**Russia-Ukraine crisis and China-Russia relations and Global transformation, by Feng Shaolei**

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 **BRICS and G20’s emerging countries which were once powerful powers in history have become key feature of the current international power structure, and their economic development contrasts with the relative decline of the West. What is particularly noteworthy is that from the conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008, to the Crimean crisis in 2014, to the large-scale military conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, in the face of this series of long-term conflicts, the vast majority of emerging and developing countries have adopted a non-aligned and neutral diplomatic line. They are unwilling to follow the European and American allies and confront Russia; at the same time, they are also clearly opposed to war and advocate the peaceful and political resolution of conflicts.**

 Overlooking the current development of world politics from the perspective of big history and long periods of time often allows people to form a deeper understanding of the significance of current events. We are experiencing the global transformation process at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. This is a critical turning point in a grand historical process that has lasted for more than two centuries and more than 500 years. The current Russia-Ukraine crisis caused by the complex environment over the years, as well as the contemporary relations between major powers including China and Russia, are all based on the overall background of global transformation.

 The Russia-Ukraine crisis, as the largest **regional conflict** since the end of the Cold War and which has lasted for two years, is like a "catalyst", "oscillator" and "reflector", which has profoundly reacted to global transformation, shaping the future form of foreign strategies and relations between major powers including China and Russia in a comprehensive, systematic and endogenous way. In this process, the complex interaction of relations between major powers such as **China, Russia, the United States and Europe** not only directly affects the prospects of the Russia-Ukraine crisis but is also bound to profoundly influence the connotation and direction of global transformation. It can be seen that we are facing an unprecedented moment of coexistence of challenges and constructions, which are intertwined with the past and the present, and intertwined with the inside and the outside. It needs to be explored and explained with profound theoretical research and creative thinking.

 This article attempts to explore the relationship between the following three ongoing international phenomena: first, global transformation as a long historical process and its contemporary implications; second, the interaction between global transformation and the Russia-Ukraine crisis since the turn of the century; and third, Sino-Russian cooperation under transformation and crisis. I hope that this article's preliminary exploration can provide new ideas for understanding global transformation.

 **Chapter 1. The debate on the issue of “cyclical evolution of international order” and its implications**

 Among all the studies on global transformation, the future direction of the international order is the focus of researchers. In the past half century, there have been systematic and groundbreaking studies in the fields of international political economics, sociology and history, which have also triggered thought-provoking controversies. It is necessary to briefly review the relevant explorations over the years. Generally speaking, there are at least three types of international studies that focus on the historical changes in the international order.

 The first category of research is represented by Dr. Henry Kissinger, a world historian and international strategist with incomparable rich diplomatic practice experience. In his view, after the Thirty Years' War in Europe, the Westphalian system that emerged in 1648 changed the traditional view of human society's order based solely on "imperial unity" or "religious unity". "The Westphalian concept takes diversity as a starting point and regards countries as objective realities, thereby attracting countries with different situations to jointly explore order. By the middle of the 20th century, this international system had covered all continents of the earth and remains the skeleton of the international order today." [1] Kissinger explained why Europe was able to make "diversity a typical feature of the world order" in this way: "This is not to say that European monarchs were more able to resist the temptation of glory brought by conquest than monarchs of other civilizations, or were more persistent in an abstract ideal of diversity. European monarchs simply lacked the power to impose their will on others. Over time, diversity became a typical feature of the world order." [2]

 In Kissinger's narrative system, although the subsequent evolution of the international order has not consciously achieved the "restraint" under the "pluralism" background of the Westphalian system, the practice of the construction of the international order from the Vienna Treaty in 1814 to the Yalta Agreement in 1945 until the end of the Cold War shows that the pluralistic and multipolar structure has indeed repeatedly avoided total war by maintaining balance. For example, although the Vienna system was not so "democratic" and was a "great power coordination" between the monarchical or semi-monarchical Eurasian powers, it avoided the outbreak of a war on a European scale and generally maintained what Friedrich Engels called "a century of peace." Although the Yalta system experienced half a century of terrible Cold War, it still maintained the demarcation, confrontation, coexistence and coexistence between major powers with different social systems such as the United States and the Soviet Union. Even after the end of the Cold War, although the United States once dominated the world, after the trend of turning to multipolarity and pluralism at the turn of the century, people from all over the world still maintained their expectations for peaceful development on this basis.

 In short, Kissinger began by recognizing and respecting the actual state of international "multipolarity" and "pluralism", and through the application of a carefully crafted "balance of power" strategy, based on the concept of "the unity of legitimacy and power", Kissinger sought to achieve peaceful coexistence among various aspirations of "different types of world order" in an international environment where "there has never been a truly global 'world order'". It is in this sense that Niall Ferguson believes that Kissinger is not only a realist but also an idealist. Although this statement is inconsistent with the meaning of traditional international political theory, this insight makes sense. [3]

 The second category is the group of researchers who are regarded by the international academic community as engaged in the "modern world system" or "the evolution cycle of the world order", including Fernand Braudel, a representative figure of the French Annales School, and Giovanni Arrighi, a representative scholar of the Italian "world system theory". Although there are disputes within this group, I believe that this group should include Immanuel Wallerstein, the author of the four-volume "Modern World System" and an American left-wing historical sociologist.

 The core view of this school of research is that at key moments in the many changes of the international order in modern times, the rise of a capitalist system with Western hegemonic countries at its core has occurred. The result of the "Thirty Years' War" in Europe in the 17th century was not only what Kissinger called "diversification within Europe," but also the rise of the Holland/Dutch Republic. The result of the Napoleonic Wars after the French Revolution was not only the coexistence of the great powers of the Vienna system, but also the rise of the British Empire. The Second World War created a UN Security Council with five major powers coexisting, but the United States not only achieved a more dominant world hegemony than the Soviet Union at the time, but also remained the most powerful hegemonic country today, even as the world moved towards multipolarity and diversity after the end of the Cold War. [4] In other words, the normal state under the change of world order is the coexistence of multipolarity and international power centers.

 In the preface to the first volume of the 2011 English edition of The Modern World-System, Wallerstein made a self-confession: **"I had a bad idea at the time that by studying how the 'emerging' states 'developed' in the 16th century, we might be able to better understand the development trajectory of the 'emerging' states in the 20th century. This was a bad idea because it assumed that all states would follow a similar evolutionary path..."** [5]

 Although Wallerstein later revised his old original idea, Wallerstein insisted on observing this issue from the perspective of the "world system" rather than from the perspective of a single country. Wallerstein criticized Max Weber's sociological theory, especially the view that "the Protestant ethic gave rise to capitalism". Wallerstein said: **"The values ​​involved occurred with the ongoing economic transformation, not before it. I proposed that only by examining the various countries in their relationship to each other can we understand why some countries become leaders in terms of productivity and wealth accumulation**." [6]

At the same time, Wallerstein recognized Stephen Mennell's evaluation of the "world system" research. Mennell pointed out that this was "actually a major effort to historically refute the eternal 'law of comparative advantage' revealed by David Ricardo. It shows how small the degree of inequality in the interdependence between various societies and economies was at first, but how it was exacerbated over time, resulting in the huge differences between what is euphemistically called the 'North' and the 'South' today." In addition, despite their differences, Wallerstein and Braudel both believed that "... they did not provide evidence to prove the autonomy of capitalist economic development or that it could be completely separated from the state and politics. On the contrary, they proved that state affairs and capitalist affairs are inextricably linked and are merely two aspects or parts of the same historical development process."[7]

It can be seen that the views of Wallerstein and the French Annales School have caused controversy because they are no longer limited to the issue of the evolution and replacement of the world system. They have systematically and intrinsically questioned and challenged the most basic part of Western political economy theory. It is worth noting that Giovanni Arrighi inherited Braudel's views and more systematically emphasized that every hegemony transfer will also experience the following phenomena:

 First, a total war - such as the Thirty Years' War that accompanied the Westphalian system, the Napoleonic Wars that led to the Vienna system, and the Second World War that gave rise to the Yalta system.

