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Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Context of Sino-US Strategic Rivalry

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Abstract: With the strategic rivalry between China and the United States becoming a hot issue in current international relations, a probe into the causes of such rivalry is of realistic importance. Different from views that regard the escalation of the rivalry as resulting from the structural differences between the Chinese and American economy, the author argues that it is the changes in American politics that have intensified the ideological rivalry of the United States against China. Under the impact of this strategic shift in American politics, particularly with the narrowing of gaps between the national strengths of China and the United States, the United States is changing its views of China, regarding the latter as its would-be enemy. The improper handling of social problems brought about by economic globalization has worsened the relationship between the American government and society, bringing in its wake waves of populism, whose particular concern with economic issues in turn makes the American government pay particular attention to economic issues in its China agenda. The polarized appeals of interests of American voters have accelerated the polarization of American politics, which further lifts up the intensity of the strategic rivalry of the United States against China, causing its China policy to waiver from time to time. This is the direct cause of the downturn of the Sino-US relationship. Facing the escalating strategic competition between China and the United States, the 20th National Congress of the CPC made it clear that with the world entering into a period of turbulence following the transference of power from the West to the East, it is important to strengthen international governance to keep peace and stability of the world. In this context, China needs to coordinate its diplomatic relations with major countries and neighboring countries and strive for the building of a human community with a shared future in order to cope with the escalating strategic rivalry from the United States. At the same time, China needs to strengthen its cooperation with Russia to alleviate the security pressure from the Sino-US strategic competition. China and Russia have extensive common ground in promoting the multi-polarization of the world and maintaining peace in Eurasia as well as in cooperation with new emerging economies. Both countries should shoulder their responsibilities as great powers for promoting world peace and development while safeguarding their own national security.

Keywords: China, the United States, Russia, domestic politics, Great powers politics

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Китайско-российское сотрудничество в контексте китайско-американского стратегического соперничества

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Резюме: В условиях, когда стратегическое соперничество между Китаем и США становится острым вопросом в современных международных отношениях, исследование причин такого соперничества приобретает реальную важность. Не соглашаясь с мнением, что причины эскалации соперничества кроются в структурных различиях между китайской и американской экономикой, авторы утверждают, что причиной усиления идеологического соперничества США и Китая являются изменения в американской политике. Под влиянием стратегических изменений в американской политике, особенно в связи с сокращением разрыва между мощью Китая и США, Соединенные Штаты меняют свои взгляды на Китай, рассматривая его в качестве потенциального врага. Ненадлежащие меры по решению социальных проблем, вызванных экономической глобализацией, ухудшили отношения между американским государством и обществом, вызвав распространение популизма, чья особая озабоченность экономическими вопросами, в свою очередь, заставляет американское руководство уделять особое внимание экономическим аспектам в своей политике в отношении Китая. Поляризация интересов американских избирателей ускорила поляризацию американской политики, что еще больше повышает интенсивность стратегического соперничества между США и Китаем, заставляя США время от времени колебаться в вопросах политики в отношении Китая. Это является прямой причиной кризиса китайско-американских отношений. Перед лицом обострения стратегического соперничества между Китаем и США 20-й Всекитайский съезд КПК ясно дал понять, что в условиях, когда мир вступает в период турбулентности после перераспределения сил от Запада к Востоку, важно укреплять международное управление для поддержания мира и стабильности на планете. В этих условиях Китаю необходимо координировать свои дипломатические отношения с ведущими странами и соседними государствами и стремиться к построению сообщества людей с общим будущим, чтобы справиться с обостряющимся стратегическим соперничеством со стороны США. В то же время Китаю необходимо укреплять сотрудничество с Россией, чтобы ослабить негативное давление в области безопасности вследствие стратегического соперничества между Китаем и США. Китай и Россия имеют много точек соприкосновения в вопросах продвижения принципа многополярности мира и поддержания мира на территории Евразии, а также в сотрудничестве с новыми развивающимися экономиками. Обе страны как великие державы должны нести ответственность за поддержание мира и развития во всем мире, обеспечивая при этом собственную национальную безопасность.

Ключевые слова: Китай, Соединенные Штаты, Россия, внутренняя политика,

политика великих держав

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INTRODUCTION

The strategic rivalry between the United States and China that has escalated in recent years is one that is asymmetric, for it is in fact dominated by the shift of American policy towards China. Starting from the Trump Administration, the United States has launched trade wars and technological blockades against China in the economic field, and reshaped its Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China in the security field. It has also conducted ideological rivalry against China so that the tension between the two countries spread from low political domains to high political domains, leading to sharp downturns in Sino-US relations.

