

China's Role in a Period of New Turbulence and Transformation

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Abstract: The world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. As the changes are accelerating, their impact is intensifying. International politics is experiencing a return to realism, and the rise of hegemonic power is antagonizing global relations. Globalization has encountered setbacks, and world economic growth is contracting. The international order is tumbling and is facing reconstruction. Nontraditional security threats have become more diverse. Great power conflicts are looming large. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China has drawn a magnificent blueprint for constructing Chinese-style modernization. China, a responsible power in its historic rise, will be a stabilizing force in a turbulent world and a constructive force for global transformation. China provides stability, positive energy, great global peace, and development opportunities.

Keywords: new period of turbulence and transformation, international order, power politics, globalization, China opportunity

Today, our world, our times, and history are changing in ways like never before. The shifts unseen in a century are unfolding unprecedentedly; the world is entering a period of new turbulence and transformation. The turbulent changes of the world, coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine crisis, have led to rapid and extensive changes in the international political, economic, and security domains. All the changes taking place seem to diverge from those in the past. The interactions of events are becoming

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more complex, more unstable, and more uncertain. China is building a modern socialist nation. In a world characterized by new turbulence and transformation, China plays a more prominent anchoring role, which is the world's expectation.

I. Uncertain Environment and Certain Changes

In the face of the volatile global changes, the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that the historical trends of peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit are unstoppable. The will of the people and the general trends of our day will eventually lead to a bright future for humanity. And yet, the hegemonic, high-handed, and bullying acts of using strength to intimidate the weak, taking from others by force and subterfuge, and playing zero-sum games are exerting grave harm. The deficit in peace, development, security, and governance is growing. All of this is posing unprecedented challenges for human society.¹

The profound changes unfolding are worsening the international strategic situation, and the global political, economic, and security environment is undergoing significant transformation and dispersion.

A. Realism is reasserting itself, the aggressive mentality of hegemonic power is resurgent, and small circles and parallel systems are starting to take shape

International political developments are closely related to the changes in the international situation since the end of the Cold War, which were quite different from the regular changes or those beyond the expectations of international society. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated, “The world is facing a *Zeitenwende*: an epochal tectonic shift,” and this “has put an end to an era.”² The Biden administration's National Security Strategy report put it more bluntly: “The post-Cold War era is definitively over, [...] the world is becoming

¹ Xi Jinping, “Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects,” Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 16, 2022, <http://english.www.gov.cn/atts/stream/files/6357d404c6d028997c37ca9b>.

² Olaf Scholz, “The Global *Zeitenwende*: How to Avoid a New War in a Multipolar Era,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2023, 1.

more divided and unstable. The risk of conflict between major powers is increasing.[...] Global cooperation on shared interests has frayed.”¹

Reflecting on the course of world development since the end of the Cold War, *The Economist* pointed out that, when the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe encountered drastic changes, and the Cold War concluded, the West labeled their values as “the unrivaled paradigm of human peace, prosperity, and progress.” As the first and sole superpower, the United States had the strength to become globalization’s guiding force. US-style liberalism, democracy, open market, human rights, and legal rules prevailed worldwide. For a time, globalization was even considered Americanized, and the United States enjoyed the dividends of the end of the Cold War by promoting globalization. But with the outsourcing of industries, the hollowing out of domestic manufacturing, the widening gap between the rich and poor, and the intensification of class and ethnic conflicts, domestic US society is seriously being torn apart. American-led globalization has led to “the rise of the rest,” diminishing the benefits to the United States. In response, the United States interest in globalization has weakened. At the same time, the rise of emerging powers and the East, wars and conflicts, nontraditional threats such as climate change and the spread of infectious diseases, and the inability of international organizations or institutions to meet or balance the diverse demands of different countries have shown that “contrary to the notion of a single coherent world system, international order in fact takes a great variety of forms across different regions and sectors of the globe.”² This new reality has frightened the United States. The belief that, as a hegemonic power, the United States could dominate everything has crumbled. *The Economist* concluded that “Western foreign policy sets out to be ethical, but often ends up being ineffectual.”³

The 2008 global financial crisis witnessed the concerted efforts of great powers to survive the crisis. Currently, great powers have more words than deeds, reluctant to spare any efforts to confront multilateral challenges such as climate change. The former US President Trump adopted policies pursuing US supremacy and unilateralism, under which the United States provoked trade

¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, Washington, October 2022, 7.

² Jeff D. Colgan, “Partial Hegemony: Oil Politics and International Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2022, 195.

³ “How to Deal with the Despots,” *Economist*, Summer Double Issue, July 30, 2022, 7.

wars with other major powers, hurting trading partners, tearing up US alliances, and undermining Joe Biden global multilateral economic governance. Since he came to power, Joe Biden has corrected Trump's unilateralism to some extent, but he is more committed to defending US hegemony than Trump was, and is obsessed with the big-power competition and maintaining confrontational politics. The strategic focus of the Biden administration on diplomacy and security is noteworthy. As a rising power, China naturally bears the brunt of this ambition.

