

## **Several Proposals For Constructing China's Grand National Strategy: United Front Against China**

**The shift of the U.S. primary strategic focus from land to sea and the  
construction of a united front against China**

**Right Wing Populism's Negative Effect To International Relations**

**Song Dexing**

**March 15, 2024**

[Abstract] In a period of turbulent change, international power has shown a trend of decentralization among, above and below countries. The widespread anxiety it has spawned makes the current era an "era of strategic anxiety". At the same time, the evolution of the basic international attitudes of the United States and the West and the self-interest strategic tendency represented by populism have directly negatively affected the development of the United States and the West as well as negatively impacted inter-state relations.

After entering the 21st century, the United States' primary geostrategic concern has undergone a historic shift from land to sea, which to a certain extent promoted the formation of the United Front of Maritime Countries against China.

The above-mentioned changes in the strategic environment determine that the creation of China's national grand strategy must attach great importance to domestic development, which is the key for the successful rise of China.

At the same time, China must also attach great importance to the optimization of the external strategic environment, and effectively enhance its strategic thinking. We should objectively and rationally grasp the relationship between China and the world, and the role of the international community. We should as well master the art of using power. Therefore, in the process of creating China's national grand strategy, sufficient attention needs to be paid to both the domestic and international dimensions, and national grand strategy making process should be regarded as a

process that requires constant adjustment and optimization to ensure its inherent dynamic balance.

## **Text**

The report of the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party points out that the world has entered a new period of turbulence and change. ① As the counterpart of peace and stability, turbulence and change imply that the seriousness of the contradictions and challenges has reached such a level that it cannot be ignored. The urgency and significance of the situation derived from this foundation have compelled the main actors to adopt a different approach to governance than in the past, reflecting a marked tendency towards change, although there is still a legacy. In particular, structural factors, as key variables, generate dynamics and changes that are sufficient to fundamentally alter the basic landscape of international politics, mainly with regard to the international power structure, geostrategic priorities and the basic international attitudes or international political culture of the United States and the West.

The above-mentioned elements systematically affect the international strategic environment and deeply influence the international strategic psychology, thus inevitably pulling the major countries' grand strategy creation and implementation in terms of both objective patterns and subjective perceptions, and making the international community's governance strategies and logic of policy behaviors during the period of turbulence and change different from those of the past. Therefore, the international environment, domestic foundation, and decision-making quality on which China's national strategy is based need to be optimized to keep pace with the times, so as to win the first opportunity and take the initiative during the turbulent period of change.

Accordingly, the article will focus on four issues: first, the mega-trend of international decentralization and its strategic effects; second, the spread of populism and the self-interested strategic tendency of the U.S. and the West that it has spawned; third, the significance of the shift in the U.S.'s geo-strategic priority from the land to the sea for the creation of a joint front of oceanic countries against China; and finally, we will discuss the issues that China's grand national strategy should focus on.

## **I. DECENTRALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL POWER AND THE STRATEGIC ANXIETIES IT HAS PRODUCED**

Speaking of modern international relations, two extraordinary scholars, Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, have emphasized that the reality of the world of international relations has shifted from a colonialist international society, with its wide disparities of power, wealth and status, to a more pluralistic international society, in which the distribution of wealth and cultural authority has become more balanced between the West and other countries. Thinking

about international relations has shifted from a separation between the center and the periphery to a growing integration. ②

① Xi Jinping, "Holding High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Striving in Unity for the Comprehensive Construction of a Modernized Socialist Country-Report at the Twentieth National Congress of the Communist Party of China," People's Publishing House, 2022 edition, p. 26.

② [Canada] Amita Achaya, [Britain] Barry Buzan: The Construction of Global International Relations: The Origins and Evolution of International Relations in a Century, translated by Liu Debin and others, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2021 edition, preface to the Chinese edition, p. VIII.

In other words, it has become a necessity of the times to grasp international relations and their development from a holistic perspective.

Among them, the international power structure, which is the core element of the international system, provides us with a useful path for a systematic grasp of and overall thinking about modern international relations.

Of course, unlike the highly structured and fairly stable power structure familiar from the Cold War era - the American-Soviet bipolarity - the post-Cold War international power structure has moved to the other side of the spectrum, namely, increasing decentralization, the uncertainty of which has directly contributed to widespread strategic anxiety.

#### **(i) Mapping of international decentralization in international relations**

The underlying causes of the fragmentation of international power lie in the law of unbalanced development and the spread of advanced technologies, management and ideas. Accordingly, in discussing this post-Cold War structural change, Achaya and Buzan offer the following historical summary:

**First, after 1989, the imbalance of wealth and power between the center and the periphery of international relations began to be broken; second, in the 1990s, this imbalance was briefly sustained by the "apparent" unipolarity of the United States, which was soon interrupted by the rise, in varying degrees, of China, India, and others; thirdly, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the gap in wealth and power between the centre and the periphery, inherited from the imbalances and comprehensive development triggered by the modern revolution of the nineteenth century, clearly disappeared.**

**Then, at the beginning of the 21st century, the wealth and power gaps between the center and the periphery inherited from the imbalances and integrated development triggered by the modern revolution of the nineteenth century disappeared markedly. By 2017, "the West's global dominance was nearing its end. A post-Western world order is emerging in which the West is no longer the sole or dominant center of wealth, power and cultural legitimacy".**

If the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the disintegration of the bipolar pattern and the establishment of the unipolar hegemony of the United States, then the rise of non-Western countries, represented by China and India, means that a new international power structure has begun to be created, and it is developing with the tendency that the power of East and West will become closer in the short and medium term, and that the power of East will rise and West will fall in the long term. In a nutshell, this is a process of three broad historical stages, namely, the end of bipolarity and the "unipolar moment", the rise of the East and its proximity to the power of the West, and the success of the East in overtaking the West.

Of these, the international community has already witnessed two key historical phases.

First, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of major international events, such as the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, directly announced the end of the bipolar power structure of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the world entered a period of unipolar hegemony by the United States. In other words, we have moved from a highly structured bipolar world dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union to a world of unipolar hegemony by the United States, filled with new uncertainties. ②

① [Canada] Amita Achaya, [UK] Barry Buzan, *The Construction of a Global International Relations Studies: A Century of Origins and Evolution of International Relations*, Introduction, pp. 5-6.

② The so-called high degree of structuring lies in its "group identity" and logic of action, that is, under the bipolar system, the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, have not only established rival camps and "grouped" them by virtue of their superiority, but also carry out more stringent management, thus creating a unique identity and corresponding power base for each camp. As a result, each camp has a unique identity and corresponding power base, and overall centralized decision-making and collective action was one of its main features.

Secondly, the international power structure in the twenty-first century is once again undergoing historic changes.

In the first decade after the end of the Cold War, the international power structure was characterized by "one superpower and several other powers", with the United States and the West occupying the dominant position of superiority at the core. (1)

After entering 2010s, under the influence and impetus of a series of factors such as the rise of emerging powers, the international financial crisis, and the new corona epidemic, the process of international power transfer has accelerated significantly, and there have been new and significant changes in the international power pattern. New significant changes in the international power pattern, the most significant of which is the transfer of power between the East and West (especially between China and the United States) in the global context of the gradual unfolding of the original dominant position of the United States and the West is difficult to sustain. ②

The process of decentralization at the two key stages mentioned above has directly impacted on the dominant position of the United States and the West. In the short run, as Buzan argues, the extraordinary dominance that the United States has achieved since World War II has been undermined by both the revival of Europe and Japan and the rise of new economic powers.