 Second, from financial expansion to decline - here, it means that it is not like the traditional view that the entire capitalist system has developed from industrial capitalism, commercial capitalism, and then to financial capitalism over hundreds of years. In fact, from the Dutch Republic, the British Empire, to the American hegemony, every hegemony cycle has experienced the rise and fall of industrial capitalism, commercial capitalism, and financial capitalism to varying degrees.

 Third, a powerful state based on territory - **"The traditional view is that capitalism and market economy are more or less the same thing; state power is opposed to both. Braudel (author's note: this should also include Wallerstein) believes that capitalism, from its emergence to its expansion, is completely dependent on state power and constitutes the opposite of the market economy"** [8].

In fact, the Annales School's idea that "market economy is not equal to capitalism" has deeply influenced China's reform and opening up process. Giovanni Arrighi concluded that every change in the international order is the product of the "trinity" of the above-mentioned "total war", "finance from expansion to decline", and "powerful states based on territory". There is no doubt that Arrighi's historical summary of the changes in the world order points directly to the current global transformation.

 It is particularly noteworthy that in 2009, in the afterword to his 1999 book The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Time, Arrighi pointed out that **"while the possibility of a Western-led global empire remains, today, compared with 15 years ago, a world market society centered in East Asia seems more likely to be the result of the current global economic and political transformation... China has begun to replace the United States as the main driver of commercial and economic expansion in East Asia and beyond"** [9].

 **German historian Jürgen Osterhammel**

 The third view is represented by German historian Jürgen Osterhammel, an authoritative historian who has challenged the above-mentioned theories of the “world system” and “cycle of world order change”.

In the preface to the Chinese edition of his three-volume masterpiece The Evolution of the World: A History of the Nineteenth Century, published in 2010, he wrote: **“I decided to write a history composed of countless tiny connections because, compared with works that expound grand theories, this type of historical writing is relatively rare.”**[10]

The “grand theory” type of historical works that Osterhammel was not willing to associate with were first and foremost the works of Immanuel Wallerstein. In his later collection of essays, Global History, Osterhammel said: **"The last confrontation between world history and a sociology open to historiography took place in the 1970s and 1980s under the call of 'world-system theory'. The founder of world-system theory was Emmanuel Wallerstein, an American Africa expert and development theorist, who was one of the world's top social scientists at the time. Wallerstein also gained a high reputation in history through his dialogue with the great French historian Braudel. Because Wallerstein's theory was relatively mechanical and tied to specific terminology, only a few historians accepted the orthodox form defended by Wallerstein and his followers."** [11]

Osterhammer's attitude towards Braudel was more implicit. Osterhammel once wrote that Braudel **"in his history of capitalism and material life from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, literally brought the whole world into view, as if it were his duty to do so. Braudel carefully avoided getting drawn into debates about world history, and his subject of interest was not the major shifts in technology, trade structures, or worldviews during this time frame, but the way societies and the networks within them operated. It is surprising that Braudel's panoramic perspective has not been imitated by most people.**"[12]

 Although Osterhammer’s expression was euphemistic, his position is clear.

First, Osterhammer explicitly stated that his important book “abandoned the regional division based on the standard of nation, civilization or land space”. Obviously, this is different from the viewpoint of Braudel and Wallerstein that the nation, civilization, regional space and capitalist development must be observed and analyzed together.

Second, Osterhammer admitted that Osterhammer “emphasized the importance of colonialism and imperialism”. [13]

Obviously, this is obviously different from the position of the Annales School and Wallerstein in criticizing colonialism.

Third, from a methodological point of view, Osterhammer does not advocate over-emphasizing that historical science should have a predictive function. For example, Arrighi once believed that East Asia after the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries might become the world’s dominant force replacing Europe and the United States, while Osterhammer wrote in his new work, A Global History, more obscurely: **“There is nothing to predict: Asia’s future is its past.”** [14]

In his view, Asia’s past history of “stagnation” is bound to indicate that it will be difficult for it to make progress in the future. In addition, although Osterhammer did not completely reject the existence of temporal and spatial unity in the development of modern world history, and even systematically demonstrated some of the important and common nodes in world history that Osterhammer believed, the difference between him and the Annales School and Wallerstein was that Osterhammer did not advocate viewing the world historical process as an interconnected and globally unified process. Osterhammer also did not believe that such a grand, complex, diverse and even repetitive world historical process would be governed by a certain "law" (Braudel emphasized this very much) of innate destiny. On the contrary, Osterhammer paid more attention to details, local, diversity, contingency, asynchrony, and multiple lines, rather than the macroscopic whole, uniform process or single-line development of world history.

 If I simply summarize the various different views on the "cyclical evolution of the international order" mentioned above, and pay more attention to their mutual complementation and mutual correction, then I will propose the following preliminary judgment:

 First, the world historical process is not a unilinear evolution, but full of contingency, diversity, and twists and turns. However, in different eras, fields, and levels, there are indeed historical trends and characteristics of overall connection, dialectical unity, and spiral evolution. The cyclical evolution of the international order is not fabricated, but a complex process that is not external to human initiative, a combination of subjective and objective factors, and constantly inspired by history.

 Second, since modern times, the evolution of the international order has two basic characteristics: on the one hand, each change of the international order has moved towards multipolarity and diversity, but there are also power centers in a global sense. The coexistence of "multipolarity" and "power centers" is the key to understanding the evolution of the international order. On the other hand, each change of the international order is almost the product of the "trinity" of "total war", "the expansion and decline of the financial field", and "the emergence of dominant countries". This provides a very important reference for observing the evolution of the current international order.

 Third, the evolution and replacement of the international order at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries may see a "transition." That is, it is not as if only Western civilization countries can dominate the world as in the past, but there has been an unprecedented dramatic change in which power centers outside the Western civilization circle may become candidates for replacement under certain conditions.

 Fourth, it is important to think systematically and thoughtfully about future changes from a broader, more diverse, and multi-line perspective, and from repeated thinking in more fields, more cases, and more disciplinary knowledge, rather than indulging in so-called "predictions" that lack basis and are subjective and arbitrary. When thinking about the complex issues of the replacement of the international order, we should avoid "taking the lead" when the conditions are not yet mature or the cost is too high and be highly vigilant against the "absence" of the influence of the original leading countries in key areas in the international chaos. The high uncertainty of the global transformation process stipulates the necessity of this attitude.

 **Chapter II. The Interaction between Contemporary Global Transformation and the Russia-Ukraine Conflict**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is a "mirror" of global transformation since the turn of the century. This crisis reflects the various problems facing global transformation at this critical moment. Through a thorough analysis of the crisis, it is necessary to comprehensively and objectively evaluate the role and impact of this conflict on the current global transformation, objectively identify the authenticity and correctness of the psychological reflection and narrative system in the interaction between transformation and crisis, deeply explore the deep structural changes in the global transformation process at this stage, and comprehensively sort out the key phenomenon in crisis and transformation - the actual trend of the globalization process. Only in this way can we respond to the challenges in the transformation and truly find a way out for large-scale conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The author believes that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has a profound impact on contemporary global transformation in at least the following four aspects.