In the face of the reality that it is challenging to be a world leader, the United States has to rally the Western countries and like-minded nations willing to follow its leadership by establishing confrontational camps and small circles of alliances. The Biden administration has reconsolidated the G7, showing greater interest in the G7 than in the G20. Following the European Union's decision to consider China a "systemic rival," the Biden administration restrengthened NATO, which was once diagnosed as "brain-dead." In keeping with the election promise to reshape the alliance's values, the Biden administration convened the first large-scale post-Cold War global democracy summit. Authoritarian government leaders in some developing countries were invited to attend. The United States tried to adopt values and ideology as tools for rebuilding the global democratic camp. It was merely responding to the demands of realism in opposing the "nondemocratic" countries under the guise of "democracy versus authoritarianism."

B. "Super-globalization" has been replaced by "slowbalization" or "selective globalization," the flow of factors has been restricted, and the international division of labor has been disturbed

Economic relations have not resulted in a moderating influence on political relations. On the contrary, political, cultural, and security factors are having an increased impact on economic relations. The pursuit of development has been restrained by security concerns, with many countries decoupling and breaking ties on national security pretexts to avoid relying too heavily on one side of the outside world for essential industries and resources. Hegemonic power either restricted competitors by establishing exclusive groups or trade agreements, restricted technology transfer to prevent competitors from gaining competitive edges, or banned personnel exchange to prevent competitors from expanding their international influence. The Covid-19 pandemic and regional conflicts

such as the Ukraine crisis have exacerbated this situation. During the pandemic, the flow of economic factors was severely restricted by the lockdown of cities, customs closure, and control. As a result, supply chain disruptions have taken place around the world. There were also reports of international freight trains being intercepted and robbed to obtain medical and health materials, including masks. Some countries, due to concern about maintaining the provision of strategic materials, have stepped up efforts to repair the supply chains or rebuilding them. As the world is interconnected and interdependent, benefit to one means benefit to all, whereas harm to one means harm to all. In some people's minds, however, it is not necessarily true that benefit to one means benefit to all; that is, the prosperity of another country may not result in the tranquility of their own country, but harm to one indeed means harm to all. To avoid the burden, they simply part ways or build fences to protect themselves.

In economics, the infinite extension of industrial and value chains can reduce costs. Still, due to the risk of uncertainty and instability, such as armed conflict, war, regime change, and natural disasters, which may cause supply interruption, the infinite extension of the industrial chain and value chain is no longer considered safe. Therefore, the return of industrial and value chains to their own countries and neighboring areas has received policy support in some countries. Almost all manufacturing sectors in the EU were affected by disruptions in supply chains caused by the pandemic. In particular, the parts, semi-finished products, and products exported to the EU from Asia were most seriously affected. Material and equipment shortages have reportedly limited production for about two in five European manufacturers.¹ Thus, reducing heavy external dependence is an essential aspect of strategic autonomy, and this view has gained a substantial market in some EU countries, including Germany.

As a world factory, China is a big exporter in the world. The Biden administration has taken the road of decoupling from China, especially in the high-tech fields. It has been restricting the development of China's semiconductor industry through various means, from semiconductor materials, equipment, manufacturing

¹ Marcin Szczepański, "Resilience of Global Supply Chains: Challenges and Solutions," Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, 2021, 4.

technology and international cooperation, and has established the Chip4 and Internet Alliance to exclude China from participating in the industrial and supply chains of high-end electronics and semiconductors. On July 28, 2022, the US House of Representatives passed the Chip and Science Act, allocating approximately \$52 billion to provide subsidies and other incentives for chip R&D and plant construction. The bill will also restrict subsidized companies from expanding or building new advanced-process semiconductor capacity in China and some other countries or regions. China is explicitly excluded from the “India–Pacific New Economic Framework” that started substantive negotiations in September 2022. To hedge the Belt and Road Initiative, the Biden administration, based on Trump’s “Blue Dot Network,” has put forward the so-called “Build Back Better World” (B3W) initiative. At the same time, it has spread rumors such as “debt trap,” “resource plunder” and “environmental destruction” to destroy the image of Chinese enterprises and projects.

Against this backdrop, the German Ministry of Economy is also considering measures to reduce its dependence on China, including removing investment and export guarantees in China, no longer promoting trade exhibitions or training Chinese managers, reviewing Chinese investments in Germany and German investments in China, and suing China for alleged trade unfairness together with other countries.

The Russia–Ukraine conflict and the Western sanctions have led to a more severe situation in the supply of resources, energy, and food. Russia was kicked out of the SWIFT trading system, which not only led to the disruption of the global oil pricing system, but also brought the risk of dividing the global energy market. In the face of Russia’s threat to stop supplying gas and oil, the EU has instead restricted gas and oil prices and started using coal and nuclear power to preserve its energy security. French President Francois Macron even called France a “wartime economy.” The industrial chain was among the first to suffer from the Russia–Ukraine conflict. For example, since the Russia–Ukraine conflict, German enterprises’ production, investment, and cooperation in Russia have been suspended one after another, and the bilateral trade has slumped, with German exports to Russia plunging by 52.9% in 2022.¹

¹ German Federal Statistical Office, “Exports to Russia in September 2022 Down 52.9% on the Same Month a Year Earlier,” November 11, 2022, https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2022/11/PE22_474_51.html.