As the two most influential countries in the global system, Sino-US relations have a direct bearing on the stability of the global system and world order. The present research takes the structure of the global system as its point of departure, and argues that a fundamental cause of the escalation of American rivalry against China is the impact that China's rising power has produced on the existing structure of the system, throwing China and the United States into the so-called "Thucydides Trap". However, the current American rivalry against China is not a simple replica of the Soviet-Union vs US contention in the Cold War, but has new features of its own: to begin with, the US vs China competition is imbalanced. Though economically the gap between the United States and China is narrowing, there are still huge gaps between the two countries in military and technological strengths. In fact, the American rivalry against China is more ideological than material. Secondly, the American strategic rivalry against China is not an all-round confrontation. In the context of economic globalization, there is still room for cooperation between the two countries.

According to neoclassic realism, the systematic stimulus is an independent variable that can be used to analyze a country's overseas behavior, as it determines the direction of the country's foreign policy, while the decisive factor that shapes the specific foreign policy of a country is the change in the country's domestic politics, which is an intermediary variable. The changes in the domestic politics of the United States have exerted a crucial influence on the formation and implementation of American policy towards China, and are a key factor that has escalated the American rivalry against China. As a most remarkable feature of the contemporary world, economic globalization has not only changed the subjects of international relations and the ways of communication between nations, but more importantly, it has profoundly reshaped American domestic politics. As a result, ideology starts to weigh more heavily than anything else in American politics, with populism becoming a more influential factor that prompts American politics to become more polarized. For this reason, the United States will continue its strategic rivalry against China, and the prospect of Sino-US relations will remain dim. In this context, it is significant to explore how Sino-Russian cooperation will influence the future orientation of the global system.

UNDERSTANDING SINO-US STRATEGIC RIVALRY

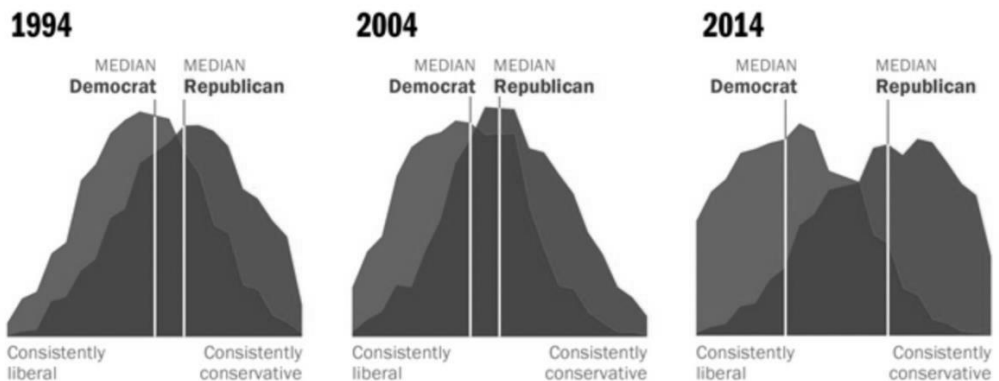
The end of the Cold War marked the acceleration of economic globalization, which has formed the most important background of our world today. Under the influence of globalization, changes have taken place in the domestic politics of the United States, where more importance is attached to ideology, coupled with an ascendance of populism and an increasing political polarization that has swayed the policy of the United States towards China and escalated the rivalry by way of a re-positioning of China's role, a re-setting of political agenda and decision-making procedures. All this has pushed up the American rivalry against China.

Strategically, the American political culture has altered the American policy towards China. Such political culture has two features. Firstly, it tries to fill up the vacuum of nationalism which the United States as an immigrant country lacks by creating an external "Leviathan" of some sort to give the Americans a national identity [Mearsheimer, 2014: 77-89]. Such strategy is well accepted by the American policy-makers as a doctrine, so in making foreign policies, they always give priority to American interests by linking together the domestic politics of the United States with international politics. Secondly, it is closely related to religion. Beliefs like "city on the hill" are so embedded into the American secular life that they give the American political culture and aggressiveness abroad and liberalism at home [Mearsheimer, 2018]. At the same time, they justify American aggressiveness. These two features of the American political culture have prompted the United States to constantly look for strategic opponents abroad in order to create a greater sense of togetherness at home and promote its own development. This has become a historical convention of the American strategic culture. This "hypothetical enemy" mentality has remained predominant in American political culture throughout American history: it viewed Germany as its strategic opponent in the Second World War. When the war ended, it started to view its wartime ally Soviet Union as its opponent. In the 1980s when the Japanese economy took off with great trade surplus over the United States, it started to view Japan as its opponent and tried all means to crack it down. Since the beginning of the 21st century, China's economy has kept growing rapidly. According to statistics from the World Bank, China's GDP in 2008 accounted for 31% of that of the United States, but in 2019, the figure increased to 67% [1]. At the same time, the fundamental ideological difference between China and the United States prompted the latter to change its way of looking at China. It started to view China as a systematic competitor. In fact, the Sino-US competition is asymmetrical and imbalanced. This is first of all evidenced by the fact that China does not have the intention nor capability to spread its ideology throughout the world. China has constantly emphasized in its foreign policy that there is no single pattern of development in the world, and each nation should be respected for choosing its own way of development. Meanwhile, the gap between China and the United States in their national strengths still remains very obvious. Although the Chinese economy is developing fast, mere economic scale is never a good index for measuring national strength. National strength can only come from an organic integration of wealth and productivity [Vuving, 2012:401-423]. Measured by per capita GDP, the American economy exceeds China by six times, and annual military expenditure of the United States also exceeds