 **1. Conflict accelerates the pace of global transformation, but also gives rise to a “decisive battle mentality”**

 The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has greatly accelerated the pace of global transformation. It not only ruthlessly revealed various contradictions, but also catalyzed the surge of a "decisive battle mentality" among countries. From a vertical linear perspective, Professor Barry Buzan of the London School of Economics and Political Science proposed that from the colonization of the West in the 19th century, the United States’ dominance in world affairs after World War II, and even its hegemony over the world after the Cold War, to the emergence of a historical trend of “decentralization” at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, a long-term global transformation process has gradually taken shape. [15]

 From a horizontal system structure perspective, as Andrei Tsygankov, a Russian scholar living in the United States, said, global transformation refers to the systemic complex of three structural processes: changes in the international order; evolution of the domestic system; and the foreign strategy and international relations that connect the two. [16]

 Judging from the motivations of the conflicting parties, it goes without saying that the Russia-Ukraine conflict affects the "global transformation" from both "vertical" and "horizontal" perspectives. In terms of domestic transformation, Russia and Ukraine represent two different social transformations. Russia emphasizes the local, while Ukraine focuses on Europe and the United States. The former sticks to local autonomy, while the latter rushes to the "democratic camp." Different paths lead to different plans. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which originated from the difference in internal system choices, is bound to further strengthen the construction of internal systems as the basis for resolving external conflicts.

 From a regional perspective, in 2014, I wrote an article in European Studies, arguing that although the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union are both promoting integration in line with market principles and pay attention to internal equality to varying degrees, their competition for Ukraine reflects the defects of their exclusive regional construction, which has not only become the cause of the Crimean crisis, but will also inevitably affect the formation of Europe's future geo-economic, political, and security structures. [17]

 From a global perspective, Russia wants to end the unipolar world, but the United States and Europe are trying their best to maintain the dominance of the West. As President Putin said at the Valdai Forum on October 5, 2023, **"Special military operations have nothing to do with territorial occupation, or even geopolitics (according to my understanding, the "geopolitics" here should refer to NATO's eastward expansion), but are about the reconstruction of the international order**." [18]

However, for the Western world, the issue of the replacement of the international order is not only about interests, but also about glory. Obama once stated at the West Point graduation ceremony in May 2014:

**"Our military is invincible,... Our economic vitality is still the world's first,... We are the axis of the alliance that no country has ever matched. ... The United States has always been an irreplaceable country, this was true in the last century and will be true in the next century."** [19]

From this standpoint, it is inevitable that the United States and Europe will restart their alliance and strongly counter Russia. Under the two opposites that concern the overall situation of the international order, the two sides eventually broke out into military conflict in the most vulnerable security area of ​​international construction - the relationship between Russia and NATO with Ukraine as the focus. Judging from the consequences, this conflict has revealed the structural drawbacks of the existing international system - the existing functions of various global and regional organizations are still unable to prevent large-scale crises like the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Therefore, reforms, upgrades and strengthening in related fields are imperative. Otherwise, the world will not be at peace.

 At the same time, this conflict has prompted people to consider more comprehensively: how to mediate the relationship between local reform and development and the external world as an environment. For example, a country has the right to independently deal with its internal affairs and external development issues, but how to coordinate with the external international environment?

Another example is that a country has the right to choose its own external alliances. However, can the principle of independence and autonomy in handling its own affairs coexist with the objective need to maintain moderate spatial isolation and buffering between major powers emphasized by geopolitics?

For another example, how can the two basic principles of international law, the internationally recognized principle of the integrity of a country's territorial sovereignty and the respect for the self-determination and autonomy of a country's internal people, be unified?

When there was a conflict and dispute between the above principles in the Kosovo crisis and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, how did people mediate? In short, how should the reform, development, independence and autonomy principles emphasized in the early stage of global transformation be applied to different occasions after some changes in the international environment, so as to reduce external resistance and avoid international conflicts? Obviously, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has pointed out these problems that have actually existed in the global transformation for a long time but have not been solved in a very sharp way.

 Objectively speaking, whether from the perspective of vertical linearity or horizontal system structure, whether from the perspective of grand goals or from the material basis and ideological and psychological conditions that are actually needed to promote global transformation, contemporary global transformation should be a protracted and relatively long historical process. However, after the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, a regional conflict that has been brewing for many years, escalated into a large-scale military conflict in 2022, the pace of global transformation, which was originally recognized as a "long process", has been rapidly accelerated. Various hidden contradictions were ruthlessly exposed during the conflict, especially the life-and-death game on the battlefield, which was coupled with the already widespread radical emotions, catalyzing a broader spectrum of "decisive battle mentality."

 The motivations for the above-mentioned "decisive battle mentality" come from all aspects: driven by patriotic enthusiasm, driven by ideology, encouraged by modern internet social media, inspired by strategic policies, and driven by party interests. As for the parties to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, even after Ukraine's "Spring Counterattack" in 2023 failed and turned to "strategic defense", there are still a considerable number of people who call for a complete victory over Russia on the battlefield, regardless of the huge cost of national sacrifice.

As for Russia, under the huge pressure of collective suppression from the West, senior elites have repeatedly stated that they will not give up the use of tactical nuclear weapons to save the crisis. It was not until Putin made it clear that it was not a matter of life and death and nuclear weapons needed to be used that this public opinion gradually withdrew. Even so, Russia's original intention to decisively counter NATO's eastward expansion has not changed.

 Even if this cannot be accomplished in one battle, it is expected to be greatly accelerated and the US hegemony will end soon. What is worth paying attention to is the performance of the United States and Europe. After the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, the decision-making elites in Europe and the United States were not completely unrestrained. However, at least in the absence of accurate prediction and careful planning, the crisis was allowed to escalate step by step, regardless of the huge unexpected risks that might occur. This has long been criticized by European and American public opinion. Among them, the first is the consideration of domestic electoral politics, which greatly overwhelmed the objective and calm assessment of the risk of war. Europe is particularly worth mentioning. When in the US political party disputes forced the suspension of aid to Ukraine in early 2024, the EU stepped forward and passed a 54 billion euro aid plan to Ukraine in one fell swoop.

 **EU's move is to seek strategic autonomy**

 The EU's move is not only to seek strategic autonomy, but also to a considerable extent, with the so-called "changing times" as an excuse, aiming to highlight its political ambition to take on regional and even global leadership through support for Ukraine, which has long been prepared but has not yet been fulfilled. To this end, it completely ignored the economic deterioration and the people's struggle and took risks contrary to the calmness and rationality of the European decision-making elite. A 2023 commentary in The Economist had already foreseen this trend, pointing out that "Europe, not the United States, is now Ukraine's biggest supporter."[20] This rare situation shows that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the fuel for this "decisive battle mentality."

 **2. Conflict promotes “re-transformation”, while ideological narratives distort this process**

 The second important impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is that its emergence has profoundly affected the "re-transformation" process of contemporary global transformation, but exclusive ideological narratives are rampant, causing negative interference to global public opinion, and the positive connotation of "re-transformation" has been seriously distorted. The global transformation since the end of the Cold War has undergone a profound “re-transformation” at the turn of the century.