C. The world is confronted with the slowdown of global economic growth, the significant differences in policies adopted by various countries, the worsening debt problems of developing countries, and the growing possibility of economic conflicts evolving into social conflicts, political crises, and even regional unrest

The Covid-19 pandemic has swept the world, and the emergence of variant viruses has often hit countries' economic recovery momentum. The global economic recovery under the pandemic is different from the past, and it is difficult to resume economic growth by providing what the economy lacks, just because it is not merely economic causes that have led to the recession. In contrast, the pandemic has had a significant impact. The epidemic control has restricted the flow of personnel and materials, dampening the policy stimulus's effect. In addition, there is no occurrence of the rise of emerging economies in groups to provide impetus to the global economy, as happened in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. While all the countries are struggling to revitalize their economies, global inflation remains high. The inflation rate in the United States jumped to a nearly 40-year high. As a result, the Federal Reserve ended its monetary easing policy. From March to December 2022, the Fed has raised its benchmark interest rate seven times, from near zero to just under 4.5%.¹ The relatively high interest rates in the United States siphoned global funds, increasing the outflow of funds from other countries and at the same time, pushing up international financing costs for every country. The expansion of lending loans by banks during the prosperous period put the entire financial system at significant risk. An economist asserted, "Today's financial markets will inevitably suffer another crash. It might come soon."²

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have several times lowered their forecasts for world economic growth. According to the IMF, Global economic growth is projected to be 3.2% and 2.7% in 2022 and 2023. If the conflict between Russia and Ukraine escalates, inflation expectations increase, and the global financing environment tightens, global economic growth will further slide to 2.6% and 2.0%. As a result, economic growth in

¹ "The Fed Continues Its Crackdown on Inflation, Pushing Up Interest Rates Again," <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/14/1142757646/fed-federal-reserve-interest-rates-declate-declaration-benchmark#:~:text=The%20Fed%20has%20raised%20its, cards%2C%20mortgages%20and%20car%20loans>.

² Milton Ezrati, "The Myth of Regulated Finance," *National Interest*, January/February 2022, 68.

the United States and Eurozone will approach zero in 2023, and some countries will face a depression unseen in a century.¹

Economic growth is restrained in most developing countries as their exports and incomes have fallen while their debts and inflation have risen. As their livelihoods become difficult, the social tensions intensify. Internal tensions were not thoroughly eased after the attempted coup d'état in Kazakhstan in early 2022. The large-scale antigovernment unrest in Sri Lanka at the end of March 2022 eventually led to the resignation of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The consequences of the transition from “great moderation” to the era of “high inflation” and “low growth” will further emerge in all countries.

D. The foundation of the international order with the United Nations system at its core weakens, the solidarity in multilateral governance declines, governance deficits increase, and commitments are less fulfilled

After World War II, the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank, and the GATT (predecessor of the World Trade Organization) were established to form the post-war international order. The United Nations is committed to maintaining world peace and development. Still, it can neither stop the war launched by major powers nor eliminate the root security causes of war as some of its pillar principles have not been properly implemented or respected by individual member states. Take the Ukraine crisis as an example; Richard Haas, a former director of policy planning at the US State Department, argues that “Russia’s invasion of Ukraine confirmed what has long been apparent: the rules-based order created after World War II is at risk of collapse.”² This conclusion not only reflects the current situation of the international order but also reveals the US’ hegemonic mentality—demanding other countries to abide by the rules of the international order but not reflecting on launching war against other countries by bypassing the United Nations.

On some issues, such as the investigation of the origins of the Covid-19, China has been stigmatized and demonized, and individual UN officials are sometimes coerced by the hegemonic power to change position. The appellate body of the WTO ceased functioning because the United States blocked the

¹ “Latest World Economic Outlook Growth Projections,” *World Economic Outlook*, October 2022.

² Ivo H Daalder and James M Lindsay, “Last Best Hope: The West’s Final Chance to Build a Better World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2022, 120.

appointment of new judges. Trade liberalization is difficult to advance as WTO members have widened their divergences. In the face of mounting challenges, the UN is difficult to gather consensus, and the decision-making efficiency is low. Differences between various parties have widened during the Ukraine crisis. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals have been difficult to advance. Governance in some areas is in a null or floating state. The results just reached at the Glasgow Climate Change Summit in Britain will be difficult to implement in the face of the energy crisis. Some countries have loosened their emission reduction commitments. The United Nations reform has made no progress, further eroding trust among the great powers and casting a shadow over the prospects for a joint response to the challenges to human society. Regarding development, trade wars have damaged symbiotic relationships and mutual benefits between countries, while small circles have artificially split the international division of labor and value chains. In the face of these problems, the relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations have mainly let go and cannot coordinate a correction.

