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CHINESE RESEARCHERS SUGGEST MODULATION OF CHINA'S POLICY
TOWARDS UNITED STATES

by JAYADEVA RANADE

The growing strain in the US-China relationship continues to cause concern in the higher echelons of China's leadership. Chinese think-tanks have cautioned that the situation could worsen considerably more and some, like the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, have recommended ways to bring about a change in public opinion in the US.

2. In a 3000-word article published on July 6, 2020, on the popular portal Aisixiang.com managed by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, three researchers of prestigious Chinese think-tanks and the Renmin University identified stable relations with the US as essential for China's development and said Beijing should "actively manage" its differences with Washington. The article focussed on the West Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. It equally noted the importance of managing "third-party factors" and, quite interestingly, said "China and the United States should refrain from the urge to gather third-party forces to block and counterbalance each other, nor should they force third parties to choose a side station between China and the United States". This suggests a major modification of the assertive policy being followed by Xi Jinping.

3. The article has been co-authored by An Gang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the Tsinghua University Research Center for Strategy and Security; Wang Yiming, a doctoral student at the School of International Relations, Renmin University of China; and Hu Xin, a National Defense Technology Associate Professor, Institute of Strategy and Security, University of International Relations. The 5-part article said that Beijing should seek to stabilize its relations with Washington and actively manage their differences and competition. It said "in order to effectively prevent the "new situation" from evolving toward full confrontation and conflict, China and the United States urgently need to reposition, deal with, and control the "new paradigm" of mutual relations". The report added that the Trump administration, which views China as a "strategic and economic opponent" of the United States, "will stick to the end in terms of competition with China". It added that following the tone and direction established by the White House, various US government departments, powerful institutions, and strategic think tanks have gradually formed a "whole government" strategic competition situation.

4. The report said "China's policy toward the U.S. has placed greater emphasis on struggle, and the competitiveness of China and the United States has increased significantly". It assessed that the United States "believes that the essence of Sino-US competition on the

international stage is the competition between the Western democratic political circle and the "authoritarian camp" led by China and Russia". It added that a conflict of value systems and differences in political systems are the source of long-term mistrust between the two countries. It asserted that "China adheres to the socialist road, firmly maintains the basic system, and mobilizes the country to achieve the "Two Hundred years" strategic goal". It averred it "is impossible to trade core interests". It acknowledged that "The development of structural contradictions on the ideological level between China and the United States will follow the rise of China. The deepening is more sharp and complicated".

5. The article stressed the importance of maritime power and said "maritime strategic competition will determine the overall strategic relationship to a large extent, and the narrowing of the contrast between China and the United States will increase the strategic competition at sea". Interestingly, the report observed "The tendency of American pressure on China to concentrate on political systems and national sovereignty and security issues is to a certain extent, inspiring China's awareness of victimization and sorrow, boosting nationalist sentiment, and aggravating the atmosphere of public opinion that is not conducive to the long-term development of Sino-US relations and will impact the rational framework for diplomatic decision-making between the two countries from time to time". Assessing that the US "is a major opponent that China has to deal with strategically and an important target for cooperation in many practical fields", it candidly stated that China is "the weaker side of the strategic competition of major powers" and "should fully understand the strategic considerations of the United States, form a reasonable response strategy, and make the right choice of the times". "China needs to carefully assess the risk of these confrontations dragging the two countries into conflict".