 From the experience of my generation, "transformation" means reform. The transition from a highly centralized political and economic system to a system reform based on the market, democracy, and rule of law was the main goal of almost all planned economies after the end of the Cold War, and learning from the West was its main content. At the same time, we also studied on how the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries reflected on their traditional systems and promoted reforms. This was a major origin of the formation of the academic field of Russian and Eurasian studies in China more than 40 years ago.

 At the turn of the century, in the second half of the 1990s and the first few years of the 21st century, reforms were still being promoted, but the environment was changing. At that time, Russia encountered NATO's eastward expansion, while China encountered the Taiwan Strait crisis; and we faced the East Asian financial crisis formed by the International Monetary Fund and Western hot money from 1997 to 1998 actually occurred simultaneously in Russia; and in 1999, the United States bombed Russia's ally Yugoslavia, and the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was also attacked by American missiles. In short, the external pressure at the turn of the century pushed China and Russia to approach each other involuntarily.

 In 2001, I was doing a visiting research at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in the United States. David Calleo, then director of the European Department of the school and an authoritative scholar on European issues in the United States, asked me in a conversation: "You always talk about 'transformation', so does the United States itself need 'transformation'?" In fact, it was not only David Calleo, but also a group of American and European scholars who launched a call for a reform of Western society itself, including a lot of profound and serious academic criticism. I suddenly realized that transformation is actually a global process covering the West, including the United States itself.

 After the September 11th incident, and especially after the Iraq War in 2003, Western society’s self-criticism has also deepened. But at the same time, the neoconservative political elites in the United States have gone the other way, advocating the promotion of ideology, returning to traditional Western values, and promoting democracy around the world with tough measures to safeguard the geopolitical interests of the United States. The expansion of American hegemony under the dominance of neoconservatism is somewhat similar to Leon Trotsky’s advocacy of “permanent revolution”.

In fact, although the two are poles apart, they do have some connections in the history of thought. Shortly after the September 11th incident, waves of “color revolutions” emerged in Eurasia. If we say that in 1994, under the premise of harmonious relations between Russia and the West, Ukraine could still sign the “Budapest Agreement” to transfer strategic nuclear weapons to Moscow. But after several rounds of “color revolutions” at the beginning of the new century, the original intention of “transition countries” to learn about the market and democracy suffered a serious setback. Although countries like Russia and Ukraine are both in the process of “reform and transformation”, they have already parted ways under the complex international environment. There is no doubt that the "color revolution" is a major background for promoting the "re-transformation" of global transformation.

 I remember clearly that between 2003 and 2004, Putin pushed for strengthening the power of the central government in Russia, taking back the autonomy that had been given to local governments, and arrested Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the president of Russia's largest private company, Yugus, which controlled a large number of national strategic resources.

 At about the same time, China established the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council in 2003 to plan the development of state-owned enterprises at home and abroad, and at the same time, a major economic debate on "state advance and private retreat" emerged in China. Obviously, this is a change compared to the overall atmosphere of "learning from the West" in the 1980s and 1990s. China and Russia have seen a "re-transformation" that emphasizes autonomy combined with open reform. Against the backdrop of this trend, Ukraine, located at the westernmost end of the junction of Eurasian and Eastern and Western civilizations, has gradually moved closer to Europe and the United States.

 In the 2020s, as the Russian-Ukrainian crisis continued to worsen, the Cold War ideology of "democracy versus authoritarianism" revived and became the main tool for rebuilding and expanding the US-European military alliance in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. After 2022, as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict escalated into a large-scale military confrontation, the public opinion dominated by European and American discourse further spread the narrative of "democracy versus authoritarianism", which became a necessary narrative for the countries involved in the conflict to mobilize their own countries and confront Russia and made the ideological Cold War confrontation seem to return to the mainstream.

 To be honest, European and American countries have accumulated far more experience in democratic practice than non-Western countries over the centuries, and non-Western countries still have a long way to go to learn and improve their democratic systems. However, the specific democratic practices of European and American countries do not mean that they can be copied to non-Western countries. In the words of Francis Fukuyama, the national systems of Denmark and the United Kingdom "are not something that any country can imitate." [21]

 Although the construction of democracy in non-Western countries does require certain external conditions, this does not mean that democracy can be forcibly imported from the outside. Whether it is democracy or authoritarianism, when the "sacred goals" of different internal governance are used as geopolitical tools for external expansion, the result is bound to be bloody conflicts and brutal wars. On the one hand, in times of international turmoil with frequent crises, the phenomenon of nationalism reversal and the re-strengthening of national and government power is common. How to avoid triggering and intensifying international disputes is not only a matter of strategic and policy control, but also requires further improvement in theoretical interpretation. On the other hand, the chaos within the contemporary European and American systems has seriously distorted the essence and image of "democracy" and "freedom" as the common value goals of mankind. Under such circumstances, it is really absurd to continue to forcibly implement "democracy export" as usual.

 In principle, I do not agree with the view of John Mearsheimer, an American surrealist theorist, that “great power disputes will inevitably lead to war.” However, in his view, during the period of the United States’ unipolar hegemony at the end of the Cold War, the internal transformation of this country under the guidance of liberal principles could still be promoted, and the trend of multipolar development could be tolerated. However, once the trend of multipolarization among emerging powers rises strongly, the tension between local autonomy and the “universality” of liberalism will emerge, and liberal principles will inevitably give way to the national interests and geopolitical interests of Europe and the United States. To some extent, Mearsheimer’s sharp words that liberalism will be defeated if it encounters nationalism and geopolitics reveal the crux of the problem only from one side. [22]

 In short, the "re-transformation" trend in the global transformation process at the turn of the century has been completely distorted into a narrative of ideological confrontation in the context of the life-and-death struggle between Russia and Ukraine. This should undoubtedly be objectively and rationally analyzed. On the other hand, it should also be used as an opportunity to fight back by strengthening and deepening the practical and effective practice of democracy.

 **3. The conflict highlights “deep structural changes”, but the international balance of power remains mixed and intertwined.**

 Another important role of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is that it reveals the "trend of deep structural change" in the global transformation. Overall, the international power structure is still intertwined in confrontation, and there are advances and retreats in offense and defense. However, the emergence of many new phenomena has prompted researchers to adopt new concepts or expand the connotation of old concepts to interpret this. This article attempts to use keywords such as "semi-order", "non-selection of sides", "big triangle", and "shifting focus" to express several deep structural changes that have been revealed through the Russia-Ukraine conflict and have a significant impact.

 **1. "Semi-Order"**

 The first thing that the Russia-Ukraine crisis reveals is the "semi-order" state in the international system since the end of the Cold War. A key difference between this "semi-order" situation and the changes in the international order brought about by world wars and revolutions is that the changes in the international order after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War took place under relatively peaceful conditions. Under conditions of war and revolution, as Joseph Stalin said, wherever the tanks go, you can establish your own system there. But the transformation of the international order under peaceful conditions is different.

 On the one hand, the existing international system and mechanism have undergone a lot of changes, even blanks and gray areas. For example, the most critical UN Security Council mechanism is still in effect, but due to the different opinions of the parties involved in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the function of the Security Council has been greatly weakened. International mechanisms that once played a role in coordination and management, such as the OSCE and the Minsk Agreement, have been marginalized one by one.