E. Nontraditional challenges are still prominent. Terrorism, extreme religious fundamentalism, and separatism await opportunities to rise in revolt, transnational crime, and piracy are still rampant, and cyber-attacks are almost unscrupulous

The strategic focus of the United States has shifted from counterterrorism to coping with the challenges of major powers. After the American troops withdrew from Afghanistan in haste, the Taliban quickly captured Kabul and seized power, and the defeated “Islamic State” extremist groups survived. More than twenty years have passed since the September 11 attacks, but international terrorism has become more rampant. Terrorist activities spread from critical areas to all parts of the globe, showing a trend of expansion and fragmentation. Terrorism has become increasingly complex due to the prolonged Covid-19 pandemic and heightened global geopolitical tensions. As a result of the accelerated proliferation of the Islamic State, the resurgence of al-Qaeda, and the vicious interaction of extremist thoughts, terrorist threats have also adopted new approaches of decentralization, nontraditionality, disorder, and even loss of control. Other nontraditional challenges are also increasingly exposed. For example, the United States National Security Agency’s cyber-attacks on China’s

Northwestern Polytechnical University constitute a de facto cyberwar. The cyberwar, as well as the AI-driven warfare may become the main direction for future warfare.

II. Great Power War Looms Large after 30 Years since the End of the Cold War

It has been some time since there was no direct armed conflict or war between the great powers. The end of the Cold War was seen as the end of history. As the sole superpower in the world, the United States led the historical process of globalization after the end of the Cold War. Almost all countries were involved in liberalization, privatization, and marketization trends. The growth of the economy improved the accumulation of wealth and living standards in all countries. The belief that interdependence formed by binding interests can provide security is called “interdependence theory.” Since the end of the Second World War, there has been no military confrontation between democracies, and the theory of democratic peace has also prevailed. Interdependence leads to the rise of the middle class in some countries in transition, contributing to the expansion of democratic aspirations and strengthening the foundations for peace in these countries. This vision purported to avoid war, especially between the great powers.

But the issue of war and peace has not disappeared. Within 30 years after the end of the Cold War, the perceptions of war seem to have undergone disruptive changes. It is time for us to face the developments in the war situation. Moreover, in the past 30 years, the Gulf War, the Kosovo War, and the Afghanistan War have all shown that hegemonic power has the impulse to start wars and do not conceal their war actions. Those who advocate interdependence under globalization have not seen change in authoritarian states in reality, such as political openness, market economy, and moderate foreign policy. The crisis in Ukraine seems to have bankrupted some people’s minds. All bets have not worked; they even had a counterproductive effect.¹ Interdependence is not the guarantee of security order. The end of the Cold War

¹ Richard Haass, “The Dangerous Decade: A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs*, September /October 2022, 29.

and the strengthening of interdependence have also failed to end the conflicts and wars. “The assumption that a major war in Europe or Asia will not happen because of economic interdependence seems to be confirmation bias.”¹ In this cognitive transformation, the democratic peace theory has lost its support.

China and Russia are considered “strategic competitors” of the United States. Their appearance in the US government’s National Security Strategy report demonstrated the nature of the confrontation between the United States on one side and China and Russia on the other side, at least in military terms. For China, it was seen as the strategic competitor of the United States during the Trump period, and it was to the “most severe geopolitical adversary” faced by the United States in the National Security Strategy report of the Biden administration, which is the primary threat that the US’ national security needs to be dealt with in a centralized manner. Richard Haass, a former director of policy planning at the State Department, argues that “Russia presents an acute, near-term problem for the United States. China, in contrast, poses a far more serious medium- and long-term challenge.”² The Taiwan question may trigger a conflict between China and the United States, but its essence is that the United States believes China will eventually become a superpower, threatening the US hegemony and that the US military will not bet on negative assumptions about whether China and the United States will fall into the Thucydides trap.

Contrary to the Western narrative that a rising power will always challenge a hegemonic power, if a hegemonic power is accustomed to containing the rising power, the latter will not fail to make hostile reactions. Therefore, it is entirely conceivable that the strategic military objectives of both sides are to take the other as the main adversary. In this sense, the conflict between the United States and China on the Taiwan question serves the overarching strategic goal of American hegemony worldwide. Therefore, the strategic goal of the United States is to maintain the status quo of the Taiwan question, hinder China’s reunification, and prevent China from gaining its geostrategic advantage in the Asia–Pacific region. This is a serious challenge to China’s core interests and will be the root cause of the strategic rivalry between the two

¹ Michael W. Johnson, “After Russia’s Invasion, Seven Assumptions the US and NATO Allies Should Drop,” March 18, 2022, <http://www.rand.or/blog/2022/03/after/russia-ukraine-invasion-seven-assumptions-the.html>.

² Richard Haass, “The Dangerous Decade: A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis,” 29.

countries. A Rand Corporation report develops two scenarios of systemic US–China conflict under the assumption that China is close to global dominance—the low-intensity and high-intensity scenarios.¹ The question is who can guarantee that a low-intensity conflict will not evolve into a high-intensity conflict.