In the longer term, modernization has spread more and more widely through the international system, and the enormous advantage that the West had over the rest of the world in the nineteenth century continues to erode.

The increasing decentralization of the power base has not only created new Powers, but has also made it increasingly difficult for any country to acquire the relative strength required for superpower status.③

Nowadays, there is a basic consensus in the international strategic community that, with the rise of emerging powers, the unipolar era once held by the United States has come to an end, and will be replaced by a multipolar world in which the U.S.-China relationship may be the most important bilateral pair. (4)

1) For a discussion of this, see Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the 21st Century*, translated by Liu Yongtao, Shanghai Century Publishing Group, 2007 edition, pp. 75-76.

② Song Dexing, "'The Era and Main Practices of China's Diplomacy under the Great Changes Era ", World Economic and Political Forum, Issue 3, 2023, p.3

3) Barry Buzan, "Power, Culture, Counterhegemony and International Society: Towards a More Regionalized World Order?", translated by Liu Weihua, World Economics and Politics, No. 11, 2010, pp. 28-29. [English] Barry Buzan, "Power, Culture, Counter-Hegemony and International Society: Towards a More Regionalized World Order?"

④ Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1990, pp. 23-33.

The reason for this lies in the persuasive assertion that, as emerging Powers gain economic power, they will be able and willing to invest resources in strategic military fields, thereby significantly increasing their military strength.

## **(ii) Reflections of the fragmentation of international power among actors**

The decentralization of international power is not only clearly mapped in great power relations, but is also evidently seen among actors, centered on the fact that the end of the Cold War not only brought about a restructuring of inter-State relations, but also a new distribution of power among the State, the market and civil society. In a globalized economy, States need to share power, including the political, social and security powers that are at the core of sovereign power, with businesses, international organizations, numerous citizens' groups and such non-governmental organizations. The steady centralization of power in the hands of the State, which began with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, is over and has been for some time.

①

### **State actors and non-state actors**

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the post-Cold War international system, the so-called "deep coalition" between sovereign state actors and non-state actors began to emerge, that is, they worked together in all aspects of the international system. ②

As a result, decision-making and management of international affairs in the era of globalization tend to be carried out in a complex system that encompasses the roles of governments, enterprises, and intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations, and it is difficult to grasp the realities and trends of the times as a whole by focusing only on the functions of the state and intergovernmental relations. (3)

To this shift in power, Jessica T. Mathews attributes a change in organizational structure: from hierarchical structures to networks, and from coercive centers to voluntary associations. The engine of this transformation has been the information technology (IT) revolution, which has empowered individuals and groups with a dramatically expanded capacity to interact, while at the same time undermining traditional authority. In this sense, these are powerful forces of globalization, and they can also have the negative effect of magnifying political and social divisions by uniting and strengthening increasingly diverse identities and interests scattered across the globe. (4)

As a result, the growth and dynamism of non-State actors has led to a new debate on the extent to which State actors can continue to exercise their sovereignty.

At least in the realm of digital networks, there are different forms of "sovereign interlocutors" that are not only heavily influenced by the state, but also reinforced by the dynamism of non-state actors (including but not limited to private companies, NGOs and even individuals). (5)

As a result, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the debate over whether national sovereignty was being eroded by the Internet became one of the most discussed topics in international politics. (6) Today, the information technology revolution is having an increasing impact on international relations, (7)

① Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 1, 1997, p. 50.

② Alvin and Heidi Toffler, "Foreword: The New Intangibles," in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, eds. *'s Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*, Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 1998, pp. xix-xx.

③ Wang Xueyu, "From Internationalization to Globalization", *World Economy and Politics*, No. 8, 2000, p. 51.

④ Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," p. 52.

⑤ Abid A. Adonis, "Critical Engagement on Digital Sovereignty in International Relations: Actor Transformation and Global Hierarchy," *Global Jurnal Politik Internasional*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2019, p. 268.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⑦ Myriam A. Dunn, "Securing the Digital Age: The Challenges of Complexity for Critical Infrastructure Protection and IR Theory," in Johan Eriksson and Giampiero Giacomello, eds. "in Johan Eriksson and Giampiero Giacomello, eds., *International Relations and Security in the Digital Age*, London and New York. Routledge, 2007, p. 89.

It is also shaping a complex pattern of power distribution, resulting in a "multi-centric subsystem" in which non-state actors are endowed with new types of power and thus have the ability to influence the position of the state as a major player in the international system. (1)

### **(iii) Decentralization of international power generates a general strategic anxiety**

As far as the international power structure is concerned, in the three decades since the end of the cold war, the process of the revitalization and rise of China, India and the countries of the global South, as an inevitable part of historical development, is profoundly altering the basic features of international power, and will inevitably give rise to a new round of competition among the major powers. On the one hand, there is the unstoppable rise of non-Western emerging powers such as China and India, and on the other hand, there is the unwillingness of the United States and the West to lose the dominant position they have long held in the international power structure. In order to maintain their hegemony, the US and the West have gone from being wary and suspicious of the emerging powers (mainly China) to wantonly containing and suppressing them, thus leading to tensions in international relations.

It is precisely because of the interaction between international power shifts and the hegemonic policies of the United States and the West that strategic competition among major powers will be one of the themes of international politics for a long period of time.

At the same time, non-State actors are growing and taking full advantage of the loosening of structural power controls in the international system, the sovereign dysfunctions and even "State failure" of certain weak States, the emergence of non-traditional security issues, and the tensions in international public opinion generated by concerns for the security of humankind as a whole, to begin to play a role in international politics and the international system in tandem with sovereign States. The international political system and the international system have begun to work together with sovereign States.



The empowerment of non-state actors by the information technology revolution has been particularly evident since the beginning of the twenty-first century, notably "the emergence and global proliferation of Internet technologies has fundamentally reshaped societies in just a few decades, and in international politics is forcing diplomats to rethink the core issues of governance, order, and international hierarchies". The information technology revolution has been a major source of inspiration for the international community. ②

These two trends of change have created not only a sense of crisis, but also an era of "strategic anxiety. (3)

1)See James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

② Elsa Hedling and Niklas Bremberg, "Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy: Toward a New Research Agenda. " *International Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2021, p. 1595.

(3) Song Dexing, "The Difficulties Specific to Grand Strategy Building in the Post-Cold War Era--An Essay on China's Grand Strategy Building", *Foreign Affairs Review*, No. 6, 2008, pp. 19-26.

First, as far as the relations among the major Powers are concerned, although it is necessary to build a predictable and stable basic framework for the relations among the major Powers, it is inevitably extraordinarily difficult because of the shift in international power. As a result, we are moving from an era of benign globalization to a new era of great power competition.

We are heading for a more divided world, a more uncertain world, with more external risks, more volatility and more turbulent events that create great uncertainty in the global economy. In other words, although great power competition and even great power wars have been a constant theme of international politics since the formation of the modern international system, the strategic risks of great power competition today are no longer comparable to those of the past, and it first and foremost affects the basic framework of great power relations.