6. Stating that "Communication and dialogue are important traditions in Sino-US relations even in the sharpest rivalry during the Cold War", the report listed a number of steps to keep dialogue open. These are: (i) "Improve the high-level dialogue and communication mechanism and establish an interactive channel that matches the importance of global power relations"; (ii) "Reactivate the strategic dialogue mechanism whose efficacy is at a standstill and build a strategic stability framework"; (iii) "Strengthen the institutional dialogue and professional exchanges between the Chinese and American armed forces"; (iv) "Resist the trend of "decoupling" and protect the mutually beneficial and harmonious relations between the two countries". The article noted, in an apparent hint to exploit the opportunity, that "Generally speaking, a large number of people in the domestic business, education, and academic circles in the United States do not consider "decoupling" to be desirable and feasible. They also dislike the monitoring and restriction measures by the Trump administration against Chinese people"; (v) "Rationally and effectively cooperate at the global security level when "China is growing into a global power, and the interests of the United States are increasingly extending to the regional and global levels"; (vi) Properly manage maritime strategic competition as "the West Pacific Ocean, especially the South China Sea, is becoming the home of Sino-US face-to-face strategic games. It is also the practice for the two countries to conduct strategic trials and explore new dynamic balances. As far as the megatrends are concerned, the two countries can neither ignore nor avoid conflicts in their strategic interests, nor can they completely exclude each other by strong means. Long-term strategic stalemate will become a normalized trend."(vii) "Clarify common interests and maintain normal cooperation" especially since "China and the United States still share

common interests in a wide range of fields";(viii) Manage third-party factors, namely China and the United States have close ties with other countries in the global arena, which has a profound impact on the interests of these countries. "China and the United States should refrain from the urge to gather third-party forces to block and counterbalance each other, nor should they force third parties to choose a side station between China and the United States" as the effect will be counter-productive. "The role of third-party countries should be defined as a common friend rather than an enemy of China and the United States". The more the United States retreats in the face of global responsibilities, the more China should join hands with third-party countries such as the European Union and ASEAN. "By strengthening the role of third parties, it can help promote the formation of a benign situation in which China and the United States actively strive for the support of the international community, and enhance the power and flexibility of the big country game". And, in conclusion, it said (ix) "China must adjust its strategy toward the United States" and "focus on the long-term, focus on strategic thinking, maintain strategic determination, and work hard at the bilateral, regional, and global levels while striving to "coordinate and interact with the US in a competitive game to create a new reasonable relationship paradigm and avoid falling into the guilty of the "Thucydides trap" advocated by the US". It stated that building a "Community of Human Destiny" is the general trend. The article emphasised that "Whether it is China or the United States, or a third-party force whose behaviour is greatly affected by the trend of Sino-US relations, it is necessary to look at a broader time and space and have more human perspective".

7. China's academics and strategic experts are increasingly concerned at the worsening trend in Sino-US relations. They are conscious of the huge differences in the respective economic, military and scientific strengths. Suggestions for changes in policy towards the United States, though now being more often articulated openly, are noticeably careful to avoid appearing contradictory to Chinese President Xi Jinping's assertive foreign policy.

(The author is former Additional Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India and is presently President of the Centre for China analysis and Strategy.)



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An Gang, Wang Yiming, Hu Xin

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Executive Summary: Since Trump took office, the United States' strategic positioning in China has shown a negative trend in all directions, and the transition from "contact" to "regulation" has been deepened. As emerging powers and hegemonic countries in today's international system, the relationship between the two countries is forming a new trend of increasingly prominent strategic competition. The emergence and deepening of Sino-US economic and trade frictions indicate that economic and trade cooperation, as the traditional "ballast stone" of the relationship between the two countries, can play a limited role in dealing with the "new situation" of strategic competition alone. In order to effectively prevent the "new situation" from evolving toward full confrontation and conflict, China and the United States urgently need to reposition, deal with, and control the "new paradigm" of mutual relations. The global governance structure, including global security governance, provides a relatively stable institutional system for Sino-US strategic games and power balance. By clarifying strategic competition boundaries, constructing a dialogue and coordination platform, and effectively using third-party forces, the rational game and active cooperation between China and the United States can be effectively promoted, and directly bring about changes in concepts, systems, and models of global security governance. This is not only in line with the fundamental interests of the two countries and the general aspirations of the international community, but also the need for the sound development of global governance. However, a major issue to be resolved to establish the "new paradigm" is that the role of economic and trade cooperation as a "ballast stone" for the relationship between the two countries has been unstable, and a new "ballast stone" needs to be explored. The role of global security governance

cooperation in this regard is not enough. The primary feature of future Sino-US relations is strategic competition. The new "ballast stone" can be established through a game of power to establish a relatively stable mechanism structure, which is ultimately built in a way that balances the powers of major powers.

About the authors: An Gang, researcher at the Tsinghua University Research Center for Strategy and Security, editor of World Knowledge (Beijing Postcode: 100020); Wang Yiming, doctoral student at the School of International Relations, Renmin University of China (Beijing Postcode: 100872); Hu Xin, National Defense Technology Associate Professor, Institute of Strategy and Security, University of International Relations (Nanjing Postcode: 210039).

Since the Trump administration came to power, under the banner of "America First", it has comprehensively promoted its foreign policy of conservatism, adjusted its strategic focus from counter-terrorism to competition among major powers, proclaimed China as the top "strategic competitor" of the United States, and issued a series of measures aimed at suppressing China's rising momentum and development potential. These measures have provoked an all-round game and pushed China-US relations into a strategic "new era of competition." This adjustment of US policy toward China did not begin with the Trump administration, but was rooted in China's accelerated rise and the strategic anxiety and panic that the US faced with this historic phenomenon.

1. China-US relations are generating a new trend

According to Kissinger, the issue of reshaping the international order is the "ultimate test" for contemporary politicians. In terms of Sino-US relations that have entered the era of strategic competition, the impact of this test is huge. "Something like Sino-US economic and trade friction is enough to generate a reshaping effect that is more powerful than the world war that destroyed Europe." In the future, the stability of the future international order and the continuity of economic globalization largely depend on how China and the United States will coexist.

(1) The relationship between emerging powers and defending powers is an insurmountable structural barrier of the international system

According to the proposition put forward by Paul Kennedy: "Due to the uneven development speed of different societies and the advantages and preferences of

technological breakthroughs and organizational reforms to different societies, the relative strength of world powers is not static." The history of the development of international relations since the establishment of the Westphalia system has profoundly shown that this relative change in power and cyclical power of major powers is the main source of power to promote the change of the international system, changes in the international order and the reshaping of relations between countries. According to realism theory, the essence of international relations is the struggle for power among countries. The perpetual game between emerging powers and defending powers is the basic form of this process. According to Hans J. Morgenthau, an important founder of the theory, the unquestioned pursuit of power by the state leads to conflicts and wars. When the power of defending powers declines and the power of emerging powers increases, wars are destined to erupt . Since each country's economic growth rate does not always maintain a balance during different periods, the emerging powers that are rapidly growing in strength seek power positions and income distribution that match their rising strengths. Historically, Germany has insisted on breaking the Versailles system between the two world wars, and Japan's deliberate breakthroughs in the Washington system are typical examples. According to the most influential structural realism perspective in realism theory, emerging powers and conservative powers are essentially the same, but they are two units distributed in the international relations system, and the game-playing relationship between them is endowed by the structure. An objective necessity of the country, the reason why the country fell into conflict is out of helpless security dilemmas. "Countries cannot know whether they have obtained sufficient security, but they know one thing: a country with power is safer than a country without power." The conflict between emerging powers and defending powers mainly stems from the fact that countries are not sure about each other's strategic intentions. The emerging powers may seek to enhance their military strength only for defensive purposes, but such a move appears to the defending powers as the intention of emerging powers. The beginning of subverting the world order and the international system. Under the guidance of this consciousness, the strategic goals characterized by prudence and moderation will often expand indefinitely, from maintaining checks and balances to pursuing universal hegemony, from relative security to absolute security, and finally to Hobbesian absolute dilemma.

In the eyes of realists, the conflicts and wars between emerging powers and conservative powers originate from a profound fatalism, which can only be achieved through a higher level of power. There is a "Thucydides trap" a priori doomed ". Historically, this is also true. For example, the British-Western Naval War, the Napoleonic Wars, and the two world wars have successively made Britain, France, Germany, and the United States establish their respective post-war dominance. The failure of the Vienna system completely destroyed the role played by the theory of balance in maintaining the existing international system, and the historical entry and exit of the old and new forces can only be carried out in a fierce manner. However, history cannot be simply copied today. First, with the development of the globalization system, international system, and international norms, the level and degree of interdependence among countries are constantly deepening, and the structural relationships between various political actors are deeply intertwined and extremely complex, and it is impossible to use a simple enemy. The meta relationship is explained. Second, mature diplomatic and crisis management mechanisms can communicate political information more clearly and accurately, and the security dilemma caused by wrong perception does not necessarily appear. Structural realism has always believed that as long as countries clearly understand their basic intentions to maintain the existing system, emerging powers and defending powers can still achieve a peaceful transfer of power: "Although all revolutionary countries are dissatisfied with the status quo, not all dissatisfaction All countries are revolutionary... The key is to accurately distinguish between revisionist countries that seek change only within the existing order and have limited purpose, and revolutionary powers whose purpose is to overthrow the system." Thirdly, the emergence of nuclear weapons, military applications of artificial intelligence, supersonic weapons and so on have changed the nature of war. War is no longer the only tool of power games as in the old era. Contemporary great power politics has paid more attention to the construction of influence at different levels such as economic culture, ally system, international system, and international organizations, and war has almost become the last option. In summary, in today's world, if the emerging powers and the defending powers hold each other properly, there is no need to fight through the war. The simpler and easier way is to maintain the desire for restraint and prudence and the recognition of power. Peaceful coexistence, cooperative governance, mutual benefit and win-win results in the peaceful and rational redistribution of power.

(2) After the Second World War, the concept of the United States' strategic outlook on China and its security outlook evolved

After World War II, the evolution of the United States' concept of China's strategy and China's security concept perfectly shows how the "Thucydides trap" between China and the United States was gradually generated:

The first stage was from the end of the Second World War to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States (1945-1979). At this stage, the deep thinking of the US strategy on China has developed from "who lost China" to "who is the new China", and has completed the definition of China's "system hostile country". As soon as World War II ended, the United States hoped to include China in the camp of democratic countries in the West, and planned to shape China as a strategic frontier against the Soviet Union by supporting Chiang's anti-Communist regime. After the founding of New China, the United States completely abandoned this intention and transformed China from a friend to an enemy in accordance with the large strategic layout of the US-Soviet structural confrontation. In the early days of the Cold War, China's Taiwan region existed as a "free outpost" for the United States against the socialist camp, while China was regarded by the United States as a "reliable strategic extension" of Soviet power in Asia. During this period, the core features of the US's strategic and security views on China were total hostility and refusal to contact. China has always been at the core of the US containment strategy in the Asian encirclement.

The second stage is from the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States to the end of the Cold War (1979-1991). In the 1970s when the US-Soviet Cold War confronted the highest peak, due to the Vietnam War, the oil crisis, and the internal disintegration of the capitalist camp, the United States was at a disadvantage in terms of military and security. At the same time, Sino-Soviet relations suffered serious cracks. Consider reshaping the triangular relationship between China, the United States and Russia, and using China to check and balance the Soviet Union. Due to the convergence of strategic interests between China and the United States, the United States began to adjust its identity and strategic and security concepts to China. The direct result was the signing and publication of the three Sino-US joint communiques, and the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue, which lies at the center of the two countries' security dilemmas, was peacefully resolved. Dawn. This period is also a critical period for the adjustment of the focus of

the work and the establishment of the economic foundation after China's reform and opening up. The United States has relaxed its containment of China, and to a certain extent has given default to the revision and adjustment of strategic natures such as China's integration into the global economic system and the construction of the surrounding geographical environment. , Objectively played a role in boosting China's rapid economic development and restoring its national strength.

