**The tale of a dragon**

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The first half of the twenty first century will bring in dramatic transformation of a unipolar world order, administered primarily by the US, to a multi-polar world order, managed by the US, Russia, and China. As the 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden perhaps faces a series of unprecedented challenges not foreseen by any of his predecessors. Mr Biden’s ordeal starts with dealing with the deadly COVID virus followed closely by the economic disaster brought upon by the same, however, the most daunting task facing the US President is to manage the meteoric rise of China as an economic power, and the colossal effort required to curtail China’s influence globally in particular in the Western Pacific rim and the South China Sea.

The meteoric rise of China on the global stage is perhaps one of the most remarkable events in modern-day history, as the world witnessed a closed agrarian economy transform itself into a manufacturing/financial powerhouse in a short span of twenty-five years. The dynamics of modern-day China are built on her tragic past filled with deceit and manipulation by colonial powers that are clearly reflected in its current—and as per the eyes of the West—assertive global strategy.

[Local administration imposed smart lockdown in several areas of Lahore](https://nation.com.pk/28-Dec-2020/local-administration-imposed-smart-lockdown-several-areas-of-lahore)

At the start of the twentieth century, China was labelled the “Sick Man of Asia” for its failed dealings with the global powers present at the time. The Chinese remember this century as “The Century of Humiliation” and continuously remind their new generation about the darkest chapter of their history under the Qing dynasty. These failings include losing two opium wars to the Colonial British, and as part of repatriation, giving up its prized possession, the territory of Hong Kong. The Chinese learned some harsh lessons from these wars/treaties: Regardless of fiscal or global duress, be patient and never sign an unfavourable treaty, as evident with Chinese resistance to WTO/Kyoto, nuclear non-proliferation, and the latest US-China free trade Agreement. Regardless of the cost, never give up any strategic ports or tract of land, and lastly; never place your trust in foreigners and closely monitor what imports they are bringing into the mainland.

[Chinese journalist jailed over reports on early COVID outbreak in Wuhan](https://nation.com.pk/28-Dec-2020/chinese-journalist-jailed-over-reports-on-early-covid-outbreak-in-wuhan)

Following the British defeat, was the loss of Sino-Japanese wars, in which China lost against a technologically superior Japanese army trained by the French and British—lessons learnt from the Japanese occupation were: Technology, discipline, and goal orientation determines the winner in any worldly conflict. No matter how brutal or barbaric your occupier is, Chinese will oppose them with resilience. Lastly, during this period of humiliation, China faced betrayal from one of its closest allies: Russia. This great friend in the name of strategic partnership continuously encroached the mineral rich Chinese territory of Northern Manchuria and Xinjiang. Lesson learnt from this experience was simple—never trust the Russians (as evident in the next fifty years). The allegorical Dragon in this period was old and weak.

This period of difficulties was first broken by a ray of hope in the form of Boxer’s rebellion, where ordinary peasants, fed up with the consistent failures of the aristocratic class in leading China, clearly knew their strength and were willing to sacrifice everything, in a bid to regain their national pride and self-confidence. It is sufficient to say that the Boxers rebellion is perhaps the most defining moment of the Chinese history, as the Dragon began to rise from the ashes.

[Cristiano Ronaldo wins player of century award in Dubai](https://nation.com.pk/28-Dec-2020/cristiano-ronaldo-wins-player-of-century-award-in-dubai)

Under Mao Zedong and his associates, Chinese found a new leadership which was characterised by fearlessness, an understanding of colonial mentality, and furthermore, knew that their greatest asset was a young nation of 700 million people. However, Mao’s confidence in his nation was clearly displayed when he decided to clash with the US in Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan. As a result of these conflicts, the Chinese came to realise that as a nation, they can withstand any adversity or calamity, and their sheer size, endurance and resistance are their key assets. In this period, the Dragon was finally in control of its den.

While the US, as a superpower likes to export its core values i.e. democracy, freedom of speech, human rights, to allies and friends (conveniently under varying circumstances) China is indifferent from internal politics of a country and likes to exports its mega-projects that bear its name and would last a century as a landmark (“built by China”—brand recognition). As the most admired country in the world, the US attracts intellects around the globe, while China, in some form or fashion, is the lifeline for farmers and miners across the globe. The US, despite creating the UN, now condemns it, while China funds 12 percent of the UN and chairs 15 of its most important committees. With the recent US exit from WHO, China is its biggest contributor and completely controls it. With its projects and allies flaunting from Africa to Latin America, it looks like finally the Dragon is strong, in control and smiling but these dreams came to fruition after a century of hard work, sacrifice and undeterred self-belief.