

## **An Assessment on Genesis and Justifiability of Thucydides Trap On Pretext of Asian Century & China's Charismatic Rise**

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### **Abstract:**

The world often gets loaded with lots of recently emerging ideological hazes that enormously engage academicians and analysts into hot seat for arguments and counter arguments. Recently, the notion of Thucydides Trap has alarmed and intimidated world thus has capaciously drawn the limelight of scholars around the globe. This paper tries to trace the origination of concept and examines the possibility of such threat and trap on note that a significant section of global society is presenting a persistent anxiety over the issue in general and over China in particular.

**Key Words:** Thucydides, China, Asia, Growth, War

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## 1. METHODOLOGY

Being purely a doctrinal research based on paradigm of interpretation, this paper deduces the conclusion after a rigorous survey and juxtaposing plenty of published texts by noted scholars and reputed authors cum academicians in the very domain. This becomes, evidently, researcher's an honest effort- based in qualitative work- in novel course of building vista of new cognizance and refined cognition.

## 2. CONCEPT

Despite being saddled with many cross-cutting views and perceptions in regard to the development, economic growth is an unswervingly, unequivocally, predominantly and the decisively single agenda for all. It bears highly announced mobility and meaning from centre to circumference and composes capacious net effect as the first and the last anticipation of each nation around the globe. Even accomplishment or acrimonious failure of nation too is hugely gauged on compass of economic progress. Agendas cum amount of actions on subjects like unemployment reduction, economic empowerment and surplus trade extension become customarily general but gist of issues for all.

On note of embracing and internalizing the same spirit, lately, an ambitious mega business scheme with unerringly equivalent interest, named Belt and Road Initiative, proudly initiated by Right Hon. President of China, Xi Jinping, has vastly hogged the world's limelight and delightfully unfolded China's psychology. Particularly nations from the West tend to foreground a distrust as shall not China's instigation plunge the world into Thucydides trap? Hence, they feel irresistible to offer stern, sometimes harsh as well, reprimand and aversion over the mission. It is largely a reflection of an agony and antagonism paid by the nations in western hemisphere and that is balled out against ballooning economic extension of the next door neighbor China.

## 3. WHAT IS THUCYDIDES TRAP?

Only change is the permanent property of the world. On the very theme, Twain (2014) perceives that history does not repeat but rhymes whereas Kagan (2009) stresses on repeating nature of history costing on end of the dream. When the status of power nations alters, it is obviously natural that the rising power's great economic strides and advancement may confront and disobey or resist the self-claimed ruling power. Often, desisting and challenging the ruling power shall be the primary interest, as a study on 100 key objectives of world politics by MacGregor (2011) suggests. Any ensnare of very nature and base is called Thucydides trap.

A prominent scholar at Havard and a prudent expert in security concerns from America, Graham (2017) penned a book titled '*Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides Trap*' and introduced then percolated the diction to be viral in debate though the very concept was once more floated into discussion, prior to this book, through his own article

“The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War? on *Atlantic* in 2015. The very concept is then popularly abbreviated as T-trap as well. Nonetheless, Sanger (2011) is said to have been the first one to use the term Thucydides Trap in print during the commentary while the then Chinese President Right Honorable Hu Jintao was in official visit of USA. In the same famous commentary, he had even used the phrase ‘Sino-American’ partnership or G2 as well. Following the robust rise on discourse, Schott (2011) came in the chorus to second him.

Approximately 2400 years back, author Thucydides (Re-print: 2009) penned a book *The History of Peloponnesian War* to archive the account of the war between Sparta, the then ruling entity, and Athens, the then rapidly rising respondent state. Thucydides ascertained that the robust rise of Athens countered then forged threat to Sparta thus the violent war was tailored. It resulted in causing the entire Peloponnesian belt to suffer gravely. Graham (2017) has baptized any sort of brawl or battle that might evolve on the cost and cause as Thucydides claimed to be a ‘Thucydides trap’. As per him, there have been altogether 16 logs of such T-traps in last 500 years of history. Though Kotok (2018) notes that information are quite asymmetric and archived records do have noticeable mismatch to some extent, among reportedly assimilated 16 such vistas of past, where evolving power countered entrenched power, 12 of them broke into an understandably violent form of the war.

