China’s ascendency as a great power in East Asian region has larger implications for the regional balance of power. According to Alastair Iain Johnston already there is a ‘growing uneasiness in the US and the Asia-Pacific region about the implications of China’s increasing economic and military power’. China today is no longer willing to see the U.S alliances in Northeast Asia and has used its diplomatic offensive to redefine the regional stability by getting itself stronger in the regional multilateral forums. Clearly in Northeast Asia the U.S has faced a relative decline in its influence. The rapidly changing economic dynamics in East Asia have become a ‘critical ingredient’ for changing the regional balance of power. The U.S - Japanese alliance continues but Japan can opt for its own military capability in the current context in facing China. The relationship of China with other Asian powers, India and Russia may display an enhanced phase of it. However, the Asian powers are entering an era of regional power rivalry as the economic and military capabilities of them are in the ascend. The transition of regional power in favor of China would provide it the opportunity as the next threat to the unipolarity and in favor of multi-polarity. Regionally China has posed its image as a “status quo” power though it stands before the U.S as a revisionist power. As Morgenthau shows “the politics of the status quo aims of the maintenance of the distribution of power as it exist at a particular moment in history”. The Chinese role as a balancer of the regional power depends not only its economic and military power but its respect to the existing norms of the international politics as well. How far could the regional hegemony of China survive in the face of the U.S’s continued effort to make it a responsible great power while making alliances with other Asian powers. The paper attempts to employ neorealist balance of power theory to identify the regional balancing strategies of the Asian powers vs vis China. The neorealist would argue that the concentration of power in a major power would prompt others to balance it. The growing regional power rivalry against seemingly status quo China by other major economic and military powers will be read in order to re- stress the Waltzian balance of power theory in a regional context.

“For here again we are confronted with the basic misconception that has impeded the understanding of international politics and has made us the prey of illusion”

-Morgenthau

China is on the rise, mostly in terms of its economic performance and not in military terms. As Den Xiaoping envisioned, the hegemonic ambition of the great Chinese state, which has a history of imperial oppression over hundred and fifty years, has to be achieved without getting itself bruised by involving in wars, it should cross the river by feeling the stone and not by getting itself immersed. Many analysts have seen ‘the peaceful rise of China’. How long could its peaceful exercise of economic building survive? Some have expressed doubts. How will the other powers, the secondary states and specially the US respond to the concentration of power in the Chinese hands in the Northeast region of Asia? Has China’s grand strategy won over the US power in the East Asian region? What consequences will the geographically proximate secondary powers like South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and etc face? These and several other questions based on China’s upsurge as a great power in the East Asian region have been in the debate among the international relations analysts. Several schools of thoughts of International Politics have viewed China’s rise differently. Realism and neo-realism theorizing on the balance of power politics view that the balance of power is in flux as the power is concentrated in one pole of the East Asian region and the US experiences a decline of its power there. Also the secondary states’ behavior in the context of rising China will demonstrate their policy strategy directed toward the successful state, n this case China.

China has remained a status quo power so far but it has revisionist ambitions and seeks the global hegemony. It is the only power that has balanced against the US at least in a particular region, the East Asia. The US’s economic status is fast being equated by China. It has captured a sizeable amount of world trade and investments. Its interest in other regions, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, Europe, Central Asia, and South Asia has clearly grown and improved. China’s grand strategy has aimed first at the Central Asia, and South Asia has clearly grown and improved. China has remained a status quo power so far but it has revisionist ambitions and seeks the global hegemony. It is the only power that has balanced against the US at least in a particular region, the East Asia. The US’s economic status is fast being equated by China. It has captured a sizeable amount of world trade and investments. Its interest in other regions, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, Europe, Central Asia, and South Asia has clearly grown and improved. China’s grand strategy has aimed first at the region and then the global hegemony. At the same time, systemic pressures have already begun to drive China. It should balance against the US if it needs the global hegemony and also it has to multiply its economic and technological powers which could be translated into war fighting powers or military powers. Also China should first prove that it can solve the regional issues and provide peace and security to the region on the path toward the regional hegemony.