 On the other hand, the "semi-order" state is different from the anarchic state where there is no international institutional mechanism at all: the international institutional mechanism framework still exists; the communication channels between major powers are not blocked; and there are a lot of precedents for international crisis management. Recent information shows that all parties in the international community are eagerly looking forward to the restoration of the core functions of key international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB).

The latest progress of Zhang Wencai, Vice President of the Export-Import Bank of China, as the Managing Director and Chief Administrative Officer of the World Bank, first proves that promoting the institutionalization and reform of international relations is in line with the wishes of most countries. At the same time, it also shows that the current "semi-order" state actually shows that the operating structure of the international organization system is in a "semi-crisis" state, which not only needs to be changed urgently, but also depends on human efforts, and there is a deep potential for promoting reform.

 **2. “Not taking sides”**

 Many of the emerging powers represented by the BRICS countries are ancient civilizations with rich historical traditions. Almost all BRICS and G20’s emerging countries were once powerful powers in history. The group gathering of emerging powers in the "second rise" under the great international changes is a key feature of the current international power structure, and contrasts with the relative decline of the West. [23] Emerging countries have not only promoted economic growth with unprecedented momentum, but also demonstrated long-term development potential. What is particularly noteworthy is that from the conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008, to the Crimean crisis in 2014, to the large-scale military conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, in the face of this series of long-term conflicts, the vast majority of emerging and developing countries have adopted a non-aligned and non-partisan neutral diplomatic line.

**They are unwilling to follow the European and American allies and confront Russia; at the same time, they are also clearly opposed to war and advocate the peaceful and political resolution of conflicts. As pointed out in the article of The Economist, in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as far as the entire international community is concerned, countries accounting for more than two-thirds of the world's population advocate non-partisanship and non-sanctions.**

Firstly, it refers to the BRICS countries and the Shanghai Coop Organization countries, most of the ASEAN countries, and other emerging economies and developing countries. In fact, as far as the BRICS countries are concerned, it is not just this time that they do not choose sides and do not impose sanctions. For example, India, as early as 1956, condemned the US and Britain for sending troops to the Suez Canal, but did not condemn the Soviet Union's sending troops to Hungary in October 1956. This is an international history phenomenon worthy of attention. In short, emerging and developing countries have a long history of pursuing peaceful neutrality and non-alignment. However, compared with the past, their performance in the Russia-Ukraine crisis especially shows the huge potential for rapid maturity in the political and security fields.

 **3. "Big Triangle"**

 From the perspective of the process since the turn of the century, closely related to the above changes, the triangular and triangular relationships among major powers have also shown an objective trend of shifting from the traditional balance of power among major powers to reliance on southern countries. [24]

 As conflicts in Eurasia intensified, European countries hoped to exert influence through the trilateral interaction between Russia, the United States and Europe. For example, in 2008, the United States tried to get Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO in order to suppress Russia. Germany and France stepped in to stop it. Later, during the "Five-Day War" between Russia and Georgia, France stepped in to mediate, aiming to use the trilateral interaction between the United States, Europe and Russia to restrain the confrontation between the United States and Russia and maintain stability in Europe.

 On the other hand, since the turn of the century, almost every new U.S. government has been obsessed with gaining an advantage in the U.S.-Russia-China triangle by allying with Russia to contain China. [25]

 However, the situation changed suddenly after 2016. In 2017, the United States openly regarded both China and Russia as competitors, indicating that the U.S.-China-Russia triangle United States had originally expected would not work as expected. At the same time, the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict showed that Europe's efforts to seek a balance through the trilateral interaction between Europe, the United States and Russia have also failed. Against this background, the once active Russia-U.S.-Europe trilateral relationship and the U.S.-China-Russia triangle, both of which had become relatively stagnant after the Cold War,

 In contrast, the Global South has become the focus of all parties. In other words, between the opposing parties involved in major conflicts, the countries of the South have increasingly become an important third party. This is a new phenomenon in the field of international trilateral relations after the Russia-Ukraine conflict. There are two structural trends here: one is that when the two parties to the Russia-Ukraine conflict are in a state of confrontation, China opposed war and respected sovereignty and territorial integrity; at the same time, given the "complex historical context" of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China advocated ensuring mutual security and opposed the pursuit of unilateral absolute security. In this set of trilateral structures, China stands together with the vast majority of emerging and developing countries.

 The Russian-Ukrainian conflict presents an objective trend of structural changes in the trilateral relationship, which is that the trilateral relationship between Russia, the United States and Europe, which used to work, has turned to a new trilateral relationship structure after repeated setbacks: the Western camp led by the United States supports Ukraine in its confrontation with Russia, while the "global South" including China takes a strategic position of not choosing sides, not forming alliances, and advocates peaceful autonomy. There is a very clear three-legged tripod trend among the three parties. Under this general background, the other trilateral relationships, such as the combination of a)China, the United States and Russia; b) China, the United States and Russia; c) China, the United States and Europe, etc., also directly or indirectly affect the changes in the above-mentioned key trilateral relationship structure.

 4. “Change focus”

 The “shift of focus” here means that, consistent with the trend of structural changes in the above-mentioned trilateral relationship, the focus of contemporary conflicts and crises is shifting from east to west, which is exactly the opposite of the shift of the economic and political center of gravity to the east.

In recent years, while the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has continued, the Palestine-Israel conflict has broken out, and the situation in the Taiwan Strait has become tense, which have become the three major conflict hotspots in the world. In the past, Western powers maintained a strategic balance in Europe, and maintained the balance by creating and promoting wars and conflicts in Asia.

 Just like in the 1950s and 1960s, Western powers maintained a balance in Europe, but launched the Korean War and the Vietnam War in Asia, and maintained the balance in Europe by extending the game in Asia.

But the situation is different now. This time, people saw that, for example, although the Democratic Progressive Party won the election in Taiwan, not only did the United States clearly state that its policy of opposing "Taiwan independence" remained unchanged, but the Chinese mainland responded to this with as restrained an attitude as possible while expressing its principled position of firmly opposing "Taiwan independence". This indicates that although there is still a highly sensitive situation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, it is not completely impossible to prevent accidental shootings or even larger risks in the next stage. An obvious contrast shown here is that, contrary to the past, Asia has temporarily maintained a peaceful state, but the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Eurasia and the Palestine-Israel conflict in the Middle East are difficult to stop and the war continues. This new pattern reveals to a considerable extent that, on the one hand, the Sino-US relations after the San Francisco Summit may prevent the two countries from confrontational conflicts for a period of time. Even if the Sino-US relations are temporarily stable, it is beneficial to the security and development of the whole Asia. On the other hand, as the public opinion and people's will at the current stage, even if there are wars and chaos in other regions, Asia, as the main support for the current and future world economic growth, cannot be in chaos.

 In short, Asia has remained relatively stable, while Eurasia and the Middle East continue to be turbulent. In terms of regional structure comparison, this shows that the focus of conflict has shifted. And in terms of the deeper power comparison, this is a sign of a shift in weight.

 **Chapter** **4. Conflicts promote the transition to “plural globalization”, but the threat of decoupling and chain disruption remains**

 In his book Lectures on Global History, Jurgen Osterhammer states in the first article that it is an unrealistic assumption to believe that globalization has a uniform and clear definition. Based on this, Osterhammer points out in his explanation of the changes in the concept of "globalization" since the 1990s that by 2016, contrary to the previous process of globalization, "fragmentation and deglobalization trends, the decline of democracy and the emergence of strong nationalism in many countries in the world" were prevalent.