Habsburg’s defy on France in 16<sup>th</sup> century, France’s counter over Britain in 17<sup>th</sup> century, German’s weight over France in 19<sup>th</sup> century and Germany’s ambush over Russia and Britain respectively in 20<sup>th</sup> century are few to cite as burning examples of such Thucydides traps. China’s fresh but impassioned initiative BRI is construed as an endeavor of such fence in to western planet. In consequence, westerners are added petrified and wearily worried over BRI. Friedman (2016) believes this skirmish tends to emanate profound Global Implication whereas Graham (2017) loves to suspect that as a case of the 17<sup>th</sup> T-trap that the world is tending to face sans any option. Economic change and military conflict are key basis of either rise or fall of great power in last 500 years of time span starting from 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Kennedy (1988) opines. Money is cause of war as well as tool to avert war as well and the same is crux of debate between these two super-powers at present owing to China’s oversized ballooning growth. Because, now is the time of Asian Century.

#### 4. ASIAN CENTURY

Undoubtedly, the Asia is unquestionably leading global marketplace now. This continent holds 30% terra firma and 65% populace in 50 nations all together. Currently, nearly every one of Asian nations does have extraordinarily exponential monetary growth cum financial viability. Surmising then prophesying the rapid and radical progress of Asian nations, Weiss (1989) had prophesized that the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be the Asian century. Asia is remarkably rising in many domains i.e. economy to security to military to technology; and this peculiar and profoundly prepossessing growth has seriously drawn the limelight of all the experts around.

Most of tiger economies are in Asia but Europe is slackening since long. America has already been left behind China both in purchasing power parity index and volume of economy. The speculation of the time has tangibly transfigured into a noticeable reality. Thus, China's enamored enlargement unfailingly poses pools of challenges to America however westerners should not get shocked and jolted much. Kennedy (2010) remarks that 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were remarkably muted and assimilated as European and American century repetitively whereas 21<sup>st</sup> is supposed to be in lead of Asian Nations. Narratives regarding industrialization, battlefield of Isms, and ideology have been vividly vanquished by exponentially exceptional economic growth and concentration on the very issues. Asia's share on global GDP has inwrought a significant positive leap.

As per studies from Chandy and Gertz (2011), 93 percent of global poverty reduction has taken place in Asian countries. Development dimension has been best and impossible to second so far. Zakariya (2008) in *Post American World* regards Asia as the centre of cities, cities of tall apartments, wide roads, biggest networks and many things. Double digit growth rate along with averaging into 35 percent Global GDP has empowered Asia to be the most powerful and dominant force of the globe. Only 7 Asian countries have less than 1000\$ PCI so are left to graduate off from the demarcation of least developed countries. Gill and Kharas (2007) find substantially ballooning investment on research and development whereas Bannister (2005) notes huge scale of manufacturing employment in Asian nations. Separate studies from Dolan et al (2010) and Stiglitz et al (2010) infer a fact that Asia is lead in progress and broadness of Happiness and Mental equanimity as well. Kanbur and Spence (2010) feel Asia as hotspot with the highest ever form of equality of opportunity and with very fair chance to everyone to participate. Hence, it succeeded to trigger to uproot the social and economic tensions normally amounted by inequality. Bourguignon et al (2006) note Asia being perpetuated by cultural mechanism and success as well as being leader in global common issues alike Angel et al (2005) aver that urban expansion has taken an unbeatable and undefeatable speed in Asian continent. As an upshot of very essence, Asia has succeeded in doubling the urban populace and tripling the urban land.

World Bank's report (2006) also draws almost close synopsis alike Gros (2010) derives from his studies in regard to the radical rise of Asian nations leaving other countries quite far and distanced by far and large. World Bank asserts satisfactory performance in sustainable development goals and millennium development goals too in lieu with Gros (2018) deems Asia being central financial leader. With remarkable progress on green technology and sharing global burden, on contrary to White Man's Burden propounded by Easterly (2007), Asia has been now adduced as an ideal and exemplary trend-setter. Robust entrepreneurial development with sufficient innovation has buttressed the mission boundlessly.