China by three times. Such gaps decide that the Sino-US relationship is still very much dominated by American policy towards China. They also tell us that the American strategic competition with China is more ideological than material. That is, the change in American views of China, which are shaped by the American political culture, has led to the change in American policy towards China. But viewed historically, the foreign policy of the United States since the end of the Cold War that has been formulated on the basis of such political culture is often prone to error [Jervis, 2020: 434-456].

Chart 1

Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past



Source: Pew research center, Republicans shifts the Right, Democrats to the Left. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

Another factor that shapes American policy towards China is the American political structure. The bipartisan system, which makes rules for the number of representatives of each party in the house and their functions, is the foundation of the American political structure on which American party politics is established. As a result, relations between the two parties can exert a tremendous influence on the policy-making of the Congress. In recent years, political polarization has become a crucial phenomenon in the American political structure. A major manifestation of this is the increased convergence within each party and divergence between the two parties [Dalei Jie, 2016:61-74;6-7]. A core cause for such polarization is economic globalization, which has set off the maladies of the bipartisan system. For globalization has propelled the restructuring of American voters, making the discrepancies of interests of different racial and social groups even more outstanding, and splitting the American population into polar-opposite groups with different religious beliefs and identities. This in turn makes cooperation between them difficult, and handicaps their pursuits for common interests [2]. The voters become as divided and polarized as the political parties they support, paving the ground for greater polarization of the parties themselves. At the same time, the flaws of the bipartisan system further intensify the inter-party competition. To gain support from the polarized voters, both the Democrats and Republicans will adopt more extreme and ideological means in their election campaigns, which further intensifies the political polarization.

Such polarization mainly shows itself in the increased ideological convergence within

each party and divergence between the two parties. Ideologically, the Republicans and the Democrats stand for what is conservative and what is liberal respectively. The intensified political polarization has led to increased convergence within each party and divergence between the two of them. As Diagram 1 shows, between 1994 and 2014, the percentage of Republicans who are more conservative than the fence-sitting Democrats rose from 70% to 92%, while the percentage of Democrats who are more conservative than the fence-sitting Republicans rose from 68% to 94%. The number of fence-sitters in both parties decreased significantly, showing a greater ideological polarization for each party. The ideological polarization of the two parties has led to their polarized views on the same agenda, so that the Democrats and the Republicans have obvious differences in their views about such issues as gun control, racial discrimination, climate change and environment preservation. Such differences have made it difficult for them to coordinate policy-making, so deadlocks become frequent in the Congress. Though vast differences exist in details from administration to administration, both parties agree in their support of the alliance system, relatively open global economy, and values like freedom, human rights and democracy. Yet common ground like this is diminishing [Wright, 2020: 10-18]. In recent years, several “shut-down crises” have occurred with the American Congress. For instance, the Congress was shut down between December 22, 2018 and January 25, 2019, the longest of its kind in American history [3]. The political polarization has heightened the American rivalry against China, and expanded the areas of Sino-US competition, bringing great uncertainty to American policy towards China. This is a key factor that has caused strategic rivalry between China and the United States.

The ideological divergence of the two parties has caused the waiver of American policy towards China, and expanded the areas of competition with China. The two parties differ in foreign policy agendas and the ways of executing them. The Democrats are keener on low-political agendas like economy and environment, and gives more weight to multi-lateral cooperation, while the Republicans are more concerned with security issues and are more conservative in cooperation with other countries. Since Joe Biden took office as President of the United States, American policy towards China has become more fluctuating, and more variate in its means of competition with China. Different from the Trump Administration which competed with China by reducing cooperation and adopting unilateral means to protect the absolute interests of the United States, the Biden Administration adopted more multi-lateral approaches. Biden gives more weight to the function of allies. Washington tries to reshape the Indo-Pacific strategy to conduct competition with China in the security area by expanding the system of allies. This in fact has extended the rivalry into many areas, leading to escalation of the Sino-US competition in both high-political and low-political fields. Meanwhile, competition with China is used as an important means for the Democrats and the Republicans to overcome their differences for the exchange of benefits. This has pushed the Sino-US competition to a new height. The Biden Administration has launched a series of acts aiming to protect American interests in the fields of high technology, chips and investment. All of these acts are directed against China as a major strategic competitor. By so doing, he managed to gain support from the Republicans and highlighted his role in addressing domestic political issues. Such an act of using party politics to influence

foreign policy in fact has intensified the strategic competition with China, and lowered China's expectation for the United States to readjust its China policy.

In dealing with state-society relations, the Biden Administration has tried to reshape its China policy by creating agendas. By state-society relations, we mean the interactions between the nuclear state institutions and the various economic and social groups. A key question is how much the two can be compatible with each other [Ripsman, N., Taliaferro, J., Lobell, 2017]. Theoretically, society relegates its power to the state and accepts the rule by the state in a form of social contract, participates in state governance as interest groups, and interacts with the state through public opinions that indicate how much the society is content with the state. The level of governance of society by the state determines the compatibility between the state and society. As an important component of the domestic politics of the United States, such interaction between the state and society exerts a far-reaching influence on the American China policy. In recent years, state-society relations in the United States have increasingly deteriorated as the American government fails to effectively reduce the negative effects that economic globalization has brought to American society. Economic globalization has brought to the United States problems like lower employment rate, enlarged gap between the rich and the poor, intensified racial conflicts, and unbalanced development in different parts of the country. Globalization also weakens the sovereignty of the state and lowers the capacity of the state in social governance. The ill handling of social problems has caused discontent of American society with the state, resulting in the deterioration of the state-society relations and emergence of populism. Populism revolves around the word "people" [Wojczewski, 2020:292-311], and is essentially a way of expressing discontent to the society for the elite politics. It advocates for social governance through direct democracy and protects people's interests. Since the beginning of the new millennium, populism in the United States has bifurcated into a left-wing populism, which is caused by class and social conflicts that are brought about by uneven distribution of wealth, and right-wing populism, which is caused by national and racial tension that results from the loss of the traditional culture and values [Lin, 2017: 36-51; 5-6]. The "Occupy Wall Street" movement that broke out in 2011 is a typical left-wing populist movement, while the electoral victory of Donald Trump is an important milestone of right-wing populism. The main subjects of populism are white Americans at the bottom of society. They represent a trend of anti-globalism. The waves of populism, when employed by political elites, also produced a far-reaching influence on American policy towards China.

Under its influence, American political elites have shown particular concern with economic issues in their China agenda. More specifically, such concern finds expression in their effort to protect the domestic economic interests of the United States and to establish a new economic order by excluding China and conducting trade protectionism and technology control. First of all, the United States is trying to establish a new economic order that excludes China. The current economic order of the world is marked by economic globalization, with freedom of trade at its core. The anti-globalization trend of populism has prompted the United States to set up separate trade arrangements outside the global economic system that is favorable to its own economic growth. From the US-Canada and Mexico Agreement during the Trump

Administration to the Indian Ocean and Pacific Economic Framework under the Biden Administration, these new economic arrangements created by the United States have become more and more China-exclusive. In May 2022, Biden announced in Tokyo the launch of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean Economic Framework, with the aim to promote “high-standard trade,” control digital economy, enhance elasticity and security of the supply chain, increase transparency of trade, invest in high-standard infrastructure, and establish digital links [4]. Katherine Tai, the trade representative of the United States, announced openly that the framework is “an arrangement independent of China. The arrangement is obviously China-exclusive and smacks of trade protectionism. Trade friction has always been a core issue between China and the United States. The United States has frequently accused China of imposing trade barriers in its trade with the United States, though it is a beneficiary of global trade. Such accusations are meant to reduce China’s trade surplus over the United States and protect American industries. Even as early as during the Trump Administration, the United States started the trade war against China, which undermined Sino-US relations. The Biden Administration has so far made no concessions on high taxes levied on Chinese goods during the Trump Administration. The Biden Administration is taking strategic measures to reduce reliance on Chinese goods, which will further deteriorate Sino-US relations [Maher, 2018: 497-525]. Furthermore, in its economic agendas with China, American government has tried to out-compete China with its advantage in monopoly of technology. In August 2022, the Biden Administration launched the 2022 Chips and Science Act. In October of the same year, it issued a package of new regulations [5] for containing China’s semi-conductor industry. Trade relation is often referred to as ballast in Sino-US relations. However, under the sway of populism, the United States has attached increasing importance to economic issues in the China agenda, conducted trade protectionism, and amplified the conflicts between the two countries in the economic field, and upset the stable relations between the two countries that come from their economic mutual reliance, and intensified the competition.

Thus, it is clear that it is the changes in the domestic politics of the United States that have changed the direction of the American policy towards China, and increased the intensity of competition between the two countries. The escalation of the American rivalry against China is the result of the joint unction of political culture, state-society relations, and political structure, rather than the result of the changes in the national strengths between the two countries. The most important feature of international relations is the interaction between countries concerned. The escalation of the American rivalry against China has led to a sharp downturn in the bilateral relations, and made competition between China and the United States a keynote in the current global system.

THE CHINESE VIEWS AND RESPONSES

China has given its views and responses to the escalating rivalry with the United States. At the 20th National Congress of the CPC held in October 2022, China made an important judgement about current international relations, believing that China is finding itself in a world of unprecedented drastic change [6]. The strategic misreading of

the United States about Sino-US relations has intensified the strategic competition between the two countries, leading to drastic changes of the world order. The main task of Chinese diplomacy is to respond to these changes and turn them into opportunities for China to reshape its important position in the new world order. The judgement that President Xi Jinping made at the CPC's 20th National Congress about the change of the world order includes the following aspects:

First, the world is entering a period of unprecedented turbulence. Though Beijing still believes peace and development is an irresistible trend in the world, it no longer believes that peace and development is the only theme of international relations today. On the contrary, Xi Jinping emphasized in his report at the CPC's 20th National Congress that human society is facing unprecedented challenges, and the world is standing at a crossroad. Beijing summarizes the causes of the global turbulence as "deficits of peace, of development, of security, of governance" [7]. The world is facing changes unprecedented in a century, marked by intensified competition between major powers of the world and escalated the strategic rivalry between China and the United States, which further increases the instability of the global system and is an important cause of the turbulence of the world today marked by eruptions of regional conflicts. The Ukraine crisis that broke out in early 2022 has not come to an end. China and the United States as two major countries in the global system are locked in tense competition with each other, which will weaken both countries' willingness and capability to cooperate in resolving regional conflicts or disable them to mediate in regional conflicts. At the national level, the emergence of populism is a reflection of the contractions and conflicts within a country, which places a higher demand on better state governance and more reasonable wealth distribution system, the impact of which on international relations cannot be ignored. At the global level, problems like climate change, pandemics, and financial crises are becoming more outstanding, posing a greater challenge on global governance. In this context, major countries of the world should be more actively engaged in international cooperation, and China and United States should control their differences and shoulder their responsibilities as major players of global governance.

Second, the power transition in the world order will continue. China believes that a root cause for the current turbulence of the world is the acceleration of shift of power from the West to the East, which itself is a manifestation of the change in power structure of international relations. Viewed from a historical perspective, this process of power transference will continue. A most obvious case in point is the transference of power between the United States and China. China has claimed it will persist in its peaceful development strategy, control its differences with the United States, and actively seek cooperation with the United States in international affairs, but the United States has increasingly viewed China as a hypothetical adversary, and steadily intensified its strategic rivalry against China and expanded the areas of such rivalry under the impact of the rising waves of populism and political polarization at home. The hegemonic and power-politics approaches adopted by the United States have become a fundamental cause of the instability of the world. As the changes in United States' domestic politics are intertwined with the changes in the global system, such changes shall remain irreversible. So China will continue to protect its own national interests in the process of

power transference, and create more strategic opportunities for its continuous development through active diplomatic activities.

Third, China needs to increase its participation in international governance. Beijing believes that while turbulence of international relations worsens the environment for China's development, it also provides opportunities for China to become more engaged in international governance. International governance requires cooperation between major countries of the world, yet the steady escalation of the strategic rivalry of the United States against China has made the prospect of international governance very dim. The provision of global public products is one area where China and the United States can become engaged with each other. So, China's increased participation in international governance will help increase contact and promote communication between the two countries [Segal, Reynolds, Roberts. 2021]. China believes that it should shoulder its responsibilities to the international community as a responsible major power of the world by getting more actively involved in international governance. In this process, China needs to further promote multi-polarization of the world and establish new-type international relations. Some of the specific measures to achieve this end include the promotion of the influence of BRICS and Shanghai Cooperative Organization and more active participation in rule-making for global security, for this, will help China in its response to strategic rivalry from the United States and maintain the stability of the global system. In response to the escalation of strategic rivalry between China and the United States, And considering the current situation the in US vs China strategic competition, Beijing will give priority to the following areas in its diplomatic activities in the years to come.

First, Great power relations. Great power relations have a direct bearing on the stability of the world order, so it makes sense that China will give first priority to such relations in its diplomatic activities. The United States has regarded China as its only long-term and systematic peer competitor. The bilateral relationship can be categorized as one of continuous cooperation and competition [He, 2017: 133-151], but with the American attitude towards China becoming more and more conservative, China is facing rising economic and security pressure from the system. On this account, the main task of Chinese diplomacy is to seek more space for cooperation and control differences between China and the United States. Since the Biden Administration took office, Beijing in fact has tried its best to maintain the stability of its relations with the United States in order to create a favorable environment for China's development, though it has assumed a harder position in response to the strategic rivalry from the United States. For this reason, China has actively sought multi-lateral cooperation with the United States in low-political areas like climate change and cultural exchange. In November 2021, China and the United States jointly issued the U.S.-China Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s. The declaration states that the two countries will work in close collaboration with each other and with other countries to fulfill their commitments made in the Paris Agreement to take joint actions that are differentiated according to the liability and capability of each nation to effectively respond to the crisis of climate change.

At the same time, China regards Russia as a model of great power cooperation. Russia is also facing security pressure from the West. For a long time in the past, fierce mutual

accusations between the United States and Russia have become common [Lukyanov, 2016:30-37]. In early 2022, the eruption of the Ukraine crisis reduced the bilateral relations between Russia and the United States to a record low. Russia is facing escalating security pressure from the West. So strengthening strategic cooperation between China and Russia will help relieve both countries of the security pressure they each has to face. Over the years, China and Russia have conducted broad and pragmatic cooperation in diplomatic, security and energy areas. China and Russia have close political ties with each other, with frequent exchange of visits between the heads of state. In 2021, the heads of state of the two countries issued a joint declaration to extend the validity of the Sino-Russia Treaty of Friendly Neighbors. In March 2023, Chinese president Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Russia, in security areas, China has conducted cooperation with Russia in the form of joint military exercises and participation in joint security mechanism [8]. Using the Shanghai Cooperative Organization as a platform, China and Russia also conducted cooperation in security areas. The two countries have also conducted pragmatic cooperation in energy areas. By taking advantage of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the two countries have launched several energy cooperation projects which have provided guarantees for the energy security and economic security of both countries. Further development of bilateral relations between China and Russia is important for China to balance the systematic pressure on China's security from the United States.

Second, relations with neighboring countries. In the context where strategic competition between China and the United States has escalated, developing strategic relations with neighboring countries is of profound significance for China to ease its security pressure and balance military pressure from the United States. Compared with his predecessors, President Xi Jinping has attached more importance to diplomatic relations with the neighboring countries. Developing friendly relations with these neighbors has become a primary task for Chinese diplomats. The building of a human community with a shared future must start with our neighbors. China will deepen its ties with its neighbors on the principle of friendliness, sincerity, reciprocity and inclusiveness, treating our neighbors as good friends and partners [Ruan, 2018: 13-26; 139]. China's relations with countries in East Asia are of the greatest geopolitical importance, for it is where many hot issues of the world gather. The nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula poses the greatest potential risk to China's diplomatic relations with the neighboring countries. The blockades and sanctions imposed by the United States on North Korea are where all the tension starts. The solution to the nuclear issue in North Korea depends on where the relations between North Korea and the United States will go. For this reason, China hopes to try all possible means to keep the relatively stable relations between North Korea, South Korea and the United States. Technically China mainly encourages relevant parties to negotiate for peace through multi-lateral mechanisms of the United Nations. China hopes to increase communication with the United States on regional hot issues like this. This in turn will ease the tension between China and the United States and minimize the chance for strategic misjudgment.

At the same time, China is committed to developing stable and predictable relations with major neighboring countries like Japan and India in a way to minimize the negative impact of the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States on China's national security.

The concept of Indo-Pacific Strategy was raised during the Trump Administration, when the four-country cooperation mechanism involving the United States, Japan, India and Australia was started. The Trump Administration took a unilateral approach in its diplomatic relations with other countries, which marginalized the role of the American allies. The strategy was renewed during the Biden Administration. Its formation has given China added security pressure. Economic globalization has made countries of the world more interdependent. China's increased trade relations with Japan and India will help offset some of the negative effects brought about by the diplomatic policies of these two countries and maintain stable relations with them. This in turn will increase the predictability of bilateral relations with them.

Third, Human Community with a shared future. Economic globalization has brought with it some transnational problems like climate change, financial crisis and terrorism, making global governance a prominent agenda in international relations. Global governance must revolve around cooperation between major countries. As two most influential countries in the global system, China and the United States are obliged to take up the responsibility for global governance. The continuous escalation of competition between the two countries will produce shocks to international security and the structure of the global system, and hamper global governance. It was against such a background that the idea of human community with a shared future came into being. It is Xi Jinping's most outstanding contribution to China's diplomatic thinking. On the issue of global development, China is committed to continuing to push for economic globalization and multilateralism in economic activities, and will expand its cooperative partnership from regions to the whole world. On November 15, 2020, China signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the ten ASEAN countries. The agreement covers countries from different regions and with different systems. It is purely economic and highly inclusive [Petri, P., Plummer, M. 2020]. China's efforts to promote the building of a human community with a shared future and integrated economic development will also help to weaken the will of the United States and its allies to contain China or heighten the cost of containment.

Xi Jinping also pays more attention to issues of green and low-carbon development. In his report at the 20th National Congress of the CPC, he stressed several times the importance of environment conservation. China takes active approaches to protect the environment, and responds to climate change through multilateral cooperation and multilateral mechanisms. China has taken active measures to implement the Paris Agreement. In October 2021, China officially submitted to the United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention secretariat China's Achievements, New Goals and Measures for Making Independent Contributions to Reduction of Carbon Emissions and China's Long-term Strategy for Low Greenhouse Gas Emissions till Mid-21st Century, showing to the world China's resolve to promote green and low-carbon development and proactive response to climate change. Green cooperation not only provides a new space for China and the United States to cooperate, but also creates more opportunities for China to cooperate with the European Union. Increased cooperation and links with these allies of the United States in environmental protection, economic and other low-political fields will help eliminate the Cold War mentality and enhance international cooperation.

FUTURE OF SINO-RUSSIA COOPERATION IN THE AGE OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

The eruption of the Ukraine crisis marked the acceleration of changes in international relations. The stability of China's domestic politics as envisioned by the CPC's 20th National Congress provides new opportunities for the development of Sino-Russia relations in the future. The convergence of opinions between China and Russia on a number of international issues is a guarantee for the steady development of the bilateral relations between the two countries. The two countries' cooperation in the following areas is particularly important in this changing world.

Firstly, joint promotion of multi-polarization of the world. Promoting multi-polarization is an important appeal of Chinese diplomacy, as well as an important area China and Russia can interact in policy-making. In the National Security Strategy Report of the Biden Administration, both Russia and China are listed as threats to American hegemony [9]. The United States also defines the next decade as a crucial decade for great power competition. Therefore, promoting multi-polarization and preventing the United States from turning the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions into a new NATO of some sort to further reduce the strategic space of China and Russia is an important area for China-Russia cooperation. The Ukraine crisis that broke out in 2022 not only greatly changed Russia's security environment, but also produced a huge impact on international relations in Asia and Pacific region. Japan and South Korea's involvement in the US-led sanctions against Russia have made the great power relations in the region even more outstanding. This will produce a great impact on the national security of both Russia and China. To cope with this situation, China and Russia may cooperate in the following two areas. Firstly, they can cooperate to prevent East Asia from turning into a NATO-like region. An exclusive NATO-like security organization will not be helpful to resolve the security problems of the region, and must be barred from the international governance of East Asia. This is important for ensuring the security of the region. Secondly, they can strengthen cooperation with other regional major countries like India and Indonesia by using Sino-Russia strategic partnership as a platform. Russia has kept a good bilateral relationship with major countries in the region like India and Indonesia. In the context where the United States is promoting its Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean strategy, enhancing multi-lateral cooperation with these regional major countries can play an important role in preventing escalation of confrontation and stabilizing great power relationship.

Secondly, jointly maintaining the strategic stability of Eurasia. The rise of populism and hegemonism has posed a severe challenge to the strategic security of Eurasia. Beijing and Moscow are most important forces to keep the strategic stability of Eurasia. The two countries can work together within the framework of Shanghai Cooperative Organization and BRICS. A good triangular relationship between China, Russia and India will play a positive role in maintaining the stability of Eurasia. Russia has kept a good bilateral relationship with India since the end of the Cold War. Though there are some territorial disputes between China and The effective development of cooperation among the three countries will bring great geopolitical and geo-economic benefits to Eurasia. In Asia Pacific region, cooperation mechanisms like RCEP, CIPP and IPEF have been set up. These

highly diversified cooperation mechanisms are reshaping the chains of industry and value of East Asia and even the whole of Eurasia. China and Russia can maintain the stability of these chains by linking together these multilateral mechanisms. This includes linking Russia's Turn to East strategy with RCEP to make Russia a real important partner of economic development in Asia and Pacific Region. At the same time, China and Russia can work together to further promote the Belt and Road Initiative and build a free trade zone within the framework of Eurasia Economic Alliance for Cooperation. This will keep the geo-economic stability of the heartland of Eurasia. Apart from this, China and Russia pushing for global partnership on the basis of Shanghai Cooperative Organization and BRICS will contribute to the establishment of good and predictable international relations.

Thirdly, conducting cooperation in new areas. Beijing and Moscow both believe that the climate change agenda may exert an important influence on international politics in the future. So both countries shall work together to develop new energy and renewable energy apart from cooperation in traditional energy. The two countries can also work together in hi-tech areas in response to restrictions imposed by the United States. The comprehensive and high-intensity sanctions imposed by the United States and its Western allies may not threaten Russia's domestic stability in a short term, but they may handicap Russia's technological development in a long run. At the same time, the United States is pushing high its technological competition with China. So, China and Russia need to strengthen their cooperation in semi-conductor, AI and other hi-tech areas. In October 2019, Russian government launched its national strategy for the development of AI technology before 2030. China is also starting a new round of upgrades in its industries. That makes the cooperation between the two countries in hi-tech development a new area of cooperation in addition to their cooperation in the energy sector. Russia has enough experience and a high-level team of researchers to respond to technological blockades by the West, and China has enough funds and market to provide backup for their joint research. In the context where China and Russia become more and more aligned in economy and politics, further cooperation between the two countries in hi-tech development is significant in ensuring the steady development of their strategic partnership [Сюй, 2022].

In the context where climate change becomes a hot issue, cooperation between the two countries in energy transformation and green development should also be made a new area for their cooperation. Since 2019, both China and Russia have adopted a series of measures in response to climate change. China is firmly pushing its policy of green development and climate governance, and enhancing its capability in addressing environmental problems. Moscow has ratified the Paris Agreement and has launched a series of climate-related policies. Climate change is an important agenda in the building of a human community with a shared future as well as an important path for Russia to realize innovative development. Cooperation between the two countries in this field will not only help break new ground in their cooperation, but also give them a prominent place in the technological revolution in the future [Xu, Zhong, 2022: 36-48].

CONCLUSION

The escalation of strategic competition between China and the United States has increased the instability of the turbulent world. Different from views that regard the

competition as resulting from the systematic differences between the two countries, the present research proposes another dimension, the dimension of domestic politics for understanding the root causes of the competition, arguing that the strategic culture, populism and political polarization are important factors that have triggered the competitions. In the first place, the tradition of the American strategic culture that seeks to realize its goal of development by picturing a peer competitor has deteriorated the Sino-American relations against the background that the gap between the economic strength of the two countries is narrowing while their ideological differences are increasing. Political polarization lowers the quality of American party politics, to an extent that it starts to become important variables that influence the foreign policy of the United States. On the one hand, political polarization increases the uncertainty of American policy towards China. On the other hand, it also prompts both the Democrats and the Republicans to use the "China factor" to glue up their differences and advance their domestic political agenda. Populism turns the attention of the American public more to the economic issues, so that the trade imbalance between the United States and China becomes the fountainhead of the worsening of Sino-American relations, which in turn prompts the American government to adopt more aggressive trade policies against China. Trade relations between the two countries become a root cause of their strategic conflict.

The escalation of the strategic competition between the countries has prompted Beijing to make new judgment about the world. Firstly, it believes that the world is entering a period of unprecedented turbulence. Secondly, it believes that the process of power transference in the world order will continue. Thirdly, it believes that China must increase its participation in international governance. Generally speaking, China still believes that China and the United States do not have to step into the so-called "Thucydides trap", but the tremendous impact of domestic politics on Sino-US relations makes it difficult for Beijing to expect that the United States will change its China policy soon. So Beijing thinks that it should do what it can to keep the stability of Sino-American relations, but at the same time, strengthen its strategic cooperation with Russia. In response to Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States in Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, China hopes to conduct more active diplomatic activities with its neighboring countries, and improve its strategic environment in the world by promoting the construction of a "human community with a shared future".

In this process, Sino-Russian relations have a special significance to China. The convergence of opinions of the two countries on a number of international issues ensures the continuing stability of their bilateral relations. At the same time, in the context where Sino-American strategic competition intensifies, China and Russia must join hands to promote multi-polarization of the world, and maintain the strategic stability of Eurasia through bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation, and prevent the security situation in East Asia from turning into a NATO-like structure. Following the eruption of the Ukraine crisis, Russia has launched a "turn to east" strategy, while China is actively carrying out its neighboring country diplomacy. That will give more space for cooperation between the two countries. The interactions between the two countries in Shanghai Cooperative Organization and BRICS will contribute to the establishment of more stable international relations. In addition, China and Russia must strengthen their cooperation in hi-tech, climate change and other new areas to achieve innovative development for both countries to strengthen their position in the global system in the future.

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