The third stage is after the end of the cold war (since 1991). This stage is a period when China's economy is booming and its national power is rapidly rising. With different recognition and judgments on this status quo, successive US governments have experienced multiple rounds of ups and downs in their strategic and security views on China. In the early days of the Clinton Administration, it proposed three core objectives of the national security strategy: enhancing U.S. security, promoting U.S. economic prosperity, and promoting democracy and human rights overseas, emphasizing continued strong leadership in the world, and ensuring peace and stability in the core areas of U.S. Expand the scope of free market and democracy. Correspondingly, the Clinton administration judged that China would follow the Soviet Union in the "disintegration of the socialist system." Therefore, at the beginning of its ruling, the main consideration for China was to "promote change with pressure", forcing China to integrate into the international system dominated by the United States and market-oriented Drive political pluralism, and eventually evolve and transform China with Western standards of democracy and human rights. After the failure of this strategy, Clinton quickly adjusted the direction to "contact", believing that "if we are in contact with China instead of self-isolation, it may affect the path China chooses." Under the guidance of this strategy, the United States has broken the economic blockade against China, Integrating into the international market system to give support and implementing the "fuzzy strategy" on the Taiwan issue does not make it clear that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait between China and Taiwan will choose a side stand on security issues. At this time, the United States sat on the "historical holiday" after the victory of the Cold War, had absolute confidence in itself, and had not yet defined China as a "challenger."

After Bush Jr. took office, the American neo-conservatism gained power and the national security outlook was adjusted accordingly. The fundamental judgment is that the post-Cold War world is still a "world without end of danger and chaos, and a world governed by power rather than law." Since then, US foreign policy has paid too much

attention to issues of value orientation such as democracy, freedom, and human rights, and turned to refocusing on the ally system and military security. In judging China, Bush Jr. buried the "constructive strategic partnership" proposed by the Clinton administration as soon as he took office, defining China as a "strategic competitor comparable to the United States" and implementing "preventive containment"; and At the same time, it vigorously promoted arms sales to Taiwan, declared protection of the Taiwan region, and even listed China as a "potential nuclear target." However, this violent turnaround lasted for a relatively short time and was "locked into a file cabinet" after the September 11th incident in 2001. In the 2002 edition of the US National Security Strategy report, terrorism was listed as the primary threat, requiring the implementation of national defense transformation, the active development of military power, deterring and defeating any possible opponents and threats, and ensuring US global interests and hegemony. As a result, the Bush Administration's position on China has also been adjusted to "stakeholders", and it has gradually turned to promote China's acceptance of the US-led international order, requiring China to be "responsible" as the "status quo" rather than "amendment" in the system. country".

During the Obama period, the United States made another major adjustment. The 2010 US National Security Strategy report for the first time placed global common dangers above the geopolitical game, and at the same time determined that the threat of terrorism facing the US was declining. Since then, the Obama administration has implemented "limited power" and strategic austerity worldwide, clearly promoting the reduction of overseas troops, while shifting its strategic focus to Asia, promoting "Asia-Pacific rebalancing", and signing the "Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement" (TPP) And a number of bilateral security agreements to form a system-wide Asia-Pacific strategy with economic, political, security, and values as the pillars. The precautions and restrictions on China's strategy have greatly increased during Obama's second term. In 2010, after China's total economic volume surpassed Japan and ranked second in the world, the formulation of the "Thucydides trap" began to become popular in the US strategic circles, while China's proposal to build a "new Sino-U.S. major power relationship" was never available The Obama administration fully agrees. The United States claims to be happy to see China play a "responsible leadership role," but only if China must play a role with the United States, abide by various international norms, and be consistent with the current international order led by the United States. It can be said that during the Obama administration, China's "power shock" to

the United States as the emerging power has begun to cause worries in the American political and academic circles, and has profoundly influenced the development and evolution of the US's strategic outlook on China, security, and foreign policy. Since Trump took office, the US government has successively issued a series of strategic documents such as the US National Security Strategy report, the US National Defense Strategy report, and the Nuclear Posture Review report. For the first time since the September 11 incident, the US strategic objectives: Terrorism, callbacks to focus on the competition game of big powers, clearly defining China and Russia as "strategic competitors" and "revisionist powers" of the international order, ranking first in the US's three major categories of strategic challenges (the latter two categories are Iran and North Korea respectively) Waiting for "rogue states" and international terrorism), and among the "strategic competitors", China ranks ahead of Russia, which provides the theoretical basis for the US to fundamentally adjust its strategy toward China. US Vice President Mike Pence delivered two speeches on China policy on October 4, 2018 and October 24, 2019 at the Hudson Institute in Washington and the Wilson International Scholar Center.