Growing as global footprint and offering dividends to all collaborating nations and ensuring spillover effect on non-collaborative nations have empowered all to share the returns. Acs and Audretsch (1988) regard Asian nations' understandably fair contribution in job creation across the world along with entrepreneurship that is both the innovative and inventive as well. Deep focus on R & D and total quality management has been prime concern and key goal. Singapore and Malaysia have excelled rest where South Korea has ostensibly justified self as centre of science and technology. Any serious issue commences to unzip space and strength in Asia, Abbot (2009) urges; and, White (2008) regards this as an outcome and aftermath of power-shift. Maddison (2001) had quite early prophesized the Asia to be the world economy in new ongoing millennium, for which, Nayyar (2005) assumes it in monetary terms; and that shall generate new dynamic activities as Ocampo (2005) perceives. Reinert (2005) too concedes on it; and, Taylor (2006) considers that succeeding in breaking poverty and stereotypes of low level development pace records to an ever un-experimented height and unnoticed oversized growth. Very same has been fairly seen in Asia.

Basing on background of Russian disintegration in 1990, Fukuyama (1992) penned an illustrious book '*The End of History and Last Men*' to assert that the global clash had arrived to buttock and the contemporary age-band populace was final to be onlooker of quarrel among nations. He inferred accordingly as socialist block had bent down with serious self-ruin and collapse thus the perpetual dominative hegemony of capitalist, America, would sustain, he prophesized. Auslin (2017), through a book, *The End of Asian Century* constructs identical synopsis. These books were magnanimously marketed to be read over the world hence it enforced people presume that merely capitalism is the solitary and solo supremacy over the globe. But China's gigantic and elephantine growth has shocked many countries to utter surprise and restlessness. The century has witnessed a miraculous and radical cum rapid rise of Asian nations. It, especially China's Charismatic Growth, has even been a serious threat to western block of the world.

## 5. CHINA'S CHARISMATIC GROWTH

Posing a big U turn, lately, China is endorsing radical and rapid all round augmentation thus has commanded a large leverage over Asia as well as globe too. BRI is to seamlessly serve the very purpose without stymieing any smoothness. Miller (2017) on book '*China's Asia Dream...*' & Cole (2016) on '*China's Quest for Great Power*' argue in the same line.

'China is sleeping lion, let her sleep; for when she wakes then she shakes the world' is supposed to have been gracefully remarked by the noted emperor Napoleon at that time. At present too, among total publications, majority of books are reportedly written about China where westerns are purportedly expecting China to collapse and exhibit the sangfroid on it.

Following modified socialism policy introduced by Right Honorable Deng Xiaoping, China is devising swift, sound, and unparalleled economic growth. Assessing the same, Iskyan (2016) notes China's super-rise resulting into salubrious and fast growth of middle class population. Such exponentially exceptional enlargement of Chinese economy unquestionably places America in reverse gear. Owing to the fear, America attempts best to preempt then avert China's speed; and if not possible, sweats to defile and defame it for edifying anti-Chinese state of mind, globally. China's intermittent exercise of Veto, in regard to some critical global disputes, in UN Security Council has further endangered America. Supply of goods to North Korea may have contributed to upend the graph of westerners' panic. Furtherance, instituting some powerful regional organizations like BRICS and ADB has fueled the wrath at the fullest. Nonetheless China's intent is not to dominate others, wreck the peace and invite havoc as they baselessly blame. But others are finding it quite difficult to disbelieve on their preposterous, pointless and biased basis. Akram (2016) metaphorically presents China as rising dragon and America as a wounded eagle whereas Wilke (2015) confirms that these two countries definitely take a course of collision somewhere in 21<sup>st</sup> century alike Parmeggiani (2014) deems such confrontation as necessary tool to reconfigure the world order than an accidental occasion. But Chinese scholars love to explain the growth as return than rise as well as deny such a confrontation ahead.

Using econometric model in their studies, Au and Henderson (2006) find optimal employment size- with an excessive engagement- into manufacturing sector i.e. almost close to the size of total population. Gill and Kharas (2007) observe Chinese cities in relatively small size but high in number thus it shall be possible to have utmost and optimal management, and worth admiring urbanization with necessarily sufficient backing of city amenities. Making such mapping ahead, Henderson (2007) too agrees to Maddison (2007), who assumes the long-term effect of Chinese growth. Chinese economy is remitting to entire world in course of raising her status to the first power by altering the existing world order as well whereas O'Sullivan (2000) considers urban economy and Anderson (2007) and Xu (2010) deem export led economy generating such sound surreptitious success to China. Ljungwall (2006) too agrees on the argument of overstated ballooning export whereas McKay and Song (2010) value then venerate the Chinese caliber of readjusting gross strategy along with being lead in global manufacturing powerhouse. Shu and Ng (2010) suppose sector wise monetary incentives and investments as cardinal beam for Chinese economy whereas Walter and Howie (2011) love to disbelieve it. They dart for defaming it and red capitalism as well as baselessly bewail the rise of Chinese economy and even urge that it is prone to shake and collapse sooner.