In this regard, the impact on China-American relations has been the most pronounced. In the face of international power shifts and the rise of China, the primary goal of the United States national security strategy is not only to maintain but also to increase its power and to contain China's rise in various ways.

It is on the basis of this strategic logic that the US-China relationship has undergone a worrying and drastic change, and has become competitive in many fields, including politics,

economy, diplomacy, military, finance, science and technology, education, society and ideology.

Secondly, for sovereign States, the Great Transition is also a new situation to be reacquainted with, re-adapted to and remanaged. As Buzan puts it, "the prospect of a truly globalized distribution of power within a highly tense but interdependent system is arguably unprecedented.

Before the rise of Europe, we had a global distribution of power, but the scene was a rather weak international system with a very low level of interdependence. After the rise of Europe, we also had a tense but interdependent system, but almost all the power was concentrated in the West and Russia. The situation we are facing is therefore completely new."

In other words, facing up to change, turbulence and uncertainty will be the new normal for the international community, and will require a different kind of strategic guidance than in the past. Once again, the above-mentioned trend towards decentralization of power inevitably leads to changes in the rules of the power games and is fully reflected in the area of global governance. Today, the international system has become more complex, and the main reason for this change is the increasing number of independent international and transnational actors playing power games at multiple national, regional and global levels. (3)

① "DPM Lawrence Wong's Dialogue at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)," October 13, 2023, Newsroom, Primer Minister's Office of Singapore, . gov.sg/Newsroom?page=1&type=Dialogue. 2023, Newsroom, Primer Minister's Office of Singapore, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom?page=1&type=Dialogue>.

② [English] Barry Buzan, "Power, Culture, Counterhegemony and International Society: Towards a More Regionalized World Order?" , p. 18.

③ See Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997; Robert Jervis, "Complex Systems: The Role of Interactions," in David S. Alberts and Thomas J. Czerwinski, eds. "Complex Systems: The Role of Interactions," in David S. Alberts and Thomas J. Czerwinski, eds. *Complexity, Global Politics, and National Security*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1997, pp. 45-71.

As Prof. Shi Yinhong puts it, **"the presence and activities of a large number of non-state actors and all states in their respective functional spheres, together with their intertwined and multifarious forms of cooperation, resistance, and conflict with each**

**other, form a far broader and richer world political configuration than in past eras-the contemporary global 'complex conglomerate system', in which non-state actors play a significant role that was previously unparalleled. This has resulted in a far broader and richer world political construct than in previous eras - the contemporary global 'complex conglomerate system' - in which non-state actors play an important and previously unparalleled role. As actors 'above' and 'below' the state, their existence, proliferation, and linkage of roles greatly complicate world politics." (1)**

The above results are projected onto the strategic field, which inevitably leads to a marked weakening of the coordination function inherent in grand strategy. In discussing post-Cold War U.S. national grand strategy, Paul D. Miller has lamented that the complexity of the strategic environment has increasingly made it "impossible for a grand strategy to be a plan for coordinating the efforts of the 'whole nation,' a concept that seems unrealistic, nor should we expect a grand strategy to be a master concept that explains everything and at the same time can be summarized by a simple label. Nor should we expect grand strategy to be a master concept that explains everything, but at the same time can be summarized by a simple label. ②

## **II. Transmutation of the basic international attitude of the United States and the West and the strategic tendency towards self-interestedness**

As far as international political thought in the United States and the West is concerned, liberalism was once enshrined. The end of the Cold War has been labeled by the West as "the end of history" and "the victory of liberalism".<sup>3</sup>

But the truth is, as Alan S. Kahan has argued, that the triumph of liberalism did not last long. The events of 11 September 2001, which highlighted the challenge of extremism, the financial crisis of 2008, which many blame on neoliberalism, and the resurgence of radical nationalism have combined to fuel the growth of global populism.<sup>④</sup>

It is under the impetus of populism that the basic international attitude of the U.S. and the West has undergone a new trend of change, with self-interestedness becoming its main policy orientation and directly affecting interstate relations.

### **(i) Global spread of populism**

Although populism is not new, its rise in the 21st century, coupled with a new period of turbulent change, has directly contributed to widespread conservatism and impatience. ⑤

(1) Yinhong Shi, "Global Interaction, Interdependence and Non-State Actors", Europe, No. 5, 2001, p. 8.

② Paul D. Miller, *American Power and Liberal Order: a Conservative Internationalist Grand Strategy*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press 2016, p. xii.

③ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press, 1992, pp. 3-71; Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest*, No. 16, 1989, pp. 3-18.

④ Alan S. Kahan, *Freedom from Fear: An Incomplete History of Liberalism*, New Jersey and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2023, p. 416.

⑤ For a discussion of the reasons for the rise of populism in the West, see Sherry Berman, "The Reasons for the Rise of Populism in the West," translated by Li Yuejun, *Foreign Theoretical Dynamics*, No. 6, 2021, pp. 138-148.

An important turning point was the financial crisis of 2008, which not only dealt a severe blow to economic globalization, but also upended the entire worldview of the neoliberal market economy, namely the cult of the free market. This ideological crisis has given rise to a "populist moment" in defense of the nation-state in many countries at the heart of the capitalist system, especially in Europe and the United States. It has been observed that among the proponents of populism, there is a deep sense of loss that combines cultural and economic factors, which are often concentrated in geographic space, i.e., marginalized and declining villages, towns, industrial centers, and even countries, whose economic, cultural, and political influence has been on a downward trend, causing a certain segment of the population to be squeezed not only materially, but also more so in terms of social dignity and social status. This makes a certain part of the population not only materially squeezed, but also more squeezed in terms of social dignity and social status. ②

It is in this sense that populism is not only the result of ideological agitation, but also of turbulent changes in society and the world as a whole. Its effects are therefore not only far-reaching but also difficult to overcome in a short period of time. How to respond to the challenges posed by populism has also become a major dilemma for major countries. It has even been argued that by 2020, it seems safe to conclude that the rise of populism is the most fundamental challenge to the post-war order since the collapse of the Soviet Union. ③

After entering the 2010s, the wave of populism interacted with the financial crisis, the refugee crisis, and reverse globalization, and eventually spread globally. In the case of the U.S. and the West, as a shadow cast by Western democracy itself, "populism is not only a social context that provides a particular moment of grievance, but also the existence of two insurmountable and conflicting facets of democracy: the redemptive facet and the pragmatic facet.

The former refers to the ideals that represent popular sovereignty, equality and freedom, and equal opportunities for people to participate in politics, while the latter refers to the rule of law, representative politics, party competition, interest groups, periodic elections, etc. that make democratic politics work." ④

① Zhang Li, "The Collapsing "Liberal Consensus" Mirage: The Rise of National Populism and "Illiberalism" in the West", *Foreign Social Sciences*, No. 1, 2020, p. 110. *Foreign Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2020, p. 110.

② Alan S. Kahan, *Freedom from Fear: An Incomplete History of Liberalism*, p. 423.

③ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

④ Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy," *Political Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 1999, pp. 2-16. -16.