Therefore, **Osterhammer proposes that "the word globalization should often be understood as a plural term"[26]**.

 If, in Osterhammer's view, the understanding of globalization in 2016 marked the beginning of a new stage, then 2022, when the large-scale Russian-Ukrainian conflict broke out four or five years after the book was written, should be regarded as a special moment worthy of attention in the process of the transformation of the singular "globalization" into a "plural" globalization process.

 **The phenomenon of “plural globalization,” greatly intensified by the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, manifests itself in several ways.**

 First, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the subsequent harsh Western sanctions against Russia have caused a large-scale interruption of traditional industrial chains, logistics chains, and financial chains in Eurasia and even on a larger scale. At the same time, Russian-Ukrainian conflict has also given rise to the creation of new industrial forms, the development of new trade channels, the adoption of new payment methods, and the exploration of new regional cooperation directions. On the one hand, the reorganization of the geo-economic pattern, which is based on the development and opening up of Far Eastern Siberia and marked by the eastward shift of Russia's entire economy, is not limited to Russia and China, but includes the vast areas of the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

 The formation of such a grand new geo-economic pattern is different from the traditional globalization approach of transcending national sovereignty. Such a grand new geo-economic pattern will emphasize sovereignty more and stick to local interests.

 This means that the above-mentioned vast regions and countries (Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) will promote regional and global cooperation in a situation that is more complex and diverse than the previous globalization process, which requires both opening up to the outside world and maintaining sovereignty.

 This will be a more difficult process of trying to reform. On the other hand, when globalization encounters challenges and has to change its course, will Russia, which bears the brunt, retreat to the "fortress" and isolate itself from exchanges, or do everything possible to continue to maintain contact with the world market? Judging from the situation at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in June 2023, even under such difficult conditions at the time, Putin was unwilling to reverse history. Putin publicly announced that Putin would never follow the old path of the former Soviet Union's closed-door policy, but advocated continued opening up.

In the 1990s, when I was doing cooperative research at the Moscow Institute of Experts, I had the opportunity to observe the working status of Elvira Nabiullina, an outstanding young expert at the time. Now as the governor of the Central Bank of Russia, Elvira Nabiullina first insists on maintaining the operation of the Russian economy in a market economy, and Elvira Nabiullina’s biggest supporter is Russian President Putin. This can be seen as a manifestation of "plural globalization" against the backdrop of the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, although this is only an expression of the position of a major power and has not yet been truly realized on a global scale.

 Second, after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the energy crisis that spread throughout Europe and the food crisis that it brought to developing countries caused great panic. While people were still fresh in their memories of the "Trump phenomenon" that appeared in 2016 and were still in shock, this new wave of turmoil brought a huge impact to the world market where the epidemic has not yet ended.

 Since then, with the shift of the focus of Russia's energy supply from Europe to Asia and the strengthening of cooperation with the Middle East, especially the announcement by the Russian side that energy transactions would be settled in rubles instead of dollars and euros, it seems that a new international trade settlement method based on energy commodities as anchors is exploring the future pattern and development path in an unexpected way. Compared with the advent of the Euro currency at the turn of the century and the challenge that the yen once attempted to launch to the international financial system centered on the US dollar, the changes in the international monetary pattern brought about by the Russia-Ukraine conflict are far from being fully prepared and relatively limited in scale, but they have brought imaginative expectations for future international monetary cooperation among emerging countries.

 After energy, the improvement in food trade and self-sufficiency among major developing countries, especially the BRICS countries, since the Russian-Ukrainian crisis has also attracted attention. To what extent will it lead to a corresponding expansion of the scale of non-US dollar currency settlement? Against the backdrop of the US dollar's continued strong position, the formation of a multi-currency international cooperation network can be seen as another aspect of the gradual formation of the **"plural globalization" phenomenon.**

 Third, as a key part of the "singular globalization" process, the global emission reduction and decarbonization process requires countries to reduce the proportion of traditional energy use. However, as a major energy exporter, Russia relies on oil and gas trade to withstand the sanctions. This situation will have a profound impact on Russia's emission reduction process. In addition, European countries have even re-used traditional energy, including coal, during the crisis, and the United States, as the world's largest LNG exporter, relies on LNG exports to support stable economic growth, which is not a short-term demand. It can be seen that it is the Russia-Ukraine conflict, including the comprehensive sanctions imposed by the West on Russia, that has promoted the formation of another layer of tension between the "singular globalization" of emission reduction and decarbonization and the reverse "plural globalization" of continuing to maintain the traditional energy economy.

 In short, the transition from "singular globalization" to "plural globalization" is a very complex process. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict reveals not only the opposition between "singular globalization" under the "Washington Consensus" and "plural globalization" under the trend of multipolarization, but also that "plural globalization" is not the opposite of "singular globalization". Some are just the restart and configuration combination of certain regions and fields, and there is a complex interaction between the two. In addition, the problem is that the isolation and decoupling brought about by hostility will inevitably continue to exist for a long time. Lavrov said that "American-style globalization" may have ended, and a new system that does not rely on Western superiority is being established.

 **CONCLUSİONS:**

 Based on the above changes, my preliminary judgment is:

 First, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has fallen into a stalemate, reflecting that the global power structure related to it has entered a stage of overall stalemate, with both sides attacking and defending but also being stuck together, and each side has its own strengths but it is difficult to tell who is better.

 In such a stalemate, there are at least two issues that deserve attention: On the one hand, the concept of "community of human civilization" clearly declares that the current era is no longer an era where one ideology replaces another ideology, one civilization replaces another civilization. The 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party also advocated "peaceful coexistence", but failed to avoid knocking shoes at the United Nations General Assembly, nor did it avoid the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the final analysis, it is still because of the failure to avoid "mutual burial consciousness". Therefore, if we really base ourselves on the concept of "community of human destiny" and put it into practice, although we will inevitably experience inevitable and even very cruel games, and will inevitably face waves of shocks, after a long period of hard work, there will eventually be opportunities and possibilities for "a bright future after a dark period". On the other hand, the correct strategic line during the Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression has left profound historical inspirations to this day. The older generation of experts and scholars often mentioned that many of their contemporaries read Mao Zedong's "On Protracted War" and understood that it was impossible to take the route of quick victory at that time, let alone be a capitulationist, so they resolutely joined the war of resistance with the determination to fight a protracted war. Times have changed, but the principles of On Protracted War remain our important theoretical and strategic basis as we face unprecedented challenges and need to make major choices among a number of possible prospects.

 Second, ending the conflict with Russia and Ukraine with the same logic as the Korean War is one of the possible prospects.

 A year and a half ago, I tried to observe the relationship between war and domestic institutional transformation in Russia: On the one hand, from the perspective of the history of about two hundred years, if every world war (the European anti-Napoleonic war in 1812, World War I, and World War II) always ended with victory for Russia and the Soviet Union (the Soviet Union's emergence in World War I can also be regarded as a major success), and then the national strength grew and the international status rose, then the other side of this is that in the past two hundred years, Russia has almost always suffered defeat in wars with its neighbors, and has aroused major reforms in Russia. For example, the failure of the Crimean War in the 1850s led to major changes that lasted for many years, such as the reform of serfdom in 1861; the failure of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 led to the constitutional reform in 1905; the failure of the Polish-Soviet War in 1920 indirectly led to the advent of the New Economic Policy in 1921; the Afghan War in 1979 led to Gorbachev's reforms, and so on. At that time, I tried to make a preliminary logical deduction of the relationship between war and domestic transformation. But the situation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is more complicated. In fact, there is no large-scale international war in the history of war that can be simply compared. The first problem is that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is both a peripheral conflict and accompanied by a clear background of comprehensive confrontation. Therefore, the outcome of this conflict may be mixed. The second problem is that although Russia has reversed its decline on the battlefield, will the entire NATO it faces be willing to publicly accept this fact? The current EU continues to support Ukraine on a large scale to persist in confrontation, and the United States will also release a new overall plan for aid to Ukraine this spring, which means that the war may continue in 2024 until the US election. The third problem is that 2024 is not only an election year for almost all the parties involved, but also a number of countries with related interests will face elections. These factors will inevitably affect the development trajectory of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in various ways, and various possibilities will appear. Even if the conflict ends in a similar way to the Korean War, that is, Russia and Ukraine (actually Russia and NATO) stop the war and put the final outcome on hold for a long time, then will it lead to a development trend in Russian society that is different from the above two situations? Will it happen that after the conflict, the country will neither increase its national strength and status, nor will it trigger major domestic liberalization reforms under the background of failure, but will continue the current system for a relatively long time, with the so-called "authoritarian line" with different connotations, while trying its best to maintain stability and security, and will neither return to the highly centralized former Soviet state nor move towards Western democracy; it will not be completely closed, and will even pursue openness and cooperation under very difficult conditions, but it will certainly not return to the "laissez-faire free economy" of the 1990s? Perhaps, it will fluctuate between the above two possibilities for a relatively long time. Of course, it should be noted that the ending of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the way of the Korean War is only a hypothesis based on logical deduction, and more options under the influence of various unexpected factors are not ruled out, including the possibility that the conflict will expand rapidly and lose control.

 Third, the Russia-Ukraine conflict also highlights China's wisdom and foresight in choosing a diplomatic line of non-alignment, non-taking sides, fairness and justice, and peaceful development.

 After the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, a much-discussed question is whether China can only fight back by forming alliances and confronting the current frenzy of forming cliques and factions. The other side of the question is whether, in view of the tremendous achievements of the 40 years of reform and opening up, and the huge and profound economic, technological, social, and cultural ties between China and Europe and the United States that continue to this day, can we return to the era of "hiding one's strength and biding one's time" at the end of the 20th century? Judging from the performance of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, China has neither easily moved towards alliance confrontation nor "hiding one's strength and biding one's time" again. China is trying to take a strategic route that is both independent and non-aligned, but adheres to principles, and maximizes the connection between its will and international peace, security, justice, and stability. Compared with rushing to form alliances and confronting, or simply advocating a return to the 1980s, choosing the third route mentioned above will certainly be tested by more complex environments, and the operation will also be more difficult because it is more delicate and subtle. However, looking at the long term, given China's current international status and the responsibilities it should bear, and given China's current capabilities, this is a more appropriate historical choice. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Russo-Japanese War broke out on Chinese territory. At that time, China also took a "neutral" stance in diplomacy, but the corrupt Qing government was completely unable to keep the powerful enemy out of the country and could only tolerate the powerful neighbors fighting on its own land. On the eve of the end of World War II, the Kuomintang government also considered adopting a "neutral diplomacy". Chiang Kai-shek wrote in a diary in January 1945: "If I can be independent and neutral, then they (author's note: referring to the Soviet Union) will respect my neutral position." [27]

 However, Chiang Kai-shek's idea of ​​a neutral diplomatic line was simply impossible to achieve when the country was weak and the powers intervened. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, after summarizing the lessons learned from the "leaning to one side" period and going through the test of the extraordinary period of the "Cultural Revolution", after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Party, with the advancement of reform and opening up and the continuous strengthening of national strength, China's diplomacy has truly embarked on a broad path of independence, fairness, justice, non-alignment, and peaceful development. The independent and non-aligned policy is not equivalent to simple "neutrality". Moreover, this may seem like a diplomatic route, but in fact, it is also a question of path selection in the complex process of global transformation. China strives to ensure its own rights and interests and advocate peace among all nations by ensuring security, promoting development, upholding justice, and achieving win-win cooperation.

 **3. China-Russia Cooperation and the Future Vision of the “Asian Mediterranean”**

 The South China Sea, known as the "Asian Mediterranean", plays a significant role in international strategy. Sino-Russian cooperation needs to demonstrate its strong and profound penetration in key areas and core regions of global transformation. "Asia-Mediterranean" is such an important concept that can reflect the height and foresight of the current Sino-Russian cooperation.

 At the end of the 20th century, French economist Francois Gipouloux proposed the concept of "Mediterranean Asia". Gipouloux argued that the developing Western Pacific region - specifically, the vast coastal countries and regions of the Western Pacific from the Sea of ​​Japan to Malacca - could, like the European Mediterranean, not only promote cooperation among countries through long-term economic prosperity, but also contribute to mankind in various fields such as politics, society, and civilization construction. Professor Gipouloux was invited to give a lecture at East China Normal University at that time, and his monograph entitled "Mediterranean Asia" has also been translated into Chinese and published. [28]

 Faced with the challenge of forming cliques in the Asia-Pacific region (QUAD, the four countries in the Indo-Pacific, the Five Eyes Alliance, and NATO's attempt to get involved in Asia), without giving up on strengthening national defense to resist foreign enemies, we must also give play to the huge advantages of geo-economics, resist confrontation with as much cooperation as possible, win the hearts of the people with win-win results, and focus on inclusive and open regional construction to find new breakthroughs to get rid of the current crisis. Gipouloux's concept of "Mediterranean Asia" has such a function: it is close to the problems faced by international transformation, connects the strategic needs of all parties, and is in line with the comprehensive interests of global and regional multilateral development. Of course, to achieve this goal, all parties will make extremely arduous and long-term efforts.

 The objective basis for promoting the concept of "Asian Mediterranean" lies in the following:

 Firstly, after the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Russia's strategic arrangement of shifting its economic center of gravity to the east has provided new factors and very important opportunities for the regionalization of the Asia-Pacific region.

At the same time, the long-term growth trend of the Asian region is optimistic for the whole world. In the long term, Asia will need energy, food, environment, agricultural products, clean water and other bulk materials, as well as a vast market environment to be developed, and Russia is one of the most convenient sources. There are huge opportunities and space for complementary cooperation between Russia and Western Pacific countries.

 Second, while the US and China are in a tense standoff, there is also a vast middle regions. This middle regions include most countries that have to balance security and economy. In recent years, China's diplomatic advancement in the Asia-Pacific region shows that if it is properly managed, China it may also gain opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation with countries that have been dragged into the chariot by the United States. The important initiative recently proposed by Foreign Minister Wang Yi to promote the negotiations on the China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Area can be regarded as a landmark arrangement. This shows that in order to curb the trend of some countries in the Asia-Pacific region joining the United States to contain China, it is necessary to respond from the perspective of politics and regional security. At the same time, it is also necessary to use economic leverage to solve the problem. Even objectively speaking, the stability of Sino-US relations also has expectations and needs for such a new regional construction.

