearly articulated in the promulgation of a "New Security Concept" in 2004[15]. The "New Security Concept" was a dramatic departure into multilateralism, with a much greater dedication to a considerably more cooperative international order. It focuses on common responsibility for security, mutual trust, and dialogue. This concept therefore

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echoes deeper in the light of China's own realization that, concerning the question of security in the 21st century, it is no longer about mere national power but collective action and cooperation.

China's "New Security Concept" has laid much emphasis on the need for an umbrella security framework, founded on mutual trust and shared responsibility. This idea goes against traditional notions of security that rest on military might and interests of nations. Rather, it reflects a more comprehensive approach to economic, social, and environmental dimensions of security. Together with the "New Security Concept," China also launched a "peaceful rise" strategy that aims to set the world's mind at ease over its purely peaceful nature and strive cooperatively for international order. The goal of the strategy was to dispel anxieties in the world over the rise in power of China and to build trust with other countries. Even though the "peaceful rise" has been interpreted in many ways, it clearly shows the commitment of China to engaging with the world and playing a responsible role in the shaping of the international system.

Even with initiatives like the "New Security Concept" and the strategy of "peaceful rise," strategic ambiguity remains at the very core of China's security thinking in this 21st century. It has generated soaring concern over its intentions as Chinese military power rises, growing assertiveness in the South China Sea, and the continuous pursuit of an accelerated "String of Pearls"[16]. China's strategy for a "String of Pearls", a network of military bases and strategic partnerships across the Indian Ocean - heightens concern of growing power projection capable of challenging the prevailing regional and global security order. This strategy, aimed at keeping access to vital sea lanes safe and energy interests secure, has increased tension with the nations in the region, especially India.

The tightrope walk between economic development and national security remains a challenge for China's security thinking. Its economic growth aspiration, linked to the ambition of becoming a world power, resulted in increasing military spending and the development of state-of-the-art military equipment and capabilities. This created a perception of possible militarism and growing risks of confrontation. The so-called "Thucydides Trap", the notion that war between a rising and currently dominant power is inevitable – has become central in international relations[17]. This tension, caused by economic rivalry and strategic competition, puts a huge challenge to global stability.

Unlike the traditional models of security as developed in the West, the Chinese framework places primary concern on cooperation, mutual interests, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Quite the opposite of hegemonic ambition that is sometimes associated with the West, to China, security implies collective action and common destiny. Indeed, this is realized through its active involvement in regional organizations such as the SCO and ASEAN Regional Forum, and in its own initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The BRI is a strategic framework that aims to build connectivity and foster common prosperity across infrastructure projects in Eurasia and African counties. Indeed, this policy proposes that economic development and connectivity may offer new ways of improving security, as things like poverty, inequality, and instability are among the major causes of conflict[18]. What this approach stresses is shared benefits and peaceful dispute resolution, which is implemented through open dialogue and negotiation sharply different from the militaristic approach of traditional security alliances.

The SCO, a regional security and economic organization, provides a platform for China to collaborate with its neighbors on a range of issues, including counterterrorism, drug trafficking, and border security. The SCO's commitment to mutual respect, non-interference, and collective security echoes China's own values, fostering an environment of trust and cooperation within the region[19]. The organization's focus on promoting economic development, particularly through its emphasis on energy and resource sharing, further reinforces the connection between economic cooperation and regional security.

The fact that China is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, established as the foremost forum on dialogue and cooperation in Southeast Asia, speaks loudly for its commitment to regional stability and the guarantee of non-interference in the affairs of other nations[20]. Confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and conflict resolution describe this forum and converge with China's peaceful coexistence and diplomatic solution approach. More importantly, the very fact that China has accepted the "ASEAN Way" of consensus-building and non-confrontation within its framework underlines the regime's willingness to work regionally by building bridges and establishing trust.

The idea of a Community of Shared Future for Mankind stresses China's aspirations toward a world that is more just, equitable, and secure[21]. At its very root, this vision shows

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shared responsibility toward problems of global dimensions – climate change, terrorism, poverty and enjoins a turn away from zero-sum competition to win-win cooperation. This was a vision that would strike a chord in China's cultural consciousness, steeped as it is in Confucian precepts of harmony and respect.

CONCLUSION

China's approach to security deviates from the conventional focus on military alliances, strategic competition, and unilateral actions. It instead emphasizes economic diplomacy, peaceful coexistence, multilateralism, cultural values, and non-alignment, forming a unique and multifaceted approach to global security. China's rise and its unique approach to security present a turning point in the history of international relations. The world is entering a new era of multipolarity, where the traditional power dynamics are being challenged and new models of security are emerging. The success of China's approach will depend on its ability to address internal challenges, build trust with other countries, and demonstrate a consistent and transparent foreign policy that aligns with its stated goals of a more inclusive and cooperative international order. What is being closely watched by the world is the way through which China's special way will play out on security grounds, defining the 21st-century global view. One critical feature of China's rise in the global arena is how its approach to security can finally shape international relations in the future. The world needs to engage itself with China's vision, its complexities, and intricacies to navigate a labyrinth of security into a peaceful and prosperous future for all. In such a scenario, fostering dialog, mutual understanding, and commitment to common security by cooperation and respect, rather than conflict and competition, becomes critical in this new era of multipolarity. The future of global security depends on how well all nations, China included, can work toward a new paradigm based on shared interests, peaceful co-existence, and collective action – in recognition of the fact that the entwining of the 21st century calls for a shared way forward in building a secure and stable future for all. This paper has provided a framework for understanding the distinctive features of China's approach to security. Further research is needed to delve deeper into the implications of this approach for the global security architecture, exploring the challenges and opportunities it presents, and analyzing its potential impact on existing security alliances and power dynamics.

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