So it's no surprise that "whether in the U.S., the U.K., France, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Israel, or India, populists see their enemies as liberal elites." (1) Accordingly, a populist "rebellion" against the establishment and the elite has become the "new normal" in Western politics.

#### **(ii) The Impact of the Rise of Populism on the Transformation of International Political Culture**

The rise and spread of populism in the 21st century has directly led to historic changes in the domestic political ecology and culture of the major powers, including the United States, and has affected foreign philosophy and international relations in an alienating way, with a negative impact no less than that of the United States. The rise and spread of populism in the 21st century has directly led to historic changes in the domestic political ecology and culture of the major powers, including the United States, and has affected foreign philosophy and international relations in an alienating way, with a negative impact no less than the generalized strategic anxiety generated by the shift in international power. In the West, the negative effects of neo-liberal globalization are increasingly being felt, especially by the middle classes, who feel that they are facing a hopeless future. The reason for this, as one study points out, is that the neoliberal globalization of the 1980s and 1990s exposed the potential fragility of the relevant post-war consensus. Post-Cold War neoliberalism did not restore the broad-based economic dynamism of the decades after 1945, but disproportionately restored growing prosperity to certain groups in Western society, with the result that the Western middle class lost its original dynamism in overall economic life. ②

The information revolution has not only removed society from the control of elites, political parties and traditional mass media, but has also provided a platform for populists to express their views and defend their interests, especially in the United States. Many traditionally middle-class Americans ignored the conventional channels of influence controlled by establishment elites and voted for Trump, a non-standard presidential candidate who was able to express their views, fears, and concerns (but probably not interests). It is this lack of control and Trump's victory as a candidate against the establishment that reflects the near frenzy of anger that has swept through most of the American elite. (3)

- 1) Alan S. Kahan, *Freedom from Fear: An Incomplete History of Liberalism*, p. 418.
- 2) ② Peter Heather and John Rapley, *Why Empires Fall: Rome, America, and the Future of the West*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2023, p. 144.
- 3) ③ Sergei A. Karaganov and Dmitry V. Suslov, "A New World Order: A View from Russia," *Russia in Global Affairs*, October 4, 2018, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/A-new-world-orderA-view-from-Russia--19782>.

Despite the replacement of Donald Trump by Democrat Joe Biden, the United States will remain deeply polarized and torn by domestic politics, and will have to face the dual consequences of this: Domestic political struggles and international anxieties abound.

## JAPANESE POLITICS

In Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government once hoped that on the basis of stabilizing its ruling position in the country, it would actively seek to amend the constitution and carry out a diplomatic layout centered on the Indo-Pacific, but at the same time, it had to face the dilemmas of changes in the global balance of power, intensified strategic competition among countries, and challenges to the existing order. To that end, Japan emphasizes that the international community is currently facing the most severe test since the Second World War. It is no exaggeration to say that we have entered a new period of crisis in the twenty-first century. In fact, for the international community, the new danger also comes from the underlying trend of changes in party politics and political culture in Japan, the core of which is that Japan has begun to show a new policy orientation of "foreign policy first", and considers the eagerness to participate in the international power struggle as a strategic priority. (①)

Josep Borrell Fontelles, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, echoed this strategic concern, arguing that in the absence of rules and the inability of the "major players" to agree on global issues, the world order will fragment into competing blocs in the areas of security, technology and economic integration. Competing blocs. (②)

As far as non-Western powers are concerned, since the launching of the "special military operation" against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Russia has been deeply involved in direct strategic confrontation with the U.S. and the West, which involves all aspects of the political, economic, military, scientific, technological, financial, cultural, social, and even national psyche. The result is that "today Russia is no longer a creator of the international order, but a country that passively accepts its role and position, at least as Russians fear that this is how Russia will be perceived by the Great Powers". (3)

- 1) Defense of Japan 2022, Japan Ministry of Defense, 2022, [https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w\\_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022\\_Digest\\_EN.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf).
- 2) ② "EU Chief Diplomat: 'Developing Countries Are Looking for Western Alternatives'," *Reference News*, September 30, 2023 ,

<https://www.cankaoxiaoxi.com/#/detailsPage/%20/dc92241c0675482d878dbeef77bb000/1/2023-09-30%2019:27?childrenAlias=undefined>.

- 3) ③ [U.S.] Robert A. Pasztor, edited by Robert A. Pasztor, *Journey of the Century: A Hundred Years of Diplomatic Stories of the Seven Powers*, translated by Hu Liping and Yang Yunqin, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2001 edition, p. 188.

Against the backdrop of total isolation and suppression by the US and the West, the return of Russian nationalism was inevitable. In addition, since coming to power in 2014, the Modi government has introduced a series of politically courageous and reformist policies and initiatives, which have successfully contributed to India's rapid rise as an emerging economy and strengthened the domestic foundation of its solid governance, but its nationalist ideology has also aroused opposition at home and alarm in the international community. While countries of the global South, especially some middle powers, have demonstrated a degree of strategic autonomy and dynamism in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, and their collective voices have compelled the major powers to pay due attention, the absence of programmatic policy consensus and institutionalized platforms has not only largely constrained the space for strategic development, but also made the implementation of their strategies highly dependent on the broader political mobilization based on nationalism. The lack of programmatic policy consensus and institutionalized platforms has not only largely constrained their strategic space, but has also made the implementation of their strategies dependent, to a large extent, on broad political mobilization based on nationalism.

### **(iii) The strategic tendency of the United States and the West towards self-interest and its impact on relations between States**

In a sense, the rise of populism, the changes in the political ecology of the major powers, the inherent tensions in international politics and the world economy, and the internal political ruptures and disruptions in the U.S. and Western countries reflect, to a certain extent, the simultaneous emergence of certain changes in the global and regional international political and economic order. Although this change has been in the making for a long time, it has not been fully realized until the past decade or so.

In other words, the international order and its basic structures have begun to loosen.

First, the most significant change is the loosening of the international political power structure, i.e., the acceleration of the process of international power shift, which is manifested



in the end of more than five centuries of dominant dominance by the West (first Europe, then the United States of America and its allies) in the political, economic and ideological spheres.

While the U.S. and the West continue to hold a relatively favorable position in some aspects of the international system, the rise of China, India, and the global South as a whole has demonstrated a strong capacity to shape the international order.

Secondly, there is structural loosening in the world economy.

As we all know, the post-war liberal economic order was established under the leadership of the United States and expanded to the whole world after the 1990s. In the process of the expansion of the liberal economic order, the United States and the West wishfully hoped that the emerging economies would eventually change themselves in accordance with the economic and political model of the West and join the West as "apprentices", completely disregarding the diversity of the paths of development and the question of whether or not they were adapted to the conditions of their respective countries.

However, the contradictions that had been accumulating after the Cold War erupted in the international financial crisis of 2008 and fully exposed the serious shortcomings of Western neoliberalism. Following the international financial crisis of 2008, the recovery of Western economies has been weak.

Only 10 years after its peak in 1999, the West's share of global output had shrunk by a quarter, from 80 per cent to 60 per cent of global output.

