

# China's Role in Modernization and Stabilization of the Contemporary Post-Cold War Order



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**Abstract** This paper researches the relevance of the claims about the end of the current post-Cold War world order trying to set today's catchphrase "the new world order" in a broader perspective than of the Ukraine war, judging that changes in the world order are still in an unfolding phase, and many of them are not clear. American unipolar power is not strong as it has been, but the new multipower global order has not been determined yet. In making the point that the world order should be changed evolutionary not through global conflict the paper is focusing on how and why the two leading global powers China and the USA have fundamentally different approaches to the world order, particularly to economic globalization and geopolitics. The paper claims that China's approach to economic globalization, which is in line with the idea of more equal globalization, and its multilateral global initiatives and projects can be understood as factors that ensure the peaceful and gradual emancipation of the world order from geopolitical approaches that destabilize the world order. China is convinced that changes in the world order must be implemented slowly, through cooperation and rejection of hegemony and unipolarity. This paper shows that the USA, though a mature democracy and highly globalized country, now pursues protectionist rules and standards forming politics and events which could restore the world order to the pre-1990's era. The USA's engaging in current international politics has been featured by the weakening of its support to current economic globalization and by the strengthening of the USA's tradition of unipolarism. They both cause geopolitical instability in Europe and Asia-Pacific. The paper suggests that the USA's approach is accepted in the EU, though it is not yet dominant, and influencing the behavior of the EU in international relations and its relations with China. It concludes that tensions in the relationships between China and the USA cannot persist for much longer in its present form and their relationships need to be rebalanced in the interests of the world order strategic stability and global economy.

**Keywords** Current post-Cold World order · Change · China · America · The EU economic globalization · Geopolitics · Power politics · Asia-Pacific · The future

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## Introduction

The contemporary post-Cold War order is at a defining moment. However, it must not be allowed to continue because its unipolar side creates chaos, injustice, and instability now, as before 2022, but its turning point should not come from global conflict despite the historically high danger of direct war among great powers.

The function of the world order is to maintain an equilibrium and peace in relations between states with different histories and cultures, but when this is impossible, change should come.

It would be ideal if changes in the world order were the results of its gradual modernization and advancing instead through conflict among great powers.

The history of international relations shows us that with each new century, the duration of the international order becomes shorter. The international order labeled as bipolar ended after 40 years. Following September 11, the USA proclaimed an “end of the post-cold war era”, but it has continued.

The huge crisis, caused by the Russian war in Ukraine, and the West’s historically unprecedented break with Russia has created substantial pressure to the post-cold order, but it has not reached its endpoint.

A world order is new when the basic rules and organizing principles of the previous system fail, the distribution of power and alliances between states are changed, and new global institutions of governance replace the old ones. So far, we see no changes to the overall structure and principles of the current order.

Russia’s attack on Ukraine’s territory and violation of the Charter of the United Nations is not a novelty. The USA and NATO did the same to the international order several times, but the order did not end, which meant that the damage to the legal structure of the order was considered reparable.

We are witnessing the strong engagement by China through diplomacy to stabilize the world order with its projects for peace while the USA is focused on strengthening geopolitics in international relations, which increases military spending globally, particularly in the European Union, which was founded to preserve peace in Europe through economic integration, and became globally popular power due to its anti-geopolitical values and diplomatic stance. Now, the EU extensively supports US hegemony, which harms the balance of power in Europe and globally. It is hard to explain how that politics can be a proper tool for the interests of the EU, Europe, and global peace.

However, America considers China, not Russia, the most serious external threat to its global dominance at the economic and strategic levels of the world order. There is a unity in American politics and academia, that China’s growth challenges the USA’s domination in the world order. The USA is presenting China as a threat to the Western-led system of free trade, and rule of law and working on the grouping of democratic forces against China. This is essentially anti-democratic, and in the meantime, the West ignores the concerns of China and other countries about the assertiveness of the USA.

Due to the global shift in economic power caused by the rise of China, America is adopting new legislation that is not friendly to China's global economic goals, economic globalization, and free-market ideology. The USA has begun economic decoupling from China, a concept that seems vague in approach, unfavorable for China, the US capitalistic system, and the economic interdependence of the world.

To contain China's strategic power, the USA has strengthened its geopolitical influence, particularly, in the Indo-Pacific region by reviving old and initiating new political and military alliances that destabilize the regional balance of power. And this growth in strategic instability will not stay confined to the region. Creating alliances in the region reduces the number of neutral countries and increases the chances of a conflict.<sup>1</sup>

These trends and events uncover a new tomorrow in which the global order may not be able to withstand the unipolar politics of the USA, and China will lose its patience with in the face of American geopolitical and economic pressure, which is currently the case.

America has a problem treating China as equal, which is the cause for serious instability and has the potential to become a breaking point of the world order in the not so distant future.

China does not seek the end of economic globalization and Western neoliberalism. Nor does it view the USA as an adversary, but as a market competitor. There is no Chinese exceptionalism. China believes that its economic model is the best way for its development, but every country must find for itself the best way to organize its economy and politics.