Barma and Ratner (2006) rightfully argue that China has been sufficiently and noticeably challenging the liberal practice and world order benchmarked by the western nations. Chan (2008) writes, "China's sheer physical size and the rapid rate of its recent growth can be an obvious cause of concern by other states regardless of the extent of its relative power gain" (P:25). To intense the message further, Fishman (2005) remarks, "China is everywhere these

days" (P7). "It does not go by when events and decisions in China do not resonate in capital markets and political capitals" (2007: xvii), Gill writes. Keidel (2008) too fully agrees on such assumptions. As per research by Lampton (2008), China has source of patents in everything as well as Shirk (2008) notes that Chinese nationals are able to underscore the western criticism. Fontaine and Rapp-Hooper (2016) feel that China is eroding the existing maritime regime whereas Mahbubani (2014) notes not any other economy in the globe either had grown or may grow in future in the same pace either.

Technological sophistication, as Garnaut and Huang (2001) value, has caused China earn so. Zoellick and Lin (2009) call G2 to China and America as great two economies of the world. In various separate studies, Chen and Cheung (2011), Cheung and Qian (2010), Li and Wang (2009), Rodrik (2006), Yao and Zhang (2008), Buckley et al (2007), Huang (2010), Lu et al (2010), and Luo and Tung (2007) too consider the economic development and foreign market expansion syndrome as cardinal role player in China's oversized growth. Tang (2009) regards political uniqueness and unfamiliarity of China to the world's liberal economy as key contributor; and Wang (2006) rates China's aggressive agenda of going global in energy area, alike Zhang (2005) restated quite often, a prime cause to unleash such marvelous effect. Witt and Lewin (2007) too consider China's outward flows of goods and services as significantly dominating lead in today's status. Kennedy (2010) and Kong (2010) regard China's energy strategy in remitting pivotal and vital recompense to cause upswing sweepstake in Chinese economy.

For Xing and Detert (2010), Chinese attempt to assemble the product than buying branded one is leading at profitable positive rise. Lardy (2007) finds that China, as dealer, intends building profit at any cost, leading among intellectual light. Woo and Zhang (2010) consider urbanization as durable driver of growth similarly Song (2010) too cedes on synopsis and adds massive industrialization and employment of rural labour responsible factors to wax then fuel the situation further. Bardhan (2010) finds China performing better in comparison to India despite being an ace card democracy. Gilley (2005) cares highly for the social costs and rewards besides mere calculative monetary or economic gains. Mahbubani (2007) believes that the US has now no longer been the best geopolitical card player in Asia and is losing its impression and control. So feels Zakaria (2008) too; and it is as US is missing multiple times to remain as the records in the globe. Crane et al (2005) believe that the ongoing effort works 'to create [a] system that will unify, standardize, and legalize the [Chinese] weapons procurement process' (P:165). Goldstein (2005) deems China simultaneously making rise and taking a leap forward in economic, diplomatic and military strength as Kydd (2005) regards it as sensitivity to power and reassurance. Tan (2007) highlights China's journey from security seeker of Cold War era to lead military might in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus China has sufficiently empowered itself but the situation will never lead to war - though anxiously blamed- for umpteen reasons.

## 6. TRAP: BASELESS BEMOANING

Being the noted and incontrovertible world power, both the China and America certainly strive to balloon the supremacy and sway over the word but it is undeniable fact that they surely refrain from waging war at any alibi. None of them will and dare to afford war, at present.

Though scholar Smith (2005) surmises a violent future, it definitely won't be inevitably 'contested, congested, cluttered, connected and constrained physical brawl and battle' alike the western globe purportedly alleges. Ahmed (2013) opines that military oppression goes less effective and lowly countable in comparison to rest of issues in commanding world attention whereas Mumford (2010) regards future war to be irregular and unconventional, rather proxy in various ways. Kilcullen (2013) believes the warfare to be unfamiliar and unpredictable or unlike of past trends. These all realities help to infer that these nations won't unduly confront to each other physically.