Although the worst direct effects of the crisis were quickly contained as Governments and central banks injected large amounts of money into economic development, Western countries have not been able to regain their past growth rates since 2008, while growth rates in developing countries have remained high. As a result, the West's share of global GDP continues to decline. More serious than the economic problems is the fact that "the once glorious 'brand' of the West has lost its aura and now often gives the impression of a deeply divided and indecisive democracy, where development increasingly benefits only a few". " ②

1) Peter Heather and John Rapley, *Why Empires Fall: Rome, America, and the Future of the West*, p. 10.

② Ibid



Against this backdrop, the rules formulated by the Western powers cannot fully reflect the interests of the emerging powers and the countries of the global South, which, in defending their legitimate rights and interests, are firmly opposed to the United States and the West pursuing economic policies with a strong tinge of protectionism on the grounds of national security.

All of these factors combined led directly to the collapse of the liberal economic order in the U.S. and the West.

When the United States and the West realized that the rise of emerging Powers posed a challenge to their economic, financial and technological dominance, they began to adopt Cold War-type policies of decoupling, blockade and suppression such as "de-risking" and "high walls in small courtyards", which led to a more pronounced trend towards the politicization of the economy, the securitization of the economy and the populization of the economy. The trend towards politicization, securitization and populization of the economy is becoming more and more obvious.

Third, in the strategic military arena, the U.S. and the West are also in what the 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy Report calls a period of "strategic atrophy". This report states that **"the challenges to U.S. military superiority represent yet another shift in the global security environment. For decades, the United States has enjoyed undisputed or dominant advantages in every field of operation. We can usually deploy troops when we need them, assemble them where we need them, and act the way we want to. Today, there is competition in every field, including air, land, sea, space and cyberspace."**<sup>①</sup>

In this regard, the U.S. has targeted China and Russia, falsely claiming that **"the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the re-emergence of a long-term strategic rivalry with the revisionist powers"**.<sup>②</sup>

As a result of the alienation of the international political culture of the United States and the West and the reversal of their basic international attitudes, the United States, the world's largest developed country, has become the most politically dysfunctional and wealthy country.

As the world's most important bilateral relationship, the U.S.-China relationship is deteriorating faster than U.S. leaders can build a "new guardrail," and today's international institutions no longer reflect the true balance of power in the world. (3) What is even more worrying is that under the continued influence of populism, self-interested policy tendencies such as "America First" are beginning to become the new political correctness in the United States. As a result, the Trump administration is also demanding more responsibility and costs

for regional security matters that involve the interests of U.S. allies, and "close cooperation among developed countries, once largely a product of U.S. will and power, and the abandonment of the values and interests that underpinned it by the center of that power, will change almost everything. This would change almost everything." ④

① Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge, U.S.. Department of Defense, 2018, p. 3, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

② Ibid., p. 2.

③ Ian Bremmer, "Navigating the Geopolitical Recession," Speakers Spotlight, <https://www.speakers.ca/speakers/ian-bremmer/>.

④ Martin Wolf, "The West Divided and World Order," FT Chinese, January 4, 2018, <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001075749?page=2>.

The United States does this to its allies and partners, not to mention the impact and influence on other countries. In view of this, the vast number of non-Western countries, including China, have become more active in promoting the process of multipolarity in international politics and believe in the following basic judgment: **"While the shift to true multipolarity - not only economically, but also militarily and in terms of agenda-setting capacity - will be unsettling for many, post-Western multipolarity will ultimately be far more democratic than any previous order."** (1)

**"Managing competition" has become an important strategic task in U.S.-China relations.**

This is because, unlike the relative stability of US-China relations in the late Cold War, today's US-China relations can never go back to the past due to changes in the US political ecology and adjustments in the country's broader strategy, and "most likely, we will see an ever-changing managed rivalry, which requires constant adaptation to changing relations and conditions, and also implies continuous renegotiation and adjustment".<sup>176</sup> This is because, as a result, US-China relations have become more stable than before. Most likely, we will see a changing 'managed rivalry' that will require constant adaptation to changing relationships and conditions, and will mean constant renegotiation and adjustment. ②

### III. Historic Shift in the Primary Geostrategic Concerns of the United States and the New Round of the Great Strategic Tussle

This loosening of the systemic structure and changes in the domestic political ecology have made the post-cold war era an "era of strategic anxiety". Under these circumstances, not only have the major Powers of the world demonstrated a strong tendency to play strategic games with each other, but the competition over the world order is also sharply tearing the international community apart. For this reason, following the logic of geopolitics, and in the light of the changes in the balance of power, statesmen have repeatedly explained the contemporary significance of political geography in the hope of revealing the spatial logic of relations between countries and applying it to the planning of foreign strategies and relations between countries, consciously or unconsciously launching a new round of strategic contests of the century.

#### (1) The West's "Greater Europe" strategy for Eurasia and its troubles

In the case of the United States and European countries, for a long time after the cold war, their primary strategic concern was to prevent a hostile State or group of States from controlling the Eurasian continent. There is no doubt that this so-called hostile country was Russia. Because for the U.S. and Europe, "as the victor of the Cold War, the West will not be satisfied with the victory it has won, and that is its problem." (3)

1) Oliver Stuenkel, *How Emerging Powers are Remaking Global Order*, Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2016, p. 205.

② Ibid., p. 94.

③ Gregor Gysi, "Europe and the Crisis in Ukraine: Is the International Community Facing a New East-West Conflict?" *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2014, p. 78.

In order to prevent Russia from expanding westward in the future, the United States and the European Union have formulated a clear strategy for the expansion of "Greater Europe", that is, the "double eastward expansion" of the European Union and NATO.

The internal logic of this strategy is: **After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent countries of Central and Eastern Europe will be politically and geographically part of the transatlantic system through their membership in the EU and NATO. No country outside the system (including Russia) has the right to prevent eligible Central and Eastern European countries from joining the transatlantic system.** ①

Following this policy logic, since the implementation of NATO's eastern enlargement in 1999, 14 Central and Eastern European countries have joined NATO, and in May 2009, the European Union formally launched the Eastern Partnership program with six countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The U.S.-European program of "Greater Europe" is aimed not only at politically expanding and consolidating its alliances, but also at weakening Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space, which has naturally aroused Russia's hostility. For post-Cold War Russia, one of the major realities of its geopolitical environment has been the penetration of peripheral forces in Eurasia into the core, rather than the traditional influence of the core on the periphery of Eurasia. ②

Despite the fact that Russia has its own strategic program of "Greater Europe" - the Eurasian Union strategy - and certain countermeasures against the US and Europe, it has a deep sense of frustration and crisis in the strategic game with the US and Europe.

In December 2021, in a speech on Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded: **"When we engage in an equal dialog on issues of principle and in practice receive no response from the United States and NATO, when the threat to our country rises markedly, Russia has every right to take responsive measures to ensure its own security."**

The immediate result was Russia's "special military action" against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, which continues to this day. As the American grand strategic theorist Brzezinski pointed out, **"Russia's geopolitical and historical questioning of Ukraine's secessionist status collided head-on with the U.S. view that an imperial Russia could not be a democratic Russia."** ④

1) "Full text of Putin's 10,000-word speech: the West lied to us and put a knife directly to our throats," China.com, February 25, 2022, <https://news.china.com/socialgd/10000169/20220225/41454007.html>.