In the West, the Ukraine crisis is called a “Zeitenwende”—a watershed moment and the end of an era. NATO has stepped up troop deployments to member states in Eastern Europe. The United States and Europe imposed the largest-scale sanctions against Russia in history. All kinds of military aid have been sent to Ukraine. Sweden and Finland are poised to apply for NATO membership, a step previously opposed and now embraced by their societies. And in the most dramatic transformation, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced once unthinkable investments in German military capabilities and shipments of arms to Ukraine.² In Asia, Japan’s Ministry of Defense asked for 5.59 trillion yen (\$40.4 billion) for fiscal year 2023, its most significant ever budget request, and will rise to 2% of GDP in five years. Prime Minister Yukio Kishida vowed to “fundamentally reinforce Japan’s defense capabilities within the next five years.”³

America’s annual military spending is now more than \$800 billion. After the Biden administration took office, the military machinery expanded by rallying allies, consolidating NATO, and establishing the US-UK-Australia Tripartite Security Alliance (AUKUS). The significant rise in US military spending and its allies will inevitably lead to the large-scale accumulation of military strength. In the evolution of the so-called “democracy versus authoritarianism,” “the West versus the East,” and the mutual repulsion between different religions and races, this large-scale military accumulation far beyond the minimum level of maintaining security adds to the risk of conflicts hard to conceal and even wars. Richard Haass argued that “the increased prospects for

¹ Timothy R. Heath and Kristen Gunness, “The Return of Great Power War: Scenario of Systemic Conflict between the United States and China,” Rand Corporation, August 2022.

² Craig Kafura, “Does the Russia-Ukraine War Herald a New Era for Japan’s Security Policy?,” May 20, 2022, <https://globalsecuritywire.com/military-terrorism/2022/05/20/does-the-russia-ukraine-war-herald-a-new-era-for-japans-security-policy>.

³ “Keynote Address by Prime Minister Kishida at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2022,” June 10, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/diplomatic/202206/_00005.html.

major-power wars in Europe and the Indo–Pacific, and the growing potential for Iran to cause instability in the Middle East have come together to produce the most dangerous moment since World War II.”¹ The trigger of war lies not only in the competition of great powers but also in the diversity of threats and conflicts. The world has entered a new and more complex era similar to the Cold War, which is characterized by unfocused and frequently occurring conflicts, including territorial sovereignty disputes, religious opposition and conflicts, resource scrambling, war crises looming in hot spots of traditional conflicts, asymmetric terrorist attacks, broad information wars, and the international drug trade.

It is inadvisable to exaggerate the threat of war. But for Anthony C. Grayling, war is one of the common historical events and will not diminish with the development of civilization and democracy. Of the 3,421 years recorded in history, only 268 years have been free of war.² According to the realist theory of war, nations essentially act as individuals, interacting with other countries on an international anarchist stage that lacks a supreme authority and adjudicators to resolve differences between nations. If a nation is to protect its own interests, it must consider the worst case scenario and prepare for it with arms. War can be an accident or well-designed.³ Realism also holds that “power provides security and means to maintain security” and that hegemonic power’s unwillingness to give up power and the rivalry with other nations for power may lead to conflict. A universal view is that when there is a balance of power, the international community can achieve relative peace. When the balance of power is broken, the rising nation will always become the target to quell. Anthony C. Grayling exclaimed that British foreign policy has opposed the continent’s most powerful, aggressive, and dominant country for the past 400 years.⁴ British opposition did not result from the misdeeds of the rising nation, but because Britain, as one of the global maritime powers, wanted to maintain a balance of power on the European continent.

In the past, nuclear weapons contributed to a “balance of terror,” and wars

¹ Richard Haass, “The Dangerous Decade: A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis,” 29.

² Will Durant and Ariel Durant: *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

³ Anthony C. Grayling, *War: An Enquiry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁴ Ibid.

between great powers were widely regarded as “imaginable.” However, after the Ukraine crisis began, US President Biden declared that the United States would not participate in the war, mainly out of considering Russia’s nuclear power status. While the consequences of a nuclear war between great powers are unthinkable, nuclear deterrence can be seen as part of the evolution of war and may be the last option for nations to be driven to their knees. Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres warned at the NPT Review that the world is in “nuclear danger not seen since the height of the Cold War.”¹

The unbalanced development of the world power, the insane preservation of hegemonic status by the hegemonic power, the intensification of great power competition, and the growing risks of various wars and conflicts all suggest that humanity’s efforts for peace are far from being accomplished overnight. Peace is still being tested, and that shadow of war has not gone away; instead, it is looming. It may be the traditional direct confrontation between the two armies. In the eyes of the West, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is a big-power war, and basically, it is re-occurrence of a traditional major-power war. However, it may also take on a new form, such as trade war, financial war, cyber war, public opinion war, intelligence war, biological war, electronic war, etc. At present, world peace is intervened at an unprecedented extent, and the danger of war and the challenge of security have become serious matters for all countries.

III. China Has Become the Anchor of Stability for World Peace and Development

The change in the international environment is far from over. It is believed that “the coming era will be one of health crises, climate shocks, cyber-attacks, and geoeconomic competition among great powers.”² The strategic competition of big countries will continue; the parallel system, small circles, and small groups will not disappear but will further develop. Globalization faces adjustment and

¹ Colin Lodewick, “‘One Miscalculation Away from Nuclear Annihilation’: U.N. Chief Warns of Global Conflict as Ukraine War Pushes Nuclear Risk to Highest Level since the Cold War,” August 2, 2022, <https://fortune.com/2022/08/01/un-antonio-guterres-non-proliferation-nuclear-weapons/>.