 Third, not only does cooperation between Russia and the Asia-Pacific region need to be strengthened, but also, with the change of climate conditions, the opening of the North Arctic route makes it possible for the Western Pacific region to conduct exchanges with Europe through the northern passage of the Eurasian continent. In the past ten years, the Russian Research Center where I work has participated in a multinational research project called "The Last Frontier" with scholars from Russia, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and later Germany. The continued participation in this research project for many years has made me feel the great enthusiasm of scholars and experts from various countries for connecting the economies of Europe and the Western Pacific region through the Northern Sea Route. Although the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has complicated the international situation, the shift of Russia's economy to the east, the development and opening of Far Eastern Siberia, and the gradual opening of the Northern Sea Route have provided a rare strategic opportunity to promote Eurasian cooperation in the long run.

 Fourth, a very important change after 2021 is the regional cooperation framework established by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This regional bloc, led by ASEAN and actively assisted by China in its cooperation, has accumulated many years of experience in developing cooperative relations with northern partners. Russia has also been developing in-depth relations with ASEAN countries for several years. It has made remarkable progress in terms of economy, politics, science and technology, and defense. In the current low tide of globalization, there is a need for regional construction such as the "Asia-Mediterranean" to re-stimulate the momentum of globalization from the perspective of regional cooperation. In particular, in the context of the emergence of cooperation mechanisms in different regions, the concept of the "Asia-Mediterranean" will help advance the process of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). In other words, if an effective economic cooperation zone can be built between Russia in the north and ASEAN in the south, it goes without saying that for China, which is located between the north and the south, this "Asia-Mediterranean" will be able to improve the surrounding geopolitical environment to a considerable extent, and there will be a greater foundation and space for further promoting multi-faceted cooperation. Therefore, the "Asian Mediterranean" is an alternative long-term approach for us to re-evaluate the strategic position of cooperation with Russia based on the overall situation of global transformation and Eurasian strategy.

 Fifth, in the future, China's internal and external economic cycles will gradually evolve from the past 40 years dominated by the European and American markets to striving to maintain market share in Europe and the United States while looking for strategic fulcrums in the continental Eurasia and the Western Pacific to balance and supplement the lack of European and American markets. The original intention of the "Belt and Road" initiative is to find a strategic breakthrough by operating westward in the Eurasian continent. Over the years, although the "Belt and Road" initiative has been promoted in other aspects, there is still room for Russia to significantly improve its connection with the Belt and Road. China and Russia can not only develop in the depths of the Eurasian continent, but also play an important role in promoting development cooperation between Russia and countries in the Western Pacific region. The further economic development and security of China's eastern coastal areas also need "Asian Mediterranean" cooperation to provide opportunities. Whether it is the acquisition of the Tumen River estuary, whether it is the development from the Bohai Bay to the entire coastal space of China, or whether it is the stability of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, the participation of Russian factors will be an inevitable trend. From a formal point of view, this is starting from the economy; but with the development of this situation, there may be security opportunities and stability space for the entire region.

 As far as the development of China's eastern coastal areas is concerned, the Tumen River region in the northeast already has a good foundation for cooperation with Russia. The overall launch of the "Asian Mediterranean" will inevitably be conducive to the improvement of port conditions in China's northeast region. With the promotion and deployment of Sino-Russian industrial joint development in the eastern coastal areas, the environment for the construction of large deep-water ports in China's eastern coastal areas, especially in the eastern coastal areas of Jiangsu province, is also rapidly improving. As a must-pass place for the north-south sea channel, this is a good infrastructure condition that has begun to take shape for the future cooperation and development between Russia and the southern part of the Western Pacific. As early as 2007, Vladivostok was already a domestic trade cargo transit port in Heilongjiang. Fortunately, in May 2023, the General Administration of Customs agreed to Jilin Province to add the Russian Vladivostok Port as a domestic trade cargo transit port, which is an important progress in Sino-Russian cooperation.

 Although the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has not yet ceased, the original cooperation ties in the Asia-Pacific region are facing severe challenges of decoupling and breaking the chain, and the exploration of the cooperation intentions and potentials of the above-mentioned parties is far from easy, but a long and difficult development process. However, the future regional construction with the medium- and long-term goal of "Asian Mediterranean" will not only bring new opportunities for China-Russia cooperation, but also, through the stable development of the Western Pacific region, it is expected to provide vitality and space for the entire trans-Pacific region and even the entire global transformation process.

Notes:

1. Henry Kissinger, World Order, translated by Hu Liping, Lin Hua et al., Beijing: CITIC Press, 2015, p. 24.

2. Ibid., p. 3.

3. At the end of 2019, during a small symposium during Niall Ferguson's visit to Shanghai, the author asked Mr. Ferguson about his book "The Biography of Henry Kissinger": Why did he call Kissinger an "idealist" instead of a "realist" as generally said? Dr. Ferguson gave a detailed answer to this question.

4. Based on the review of the views in the works of Braudel, Wallerstein and Arrighi, for specific content, please refer to Fernand Braudel: Material Civilization, Economy and Capitalism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century, translated by Gu Liang and Shi Kangqiang, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2017. Emmanuel Wallerstein: The Modern World-System, translated by Guo Fang et al., Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2013; Giovanni Arrighi: The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Time, translated by Yao Naiqiang et al., Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022.

5. Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System (Volume 1), translated by Guo Fang et al., Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2013, Preface to Volume 1, p. 2.

6. Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System (Volume 1), translated by Guo Fang et al., Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2013, Preface to Volume 1, pp. 2-3.

7. Ibid., Preface to Volume 1, pp. 6-7.

8. Giovanni Arrighi: The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Time, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022, p. 13.

9. Giovanni Arrighi, The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Time, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022, pp. 473-474.

10. Jurgen Osterhammer, The Evolution of the World: A History of the 19th Century, translated by Qiang Zhaohui and Liu Feng, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2016, p. 4.

11. Jurgen Osterhammer: Lectures on Global History, translated by Chen Hao, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2021, p. 12.

12. Jurgen Osterhammer, The Evolution of the World: A History of the 19th Century, translated by Qiang Zhaohui and Liu Feng, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2016, p. 101.

13. Ibid., Introduction, p. 4.

14. Jurgen Osterhammer: Lectures on Global History, translated by Chen Hao, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2021, p. 140.

15. Barry Buzan, George Lawson, Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations, translated by Choi Sun-hee, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2020, pp. 249-276.

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19. “Obama’s Speech at the 2014 West Point Graduation Ceremony ”, May 30, 2014, https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/news/2014-05/30/content\_17555058.htm

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21. Francis Fukuyama, The Origins of Political Order: Prehuman Times to the French Revolution, translated by Mao Junjie, Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2014, p. 425.

22. See John Mearsheimer, The Grand Illusion: The Liberal Dream and International Reality, translated by Li Ze, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2019.

23. The rise of the group of emerging countries at the turn of the century is called the "second rise", which is based on the term used by the Chinese scholar Xiong Jie. We would like to clarify this.

24. When discussing this issue, researchers often use the concepts of "trilateral relationship" and "triangular relationship" in the same context. In my opinion, "trilateral relationship" mainly refers to the relationship between Russia, the United States and Europe, which has a dedicated working framework. For example, there was the "CSCE" before the Cold War, and the "Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe" that has existed since the end of the Cold War. However, there is no dedicated working framework for mediating the trilateral relationship between China, the United States and Russia, but there is actually a very important and subtle interaction, so I choose to use the original "triangular relationship" here. It should be noted that the "triangular relationship" here does not specifically refer to a relationship between major powers with confrontational conflicts.

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