2) At the 2014 NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting, the NATO Secretary General stated that "third countries do not have the right of veto on NATO enlargement".

"Quoted in John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 93, No. 5, 2014, p. 10. No. 5, 2014, p. 10.

3) Song Dexing, "Geopolitics, Democratic Transition and Russian Foreign Policy," Pacific Journal, No. 12, 2004, p. 52.

"Putin's 10,000-word speech in full: the West lied to us and put a knife directly to our throats", China.org, February 25, 2022 <https://news.china.com/socialgd/10000169/20220225/41454007.html> .

④ [US] Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Great Game of Chess: American Primacy and Its Geostrategy, translated by the China Institute of International Studies, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1998 edition, p. 136.

In April 2022, American scholars wrote that "despite the strong negative attitudes toward Russia in the West, especially among small and medium-sized countries with complex historical relationships with Russia, hostility has never been the ultimate way to achieve peace. Short-term conflicts and long-term regional peace will not be realized if the West fails to unite and accommodate Russia in its long-term strategic planning." (1)

In other words, there are two main strategic problems for the United States and Europe in dealing with the Eurasian continent:

First, a strategic collision with a strategically ambitious and still powerful Russia is inevitable due to the fundamental opposition of the goals of their "Greater Europe" strategic programs. Secondly, "absorbing" the Russian issue in a receptive way in the "Greater Europe" program is a strategic necessity for the United States and Europe, but it is difficult to implement in the short and medium term, let alone ensure the success of its strategy.

It is precisely because of these two strategic obsessions that the United States has found it difficult to disengage itself completely from Eurasian affairs.

## **(2)The shift of the U.S. primary strategic concern from land to sea and the construction of a united front against China**

As a theoretical doctrine, "geopolitics is the study of the spatialization of international politics by the core powers and hegemonic states." ② Accordingly, when we consider the geopolitics of the United States as a whole since the end of the Cold War, we will find that the focus of United States geopolitics has changed in a strategically significant way, that is, from focusing on the Eurasian continent in the early years after the end of the Cold War to focusing on the "Indo-Pacific" region in the second decade of the twenty-first century, thus completing the shift from the continent to the sea.

The change in the geopolitical focus of the United States has not only shaped its strategic trend from land to sea in general, but has also intensified the strategic game between the United States and the United Front of Maritime Nations (UFMSN) led by the United States and the rising China in this trend.

In other words, addressing the so-called "China's systemic strategic challenges" and "the struggle to win a new world order" in the Indo-Pacific region has become the centerpiece of the geopolitical thinking of the United States. Unlike the Trump administration's unilateralist policy thinking, the Biden administration attaches importance to the creation of an international united front on the issue of strategic competition with China, the core of which is the U.S.-Japan-Australia-India "four-country mechanism," with optimization of the relationship with India and Japan as the main focus. (3)

1) "For a Lasting Peace, Europe Must Embrace Russia," Defense One, April 7, 2022, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/04/lasting-peace-europe-must-embrace-russia/364130/>.

② Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, "Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy." *Political Geography*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1992, p. 192.

③ Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, White House, February 11, 2022,  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

For India, the optimization of major power relations, especially with the United States, under the framework of the Indo-Pacific Strategy is the key to its renaissance as a strong nation in the context of international power shifts, and the core of this is the construction of the United States-Japan-Australia-India Quadrilateral Mechanism (QPM).

This mechanism can firstly fulfill India's cooperation with the U.S.-Western dominated international maritime system; secondly, it can fulfill India's strategic demand for effective integration of political, economic, military, diplomatic and infrastructural resources; and lastly, it can fulfill India's strategic need to counterbalance China by leveraging on the power of major powers. Of course, India also recognizes that the difficulty of this mechanism lies in striking a balance between, on the one hand, fully demonstrating its strategic value as a great power to counterbalance China, and, on the other hand, not becoming a strategic pawn of the United States and being passive.

For Japan, the inherent tension between geography and culture, and the geopolitical concepts, the idea of power, and the gambler's mentality derived from it, have always prompted Japan to eagerly participate in the international power struggle at critical periods in history, which is also the reason why Japan has been advocating the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" so loudly. This is also the reason why Japan has been advocating the "Indo-Pacific Strategy".

In fact, the strategy not only magnified the significance of the U.S.-Japan alliance, but also the significance of the counterweight to China.

In this way, Japan could realize the purpose of multi-directional joint efforts to control China, and at the same time alleviate to a certain extent the disadvantage of being alone in the front line of the struggle against China.

In this way, under the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the U.S.-Japan maritime power cooperation has a new and stronger momentum.

### **(3) Management of State relations in the land and sea directions has become a new strategic challenge.**

The geostrategic tug-of-war triggered by the aforementioned developments in Eurasia and in the Indo-Pacific oceans has made the management of great-power relations during a period of turbulent change both a strategic necessity and a strategic dilemma. It is an indisputable fact that Russia is "isolated" by the U.S. and the West. ②

That is why Russia's strategic choice to "integrate" itself into Europe and become an influential European power will be difficult to achieve for a long time, while the emerging bloc confrontation around the Ukrainian crisis is testing the development of normal state relations with Russia and Ukraine in other countries.

Second, in the aftermath of Brexit and the Ukraine crisis, the dominance of the Franco-German axis in Europe has been strengthened, firstly, by its relative ability to respond to crises, secondly, by the greater policy influence of the two countries, and thirdly, by their obvious role in mediating hotspot issues. At the same time, however, the New Europe is making its voice heard, and EU solidarity remains a real challenge.

Third, the dominant position of the United States as the leader of the Western world has been strengthened to a certain extent by the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Ukraine crisis. Although the Biden administration has emphasized that "U.S. diplomacy is critical, and U.S. resolve is critical," the question of whether to focus on solving the Eurasian continent's problems or to focus on "Indo-Pacific" affairs is also a test of U.S. strategic wisdom. ③

(1) Song Dexing and Yin Shi, "Geographic Attributes, Cultural Characteristics, and Japan's Grand Strategy Making: An Analysis Focusing on Geographic and Cultural Dimensions", World Economy and Politics, No. 8, 2007, pp. 56-64.

② "Remarks by President Biden in State of the Union Address," White House, March 2, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/02/remarks-by-president-biden-in-state-of-the-union-address/>.

③ "Remarks by President Biden in State of the Union Address," White House, March 2, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/02/remarks-by-president-biden-in-state-of-the-union-address/>.

Fourthly, in the post-cold-war era, one of the features of international politics has been the full realization of the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean and India's unique strategic position.

More importantly, India has begun to influence events on land and at sea simultaneously, benefiting from its rising national power and geopolitical land-sea interdependence.

Fifth, as the strategic integration of the major powers under the Indo-Pacific architecture unfolds, the trilateral relationship between China, the United States and India, and its strategic maneuvering, have taken on global significance. For a long time to come, the United States and India will inevitably integrate the struggle over China's maritime power into the broader international political and power struggle, and at the same time into the relatively specific military struggle over China's maritime power, thus magnifying the strategic significance of the struggle over maritime power at the global level, and to a certain extent reducing the geopolitical value of the Eurasian landmass.