In the official documents of the Communist Party of China, the military, and academic literature, globalization is described not as a Chinese or American project, but as a historical and irreversible process of shaping a world in which China is one of the central pieces.

The guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress reject a Cold War mentality, geopolitical conflicts, and narrative on deglobalization, seeing them as dangerous for peace, and stability and the opposite of the *Zeitgeist* of our time, that is networking for people's well-being.

The interest of China is to continue the process of economic interdependence and influence other great powers to work together on its modernization.

China does not think that this transition toward a more comprehensive multipolarity will arrive this decade, but it is working toward creating a world order that is something more than power politics and great power rivalry. Since 2013, China, as one of the principal actors in international relations, has been intensively focused on improving the world order and making it more dependent on the interests of humanity which are peace, environmental sustainability, and economic progress for all people.

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<sup>1</sup> "China has always talked about a "non-aligned" and "independent" foreign policy of peace, why? Alliances create enemies, and the US-NATO expansion eastward creates enemies of Russia, which eventually lead to this war". See Wang Yiwei: Chinese-style modernization has rewritten the modern world map China.com's "China Interview", March 2, 2023, [http://m.china.com.cn/wm/doc\\_1\\_474303\\_2445007.html](http://m.china.com.cn/wm/doc_1_474303_2445007.html).

And here we find the factors that have the potential to do both: stabilize the world order and modernize it.

## The Future of Economic Globalization

Economic globalization is not a world order, although it is influenced by the shifting of balance among global powers. Relations between the USA, China, the EU, and Russia have changed in a way that negatively influences global cooperation, infrastructure, and multilateralism.<sup>2</sup>

The increasing insecurity of key global and regional oil and gas transportation infrastructure and global supply chains portends dark times for global cooperation.

The largest gas pipelines in Europe, Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2, which advanced energy cooperation between Russia and Germany, were attacked in 2022. Now, countries that use the Turk Stream gas pipeline fear the danger of a physical attack on their infrastructure.

The USA has taken a pessimistic view of economic globalization, believing that it has been misused by other global powers, particularly by China, as leverage to counter American global dominance and competitiveness.

China's economic success story is now under the pressure from the USA, which plans to initiate a new era in the global economy that is absolutely shaped in favor of how the USA could control and out-compete China, which "is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, has the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years".<sup>3</sup>

The US realignment of the global supply chain has been moving fast and big companies from the USA are relocating manufacturing outside of China, increasing their investments in India and Vietnam. China is in danger of losing some of its presence in American and global supply chains that were built over decades. The USA is already working on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which excludes China.

The US strategy is to reclaim its role as a global trading power, but nearly 100 countries count China as their largest trading partner, while only 57 have such a relationship with the USA. This might result in a dangerous division of global trade into trading blocs—one focused on China and developing countries, and the other on the USA and its allies. America's new hard unilateral approach to economic globalization is based on security concerns rather than free-market rules.

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<sup>2</sup> An optimistic sign that multilateralism is still alive is the Global Oceans Treaty, signed on March 4, 2023, by 200 countries that agreed to protect marine life in international waters.

<sup>3</sup> See the Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China, <https://www.state.gov/the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>.

The relationship between economy and security must be balanced, which requires a careful assessment, but the US push to ban TikTok, the world's leading video-based social media, reveals the serious flaws in its efforts to out-compete China by putting everything in a security context. America seems to have lost trust in its global competitiveness.

Economic globalization also has been under the constant pressure of developing countries to change. Since the 1990s, they have demanded faster reforms of globalization's internal weaknesses, above all rejecting the zero-sum game approach, which has amplified inequality and unfairness in economic relations.

In the last decade, China has invested heavily in the advancement of economic globalization energy and transport infrastructure, strengthening global supply chains, and expanding its influence with its global win-win strategies focused on mitigating inequality in economic cooperation with Asia, Africa, and Europe. Until recently, many expected all these efforts to reduce geopolitical competition among countries, but for us globalists, an era of great awakening has come.

Economic globalization alone cannot sustain development and peace across the globe. International organizations must be stronger to oppose the USA, which threatens countries that oppose its global power with deglobalization.

However, all these tendencies and events do not represent the end of economic globalization yet, but emphasize the differences between the current model economic globalization and that of the 1990s, when the USA led the way in idealized economic globalization, including China's opening to the world and outsourcing of its production to China.<sup>4</sup> Now, America is at the forefront of changing economic globalization through its concept designed to contain Chinese development and lessen its ability to surpass the USA. We are witnessing to its attempts to redefine not only cooperation with China by launching new political ideas like "decoupling" or "de-risking", whatever, but also the very essence of the term cooperation.