This paper appraises the Chinese economic and military performances in order to measure the impact of China’s rise on the regional balance of power. For this purpose the paper
will review some of the empirical researches carried out by analysts on the growth of economic and military capability of China. The paper will argue that the mere economic powers are not sufficient for a great power to maintain its hegemony and the relative military capability is the most important aspect of power which China has not much concentrated on or gained in comparison to the US so far. The paper then examines the secondary states’ behavior vis-à-vis China. Next it explores the role of the US in power balancing in the Northeast region of Asia. And China’s grand strategy to balance the US will also be studied in a separate section. The study will employ a theoretical paradigm of realism and the concepts of balancing, great power, secondary power and they will be discussed at the start. The conclusion will establish that China’s economic capability translated into military power will give it the opportunity to achieve its hegemonic ambitions. But contrarily to the arguments of China becoming the next super power the study will not take that argument for granted because for prediction of such broad range of behavioral patterns we have to see how China will drive for universal domination once its own preservation is achieved. The power rivalry between the two powers the US and China will further grow and the states in the East Asia will decide on their policies according to the improvement or decline of capabilities of the two rivals, China and the US in the region. The alliance formation by China and the US will further add to the pressure on China to counter the US power in its region. The role of Japan will be crucial as it would aspire to gain the military capabilities of its own that gives it the autonomy of military actions. Also China will have to further look for the military capabilities that it lack in most cases to counter the US power. The future of the international relations in the East Asian region will be heading toward a crucial period where the two poles of power, China and the US in the region will be competing with each other in all the directions. How ever the probability of a great power war will be less as the deterrent power of the nuclear weapons will ultimately prove its theory as it did in the era of hegemonic rivalry between the USSR and the US during the cold war.

Balance of Power, Great powers and Secondary States in the East Asian Region

The rise of China is seen as a challenge to the existing balance of power in the Asian region and the US’s capability to counter it and regain its lost share of influence on the secondary states has gained lot of scholarly attention. Realism and its various strands, among them neo-realism as the most influential one, has studied the rise and fall of great powers and the balance of power theory has been the central tendency of their theoretical foundations. A defensive realist view of Kenneth N. Waltz has captured the evolving drama of power balancing in the Northeast region of Asia and the American’s perception of it, in his “Structural Realism after the Cold War”. According to him, “When China makes steady but moderate efforts to improve the quality of its inferior forces, Americans see a future threat to their and others’ interests. Whatever worries the United states has and whatever threats it feels, Japan has gradually reacted to them China then worries as improves its airlift and sealift capabilities and as the United States raises its support level for forces in South Korea. The actions and reactions of China, Japan, and South Korea, with or without American participation, are creating a new balance of power in East Asia, which is becoming part of the new balance of power in the world”.

At the sunset hours of the cold war era, China displayed its adherence to the structural constraints as still it had not ‘dramatically increased its capabilities relative to the super power it feared most’, the USA. The relaxation of the structural constraints has provided it with the space to change its policy at the current scenario as its economic growth empowered it to balance the US in the East Asian region. In this scenario the potential China threat – discourse emerged and in the words of Goldstein “…resumption of rapid economic growth that some worried might easily be translated into military power” was the major ingredient in it. As Mearsheimer has views “the most dangerous scenario the United States might face is one in which China becomes a potential hegemon in the Northeast Asia”. For Mearsheimer China’s economic growth itself has to be slowed down and the central challenge it poses to world politics be recognized by the US. Thus the offensive realism views the potential threat confronted by the US and the East Asian region as a situation to be balanced. As Measheimer illustrates in his Rise and Fall of the Great Powers “It is sad that international politics has always been a ruthless and dangerous business, and it is likely to remain that way. Although the intensity of their competition waxes and wanes, great powers fear each other and always compete with each other for power, which means gaining power at the expense of other states.” The emerging competition between the two powers in the region of the East Asia, the US and China, has been recognized by the realist and they predict the economic gaining of China will be translated into the military capabilities that will intensify the balancing of powers in external and internal ways, forming alliances and building up of arms.

The states in the East Asian region which are categorized as the secondary states as they lack the necessary capability to counter the great powers- Japan, South Korea, Taiwan- will have two options i.e. to balance China or to bandwagon / emulate, which are contingent upon their capabilities. This act of balancing will be result from regional structural incentives of China or the US’s incentives for them to taking side with it. The US has already lost its sphere of influence it enjoyed in relating to South Korea, North Korea and Vietnam because China’s growing economy has attracted them more toward her. The question Taiwan and the Japan still provide it with a window of opportunity in countering the Chinese rise. As theorists have shown there is no consensus among the realists as to how the secondary states would behave in the face of changes occurring in the existing contours of power. The secondary states could accommodate or balance the rising powers Zhao and Guiliuli have argued. The realist variables of power in fact drive the secondary states to make the choice and in most cases they would accommodate the rising power in their region as the economic and military powers of the great power would benefit them. The accommodation would
persists as long as the rising power is capable enough to build up its military might and the mere economic power is insufficient for a rising power to maintain the power distribution of a region, this paper would argue.