In short, the strategic competition among the major powers has determined the complex relations among the major powers in the land and sea directions, and how to manage the complex and diversified relations among the major powers has also become a major practical problem that the international community has to face.

#### **IV. Some thoughts on China's national grand strategy**

In this new period of turbulent change, the proliferation of unresolved issues, the growth of uncontrolled and irresponsible actors, the absence of rules and norms in emerging strategic areas, the fragmentation of international public opinion and the divergence of perceptions mean an increase in the number of uncertain and unpredictable factors.

In this regard, the United States advocates global polarization and ideological division, and describes China and Russia in its national security strategy and government documents as "'revisionist' powers committed to undermining the existing international order and opposing the U.S. and the West" in order to strategically bind its allies and partners to win the so-called "second global confrontation". The aim is to strategically tie up allies and partners in order to win the so-called "second global confrontation". This has made it significantly more difficult for China to create a national grand strategy. For China, the creation of a national grand strategy has a lot to do with the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the century-long rise of China as a modernized and powerful nation, and its importance cannot be overstated.

##### **(1) We Should Attach great importance to the domestic foundations on which the success of the national grand strategy depends**

As far as the creation and implementation of a national grand strategy is concerned, its success depends on the realization of the set strategic objectives, which to a large extent depends on a solid domestic foundation. In other words, the investment of strategic resources, the deployment of strategic forces, the formation of strategic consensus, the optimization of strategic decisions, and the improvement of strategic literacy are all internal factors no less significant than the strategic game with external forces. For this reason, the report of the CPC's 20th Party Congress states that it is necessary to "adhere to the national interest as the most important thing, prioritize domestic politics, and maintain strategic stability". ① To insist on the primacy of national interests, the core is to clarify the level of national interests, especially where the core interests lie.

In other words, it is necessary to explain clearly what are China's core interests and important interests; not only is it necessary to systematically explain and analyze national interests, but it is also necessary to reach a broad consensus and unanimous recognition of core and important interests, so as to prevent the abstract use of the concept of national interests, and in particular to avoid the tendency to use instrumental explanations of national interests, which is in serious contradiction with the rationality of strategy. ②

The insistence on prioritizing domestic politics is determined by the essential attributes of the grand strategy.

As the British theorist of grand strategy, Liddell Hart, puts it, grand strategy consists in regulating and directing all the resources of a state or states in order to achieve the political ends of war; and it is this end that is determined by the basic policy, that is, the policy of the



state. (3) The political ends of the war, as well as the political ends of the state, are determined by the basic policy, that is, by the policy of the state. (4)

For this reason, both the regulation and guidance of strategic resource inputs and the definition of strategic objectives depend on domestic politics. For China, adhering to the priority of domestic politics means committing to the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, so that it will have a more solid material foundation, a better institutional guarantee, a more vigorous spirit of struggle, and a stronger confidence in victory.

Therefore, when thinking about China's strategy for the century, it is necessary to bear in mind that the source of strength of the national grand strategy lies in China itself. In this sense, the domestic dimension of the national grand strategy takes precedence over the international dimension, not only because of China's basic national conditions, but also as a result of the logic of the grand strategy itself. ⑤

The key to maintaining strategic stability is to uphold the strategic credo of realism, i.e., to make the world realize that China as a great power is not just a conceptual and literal one, but is indeed a strategic reality that is moving forward in accordance with the basic strategic plan by taking strategic initiatives, albeit unpopular ones (or even sanctioned by the international community). (6)

Today, it is still important to maintain strategic stability by "placing the development of the country and the nation at the base of one's own strength", not falling into traps and snares, and steadily advancing the work in accordance with the established strategic goals and strategic deployment. (7)

1) Xi Jinping, "Holding High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Striving in Unity for the Comprehensive Construction of a Modernized Socialist State - Report at the Twentieth National Congress of the Communist Party of China," p. 4.

② Song Dexing, "The Construction of the Grand Strategy Theory for China's Rise", International Perspectives, No. 6, 2013, p. 46.

(3) Liddell Hart, Theory of Strategy: Indirect Route Strategy, translated by the Academy of Military Science of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Warrior Press, 1981 edition, p. 439.

④ See Xi Jinping, "Holding High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Striving in Unity for the Comprehensive Construction of a Modernized Socialist Country-Report at the Twentieth National Congress of the Communist Party of China," pp. 15-16.

⑤ Song Dexing, "Strategic Realism: A Choice for China's Grand Strategy", World Economy and Politics, No. 9, 2012, p. 9.

(6) Ibid., pp. 4-17.

7) "Xi Jinping Attends Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference and Delivers Important Speech," Xinhua, November 29, 2014 [http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-11/29/c\\_1113457723.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-11/29/c_1113457723.htm).

## **(2) Attaching great importance to the issue of optimization of the external environment in the context of the national grand strategy**

In terms of national strategic decision-making, a country's ability to steadily achieve its strategic goals depends to a large extent on how politicians perceive the international environment in which they live and how they engage in international political competition. As mentioned earlier, today's world is more pluralistic, complex, dynamic and volatile, and this external environment makes it more difficult for the country to steadily realize its broad strategic goals. The underlying reason for greater pluralism is the decentralization of international power.

One result is the emergence of multiple centers of force, multiple modes of behavior, multiple values, and multidimensional strategic games; the other result is the full release of the dynamic roles of the international system, sovereign states, supranational actors, and non-state actors, and the mapping of interrelationships and strategic effects in multiple directions at the same time.

This represents both an opportunity and a challenge for the State; an opportunity in terms of increased options, and a challenge in terms of an inevitable decrease in overall control. Further complicating matters is the growing magnification of the contradiction between division and integration.

In other words, in terms of traditional and non-traditional security, traditional and emerging strategic areas, traditional and emerging issues, and traditional and new force building, policymakers should not only adhere to dualistic thinking but also emphasize cross-domain integration; not only adhere to scientific planning but also make good use of empirical judgments; and not only pursue unidimensional goals but also achieve overall optimization. In addition, the involvement of the "trinity" of state activists, experts (including but not limited to diplomacy, military, international relations, international law, etc.) and scientists (including but not limited to engineering, technology, biology, medicine, etc.) in strategic decision-making is also imperative.

The main reason for this increased dynamism is the apparent loosening of the highly structured control of power at the systemic level, which makes the international system of the twenty-first century different from the multipolar, bipolar, or unipolar systems of the past, and makes it possible for the international system of the future to encompass a "multiplicity of orders" and thus form a complex network of "inter-order relationships". The future international system may include "multiple orders" and thus form a complex network of "inter-order relationships". The future international system may include "multiple orders" and thus form a complex network of "inter-order relationships".

The term "multiple orders" is used because the main tensions are likely to arise within and between orders, rather than between multiple sovereign states. According to Barry Buzan, state societies are "second-order societies" because their members are not individuals, but

collectives. It can be inferred that the emerging international system also belongs to the "second-order system", since its members are not individual States, but a collective of States. See Flockhart Trine, "The Coming Multi-Order World," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2016, p. 23.

