

The rise of China:

Challenges for development policy and strategy

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China: Our New Favourite Topic

- Attention paid to China has increased remarkably in the past several years because its importance and presence has grown rapidly
- Yet as John mentioned, involvement in Africa and the global economy is still much smaller than US, EU or Japan
- Why the attention?
- The purpose of my comments is to contextualise the story of China by reference to international relations theory

Why does China matter?

- It's size gives it the power to *transform* the international political economy and the global order
- It's involvement in Africa...
 - Might undermine established international “norms” of behaviour and therefore threaten established rules of the “international society”
 - Might be a signal to the West of its intentions to challenge the existing distribution of power

Liberal vs. Realist IR Theory

- Liberals would be most concerned about the first
 - China's involvement in Africa doesn't conform to international norms of aid, lending, labour standards, human rights, environment, etc
- Realists more concerned about the second
 - Increased Chinese presence in Africa is an indicator of its intention to challenge the international distribution of power

Realism and Balance of Power

- The world is most dangerous when power balances are shifting
 - When some powers are on the rise and others in decline, they attempt to balance each other
 - Multi-polarity (situation of Europe before World Wars) is hypothesised to be the least stable
- Bipolar systems are thought to be more stable (e.g. US and USSR)
- Unipolar systems (present?) are moderately stable, but unlikely to persist

How does China fit in?

- IR scholars are worried that China's rise might transform the global order from a stable one to an unstable one
- This depends on whether China is a “revisionist” or “status quo” state
 - Revisionist: will change international norms to suit their own needs, and disrupt existing power balances in the process
 - Status Quo: aims at maintenance of the distribution of power and does not challenge established international norms and rules

How to examine the evidence

- Development Policy
 - Does China present a new model of development or an alternative for Africa and other regions?
- Global Governance
 - Does China play by “the rules of the game” in international organisations?
- Other norms
 - Does China threaten widely held norms on human rights, aid, lending, etc?

No easy answer

- China has the capacity to transform the international economy and international order
- Yet its continued success is highly dependent on economic integration with the US, EU, Asia and other regions
- Passive rather than active transformation?