The idea of decoupling from China currently could be interpreted as a kind of half-decoupling. Namely, America's leadership perceives China as half-democratic and half-authoritarian, a political version of the half-man, half-bull Minotaur from Greek mythology. For the USA, China is democratic enough to cooperate in the fight against climate change, promoting sustainable development, and managing some global economic issues, but autocratic in terms of science, technology, and military development—the very areas in which the USA wants to contain China.<sup>5</sup>

The Trump Administration's trade war on China, which started in June 2018, has been harmful to the US citizens.<sup>6</sup> The Biden Administration has taken an even more confrontational stance toward China seeing US-China interdependence as the

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<sup>4</sup> How economic globalization was glorified see Justin Rosenberg, *Globalization Theory: A Post Mortem*, *International Politics* 42, 2-74, 2005, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.ip.8800098>.

<sup>5</sup> See more Jasna Plevnik, No one-size-fits-all governance model, November 7, 2022, *China Daily*, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202211/07/WS63683b7ca3105ca1f227451b.html>.

<sup>6</sup> According to the US International Trade Commission (USITC) and IMF, the prices for imports from China across some of the most affected industries rose by as much as 25 percent in 2019 and 2021.

reliance on an “adversary” and is working to return industrial investment in the USA. In 2022, the USA adopted several anti-globalization laws and strategic documents the purpose of which seems to be discriminatory, especially toward China. Biden Administration’s 2022 US National Security Strategy emphasizes strategic competition with China in which it needs to “outcompete” China. In this way, how it could not influence the rules of commerce, and other countries.<sup>7</sup> America presents its goal as if it was “international law” itself and could forbid China from influence global rules, other countries or to surpass the USA. The Congress behaves as if its laws are globally binding.

Decoupling or containing China’s development has been underpinned by the 2022 Chips and Science Act, which restricts the sale of certain chips to China, prohibits providing Chinese companies with the technology needed to make chips, and prevents China from accessing advanced semiconductor machinery.<sup>8</sup> The USA also requires its allies to take part in its technological war on the Chinese tech and semiconductor industries, where the USA is ahead of China but also encourages them to invest in facilities in the USA.<sup>9</sup>

The America Creating Opportunities for Manufacturing, Pre-Eminence in Technology, and Economic Strength Act of 2022 (America COMPETES Act) is aimed at helping the US economy to compete with China and “will have a huge negative impact on the export of intermediate products originating in China as well as overseas Chinese funded enterprises, which will further affect the ‘going out’ of Chinese enterprises and slow down the implementation process of the Belt and Road Initiative. Its implementation may also lead other countries or regions to follow suit and disrupt the global supply chains”.<sup>10</sup>

The Restricting the Emergence of Security Threats that Risk Information and Communications Technology (RESTRICT) Act will “empower the United States government to prevent certain foreign governments from exploiting technology services operating in the United States in a way that poses risks to Americans’ sensitive data and our national security”. It means Chinese-owned technologies, applications, software, or e-commerce platforms may be sold and banned if they present a national security threat to American users.

<sup>7</sup> See PART III: OUR GLOBAL PRIORITIES, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> See FACT SHEET: CHIPS and Science Act Will Lower Costs, Create Jobs, Strengthen Supply Chains, and Counter China, The White House, August 9, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/09/fact-sheet-chips-and-science-act-will-lower-costs-create-jobs-strengthen-supply-chains-and-counter-china/>.

<sup>9</sup> The Dutch government said it would impose export restrictions on the “most advanced” semiconductor technology. The Hague and Tokyo struck a deal with the USA to limit sales to China. See, Alexandra Alper and David Shepardson, Reuters, February 1, 2023:49 AM GMT+, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/us-official-acknowledges-japan-netherlands-deal-curb-chipmaking-exports-china-2023-02-01/>.

<sup>10</sup> See Hu Jianguo and Chen Yujing, US Cross-Border Subsidy Countervailing System: Historical Evolution, WTO Compliance, and China’s Response, [http://www.guojifayanjiu.org/Admin/Upload/File/Issue/201707170003/2023/2//20230203054612WU\\_FILE\\_0.pdf](http://www.guojifayanjiu.org/Admin/Upload/File/Issue/201707170003/2023/2//20230203054612WU_FILE_0.pdf), in Newsletter of the Global Think Tank Network for Democracy Studies March 3, 2023.

America's protectionism targets not only China, but it is also discriminatory to other countries. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, with its clean energy subsidies, was seen as an attack on the competitiveness of key Washington allies including the UK, the EU, South Korea, and Japan.

America's idea of decoupling from China goes against the interest of its capitalist system, which encourages the free flow of capital and the principle of international competition. American, European, and global financial and industrial companies have confidence in China's markets and do not support the narrative on decoupling as they understand it as dangerous for their relationship with China, which could potentially retaliate with countermeasures and close its market, which contributes a great deal to the profits of global companies.<sup>11</sup>

The USA, supported strongly by the EU, has had an opportunity to test hard decoupling politics *in vivo* by imposing sanctions against the Russian economy and blocking access to its wealth abroad. America took advantage of the global financial system, which is subject to the American financial system. With this kind of interdependence, which has never been doubted or seen as excessive or dangerous, the USA has found leverage for its financial attack on Russia and the confiscation of its wealth.