These all inferences, derived from respective scholars on the basis of various studies, too deny the possibility of war in form of psychical battle. Kissinger (2011) has argued that the China–United States relationship will never look like a second Cold War because it is an overriding reality that neither a country will be ever able to dominate the other; and the conflict between them would exhaust their societies thoroughly. Murdoch and Sandler (2011) note surprisingly unprepossessing and uncomely negative outcome of war on economic growth and Bigombe et al (2000) regard peace as prime and foremost necessity for expected and highly touted pace of prosperity and progress. Both of the countries are fairly known in this regard, have forged their commitments and dedication for the same quite often.

The world has been tangibly transmogrified into global village in lieu with substantial number and significant pool of conscious citizenry. Thus, it, proactively, hails and heralds global pressure over them to avert activities prone to beget war. Therefore war is now an obsolete phenomenon and an antique. Even an accord has been made between two presidents and that confirms of working together for world peace and prosperity.

All the claims from Fukuyama (1992) to Huntington (1996) have largely gone unmatched and impertinent. Lebow (2010) believes that ranking of real power of country depends on multiplying of the GDP thus both nations endeavor to produce and merchandize more than to wage physical battle. Lebow (2008), and Lebow and Valentino (2009) regard power analysis as a subjective category unlike Blanning (2007) urges. Nexon (2009) denies the war as Westphalia system of controlling conflict rather urges to consider it into other elements and modes as well. Simms (2007) calls the same as prime cause of failure of British Empire across the globe. These lead countries, now, may go mired not to cast such stupidity to damage self and experience own ruin.

China exerts no excuse to invite war since it has equal concern and refined contribution for global peace and security. Rather the project is absolutely engineered with pious motto to distend her own economy and hoist the entire Asian region then to commence for mitigating



regional predicament as well as enhance provincial fraternity. Cunningham (2006) stresses on huge havoc and haplessness that war generates; Raleigh et al (2010) too agree on the idea. Salisbury (2017) finds that war multiplies malicious malfunctions for the health of nation in many respects. Iqbal (2010) too opines in the same line. Glick and Taylor (2010) and Justino (2012) regard war as the prime cause for plunging countries to dive into pond poverty and state of penury, which is definitely not the expected outcome for both the nations.

Ergo, China's progress is clearly unlikely and uninterested to plunge into war thus American doubt is psychologically unjustifiable. Higgs (2006) noted that the US economy had slackened tremendously with 20% decline on GDP during world war II too thus shall not afford any war further. The 20<sup>th</sup> century powerful and progressive American economy had taken a boom and earned a momentum only after the war was truly ended. Madrick (2008) blatantly and boldly refuses the war, citing it to be no good for economy on million reasons. Baker (2007) traces that America is losing a great amount of capital and progress line because of war with Iraq hence dares not to compound it further to aggravate the situation whereas Edelstein (2000) surmises that America won't mistake of repeating the same shameful and suicidal step again.

America along with other western nations ought to cease to myopically foresee problem in China's progress. Objection on China's initiative is not a fair trial that is begotten by envisioning the clear loss of control over the world affairs as unethically cum unreasonably enjoyed for long in past.

Glick and Taylor (2010) have noticed an immediate drop on trade up to 80 percent while a brawl begins. Such rare and dreadful disaster can never be borne by any country as Barro (2006) believes. Gompert and Saunders (2011) regard it as paradox, hard to believe, but realities to bypass the war; and Zhang (2006) thinks that as science of campaigns as the most powerful and meaningful campaigns from China are also designed to set peace.

Even China plans countering America then the only option to it is either to bear or to re-counter it with sound strategy ahead. Wu (2016) considers that now US can't imagine self as a single and sole power whereas Mazarr et al (2018) stress on looking for mutual co-existence. Feenstra and Sasahara (2018) and McGregor (2010) regard China creating a separate world and taking a giant control over it. Rajah (2017) feels that China is not always certain to be the lead thus will be affording war not at all. Going aligned with Chen (2015), He and Kwai (2017) cite the recent changes and judicial attempts in China which promotes and advocates the policy of peaceful rise than leading to any confrontation ahead along with changes in technological connectivity and strength in order to exist into complex corporate culture of the world at present. Such situations and scholarly observations clearly verify the argument that there shall not be any hard-power war as assumed.

Thus indulging in bogus bewailing and bemoaning on it as base-building for violent outbreak of war, as projected- on being bewildered over sound speedy progress of China- can't be

adduced anyway validated and admissible observation than being simply a profoundly prejudiced blame. To conclude, Thucydides trap seems neither intended nor orchestrated.

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