The secondary state behavior can be explained using the neorealist perspective of Waltz. In his article “Reflections on International Politics: A Response to My Critics” Waltz mentions that “…some states imitate the successful practices of others indicates that the less skilful must expect to pay the price of their ineptitude. The situation provides enough incentives to cause most of the actors to behave sensibly. Actors become sensitive to the costs….“ Waltzian theory emphasizes the structural constraints on the actors of the system: Moreover the anarchic real of world politics itself compel the actors, the like units to coact, Waltz has explained in explaining the domestic and international systems of politics.\[1\] The emerging polarity in the East Asian region thus compels the secondary actors to align with the great power, China or to balance it by aligning with the US. In the regional context the applicability of the entire systemic pressures created by the hegemonic US becomes less severe due to the geographic proximity of the regional power to the secondary states. So the threat perception that emanates from the military capability and the geographic proximity of the regional power would decide on the choice of some secondary powers behavior; they would bandwagon with China for profit. How ever the case of Japan and Taiwan would be different as the latter is the second largest economy in the world and the former is backed by the US in his struggle for autonomous action.

In the case of East Asian region, there many odds that obstructs China’s ability to align all the secondary, powers into her side in competing with the US. The naval superiority of the USA in the pacific ocean region, Japan’s aspiration of building her own military in facing North Korea and China and the issues of Taiwan give the power rivalry a twist that seemingly China will face tough to crack. The Chinese hegemony in the East Asian region will be a costly affair as the US hegemony would severe the constraints on it to be a responsible player and it will dramatically lead to the revisionist behavior of China as it becomes more dissatisfied with existing systemic distribution of power.

The realists view the balance of power as the necessary outgrowth of the power politics which is interpreted by the neorealist as the response of the actors to an overconcentration of power into a one single pole or several poles. The system drives the actors to balancing strategies. The US as the unipolar superpower has enjoyed an unbalanced amount of power as the other great powers had no capability to balance its power. The first notion of US being balanced in a regional context is heard from the East Asian region in which the capabilities of power of China are on the ascendad. It is accepted by realists that the influence of US hegemony in the particular region is on the wane but this paper would attempt to display that unless and until China achieves the hard power parity with the US the balancing of military powers can not be thought of and then the balancing is beyond the contours the military powers. And the future can not be predicted as the two actors, one with system shaping capabilities and the other aspiring for such capabilities continue to concentrate their energies on defeating each other in all the directions: military, economic and political. The next section of the paper will analyze the power capabilities of the rising power and its regional hegemony over the secondary states.

**Power Shifts and Economic Development: The Case of China**

China’s continued high economic growth since the early 1970s has today stationed it at position that has prompted many critics to predict about its future status as another superpower. Much literature has been and is being produced on the rise of China and a systemic change is on the cards according to most of them. The empirical researches on China’s economic growth have correctly viewed its flourishing economic power in the region. How ever this paper suggests that the predictions about the global supremacy of China or the end of the US hegemony in an exact period in the future can not be predicted just based on the economic facts only. It is correct to argue according to the neorealist and realist theories that the growing capabilities of a rising power would ultimately lead to balancing by others and its fate will be determined at that particular context of hegemonic rivalry. For the time being we can analyze only of the capabilities being gained by the rising power and the changing scenario of the secondary power behavior and the hegemonic response to it. As Casetti examines, historically ‘the earlier attainment of power supremacy’ by the states had made them the major powers despite their geographical size: that is smaller states like UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan were the major players of the world system some time in the history\[3]\]. However the US and the USSR as geographically bigger states than others changed this trend through the accumulation of power capabilities and becoming great powers. The earlier powers like UK and France happened to lose their status to the US and the USSR. His argument that “the economic development of larger countries can produce power shifts of major consequences” is not without its validity. But the countries which achieved the power shifts had first achieved the economic supremacy with the proven military capability of fighting great power wars. Thus the attainment of economic growth *per se* would not place a state over the hegemonic power in a region. It is the material power of military capability over others that would ultimately drive it toward the shift in powers.

First, in this section we will review some of the literature written on the economic rise of China. Then we will go to evaluate its military capability and attempt to conclude on our thesis that the economic capability has to be militarily exchanged for the attainment of supremacy of power by a state aspiring for hegemony in a regional or global context. The argument that the paper brings in fact challenges the thesis of Casetti who employs the power transition theory in his article which maps the time frame using an economic model during which time the US will be overtaken by China. The theory of power transition is concerned with the development basically the industrial development, political
development, population growth and wars and conflict resulting from the power transition. Further Cassetti quotes from Organzki who in early sixties stated that the international order would undergo a change with an industrializing power. According to him “as each nation goes through the process of industrialization with its accompanying population growth and governmental modernization it goes into a sudden sprint of race of power…”.xiii Organzki is right in stating that “a nation with an increasing economic capability and other developments will be in race for power as all the actors need to maximize theory power”. However this theory of power transition is not appropriate in analyzing a systemic change. The systemic power shift should mean the change of the existing international order, the shift of system shaping capabilities from one pole to another. Therefore he is not correct in stating that “if the nation is large to begin…its sprint may upset the existing international order.”xiv If this power transition theory is applied in the context of China’s rise it should display that a new order is emerging.

How ever it has not happened because relatively the US remains still the most powerful in every aspect of power. Thus the argument that Cassetti develops with the help of Organzki’s power shifting theory is further deconstructed for its lapses in predicting a new order merely on the basis of a state’s economic growth. This is clearly evident when he states that “The development of China and, at some point in the future, of India has the potential of pushing these countries to superpower status, while pushing the USA and a revitalized Russia to substantially lower power rank.”xvii In this juncture what Waltz says about the great power capabilities is important because it is the relative distribution of capabilities that leads to balance and system change. According to David Walgreen “Kenneth Waltz argues that states with great-power capabilities, as supported by their geographic and economic potential, will almost invariably choose to engage in power politics and balancing behavior in order to increase their ability to manipulate the international system”xviii. It is correct to point out that the states with great power capabilities always attempt to increase their influence by enhancing theory powers according to Waltz, but Cassetti and Organzki kind of arguments have certainly exaggerated the growth economic power and their predictions are beyond the structural logic of international politics. The realistic picture of the coming anarchy is expressed by Walgreen that “With Chinese power rising rapidly in critical areas (particularly economic growth, as well as military expansion and modernization), it seems highly likely that its ability and willingness to challenge the status quo (that is, the U.S.-dominated system) will rise commensurately”xixii. Here what is important is not the argument which neorealism has conveyed correctly but the use of words i.e. the “ability” and “willingness” of a great power is also important despite its economic growth. The ability to face the systemic pressures and willingness to act as a revisionist would decide its fate in the system. China’s weakness in its offensive capabilities and the overwhelming superiority of the US’s conventional and strategic forces is just one dimension of the relative capabilities that China needs to consider of before attempting to go against the status quo openly. James H. Nolt captures it best when he suggested that China’s military power should be seen in relative terms rather than just its modernization efforts in isolation.xviii

The relative decline of the US influence in the East Asian region in terms of economic capability is accepted by many analysts of US foreign and economic policy. Shaplen and Laney in their “Washington’s Eastern Sunset” enter this debate by accepting this fact. According to them, “The United States has dominated Northeast Asia economically since the end of World War-2, gaining support for its policies there with trade and aid. Today, however, the United States is no longer as powerful, if it now shares the stage with China.”xix These analysts have examined the relative decline of trade by US in the region and the latest trend of trade bandwagon by the secondary states with China. They further bring forth some trade related data that compares the decline of US with China’s rise.

“In 2007, China’s trade with Japan, the world’s second-largest economy, surpassed U.S. trade with Japan for the first time since World war-2. Similarly, in 2004 China replaced the United States as South Korea’s largest trading partner. (In 1991, one year before it normalized relations with South Korea, China accounted for just over one percent of South Korea’s exports, compared with 26 percent for the United States. By 2006, China accounted for almost 22 percent and the United States for just 15 percent). Even if the recently negotiated U.S. - South Korean free-trade agreement is ratified, it will not return the United States to the top spot”xxi. How ever this decline itself does not “reflect a decline in actual trade between the US and its Northeast Asian partners”xxii. It is relative to China’s economic resurgence Shaplen and Laney explain further. The trade decline on the part of the USA has rendered it lose its influence South Korea. The secondary states have turned more towards China for trade. The balance of power situation in the Northeast Asia is thus being altered by China in favor of it. Howe ever the US has still retained its key of military capability that China cannot surpass despite its burgeoning expenditure on defense. One thing that is clearly alarming for the US is that it is not the only player in the East Asian region. China has militarily and economically challenged U.S.hegemony in the Northeast Asian region. This is not an effect of the so-called power transition to the larger states. It has to do much with the direction of the capital market which is not in fact stable.