² Ganesh Sitaraman, “A Grand Strategy of Resilience,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2020, 165.

the road to world development will be uneven. The domestic contradictions in every country will be further exposed. The multiple threats will continue to be presented in different ways. China will still face all kinds of undercurrents and dangerous beaches. The hegemonic power may intensify its efforts to suppress and contain China. Some countries will take follow-up actions to decouple from China, and the conflict between values will not cease. The risk of great power conflicts continue to exist, and the occurrence of real conflicts and even local low-intensity war cannot be ruled out.

In the face of the changed international security environment, human society once again comes to a historical crossroads: hostility or mutual respect? isolation and decoupling or openness and cooperation? zero-sum game or win-win outcome?

Considering the global strategic situation and the vision of humanity for the future, the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China claims: “Although this is an era fraught with challenges, it is also an era brimming with hope. The Chinese people are ready to work hand in hand with people across the world to create an even brighter future for humanity.” The better prospects for humankind hinge on people’s choices. For example, the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China declared, “China has always been committed to its foreign policy goals of upholding world peace and promoting common development, and it is dedicated to promoting a human community with a shared future.” This is a rising power’s responsibility to the future, showcasing China’s anchor and hope for the direction of human progress in the complex change of international strategic situation. This anchor and hope lie in the fact that the Central Committee of the CPC, with Comrade Xi Jinping as its core, implements the national rejuvenation strategy within a wider context of the once-in-a-century changes taking place in the world, promotes the strategic objectives of Chinese modernization in the new era, and seeks self-development committed to world peace, development, and self-development. As a result, China is growing into an anchor of stability for world peace and development, injecting more stability and positive energy into a turbulent world.

A. China injects stability into the world

Decided by its firm pursuit of an independent foreign policy of peace,

China is injecting stability into a turbulent world. It contains the two elements of independence and peace. China today has grown into a big country with a massive economy and market. It does not need to engage in one-sided diplomacy, much less sit on both sides. Since its establishment, China has been respected by the world as a great power just owing to its unique role played in the international arena with its independent position, although it was not quite strong in national strength. At present, the tendencies of unilateralism, egoism, profit-seeking, and nationalism of some great powers are rising. As a rising independent force, China is, first of all, a significant force of peace and development, which is precisely what the international community expects to see. On November 22, 2021, President Xi Jinping pointed out at the summit on the 30th anniversary of establishing China–ASEAN relations:

Without peace, nothing would be possible. Maintaining peace is our greatest common interest and the most cherished aspiration of people of all countries. We need to serve as the builders and guardians of peace in the region. We need to pursue dialogue instead of confrontation, build partnerships instead of alliances, and make concerted efforts to address the various negative factors that might threaten or undermine peace.¹

The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China stressed that one of the essential characteristics of Chinese-style modernization is that it follows the path of peaceful development. “China’s development strengthens the world’s forces for peace. No matter what stage of development it reaches, China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansionism.”² If China’s power is strengthened, the force for peace will increase, and the impetus for development will also increase. We should not only develop and consolidate the regional and international multilateral institutions featuring cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, reciprocity, and mutual support, but also defer the formation of an all-out confrontational Western camp as far as possible and clearly oppose bloc politics. In his speech at the Boao Forum for Asia, President

¹ Xi Jinping, “For a Shared Future and Our Common Home,” Speech at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, November 22, 2021, https://en.qstheory.cn/2021-11/23/c_683703.htm.

² Xi Jinping, “Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects.”

Xi Jinping called for “opposing unilateralism, and saying no to group politics and bloc confrontation.” Therefore, China advocates upholding multilateralism and safeguarding world peace and stability. President Xi Jinping pointed out, “History teaches us that multilateralism, equity and justice can keep war and conflict at bay, while unilateralism and power politics will inflate dispute and confrontation.”¹ We must continue emphasizing partnership, openness, and friendship instead of alliance and exclusion. Influenced by the United States, the EU regards China as a challenge and rival and its China policy shifted negatively. But it is never easy to achieve the overall transformation of its China policy for a community of countries with different strategic interests. Domestic conflicts have a profound effect on themselves and their mutual relations. “As Europe and the United States continue to contend with populism, widening inequality, and spiraling political polarization, cultural fragmentation could be more dangerous to the transatlantic relationship than—dare one say it?—either Russia or China.”²

In many international conflicts and disputes with complex backgrounds, China always stands on the side of fairness and justice, the side of peace and the right side of history based on the merits of the matter itself, historical latitude, realistic concerns, and international law. China treats all parties fairly in complicated rivalries. China adheres to the development of friendly cooperation with other countries based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, promotes the construction of a new type of international relations, actively promotes coordination and benign interactions between major powers, and promotes the establishment of a pattern of major-country relations featuring peaceful coexistence, overall stability, and balanced development. On November 14, 2022, President Xi Jinping met with US President Joe Biden in Bali, Indonesia, indicating that non-conflict, non-confrontation, and peaceful coexistence between China and the United States are in the two countries’ fundamental interests. President Biden said that the United States and China have a shared responsibility to demonstrate to the world that the United States

¹ Xi Jinping, “Fighting Covid-19 in Solidarity and Advancing BRICS Cooperation through Concerted Efforts,” Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at 12th BRICS Summit, November 17, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-11/17/c_139523124.htm.

