

# *The Rise of China and the Transformation of Global Power Dynamics*

**Koh King Kee**

**President, Centre for New Inclusive Asia**

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**China Rising: USA and West Responses**

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Dr Lim Teck Ghee,  
Distinguished Guests, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to everyone!

Let me begin by congratulating Dr Lim Teck Ghee on the publication of his new book, *China Rising: USA and West Responses*. The subject of his book is exactly what many of us are trying to understand today, because whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not, the rise of China is the single most important development shaping the international system in the 21st century.

Over the past forty years, very few changes in the world have been as profound as China's transformation.

Today, China makes up about 18 percent of the global economy and contributes nearly 30 percent of global growth. But these are not just numbers. They tell us something deeper — that the way power, influence, and opportunity are distributed in the world is changing.

China's modern rise really began in 1978, when it embarked on reform and opening-up and chose economic modernization and global integration. And in 2010, when China overtook Japan to become the world's second-largest economy, it was more than an economic milestone. It signaled that China had re-emerged as a central actor in global affairs.

But China today is not just participating in the international system. Increasingly, it is helping to shape it.

Take the green economy as an example. China leads the world in renewable energy capacity, electric vehicles, and battery technology. Because China produces at scale, the cost of these technologies has fallen worldwide. This has made low-carbon development possible for many developing countries that otherwise simply could not afford it.

Then there is poverty reduction. China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. For many countries in the developing world, this is not just impressive — it is instructive.

What does all this mean for the international order?

After the Cold War, the world went through a period where one power dominated. Western-led institutions, liberal norms, and a particular model of globalization appeared to be universal.

That period is now giving way to something different — a more multipolar and more plural world, where different development models coexist and influence is more widely spread.

China did not overturn the system. In fact, China grew within that system and benefited from it. But its size and speed of growth have inevitably reshaped it. Today, whether in trade, climate negotiations, development finance, or global governance, China's participation is not optional. It is essential.

We can also see this in the global economy. For decades, economic governance was shaped mainly by advanced Western economies. Now, emerging economies — especially China — play a much larger role.

Through South-South cooperation, investment in developing countries, and initiatives like the Belt and Road, China has expanded choices for many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In that sense, China's rise has rebalanced not only power, but also opportunity.

There is a common perception that China wants to replace or overthrow the existing order. In reality, China has repeatedly said that what it seeks is not rejection, but reform — reform to make global governance more representative of today's realities, especially giving greater voice to the Global South.

At the same time, China's rise has also changed security dynamics, particularly in the Asia-Pacific. As China grows stronger, concerns and suspicions also grow, especially among established powers. This competition is not only about military strength, but also about influence, rules, and narratives.

Yet it is worth noting that China's rise has not followed the historical pattern of expansion through conquest or colonization. China consistently speaks of sovereignty, non-interference, and peaceful development as core principles of its foreign policy. Whether everyone accepts this or not, these ideas shape how China sees itself and how it presents its role in the world.

Perhaps one of the most interesting effects of China's rise is psychological. For many developing countries, China's experience shows that modernization does not have to follow a single Western-defined path. It gives confidence that countries can develop according to their own history, culture, and conditions.

Of course, China's rise also brings responsibilities. Expectations are higher, scrutiny is greater, and its actions have wider consequences. Like all rising powers in history, China must ensure that its growth contributes to shared prosperity rather than mistrust.

As former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull once said, China's rise can be seen as "a return to the natural order of things," reflecting China's historical position before the 19th century. And Lee Kuan Yew made a similar observation — that China's rise is not a disruption, but a return after a long historical interruption.

So, the real question today is not whether China will rise. It already has.

The real question is how the world responds. Do we adapt through dialogue, reform, and cooperation? Or do we allow rivalry and outdated assumptions to dominate our thinking?

History tells us that periods of power transition are moments of both risk and opportunity. With wisdom, restraint, and openness, China's rise can become a force for greater balance, inclusion, and stability in a changing world.

Thank you.