These sanctions have caused great damage to Russia, but have yet to destroy its economy, or separate it from the global economy due to expanded partnership with BRICS countries, and the countries in the Middle East. From the point of view of economic calculation, the biggest victim of this decoupling experiment has been the European Union, whose economy is in recession, and its power to compete globally without Russian energy sources and rare resources is seriously threatened.

The sanctions, not authorized by the United Nations Security Council, have gone wrong because the USA is not as globally dominant as it was thirty years ago, as evidenced by the fact that it is mostly restricted to Western countries and its strategic allies in Asia. Two-thirds of the world does not support America's economic sanctions against Russia.

Though the sanctions have been implemented in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine's territory, which is a situation that highly differs from normal conditions in the global economy, it has confirmed a commonly held theory: the costs of breaking the current state of global economic interdependence are not limited to only one side.

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<sup>11</sup> See US-China Chip War—Policy Recommendations by PKU Scholar Lu Feng, Thomas des Garets Geddes, and Laura van Megen, February 1, 2023, <https://sinification.substack.com/p/us-china-chip-war-policy-recommendations>.

## China's View on Decoupling and the Future of Economic Globalization

China believes that the world “must have” economic interdependence, as it has proven to be better than “small yards with high fences, which mean seclusion and regression and decoupling”.<sup>12</sup>

China's view of economic globalization radically differs from the Biden administration's, which more forcefully and explicitly focuses on a “zero-sum game”, unlike Presidents Clinton and Obama, whose administrations saw economic ties between China and the USA that were so strong that they were recognized by some as “one economy with two systems”, while America's role in the world order was described as “unipolar multilateralism”.<sup>13</sup>

The Biden's administration underestimates China's power in the global economy while overestimating its own power to determine the deglobalization of China and how China participates in the global economy. This type of miscalculation has caused tension in America's relations with China, and in the world economic order.

The future of economic globalization depends as much on China as on America. Both countries are the main pillars of today's global economy, and China, as well as the USA, has the power to decide on its own how deeply it wants to be globalized, just as the Chinese Communist Party decided on its own to open the country to the world in 1978.

China's economic growth depends on the global economy, and *vice versa*, and breaking interdependency with the West, which had recently reached record levels, would be a catastrophe for China and the global economy.<sup>14</sup> China does not want to separate from the American economy but has prepared itself at home by reducing its reliance on foreign technologies and soften the impact of changes in international relations initiated by the US strategy to out-compete China. Now, as the most successful part of the global economy, China also has significant global weight to respond to the possible consequences of a US-China decoupling—globally, by accelerating the processes of economic globalization with developing countries in the foreseeable future, and by strengthening the role of traditional global institutions and new ones such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank of BRICS, in managing the consequences of the American decoupling policy in Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America. China is by far the most influential foreign power in Africa, and its influence is widely viewed as a

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<sup>12</sup> See Wang Yi: US views on the world, China, China-US relations are seriously miscalibrated, May 28, 2022, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202205/t20220529\\_10694135.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202205/t20220529_10694135.html).

<sup>13</sup> On China and the economic Globalisation from 2001 to 2018, see Jasna Plevnik, *China's Capacity to Consolidate Economic Globalisation*, last volume-China's 70-Year Development and the Construction of the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind (Volume 2), 674, December 25, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Gerards Iglesias and Jürgen Matthes, Drohender Handelskonflikt: China kann nicht ohne den Westen, IW Report No. 15 March 6, 2023, <https://www.iwkoeln.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/juergen-matthes-simon-gerards-iglesias-china-kann-nicht-ohne-den-westen-1.html>.



good thing, with 76% of respondents saying that Beijing has a positive effect on the region.<sup>15</sup>

Since 2013, China has become a leading nation at the UN in proposing new concepts for improving economic globalization, which include the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the idea of creating a “community of shared future for humanity”. These initiatives have proposed general principles for global connectivity, global development, global security, and a new world order, which is, in our view, extremely important for both the continuation of economic globalization and its modernization.

China's Belt and Road and Global Development Initiative strongly underpin China's vision of more equal globalization and have the strength to eliminate barriers brought to the world by geopolitics, neoliberalism, unfairness, protectionism, and populism. The Belt and Road Initiative is economic globalization embodied, focused on creating conditions for the growth of intercontinental connectivity and economic interdependence. Many countries in the world have become partners within the framework and have been linked through the economic land and maritime corridors that make up the BRI. The initiative is also open to third countries as well as regional and global organizations and global companies.

When China launched the BRI, the world was very different than it is today. There was no coronavirus pandemic and no war in Europe. The Ukraine conflict has revealed, among other terrible things, how important food security is, which China listed as one of the GDI's objectives. The BRI also includes a “Digital” Silk Road and “Healthy” Silk Road component, which work for food, energy, and financial stability in global digital development. China has allocated colossal funds for the BRI and will assign more resources for global development cooperation and implementation of the GDI.

The GDI is much younger and even more global than the BRI, which this year celebrates its 10th year. The Belt and Road's comprehensive experience in connecting China with three world regions: Asia, Europe, and Africa, has been precious for China in process of shaping the GDI's concept. Experience comes before theory.

China launched the Global Development Initiative to boost global development, cooperation, and economic integration. The GDI maintains that development has no border and every country has an equal right to pursue modern technology and development, which shows that China's approach to global development is entirely different from America's, which uses geopolitical explanations and “strategic concerns” to deny China the right to high-quality development.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Poll: China most influential power in Africa as US influence wanes, June 29, 2022, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/06/29/poll-china-most-influential-power-in-africa-as-us-influence-wanes/>.

<sup>16</sup> On September 21, 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the general debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly and put forward the Global Development Initiative in his speech titled “Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties to Build a Better World”. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zjyh\\_665391/202109/t20210922\\_9580293.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zjyh_665391/202109/t20210922_9580293.html).

Both initiatives view the UN as a core part of international relations and China's leadership believes that they can speed up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

China's efforts to modernize economic globalization have even influenced the USA, G-7, and the EU, which have developed their own versions of the BRI in programs like Build Back Better World and the Global Gateway, hoping to counter China's influence in Eurasia. The fact that these have just started, it is clear that both initiatives are heavy on political rhetoric and light on projects and funds.<sup>17</sup>

## Strengthening of Geopolitics in the Post-Cold War Order

The current difficulties in the global economy mostly come from geopolitics for which macroeconomy has no effective countermeasures. The destiny of the world depends on what happens in the geopolitical area and what global powers will do in the coming months to overcome strategic tensions in international relations. It is politics that leads the economy and not *vice versa*.

The new geostrategic policy of the USA to "out-compete China" focuses on containing China economically at the global level, as described above, and geopolitically at the regional level. It hopes to simultaneously to draw away China from its path of growth and to end or delay its future development.

In its public strategies, the USA views China as a real challenge to its position as a superpower and explains the current international environment as a factor that has greatly favored China's development at the expense of America.

Washington claims that it does not aim to change China's political system, but its new rules in the global system show that China would operate in extremely unfavorable conditions that would be unfriendly to its economy, scientific development, and security.

By slowing down China's development, America undermines the credibility of China's socialist development model globally, curbs China's influence on global governance, and questions the ability of the Chinese Communist Party to lead the country, which appears as the first goal of its not so public strategies. What's more is that in the USA there is a bipartisan consensus that the Communist Party of China is "the greatest threat to the United States".

America has correctly assessed the importance of the Communist Party for the development of China. Many other countries have benefited from participating the cross-border flows of goods, services, capital, data, and people, but China has been the most successful because the task of achieving economic development was not understood as the responsibility of economic globalization, or the USA, but of the Communist Party of China. The leadership has led gradual and persistent institutional and policy reforms, which are the main reasons for China's growth. China's

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<sup>17</sup> See more Jasna Plevnik, "China's Belt and Road Initiative's Impact on Europe", Prunus Press USA, 2022.

leadership has protected the country's national interests in a global context and was able to avoid the Asian financial crisis in 1998 and the global financial crisis in 2008 and solve the global health crisis in 2020–2023 more successfully than the USA. And through global institutions, China has also worked to reduce distortions in the global economy.

The US House of Representatives established an ideological body, the US House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the USA and the Chinese Communist Party at the beginning of 2023, to help the USA win the new Cold War against China.<sup>18</sup> Under pressure from Congress, the CIA has shifted its focus and resources from counterterrorism to China, which means that CIA operations will be designed to provoke China. These are classic CIA methods. In 2021, the Agency established the Chinese Mission Center and is working on establishing new centers to collect data on China and its new technologies.

The USA thinks of China's containment as a multitasking policy because we live in a time of overlapping global economy, global health, and global security. That explains why in 2023, the USA revived its concerns that the Covid-19 pandemic began with a lab leak in Wuhan, though it did not reveal any evidence for that, or why it aggressively connects China's economic development with security concerns in the West. In addition, Washington often attributes its aggressive global policy as being in response to China.

America has been involved in the war in Eastern Europe, which may finish tomorrow or last a decade. It's also been involved in the war in Syria and intensively focused on the Indo-Pacific region, saying that "the Indo-Pacific faces mounting challenges, particularly from the PRC. The PRC is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific and seeks to become the world's most influential power. The PRC's coercion and aggression spans the globe, but it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific".<sup>19</sup>

America's vision is a free, open, democratic, consistent with international law and peaceful Indo-Pacific where governments can make "independent political choices free from coercion".<sup>20</sup> But how should we understand the US contributions to stability and democracy in the region?

NATO has increased its interest in the Indo-Pacific region, criticizing China, which is not "our adversary" and urges allies of the USA to form closer ties since trans-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security are "deeply interconnected".<sup>21</sup> The new NATO strategic document hints at the possibility that NATO is trying to interfere in China

<sup>18</sup> See the House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's Floor Remarks on Establishing the China Select Committee, <https://www.speaker.gov/29821-2/>.

See Mike Gallagher's call China and the USA are locked in a Cold War. We must win it. Here's how we will, Fox News, December 8, 2022, 10:11 am EST, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/america-locked-china-cold-war-win>.