The discussion of military capability of both China and the US in the Northeast Asian region gives supremacy to the US. The increasing military expenditure of China demonstrates its intention to maximize its power. The security in the region, on the part of the US, is rendered vulnerable. Richard K. Betts in his “Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War” concentrates on this matterxxiii. According to him the concentration of wealth in China will leads to instability in power in the region. Shaplen and Laney also make this clear by showing that Japan is retreating to its military capability in facing new the balance of power situation favoring China.
The Japanese factor will be decisive for China in the coming years. The second largest economy in the world depending on the US alliance for security will redraw its strategic map that could possibly upset the current military supremacy of China in the region. Arjun Asrani, the Director of the Board CCI revealed of this in a speech given on the topic of “A Budding Strategic Partnership: India-Japan Relations in a New Asian Era”.

“The on the security front, the galloping economic and military might of China, the nuclear shenanigans of North Korea, threats to the Indian Ocean and Straits sea-lanes from piracy, terrorism and WMDs, are all factor compelling Japan to re-examine its strategies even while further tightening its alliance with USA as the lynchpin of its security. The fact of India and Pakistan becoming de facto nuclear powers in Asia does not threaten Japan’s security but does pose a challenge to Japan’s own nuclear policy. In a paradigm shift of policies pursued over the last half-century, Japan today wishes to play a greater role in the Asian security domain as also contribute to global security. It would like to have some form of an Asian collective security system but is skeptical for the present, given the competing nationalisms in the region”\(^{xxi}\).

The military alliance between the US and Japan still continues but Japan seeks its autonomy. Given her economic and technological supremacy Japan can easily upgrade its military to face the security threats currently the region is confronting in the context of rising China. China’s capabilities in terms of military assets have been differently interpreted. Mostly China’s military strength is overestimated or misconceived. Regionally China’s military strength has far reaching implications for the secondary states, but in a global scale it has got to develop its power projection capability and come in to parallel with the Revolutionary Military Affairs (RMA) technology of the USA. A regional perspective of China’s military strength is given in “China’s Emerging Power and Military Role: Implications For south Asia” by Sujit Dutta, we will reproduce his analysis in order to have a comparative analysis of China’s military strength. Sujit Dutta says that China’s power consists of a ‘strong military component’ and China’s aims to modernize its armed forces and military industrialization complex. According to him “China's nuclear weapon capability, its permanent status in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the large size of its armed forces and the crucial role the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in its neo-authoritarian political system and national security policy-making give it a special place in the Asian security and strategic order.”\(^{xxiv}\) His analysis has brought out the China’s growing military and its implications for Asian-Pacific region. By referring to several analysts including Shambaugh, Friedberg, Kristol, Harding and Segal he presents the following analysis.

“The rise of China into a military-industrial powerhouse will therefore have a multi-dimensional impact upon other states of the Asia-Pacific region. This judgment is now well-recognized by most strategic analysts. It will in particular have direct security consequences for China’s neighbors, notably Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Mongolia, other Southeast Asian states, the Central Asian states and Russia, and the countries of South Asia. Most of these countries will be affected one way or the other by Beijing's changing economic and military capabilities, its trade and defense policies, its approach toward resolution of bilateral disputes, and how it will use its power as it grows stronger. States in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, which do not share a border with China, will be affected by its naval build up, its handling of its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and its strategic and military relationship with Myanmar and Indochina”\(^{xxv}\).

The onset of the journey for hegemony in the region as well as the globe by China seems a much more realistic one once the analysis of China’s military and economic performances is interpreted in a way which gives much space for the perception of threats. The perception of china’s rise as a threat is a valid point for the geographically proximate secondary power neighbors of China. Nevertheless the capability per se would not allow China to take the hegemonic position as long as it is unable to mange the regional stability of balance of power which the US had managed through alliance and bilateral relations so far. In the 1997 Strategic Assessment by National Defense University of the US this predicament has been clearly explained. According to the report “Dealing with China as a rising power is the most compelling of all the many challenges facing the United States and its all regional allies”\(^{XXVII}\). This section of the paper has attempted to re-read some of the literature on the economic and military growth of China. The study identifies that the economic growth of China has warranted it to modernize its technologically lagging military and prepare for the future in facing the US and the regional secondary powers like Japan who would not be willing to give her the hegemonic status in Northeast region of Asia. China has just begun to win in her own regional sphere and still it has long uphill journey for the hegemonic position in the region. How far it could match with US and face the Japan which has abandoned its idealist norms on military power and taken a realist path from recently will depend on her ability to align with the secondary powers and translate its economic wealth in to technologically sophisticate military power. The next section of the paper will analyze the regional response of the secondary powers to the newly emerging situation of balance of power in which US has slightly lost to China’s relative growth.

**Rise of China: Regional Response**

The Northeast Asian region has been a center of conflict during the cold war period. Korea, Vietnam and China had been caught in the net of proxy wars executed by the two great powers in a bipolar world. The unipolar system brought a power vacuum that no other power could fill in balancing against the US. The US hegemony is unchallenged globally. How ever the shift in power capabilities since recent times in the post cold war era has loosened the US grip of influence in the Northeast region of Asia giving China the contours of influence over the secondary powers as we discussed in the early sections of this paper. The new balance of power in the region has
compelled some allies of the US to seek China’s way in terms of trade. Also the US has indicated that China should use its influence to solve the regional nuclear conflict involving the North Korea. This phase of a rising power with nuclear military capability and high economic potential is not a favorable situation for world’s major economic powers like Japan and her military ally the US. Thus the situation in the region allows us to examine the transitory moment while looking at the behavior of the secondary powers and the global hegemony the US.

The realists recognize a difference of responses to a rising power by the great powers and the secondary states. xviii According to Kenneth Waltz the “behavior of the secondary states, if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side”. xxviii Here Waltz suggests that the non-great-power or secondary states make their choice depending on the changing strategic circumstances. The debates over the states alignment in face of a rising power is further continued by Robert Rothstein who suggests that the great powers are concerned with the systemic threat to balances while the secondary states are concerned with the threats to local balancesxxxi. Now to bring the realist perspective on the response of the secondary powers to the rising China let us read what Robert S. Ross says in his analysis of the secondary states in the East Asian region in the context of rising China. According to him,

“...if the arguments of structural realism and classical realism are correct, the effect of the rise of China will reflect the implications of Chinese balancing of U.S. capabilities in the immediate environment of secondary states and the corresponding effect on their alignments and thus on great powers’ spheres of influence. More generally, improved relative capabilities that suggest rising power and great-power balancing are capabilities that affect the immediate security of a third party and the changing likelihood and cost of war with the rising power, rather than capabilities that alter the great power global or even regional balance or that can alter outcomes of a system-wide great-power war”xxxi.

In the Northeast Asian region, as Robert S. Ross explains using realist and neorealist theory of balance of power, the secondary states, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and etc. have not balance against the rising Chinese power. Rather they have accommodated Chinese power and not aligned with the US to balance against it. This is in response to the China’s improvement of capabilities in this theatre and not elsewhere. In other spheres where China’s influence declines these secondary powers have kept to the US line.

The case of Japan’s “global alliance” with the US is an indication of the great power status that Japan aspires for but is unable to achieve without developing her military capability. Therefore Japan has further retained its military dependency with the US. Japan as the second largest economy that China takes another decade or more to surpass has clearly come out of the self-imposed norms related to the war and peace. The Japanese aspiration to play a lager role in the security arena and have its autonomy in handling external threats on her own is clear and it is understood that the US-Japan military alliance has clearly posed a balancing effect to China’s hegemony in the Northeast Asian region. Shaplen and Laney summarize this counter balancing strategy that the super power and her ally is placing for trapping China. According to them,

“The U.S.-Japanese relationship continues to be the most important alliance in Northeast Asia and should remain a pillar of the United States’ presence in the region. Nevertheless, Japan is fundamentally reassessing how it views its own security needs and is rapidly adopting a more assertive posture in the face of China’s economic and military ascendance and the possible reunification of North and South Korea”xxxi.

The US relations with the Korean peninsula have not shown way forward due to several reasons. The way the US dealt with North Korea labeling it as a member of ‘axis of evil’ has clearly made it side with China. Also the increasing accommodation to China’s power by South Korea in terms of trade has won China’s favor for it. The military capability of South Korea has also driven her to look for the geopolitical options in the region. The vehement opposition South Korea posed before the US response to North Korea’s nuclear issue illustrate that the secondary power is no more bound to the US alliance in the region.