² Michael C. Kimmage, “A Post Western-West?,” *National Interest*, November/December 2021, 43.

and China can manage differences and avoid confrontation or conflict resulting from misunderstandings and misjudgments.¹ The position statement has eased tensions between China and the United States. The heads of state of China and the United States unanimously oppose the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine to prevent a nuclear crisis on the Eurasian continent, stressing that the use of nuclear weapons must be rejected, and nuclear war must never be fought.² The common stand allayed global concern that the crisis in Ukraine may turn into a nuclear disaster.

China respects all countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity, adheres to the equality of all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, and respects the development path and social system independently chosen by all peoples. It firmly opposes all hegemonism and power politics, Cold War thinking, interference in the internal affairs of other countries and double standards. At bilateral meetings and international organizations, China has called for an infusion of stability into the world. When President Xi Jinping met with President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in Beijing via video link on April 1, 2022, he stressed that under the circumstances of the spread of Covid-19, the weak and faltering global economic recovery and the Ukraine crisis, China and Europe, as the two major international forces, two big markets and two civilizations, should strengthen communication and play a constructive role on China–EU relations and major issues concerning global peace and development, to provide some stabilizing elements for the turbulent world situation.³ On December 1, 2022, President Xi Jinping held talks with European Council President Charles Michel at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. President Xi said that as China and Europe are two major forces for maintaining world peace, two major markets for joint development and two significant civilizations for promoting human progress, it is in the common interest of China–EU relations and the international community to maintain the upward momentum

¹ “Xi Jinping Meets with U.S. President Joe Biden in Bali,” *People's Daily*, November 15, 2022, 1.

² “Wang Yi Briefs the Media on the Meeting between Chinese and U.S. Presidents and Answers Questions,” November 15, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202211/t20221115_10975747.html.

³ “Xi Jinping: China and Europe Should Provide a Stabilizing Factor for the Turbulent World Situation,” April 1, 2022, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-04/01/content_5683023.htm.

and adhere to the principle of mutual benefit and win-win results in developing China–EU relations. The more volatile the international situation and the more prominent the global challenges, the greater the significance of China–EU relations for the world.¹

B. China injects positive energy into the world

The world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation. The existing international order, which comprises all kinds of global and regional organizations and institutions, are under severe shocks and confronted with the fate of collapse. At the same time, the voice calling for the establishment of a fair and equitable international order is increasing. The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China maintains that “China is firm in safeguarding the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order underpinned by international law, and the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.”² We need to advocate and follow a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security concept, resolve differences through consultation and negotiation, oppose interference in internal affairs, oppose unilateral sanctions and “long-arm jurisdiction” and jointly create a peaceful and stable environment for development. The world is facing an increasingly prominent deficit of peace, development, security, and governance. The contradictions among major powers are rising. The rise of power politics in international relations has resulted in the absence of governance in the new frontiers of the Arctic, Antarctic, deep sea, and space, which is all the more urgent for the joint efforts of the international community. The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China stresses that “China plays an active part in the reform and development of the global governance system. It pursues a vision of global governance featuring shared growth through discussion and collaboration. China upholds true multilateralism, promotes greater democracy in international relations, and works to make global governance fairer and more equitable.”

¹ “Xi Jinping Holds Talks with President of European Council Michel,” December 1, 2022, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-12/01/content_5729824.htm.

² Xi Jinping, “Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects.”

At a time when the growth of the world economy is slowing down and is even possibly sliding into a decline, and international politics and international security are facing challenges, President Xi Jinping has put forward the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative successively, and expressed China's willingness to join hands with other countries to implement the initiatives, injected positive elements into world peace and development.

As a rising power, China pursues a peaceful rise instead of challenging the incumbent world order as the previous emerging powers did. President Xi Jinping said in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, "We sincerely call upon all countries to hold dear humanity's shared values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom; to promote mutual understanding and forge closer bonds with other peoples; and to respect the diversity of civilizations. Let us allow cultural exchanges to transcend estrangement, mutual learning to transcend clashes, and coexistence to transcend feelings of superiority. Let us all join forces to meet all types of global challenges."¹ "China is committed to building a world of lasting peace through dialogue and consultation, a world of universal security through collaboration and shared benefits, a world of common prosperity through mutually beneficial cooperation, an open and inclusive world through exchanges and mutual learning, and a clean and beautiful world through green and low-carbon development."² China provides sufficient positive energy for the world.