<sup>19</sup> See Indo-Pacific Strategy of the USA, The White House, February 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> NATO chief urges closer ties with Japan to defend democracy, CNBC, January 31, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/01/nato-chief-urges-closer-ties-with-japan-to-defend-democracy.html>.

and Russia's regional activities, aiming to drive Russia out of Europe and China from the Indo-Pacific.<sup>22</sup>

The strategy echoes America's geostrategic interests and pushes countries from the EU to step up in terms of Indo-Pacific geopolitical competition. NATO and the EU currently have 22 member countries in common while Sweden is on the way to join NATO "as soon as possible" as America's President Joe Biden promises, though Turkey and Hungary block its accession to the alliance. Of the 31 members of NATO, two are North American and 29 are European!<sup>23</sup>

Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand participated in the 2022 Madrid NATO Summit for the first time. The USA and NATO have pressured its Indo-Pacific partners to provide weapons and ammunition for Ukraine, but they have been unwilling to risk their relations with Russia. However, South Korea has approved Poland's export of artillery weapons with South Korean parts to Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> Joining any military anti-China alliance would be a dangerous decision for South Korea and Japan due to their strong economic interdependence with China. Japan, for example, brings imported oil along the southeast coast of Taiwan, so any conflict in that area would lead to an energy crisis, as well as a crisis of other commodities.

The USA has also formed a new military alliance, which it has named AUKUS, and revived an old one, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, under the pretext that the balance of power in the region has changed in favor of China. Seoul announced that it would gradually approach the group to formally join. This trilateral partnership unveiled details of a plan to provide Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines and it raised questions about nuclear proliferation.<sup>25</sup> India, which is a member of the QUAD alliance, has remained neutral for now, though the USA hopes to get India more involved in countering China in the Indo-Pacific. For now, ASEAN member states are refraining from choosing between the USA and China, considering both important partners.

In 2023 the USA announced the opening of its embassy in the Solomon Islands, after 30 years of without one, in response to the security agreement between China and the island country signed in April 2022. China has emphasized that "China has come to the South Pacific region to build roads and bridges and improve the people's lives, not to station troops or build military bases".<sup>26</sup> However, the USA and its

<sup>22</sup> See NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, <https://www.nato.int/pdf/2...>

<sup>23</sup> Based on NATO estimates for 2022, the USA contributes 1.3 million armed personnel, making up 40.7% of the 3.3 million armed personnel in the alliance. The remaining 59.3% come from Canada and European countries. See <https://shape.nato.int/page13615743>.

<sup>24</sup> Josh Smith and Joyce Lee, Exclusive: Seoul approved Poland's export of howitzers with South Korean parts to Ukraine, Reuters, March 8, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/seoul-approved-polands-export-howitzers-with-skorean-parts-ukraine-official-says-2023-03-08/>.

<sup>25</sup> See Steve Holland, Elizabeth Piper, David Brunnstrom, and Lewis Jackson, Eyeing China, Biden, and allies unveil nuclear-powered submarine plan for Australia, Reuters, March 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/eyeing-china-biden-allies-unveil-nuclear-powered-submarine-plan-australia-2023-03-13/>.

<sup>26</sup> See Wang Yi on China-Solomon Islands bilateral security cooperation, June 3, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202206/t20220603\\_10698478.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202206/t20220603_10698478.html).

allies view the agreement as a threat to their position in Oceania. The USA and the Philippines have signed an agreement on expanding their military cooperation, in which US troops have been granted access to four more military bases in the Philippines.<sup>27</sup> More members of the US military are based in the region than in any other outside the USA”.<sup>28</sup>

Washington's strategy for the Indo-Pacific increases the US military presence, instability, and defense spending in the region, which makes it difficult to concentrate on building peace in the region and resolve the territorial disputes across the region without US interference. Meanwhile, the USA is also proactively preparing for war in the Indo-Pacific if there is a military conflict with China over “Taiwan independence”.

The American approach to Taiwan is first and foremost defined by a geopolitical doctrine, not by Washington's interests in a democratic Taiwan. Geopolitics is the biggest threat to world stability, but all American presidents have conducted foreign policy as geopolitics which views regions and their people from the perspective of their political value for the interests of great powers. This geopolitical perspective firmly shapes America's national interests as we approach the third decades of the twenty-first century.

Taiwan's strategic geographic location could play an indispensable role in terms of US geostrategy should the USA conduct military operations in the Pacific for its national security and commercial interests.

When Taiwan, which is an integral part of Chinese territory, returns to China, it will increase China's strategic position in Northeast and Southeast Asia and reduce the strategic position of the USA in those areas.<sup>29</sup>

American behavior toward Taiwan questions China's territorial sovereignty, and if it gets involved in the defense of Taiwan, the USA would be in the position of an aggressor against China. America's Taiwan Relations Act, the “Six Assurances” and The Taiwan Policy Act of 2022, contradict the three joint statements made by China and the USA.<sup>30</sup>

At the risk of being wrong, we must stress that recent American changes to the One-China policy in some way remind us of the West's promises that NATO would not expand to Russian borders, but the promises were broken and forgotten.

The West has suffered a lot from the war in Ukraine and the global economy too. There are lessons here to be learned both globally and regionally.

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<sup>27</sup> See Philippines, US Announce Four New EDCA Sites, February 1, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3285566/philippines-us-announce-four-new-edca-sites/>.

<sup>28</sup> See Indo-Pacific Strategy of the USA, The White House, February 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> On Taiwan's function in the US Pacific strategy see Joseph Bosco, Cross-Strait Relations: the Strategic Importance of Taiwan, February 26, 2018, University of Nottingham, <https://taiwaninight.org/2018/02/26/cross-strait-relations-the-strategic-importance-of-taiwan/>.

<sup>30</sup> The Taiwan Policy Act of 2022, [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/SBS%20Taiwan%20Policy%20Act%20FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/SBS%20Taiwan%20Policy%20Act%20FINAL%20(1).pdf).

## China's View on the Strengthening of Geopolitics in the World Order

China thinks that the twenty-first century world order should be very different from that of the twentieth century and it has proposed building a “community with a shared future for humanity”, which prioritizes the common interests of humanity over the geopolitical interests of great powers. Though that view for modernization of the world order looks like it came to us from the future it has come to the world from the long history of China's foreign policy.

China does not rely on geopolitical doctrine to understand the world and shape its relations with other countries. It did not wage global or regional wars to control other countries' geographical features to expand and ensure its prosperity and strategic superiority, nor did it compete with other countries over territories and regions. China does not have the concept of geopolitics and its narrative is about global cooperation and “shared development”.

China believes nowhere should be regarded as “America's backyard” and does not see the world as a geopolitical chessboard.<sup>31</sup> China does not aspire to global hegemony and has proven it a thousand times over, but the USA, which has 800 military bases around the world, compared to China's one, does not trust China.

The constitutions of both the PRC and the CPC reject any path that leads to hegemony which destroys peace and corrupts international relations. Beijing rejects Cold War mentality and bloc trade politics and does not want to take on the US role on a global or regional level. For China, the core of the world order is the UN, and it has made real efforts to put the UN's principles into practice. China is committed to the UN, WTO, WHO, WB, IMF, and other multilateral agencies.

China's basic approach to the USA is democratic. China does not look for conflict with the USA, it does not view the USA as a systemic rival either, nor it has been working with other countries and global organizations to build an anti-USA world order as America is doing now to China. China thinks that geopolitics cannot frame international relations forever and it keeps on believing that the best way to govern international relations is peaceful cooperation and harmony among nations.<sup>32</sup> However, it understands that everything in international relations could be determined by geopolitics.

China appears patient, but it has made clear to the USA, and its allies, that America's global domination will not be based on China's economic weakening,

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<sup>31</sup> See Mo Jingxi, FM: Asia-Pacific is not a “chessboard”, China Daily, March 7, 2022, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England. 2022<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202203/07/WS6225d038a310cdd39bc8af23.html>.

<sup>32</sup> See a conversation between Chinese scholar Wang Yiwei, director of the Institute of International Affairs at the Renmin University of China, and British sociologist Martin Albrow. Hu Yuwei and Gu Di, “Community with a shared future for mankind” contrasts sharply with the Western thesis of “clash of civilizations”: scholars, Global Times, August 2, 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202208/1272051.shtml>.

changing of the strategic balance of power in the Indo-Pacific and violating China's territorial sovereignty in the matter of Taiwan.

At the regional level, China is focused on using soft power diplomacy, but its position is clear and consistent: in the event of a change in the status of Taiwan, it is ready for war. In 2005, Beijing adopted an anti-secession law, which states that it would attack Taiwan if it declared independence. The Communist Party of China has taken numerous actions to convince its compatriots that they wish to achieve reunification without force, and on these grounds, in 1981, it published the Nine-Point Proposal for the Resolution of the Taiwan Question.

Thanks to numerous agreements on the development of bilateral relations, first in the field of trade, transport, and postal services, and later in the field of tourism, political, cultural, financial, and sports cooperation between countrymen, there has been great progress in the field of economic cooperation and growth of political trust. Taiwan exports significantly more to China than to America.

The true history of diplomatic relations between the world's largest economic powers began with the American recognition that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. Ever since the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy, America has refrained from supporting Taiwan's independence and membership in international organizations, but recent changes in Washington on the One-China policy worry China as does increased sales of US arms to Taiwan, which challenge the three joint communiques of 1972, 1979, and 1982.

Relations between China and Taiwan have seen through many crises, most of which were caused by America. The 2022 visit of the Speaker of the US House of Representatives to Taiwan undermined China-the US relations and regional stability, while also failing to win political points for the Democratic Party. During that visit, China demonstrated that it could surround and isolate Taiwan from all sides with its navy and it can target any point on the island with missiles. The visit, which the American president could have prevented, reveals an ignorance of the USA for China's warnings.<sup>33</sup>

With regard to global governance China has answered with a new concept the Global Security Initiative (GSI) to counter current security imbalances in the world order caused by strengthening geopolitics in the world system.<sup>34</sup> The President of China Xi Jinping proposed the Global Security Initiative at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022.<sup>35</sup>

In addressing conflict in Europe, China is the only major power that offered a document that proposed a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis focused on

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<sup>33</sup> See Jasna Plevnik, One China, One USA, and (not) One War, Večernji list, September 3, 2022. <https://www.geo-economic-forum.com/en/research-and-opinion/233-one-china,-one-usa,-and-not-one-war.html>.