In the multilateral forums in Asia China has strengthened its presence. In ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum, the APEC, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and East Asian Summit China has become the major participant. The regional hegemony of China has dominated most of the free trade agreements with countries over the Asian region. Thus the US has got to use its strategic relations to counter the Chinese rise in most of the spheres.

The balance of power in the Northeast Asian region has shifted in favor of China. How ever still the US has its military alignments with the secondary powers in the region. The ability of China to provide security in the region would change this partial power of military alliances that the US continues further. In an article titled “Revamping American grand strategy” Sherle R. Schwenninger observes that still the leverage of security matters is with the US in the region and it has to more weight on it in the future. He states that,

“The picture in East Asia is more complex in that the American military presence here arguably adds a dimension of security reassurance for China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea that still gives the United States leverage in that region. But even in East Asia, there is a growing sense that the United States may no longer be the stabilizing force it once was. China has abandoned its previously confrontational posture toward many of its neighbors...Meanwhile, Washington’s new emphasis on preventive war, with its on again/off tough talk toward North Korea has made many East Asian uneasy”xxxi.

The economic and military rise of China’s power capabilities has a big impact on the region of Northeast Asia. The secondary powers in the region has adopted a realist strategy of accommodating the rising power as it
gives the more space for them to remain peaceful and develop themselves. On the other hand the US-Japanese military alliance with its own ups and downs has continued and become a global alliance. The US could use the alliance to balance China in the region. How ever the status quo favoring the three powers China, Japan, and South Korea remain peaceful as none of them has openly confronted. In this scenario of the seemingly peaceful behavior of the secondary states in the region reminds us of Waltz when he states in the Theory of International Politics that “Since the theory [balance of power theory] depicts international politics as a competitive system, one predicts more specifically that states will display characteristics common to competitors: namely, that they will imitate each other and become socialized to their system.”xxxiii The states in the region are clearly competing but their strategy has been to accommodate the rising power on the one and giving U.S the support in its global alliance.

This section has attempted to explain the behavior of the secondary states in the Northeast region in face of the rising power and the newest face of the balance power. The economic capability has certainly facilitated China to overtake the US in the region and then gain the secondary states into its alliance. The secondary states regionally have followed a policy of accommodation as their capabilities certainly do not allow for balancing against China. On the other hand China has gained an upper hand in the regional forums and the US and Japan has been pushed into a secondary position. The dilemma of the post-war Japan whether to be militarized or not has clearly come up in the present scenario of rising China. Therefore Japan could opt for military autonomy while maintaining the alliance with the US as well. The next section discusses as to how the US has responded to its declining influence and China’s rising power in the region.

Converging Capabilities: China and the US in Northeast Asia

The transition of power into Chinese pole has made it to come into parity with the US in Northeast Asian region. The “declining and the rising powers are prone to conflict when capabilities converge” the power transition theorist would argue.xxxiv. This possibility of applying this theory into the context of Northeast Asian region is less. In the Case of China it has maintained a policy of status quo and is not in position to go for overt competition and conflict with China as it needs to consolidate its status in the global arena as a great power. The rise of economic power is mostly dependent on the free market competition and the US ha also benefited from the China’s market while it consider China’s rise as a doubled edged sword. As the new balance is being formed the regional secondary states are already socialized into the new conditions. The US meanwhile attempts to increase its presence in the regional affairs. The situation now can be explained to be one in which the two powers the US and China involved in a competition to maintain their position in the system. In this context what Waltz says could be useful for our explanation of the behavior of the two powers According to him “Competition produces a tendency toward the sameness of the competition”. The two powers would attempt to gain the influence in the regional forums in a similar fashion. Also they would increase their influence by providing benefits for the secondary powers and as the next strategy they will engage in a similar military confrontation in terms of weapon.