In such a network, the dynamism of States is significantly enhanced, as they are able to find areas where their strengths and roles can be brought to bear. The reason for the increased volatility is the inevitable trend towards the decentralization of international power, the alienation of international political culture under the influence of populism, and the century-long rivalry resulting from the historic change in the geostrategic priorities of the major Powers. This, coupled with the breakdown of international rules and norms, the growth of irresponsible actors, the overlapping of old and new conflicts and the far-reaching impact of the epidemic of the century, has led to a weak recovery of the world economy, the recurrence of localized conflicts and turmoil, and the exacerbation of global problems. ①

The systematic changes in the external environment described above have made it significantly more difficult to avoid strategic risk-taking in the current era. The reason is that the "era of strategic anxiety" and radical populism have prevented the emergence of such key strategic qualities as prudence, restraint and strategic patience, and countries are eager to achieve strategic breakthroughs by using their strengths to achieve superiority, without fully considering the huge risks behind the use of strengths. ② That is why strategic prudence, as an important strategic quality of a great power, needs to be vigorously adhered to. ③ Moreover, the optimization of the international strategic environment should be considered an important aspect of strategic prudence, because the importance of the great Powers lies not in the fact that they steer the course, but rather in the fact that they provide a stable and secure framework within which States can navigate with ease. ④ In this way, the national grand strategy may have less external resistance and more strategic followers, and its chances of success will be greatly increased.

### **(3) Key aspects to be grasped in the management of national strategies during periods of turbulence and change**

In this new period of turbulence and change, China's national strategic planning will have to be carried out in the midst of a great change that has not occurred in a hundred years, and will face great uncertainties.

It will have to be carried out in the midst of strategic competition among great powers, facing many strong rivals; and it will have to be carried out in the midst of the tide of the times, where all kinds of values coexist, facing the collision of ideological concepts. ⑤

① Xi Jinping, "Holding High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Striving in Unity for the Comprehensive Construction of a Modernized Socialist Country - Report at the Twentieth National Congress of the Communist Party of China", p. 26.

② Paul W. Schroeder, "The Risks of Victory: An Historian's Provocation," *National Interest*, No. 66, Winter 2001/02, pp. 22-36.

③ "Civic Prudence" is an important concept put forward by historian Edward Gibbon when he summarized the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire.

See [English] C. R. Porter, ed. New Cambridge History of the Modern World (1): The Renaissance (1493-1520), translated by the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China Social Science Press, 1999 edition, p. 22.

④ Robert A. Pastor, ed., Journey to the Century: A Century of Diplomacy for the Seven Powers, p. 374.

⑤ Song Dexing, "Zhongguo daixiao zhengfei zhiqiang yu zhongxue" (China's Diplomacy in a Time of Great Changes and Major Practices), p. 12.

Therefore, as an important mission, the operationalization of the national grand strategy needs to grasp the following key aspects in particular.

**Firstly, to enhance strategic thinking:** The new era is both a great era and an era of "strategic anxiety". On the one hand, international crisis events continue to occur, and on the other hand, the country is not psychologically prepared to cope with major crisis situations in general, as a result of which the sense of crisis and frustration grows at the same time. ① As Brzezinski put it, "We are in the midst of a global political awakening, and as a result, political thought will presumably grow in importance as either a source of spiritual cohesion or a source of chaos, as the basis for political consensus or as the bane of conflict." ② Therefore, strengthening the leadership of strategic thinking and enhancing the capacity for strategic discernment are not only crucial to the national grand strategy, but also a long way to go. It is in this sense that the times call for great strategists.

**Secondly, we should objectively and rationally grasp the relationship between China and the world:**

For the world, a rising China, as a key variable in international politics, has played and will continue to play a role in national relations, the international system and the world order; for China, the safeguarding and expansion of its national sovereignty, security and development interests have become inseparable from the world trend. This is because China's rise as a historical necessity has reached an unprecedented new height, China's reform and opening up as a historical necessity has developed to an unprecedented new height, China's power to go out as a historical necessity has reached an unprecedented new height, and China's interaction with the world as a historical necessity has reached an unprecedented new height. The above historical necessity determines that it is not expedient for China to take the path of peaceful development, and that China will always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order. China will always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of international order.

**Third, we should master the art of using power:** The use of power has been an ongoing international political reality for millennia, and therefore vigilant political leaders must continually reckon with power and carefully identify and grasp the essential attributes of the main instruments of power.

This is because, as means to achieve strategic goals, they have different instrumental values and different functions in the process of strategy creation and implementation, so only by grasping their special attributes can their respective strategic effectiveness be realized. (6)

① Song Dexing, "Strategic Realism - An Alternative to China's Grand Strategy," p. 12.

② [U.S.] Zbigniew Brzezinski: The Great Derangement and the Great Disruption, translated by Pan Jiabin and Liu Ruixiang, China Social Science Publishing House, 1995 edition, preface, p. 2.

③ Song Dexing, "China's Diplomacy in a Time of Great Changes and Major Practices," pp. 7-8.

④ See "Xi Jinping's Speech at the Kolbe Foundation in Germany," People's Daily Online, March 30, 2014, <https://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0330/c64094-24773108.html>.

⑤ See Xi Jinping, "Speech at the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Legal Seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations", Xinhua, October 25, 2021,, [http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2021-10/25/c\\_1127992532.htm](http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2021-10/25/c_1127992532.htm).

(6) Song Dexing, "The Use of Power in International Relations - An Analysis Focusing on the Chinese Side", Diplomatic Review, No. 6, 2010, p. 68.

In the 21st century, the international community is particularly sensitive to and concerned about the accumulation and utilization of China's national power, because China has given itself a new identity - a "stronger" China. Although this new identity attribute is based on the logic of both historical cognition and realistic development, and is an organic unity of objectivity and subjectivity, it has inevitably made the growth of China's strength and the use of its power the focus of attention of the international community and world public opinion, thus increasing the difficulty of regulating and utilizing the means of grand strategy. In view of this, mastering the art of power utilization is not only a necessary part of the strategic management of power, but also a key element of a nation's "way to win," which centers on maintaining a proper balance between strategic necessity and moderation. The core is to maintain a proper balance between strategic necessity and moderation.

**Joseph S. Nye, Jr., a leading American international political scientist, once noted that a successful strategy must include four basic elements:**

The first is the restoration of the foundations of domestic economic power, in particular the enhancement of international competitiveness and the transformation of power resources into effective influence.

The second is to maintain a geopolitical balance of power.

Third is the management of an open international economy, which helps to maintain comparative advantages on a global scale without jeopardizing long-term domestic interests.

The fourth is the promotion of multilateral institutions and regimes to organize collective action among countries to address transnational issues and prevent overreaching. ②  
Obviously, all these apply to China.

Therefore, when thinking about and creating a national grand strategy, it is necessary to pay attention to both the domestic and international dimensions, that is to say, it is necessary to carry both the domestic and international situations in one's mind, and to regard the creation of a grand strategy as a process that needs to be constantly adjusted and optimized in order to ensure its inherent dynamic equilibrium. (3)

1) Song Dexing, "The Use of Power in International Relations - An Analysis Focusing on the Chinese Side", pp. 69-71.

② Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1990, p. 242.

③ See Song Dexing, "The Theoretical Construction of Grand Strategy for China's Rise," pp. 27-46.