<sup>34</sup> See The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 21, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221\\_11028348.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html).

<sup>35</sup> See Xi Jinping Delivers a Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, April 21, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202204/t20220421\\_10671083.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202204/t20220421_10671083.html).

bringing peace to Ukraine, and stopping the military-economic chaos that has spread around Europe.<sup>36</sup> The 12-point document emphasizes that nuclear weapons must not be used and that nuclear wars must not be fought.<sup>37</sup>

However, the will for the war is prevailing in the West, which suits American geostrategic interests. The USA can easily be defined as a direct party in the Ukrainian conflict if we look at its military, intelligence, and cyber involvement, while in Brussels, there are only two or three member countries, Hungary for example, that are concerned about the economic and strategic interests of the European Union.

In the Middle East, China's diplomacy increased efforts into building stronger economic ties with that region. It urges Saudi Arabia to help speed up efforts for Gulf free-trade zone. After years of hostility, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced their agreement to re-establish diplomatic relations based on talks held in Beijing. China facilitated the agreement that will likely increase stability and security in the Gulf and help extinguish conflicts in the Middle East from Yemen to Syria.<sup>38</sup> China's economic and political pivot to the Middle East has strengthened the perception of China as peaceful power around the world.

China leads an independent foreign policy based on its essential interests and predominant trends in the world aiming to develop well relations with all countries and improve global governance in cooperation with other powers.

After the war in Ukraine, China must reassess on which major powers it can count on to strengthen peace and shape a bolder multipolar world order in the future without jeopardizing its strategic interests. In 1990, China, Russia, and the EU shared the idea of a stronger multipolar world, but now the European Union rejects all relations with Russia, following the US's non-peaceful solutions for resolving the conflict in Europe.

In that context of realignment of relations between the main powers, China's strategic choice is strengthening of strategic coordination with Russia, which is, as well as China, committed to realizing the multipolarity world.<sup>39</sup> China's strategic choice is strengthening of strategic coordination with the EU based on "Strategic Partnership", established in 2003.<sup>40</sup>

The legacy of almost five decades of a close partnership between the EU and China that until now has not been burdened by geopolitics gives optimism, but the extent of the Union's commitment to the US hegemony is seriously worrying and inexplicable.

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<sup>36</sup> See China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis, February 24, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202302/t20230224\\_11030713.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> See Parisa Hafezi, Nayera Abdallah, and Aziz El Yaakoubi, Iran and Saudi Arabia agree to resume ties in talks brokered by China, Reuters, March 10, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-saudi-arabia-agree-resume-ties-re-open-embassies-iranian-state-media-2023-03-10/>.

<sup>39</sup> See Xi meets Putin in Moscow, China Daily, Xinhua, March 20, 2023, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202303/20/WS641861d9a31057c47ebb57d7.html>.

<sup>40</sup> How the European Union's attitude toward China has changed from synergy to "strategic challenges", see Jasna Plevnik, "China's Belt and Road Initiative's Impact on Europe", Prunus Press USA, 2022. pp 113-139.



It is difficult to estimate when these changes will affect relations between China and the European Union.

The founding fathers of a United Europe, Robert Schuman, and Jean Monnet, would be shocked by the current EU's strategic dependence on the USA in resolving the war in Europe, which is first and foremost a European problem. The EU's leadership appears paralyzed, completely deprived of political global, and European initiatives for peace. Meanwhile, the USA is using Poland and the Baltic states, which have a long history of bad relations with Russia, to put pressure on the balance of power within the European Union and in Europe in a direction toward East Europe. Development in that direction could weaken the cooperation between China and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

## Conclusion

The USA is seriously missing an attentive and non-ideological assessment of China's global diplomacy for better global governance, and trust in China's view on "shared development".

China strives for cooperation and opposes a decoupling mentality among countries by implementing regionally and globally new models of cooperation through its main global platforms: the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, as well as its concept of a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity, and the Global Security Initiative which is based on the principle of "indivisible of security".

America's strategists seriously overestimate China's will to take over the US's hegemonic position in the world order, while underestimating China's results in global infrastructure, eradication of poverty, and healthcare results in fighting Covid-19, which strengthen the stability of the world.

Both powers have a moral duty to change the world for the better and to do that have to coexist and cooperate. China and America respect each other in many things regardless of ideological differences, and economic wars, and must find a way to reboot cooperation and reduce tensions in the world.

A conflict between America and China is possible to avoid now, and for a hundred years on. We believe that China and the USA will one day work together on saving the world from chaos as they defended the world together in the novel by Liu Cixin titled *The Three-Body Problem*.



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