Douglas Paal in his “Nesting the Alliances in the Emerging Context of Asia-Pacific Multilateral Process: A U.S. Perspective” mentions that the rise of China as hostile a hegemon in the Northeast Asian region would compel U.S to take an offensive strategy towards it in preventing it. According to him U.S should exercise its leadership together with the other powers in the region. In his view, “What should the United States and concerned governments do in advance? If the United States wishes to shape the outcome to maximize its own interests in maintaining influence in the region, preventing the rise of a hostile hegemon, securing the benefits of plural alliances, and stabilizing security arrangements there, it should move preemptively to express its interests and preferences”xxxv

The rise of China warrants the US to take a preemptive approach to in expressing its interests on the region. This offensive realist argument shows that U.S should engage in process of regaining its influence in the region. However the shifting of powers to the China’s pole has not been obstructed by the US. The US policy to compete China in the region will exploit its alliance relations as possibly could1990’s. The U.S.’s tilt towards the other emerging powers in the region could be seen as a part of its grand strategy to retain its influence through strategic partnerships in Asia. The U.S. has changed its policy toward India and realized its capacity as emerging great power bordering China. Ryan Floyd in his “Seducing India” mentions that the U.S. has sought India’s friendship in countering China.

“Washington needs a strong Asian ally with dynamic economic and cultural appeal. China continues to deepen its ties with the ASEAN countries, expand military cooperation with Myanmar and Bangladesh and rattle sabers over Taiwan and Japan. The United States will need to contain China with India’s help, much as Great Britain, in the 19th century, sought to contain an expansionist Germany with the help of France. The American grand strategy will require rewarding China for good behavior, warning against bad behavior and sharing the burden with India by developing a close and flexible relationship.”xxxvi.

The U.S thus seems to strengthen its relations with the other parts of Asia where it has intrinsic and extrinsic value in the face of rising China. How ever one could argue that U.S has failed in winning Russia. How ever China –India relations have improved since recently and the two Asian powers seem to have embarked on a journey that would increase their material capabilities, the first step towards being influential globally. In this scenario as we have discussed in length China has regionally already countered the US hegemony and the future of its attaining global hegemony
would take it through a path that will display an overt hegemonic rivalry between it and the US.

Summary

The study focused its attention on the changing pace of balance of power in the Northeast Asian region in the face of China’s continued economic and military growth. The U.S. hegemony in the region has been challenged for the first time and the secondary states have opted for accommodation for the rising power in the region. The Japanese-U.S alliance has continued but with some revisions. The rising capabilities of China have placed its more influential position that the secondary states cannot afford for balancing. The Korean peninsula has more tilted toward China while North Korea has become a misnomer that China will have to use its influence to create stability. Japan in the face of rising China has felt a threat perception and it would opt for military capabilities that make her autonomous and free from dependency on U.S for a certain extent. China on the other hand has extended its alliances through economic forums in the region. The U.S has further been cornered in the regional forums in the Asia-pacific region. The military and economic capabilities of China will match that of the US in the future provided the similar growth continues. The growing capabilities of a rising power and the declining capabilities of an existing super power would ultimately bring the system toward a hegemonic rivalry. The balancing strategies of the two powers are already visible.

As Waltz showed us in his Theory of International Politics balance of power theory is the most distinct among all the theories of International Politics. States as unitary actors in an anarchical environment often go to form balances. Balancing is being experienced at the moment when there is over concentration of power in one or more poles. In the Northeast region Asia we have experienced this as we realized through this study. The behavior of the rising power and the declining powers’ response toward it, as both are constrained by the systemic pressure will decide the future of the existing international system.

End Notes


iii See Hans J Morgenthau (2004 reprint) Politics Among Nations revised by Kenneth W Thompson, Kalyani publishers, New Delhi, p187. In his discussion on the balance of power Morgenthau shows that the aspiration for power on the part of nations will drive them to maintain or overthrow the status quo. The necessary outgrowth of power politics is the balance of power which is misconceived and impedes the understanding of international relations.


v Cited in Queensheng Zhao and Guoliliu P.586

vi Ibid

vii Avery Goldstein, (2003), “ Structural Realism and China’s foreign Policy” in Andrew K Hanami (ed), Perspectives on Structural Realism, p128, Palgrave Macmillan

viii Cited in Queensheng Zhao and Guoliliu Pp 587-588

ix Ibid


xi Cited in Helen Milner “ The Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique” P156


xiii Ibid p 664

xiv Organzki’s theory of power shift with modernization of larger states looks only at the economic growth and military capabilities. How ever he does not present an argument on relative capability of a state which seeks hegemonic status. In fact the relative military capability is more important vis a vis the hegemon for an actor which needs a new order.

xv Ibid pp661


xvii Ibid


xx Ibid p.83

xxi Ibid


xxiii *Arjun Asrani Director of the Board CCI “A Budding Strategic Partnership: India-Japan Relations in a New Asian -Era” keynote address, The Maureen and Mike Foundation.