C. China provides great opportunities for the world

The "strategic opportunity period" was not mentioned in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China; instead, it replaced "strategic opportunity" with "opportunity." The "opportunity" here is neither an objective existence in the outside world nor a gift from the outside world. Rather, it coexists with risks and challenges. As far as the opportunity itself is concerned, China itself is an organic component of the opportunities in the world.

First, China offers opportunities to open up. China's doors will only become more and more open. Opening up will benefit China as well as the

¹ Xi Jinping, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects."

² Ibid.

world. According to the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,

We have pursued a more proactive strategy of opening up. We have worked to build a globally-oriented network of high-standard free trade areas and accelerated the development of pilot free trade zones and the Hainan Free Trade Port. As a collaborative endeavor, the international community has welcomed the Belt and Road Initiative as a public good and a cooperation platform. China has become a major trading partner for more than 140 countries and regions, it leads the world in total volume of trade in goods, and it is a major destination for global investment and a leading country in outbound investment. Through these efforts, we have advanced a broader agenda of opening up across more areas and in greater depth.¹

The second is the opportunity to access a large market. A market is an opportunity, while a big market is a great opportunity. China has developed into a world economic power over the past 40 years of reform and opening up. China's GDP has grown from 54 trillion yuan to 114 trillion yuan in the past decade, accounting for 18.5% of the world economy. China has remained the world's second-largest economy, and its per capita GDP has risen from 39,800 yuan to 81,000 yuan. China's manufacturing sector, as are its foreign exchange reserves, is the largest in the world.² China is a populous country, its economy is still growing, and there is enormous room for its further development. The super-large-scale population makes it possible to form a super-large economy, and will inevitably form a super-large market, which will strongly promote the trade and financial investment between China and other countries. The launch of the fifth China International Import Expo in November 2022 and its outcome highlighted that China's big market is a great opportunity for the world. A recent report showed that China's average contribution to global economic growth exceeded 30% during the 2013-2021 period, ranking first across the world.³ In the next 15 years, China's middle-income population is expected to

¹ Xi Jinping, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects."

² Ibid.

³ "China Contributes over 30% to World Economic Growth in 2013-2021," September 19, 2022, https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/statistics/202209/19/content_WS6327a6dfc6d0a757729e02c0.html.

increase from 400 million to 800 million, which requires importing \$24 trillion of goods.¹ It is evident that as China further pursues high-quality development, China's super-large-scale market effect will continue to be amplified. This great opportunity created by China's big market will enable other countries to expand their export and investment in China. It will also become one of the most important incentives for world economic growth.

Third, opportunities for innovative development. In terms of technological and industrial development levels, China stays at the midstream and downstream of the industrial chains. China has to rely on its own innovation to avoid being locked in the midstream and downstream of industrial chains. Self-reliant innovation is also a prerequisite for China to participate in international competition. In the past, due to the relatively backward technology and process, some Chinese industries acted as "followers." After the gradual development of technology and industrial level, some industries leaped to be the "parallel" of the Western industries. If China wants to be a "leader" in some industries, China must rely on its own innovation.

In contrast, when China becomes stronger, the hegemonic power enjoying technological advantages will further restrict the transfer of advanced technologies to China and may even suppress the transfer of technologies from other developed countries to China in an attempt to contain its strategic competitors. Therefore, we have no way out except to rely on our own innovation, and China is making great headway in this regard. With nationwide R&D spending rising from 1 trillion yuan to 2.8 trillion yuan in the past decade, the second highest in the world, China is now home to the largest cohort of R&D personnel globally. It has grown stronger in basic research and original innovation, made breakthroughs in some core technologies in key fields, and boosted emerging strategic industries. It has scored major successes on multiple fronts, including manned spaceflights, lunar and Martian exploration, deep sea and deep earth probes, supercomputers, satellite navigation, quantum information, nuclear power technology, new energy technology, airliner

¹ "China's New Journey Creates New Opportunities for the World--Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng Shares with Foreign Diplomatic Envoys to China His Perceptions and Thoughts on Studying the Guiding Principles of the 20th CPC National Congress," November 2, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbxw_new/202211/t20221102_10797571.shtml.

manufacturing, and biomedicine.¹ China has joined the ranks of the world's innovators. It is to China's advantage to lift its position in the international industrial and value chains, thereby further strengthening the endogenous driving force and feasibility of domestic circulation, improving the quality of the international circulation, and promoting global industrial upgrading. For some latecomer countries committed to developing economies, accelerating industrialization, and improving livelihoods, China is both a model and an opportunity. For developed countries, the high-quality development of China's economy can further expand and deepen global high-level cooperation and advance the transformation and upgrading of the world's economy.

As the world enters a new period of turbulent change, the great changes that have not occurred in a century continue to develop further. It remains to be seen whether some volatile and discrete characteristics will become ossified and the impact will be greater. The world is full of uncertainty, but certainty still exists. History is often strikingly similar, but the wheels of history roll forward, never returning to where they started. The sustained rise of China will further provide positive energy for global development, opportunities for opening up, opportunities for large markets, and opportunities for innovation. A stable, developed, and prosperous China will benefit all countries, further promote world peace, development, prosperity, and the construction of a community of shared future for mankind.

¹ Xi Jinping, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects."