

The Continuity and Changes in China's Perception of the International Order*

Shinji Yamaguchi**

Abstract

China's perception of the international order has been consistent on three points. Firstly, China believes that the international order is based on the power and interests of major countries, and that the existing order is the hegemonistic order imposed by the United States. Secondly, China argues that aspects of the aforementioned international order are unfair and unreasonable, and must be reformed. Thirdly, when discussing the international order, China will without fail refer to the Charter of the United Nations and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Article 2 of the U.N. Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence provide for equality among sovereign states, noninterference in internal affairs, and peaceful coexistence of differing political regimes, and they are of vital importance for China, which sees the continuation of the administration of the Communist Party as an overriding imperative. While China's aforementioned perception of the international order has remained largely consistent, China has in the past displayed passive resistance to the international order or participated only passively in it. Amid a shift in the balance of power, however, arguments calling for greater participation and communication in the existing international order are gradually gaining ground in China. Moreover, there has also emerged an argument for China's involvement in the restructuring and development of the international order. At present, however, China has yet to generate new norms or values that are universally acceptable. The shift in the relative balance of power has lent momentum to the formation of a new international order, and it is expected that China will assert itself more strongly going forward.

Introduction

Dramatic rise of China's power is having profound implications on the politics and security of the region. At issue here is the question of what aims China will be pursuing amid its rise in power.

The simplest of the questions is: is China a revisionist power or a status quo power? The dichotomy between revisionism and status quo, however, has many conceptual issues including the problem of where the line is drawn.¹

It is therefore helpful to refer to the framework used by Aaron Friedberg for framing the discussion. Friedberg uses the two indexes of "realist/liberal" and "optimistic/pessimistic view" in identifying the following four categories: (i) realist pessimist; (ii) liberal optimist; (iii) realist

* Originally published in Japanese in *Boei Kenkyusho Kiyo* [NIDS Security Studies], vol.18, no.2, February 2016.

** Senior Fellow, Asia and Africa Division, Regional Studies Department.

¹ Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security*, vol.27, no.4, (Spring 2003), pp.5-56.

optimist; and (iv) liberal pessimist.²

Realist pessimists believe that China's aims expand as the country's power grows. It is precisely based on this logic that John J. Mearsheimer argues that China cannot rise peacefully.³

Liberal optimists expect that China will gradually accept various rules and norms through participating in the international order and will ultimately uphold the order. For example, G. John Ikenberry claims that China and other emerging states do not attempt to change the basic rules and principles of the liberal international order, and that they no more than wish to gain more authority and leadership within it. Therefore, he argues, the liberal international order will continue even if the United States were to decline.⁴ In a 2005 paper, David Shambaugh articulates that (i) a hubs and spokes alliance system, (ii) a regional institutional architecture based on shared norms, (iii) a U.S.-China cooperative relationship, and (iv) complex interdependence are emerging in Asia, and that against this backdrop, China is integrating into the region.⁵

Realist optimists attach importance to power, but regard that China's power is limited and thus China will not mount a challenge to the United States. For example, Shambaugh, who studied the global activities of China, concludes that the country is a narrow-minded realist state, and has neither the wish nor the capability to create a China-centered order.⁶ Furthermore, according to Robert S. Ross, China is essentially a continental state, and because there is geographic distance between China and the United States, the interests of the two countries will never conflict.⁷ Charles L. Glaser contends that conflict will not arise between China and the United States, as the structural forces driving the two countries into conflict will be relatively weak in terms of their power, intention, and information. In particular, conventional attacks against each other's homelands are impossible, for the reason that China and the United States have nuclear weapons and are separated by the Pacific Ocean. Additionally, Glaser explains that the United States is able to protect its allies by its forward presence and expanded nuclear deterrence. According to Glaser, the sole potential point of conflict is the Taiwan issue, and states that the possibility of conflict can be decreased further if the United States suspends its commitment to Taiwan.⁸

Liberal pessimists emphasize that the Chinese government may engage in activities to change the status quo even if it has not intention to for the sake of the domestic regime, and that there are significant contradictions between China's political regime and the liberal international order. It is suggested that nationalism in China may steer the Chinese government towards a more hardline direction, and that China may implement hardline policies as an outlet for dissatisfaction stemming from social contradictions in China. For example, Susan Shirk notes that the fragility of China's

² Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, vol.30, no.2, (Fall 2005), pp.7-45.

³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Updated Edition* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), Chapter 10.

⁴ G. John Ikenberry, "The Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism After America," *Foreign Affairs*, (May/June, 2011).

⁵ David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, vol.29, no.3, (Winter 2004/2005), pp.64-99.

⁶ David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷ Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-First Century," *International Security*, vol.23, no.4, (Spring 1999), pp.81-118.

⁸ Charles L. Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?: Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism," *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2011), pp.80-84.

domestic governance puts significant pressure on China to adopt hardline foreign policies.⁹ At the same time, Ross notes that “naval nationalism” in China gives a powerful boost to its maritime advancements.¹⁰ Friedberg also notes that security tensions between China and the United States accompanying China's rise will increase due to mutual distrust of the domestic political regime.

While Friedberg makes a strong argument, it alone does not fully explain China's current actual status. This is to say, if China mounts a challenge that is limited or selective in terms of geography or field, this would not be captured in Friedberg's argument. For example, (iii) realist optimists view that China will not directly challenge the United States because China's power is limited. However, it is fully possible that China will challenge the existing order in a way that is confined to the region. Thomas J. Christensen discusses how China can challenge the United States in the region even if China's power does not increase to the level of its peer competitor. According to Christensen, the “peer competitor” logic has shortcomings, namely: (i) U.S. forces are spread out across the world, and it is senseless to compare the total assets of the two countries; (ii) due to their distance from the United States geographically, it will take time for the United States to respond to China's activities in the region; and (iii) it is a myth that weak powers do not mount a war. Christensen states that China may make the first moves: (i) if China is backed into a corner over the Taiwan issue or other issues; (ii) if China can increase the costs of U.S. intervention; (iii) if China strongly perceives that the U.S. military is tied down in other regions of the world; and (iv) China believes that a wedge can be driven between the United States and its allies by political persuasion or military coercion.¹¹

In this context, it is worth looking into the argument made by Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu. According to Schweller and Pu, in bipolar and multipolar systems, balancing is a mechanism to preserve the status quo. However, in a unipolar system, balancing is automatically construed as a mechanism to change the status quo; therefore, not only concentration of power but also the label of revisionist power can become obstacles to balancing. For this reason, challenging states must first undermine the legitimacy of the existing order before enhancing their armaments and forming alliances. To this end, they need to: (i) delegitimize order; and (ii) implement cost-imposing strategies (soft balancing). For this purpose, states may rely on rightful resistance. Rightful resistance assumes that states (i) partially and temporarily accept the order of the hegemon, and (ii) obtain relative gains through authorized channels. Rightful resistance is the notion of lodging particular resistance within the hegemonic order. According to Schweller and Pu, this is exactly the sort of behavior that China is manifesting at this moment in time.¹²

This article sheds light on how China has perceived the international order and how China's perception is changing amid the country's rise. This article adopts the same basic position as that of Christensen as well as Schweller and Pu. Because previous studies have neglected to fully analyze the actual discourse in China, this article analyzes how political leaders, practitioners, and

⁹ Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Robert S. Ross, “China's Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response,” *International Security*, vol.34, no.2, (Fall 2009), pp. 46-81.

¹¹ Thomas Christensen, “Posing Problems without Catching up,” *International Security*, vol.25, no.4, (Spring 2001), pp.5-40.

¹² Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, “After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline,” *International Security*, vol.36, no.1, (Summer 2011), pp.41-72.

scholars have perceived the power balance and the international order.

Section 1 analyzes the discourse of political leaders, diplomats, and scholars regarding the power balance and the international order. Section 2 analyzes the analyses on the strategies and activities of modern China, with a particular focus on foreign strategies and activities in the East and South China Seas.

China's Perspective on the International Order

(1) What the international order means for China

There is no completely uniform definition of the concept of international order in China. That is not to say, however, that the Chinese term for international order differs largely from its English and Japanese definitions used in scholarly contexts. For example, a Chinese scholar defines that, "International order refers to a set of rules on international behavior and corresponding assurance mechanisms that form the foundation of the world structure, and normally includes international consultations, international customs, and international organizations." As such, commonalities can be found with the definitions used in other languages.¹³

We can see that the international order from China's perspective has three features that are common to some extent from a diachronic perspective, at least since the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The first feature is the view that power is the most critical element of international order, and that the existing international order is founded on the hegemony of the United States. Traditionally, China's diplomatic theory tends to emphasize the structure of the international system.¹⁴ In other words, Chinese leaders, government officials, and scholars begin their arguments on international relations by counting the number of superpowers and major powers. Whether the international political structure is a bipolar, unipolar, or multipolar system is extremely important. Similarly, discussion on the international order begins with the issue of power balance. According to Guo Shuyong, "In the world order, the transition of power precedes the transition of institutions and identity."¹⁵

The present order is based on the hegemony of the United States and is designed for the United States to secure its interests. At the same time, since there is a degree of openness, other states are also able to secure their interests to a certain degree. Gao Cheng argues, "The establishment and implementation of international rules constitutes the United States' primary method of reaping the benefits of hegemony and is a powerful resource. Following World War II, unlike under previous hegemony, the strategy implemented by the United States has served the interests of other states as well."¹⁶

¹³ Gao Cheng "Cong guize shijiao guan meiguo chong gou guoji zhixu de zhanlue tiaozheng" shijie jingji yu zhengzhi. Gao Cheng, "Observation of the U.S. Strategic Adjustments in Restructuring the International Order from the Viewpoint of Rules," *World Economy and Politics*, no.12, (2013), p.82.

¹⁴ For example, Shambaugh has analyzed China's international relations theory and observes that a great many scholars adopt realist positions in China. Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, pp.13-44.

¹⁵ Guo Shuyong "Lun zhongguo jueqi yu shijie zhixu de guanxi" taipingyang xuebao. Guo Shuyong, "On the Relation between the Rise of China and the World Order," *Pacific Journal*, no.6, (2005), p.7.

¹⁶ Gao Cheng "Cong guize shijiao guan meiguo chong guo zhixu de zhanlue tiaozheng." Gao Cheng, "Observation of the U.S. Strategic Adjustments in Restructuring the International Order from the Viewpoint of Rules," p.82.

The second feature is China's perception that there are unreasonable and unfair aspects to the existing international order, which need to be corrected or reformed. This is closely linked to the recognition that the establishment of the existing international order has been led by hegemons. According to a Chinese scholar, "The postwar international order was created in line with the wishes and interests of the industrialized countries of the West, and is characterized by the exploitation of developing countries under the banner of hegemonism, authoritarian politics, and free trade." In other words, so long as the international order reflects the interests of the hegemons, the interests of subordinate states such as developing countries will not be considered. Moreover, as a communist nation ideologically different from the United States, China will be exposed to considerable pressure within the U.S.-led order. The United States may attempt to restrain China using various rules and norms, while China tries to rise as an emerging economy through continuous economic development. It is acknowledged in China that unquestionably accepting the whole of the existing international order will inevitably come with risks.

Thirdly, China attaches great importance to the Charter of the United Nations (U.N.) and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the fundamental principles of international order, and this has remained largely consistent. Article 2 of the U.N. Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence provide for equality among sovereign states, noninterference in internal affairs, and peaceful coexistence of differing political regimes, and they are of vital importance for China, which sees the continuation of the administration of the Communist Party as an overriding imperative.

Especially towards the end of the Cold War, China became extremely nervous over movements that potentially could bring about democratization, leading to the government crackdown on students and citizens in the Tiananmen incident. Following the end of the Cold War, China became an isolated socialist state due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The sole superpower, the United States, sought to promote democratization, human rights, and free economy worldwide as common values, hailing a "new world order." Insisting on the principles of national sovereignty, noninterference in internal affairs, and peaceful coexistence of differing political regimes became pivotal for China to maintain its grip on power.

Even now, in an address delivered on the 60th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, for example, Xi Jinping emphasized that "the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, as open and inclusive principles of international law, embody the values of sovereignty, justice, democracy and rule of law," and that "the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have become the basic norms governing international relations as well as basic principles of international law."¹⁷ In addition, at the "Colloquium on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and Development of International Law," co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese Society of International Law on May 27, 2014 in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, it was reaffirmed that the Five Principles have the status of fundamental principles of international law.¹⁸

¹⁷ Xi Jinping "Hong yang heping gongchu wuxiang yuanze jianshe hezuo gongying meihao shijie" Renmin Ribao. Xi Jinping, "Carry forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to Build a Better World through Win-Win Cooperation," *People's Daily*, June 29, 2014.

¹⁸ "Heping gongchu wuxiang yuanze yu guoji fazhan guoji yantaohui zongjie wenjian", Waijiaobu. "Summary Document of the International Symposium on the Development of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the International Law", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 28, 2014.

While some scholars contend that the rise of China will result in a revival of a “Chinese order” and tributary system centered on the Chinese Empire in Asia,¹⁹ such features are not found, at least in the principles of modern day China.

(2) Post-Cold War: Changes in China’s perspective on the international order

(i) End of the Cold War and the U.S. threat

In the late 1980s, Deng Xiaoping deemed that the Cold War and the age of revolution were drawing to a close, and that against this backdrop, the United States and the Soviet Union would decline and the world would shift from a bipolar to a multipolar structure. In 1988, based on this judgment, Deng Xiaoping preached the need for a new international political and economic order suitable for an age of multipolarization.

However, from the end of the 1980s to the early 1990s, China became isolated from the world due to the Tiananmen incident, democratization in Eastern Europe, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The United States, which won the Cold War, exemplified overwhelming military capabilities during the Gulf War in 1991. In addition, in 1990, President George H.W. Bush set out a vision to spread free market economy, democracy, and human rights as common universal values under the banner of a new world order. An emphasis on these universal values was also reflected in the conditionality for U.N. election assistance, membership in international organizations, and financial assistance.²⁰ Further, the United States was anticipated to create a new APEC-centered Asia-Pacific order in the Asia-Pacific around the three pillars of regional economic integration, maintenance of forward presence, and democratization.²¹

The Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist states collapsed not because of war but because of the collapse of the domestic regime. China conceived this transformation as the result of “peaceful evolution” by the West, i.e., a conspiracy to peacefully bring about a regime change through the Western-led international support for domestic democratization movements. China resisted this transformation by advocating respect for sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs, bring to the fore the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. China maintained a one-party rule by the Communist Party, and faced issues of national unity, including the Taiwan issue. No way was China going to accept norms suggesting interference in domestic politics.

The years following the Cold War witnessed further gains in the United States’ relative power as well as U.S. unilateral military intervention. Moreover, the U.S. economy that had stagnated until the early 1990s due to catch-up by Japan and Europe, succeeded in revitalization through the IT revolution.

In 1994, the Clinton administration called for expanding the community of market economy and democratic regimes, based on the “Engagement and Enlargement” policy. As

¹⁹ David C. Kang, “Hierarchy, Balancing, and Empirical Puzzles in Asian International Relations,” *International Security*, vol.28, no. 3, (Winter 2003/2004), pp.165-180.

²⁰ Yu Minhao, *Kokusai Shakai ni okeru Nitchu Kankei: 1978-2001 nen no Chugoku Gaiko to Nihon* [Japan-China Relations in the International Community: Chinese Diplomacy and Japan in 1978-2001] (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2015), pp.134-135.

²¹ Seiichiro Takagi, “Beikoku to Chugoku no Taigai Senryaku ni okeru Aitekata no Ichizuke” [The Positioning of the Other Party in U.S. and Chinese External Strategies], ed., Seiichiro Takagi, *Beichu Kankei: Reisengo no Kozo to Tenkai* [U.S.-China Relations: Post-Cold War Structure and Developments] (Tokyo: The Japan Institute of International Affairs, 2007), pp.18-20.

Alastair Iain Johnston points out, there was a significant divide between China's official view of "multipolarization" and the actual distribution of power in the world, dominated by the superpower the United States. This in turn fueled debates within China.²² Unable to simply do away with the official view of multipolarization, China began to use the term "yi chao duo qiang" (one superpower and several great powers).

China's concerns deepened over the development of closer security arrangements between Japan and the United States and the strengthening of the U.S. unipolar system by way of NATO's eastward expansion. China therefore proposed the "New Security Concept," condemning security based on alliances as a relic of Cold War thinking, and advocating partnership diplomacy that promoted multipolarization. From the end of 1998 to 1999, China's concerns heightened as a consequence of such factors as Japan-U.S. joint research on missile defense, expansion of Japan-U.S. security cooperation as can be observed from Japan's Law Concerning Measures for the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan, U.S. promotion of a missile defense plan, and NATO's air campaign in Kosovo, leading to the "peace and development" debate. Its outcomes were compiled into "three no changes and three new changes." "Three no changes" means that past observations remain unchanged, namely: (i) peace and development is the theme of the times, and multipolarization continues; (ii) economic globalization continues; and (iii) the relaxation of international tensions is a major trend. The "three new changes" refer to new assessments, namely: (i) hegemonism and power politics are increasing; (ii) tendencies towards military interventionism are increasing; and (iii) disparities between developed and developing countries are widening.²³

(ii) The peaceful rise of China

Around the time of its accession to the WTO in 2001, China accepted foreign capital by opening up its economy to the world, and became a hub of the world's factories underpinned by China's inexpensive labor force. By doing so, China has continued to register remarkably high economic growth. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States became immersed in the war on terror, resulting in the weakening of U.S. strategic pressure on China. This made it possible for China and the United States to cooperate on the fight against terrorism, easing tensions in the traditional security realm.

In 2003, the "peaceful rise theory" was put forward in China. According to Zheng Bijian, China's rise will be peaceful because China is developing through proactive engagement in globalization by opening up to the world, and is pursuing security based on the new security concept. While the peaceful rise theory was renamed and officially coined "peace and development theory," its aim was essentially to convince the United States in particular that the rise of China would not become a threat. These discussions led to rising U.S. expectations. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick praised China's strategy of accepting globalization, acknowledged that China does not view the overthrow of the international order to be in its fundamental interest, and requested China to act as a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system.²⁴

²² See Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?"

²³ Seiichiro Takagi, "Beikoku to Chugoku no Taigai Senryaku ni okeru Aitekata no Ichizuke," pp.24-28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.36-37.

With the advent of the peaceful rise theory, Chinese scholars began to offer an extremely forward-looking and optimistic outlook towards China's participation in the international order.

Li Jiehao and Yan Zhiqiang note, "China's peaceful development is in harmony with the existing international order," "China's peaceful development neither competes with the existing order, nor creates a separate order; China's rise merges with the existing international order and plays an active role in improving the international order," and "China's peaceful rise has no intention of mounting a challenge to U.S. hegemony and its leading status."²⁵ Similarly, Guo Shuyong contends that maintaining and deepening favorable China-U.S. relations is necessary for China to rise, and that China should recognize the global role of the United States and should not have excessive antipathy towards it.²⁶

Cao Wenzhen and Ding Yi, while acknowledging that the existing order is a world order led by hegemony, state: "There is no need for China to engage in a struggle for world control. Nor should it engage in a struggle for 'the release of all mankind.' China's economy has already completely merged with the world economy and is a beneficiary of the existing world order. Thus, China must protect and reinforce the existing order. By participating in this system, China is subject to constraints while simultaneously obtaining benefits."²⁷

However, some caution is needed: scholars have not completely abandoned the argument that there are unfair and unreasonable aspects to the existing international order. Li Jiehao and Yan Zhiqiang underline that while China should become a reformer of the unreasonable and unfair aspects of the international order, "the issue is that this criticism should be more constructive." They write, "While China does not want an international system completely controlled by rules set forth by the United States or Europe, China is not a challenger of the U.S.-established international order."²⁸

In a 2005 paper, Guo Shuyong examines models that China's rise should follow in connection with the United States, namely: (i) the Germany-U.K. model: strategic competition to war; (ii) the U.S.-U.K. model: peaceful transfer of power; and (iii) the U.S.-France model: collaboration and condemnation while keeping a distance from each other, without mounting a fundamental challenge. Of these three models, Guo claims that the third model is the most optimal choice. He reasons that the first model cannot be selected because China's military force cannot challenge the United States, while the second model cannot be adopted because China's economic strength does not match up to that of the United States.²⁹

²⁵ Li Jiehao, Yan Zhiqiang "Lun zhongguo heping fazhan jiqi dui guoji zhixu de yingxiang" Hunan Keji Daxue Xuebao (she hui ke xue ban). Li Jiehao, Yan Zhiqiang, "On China's Peaceful Development and its Influence on the World Order", *Hunan University of Science and Technology Journal*, vol.11, no.5, (September 2008), pp.50-51.

²⁶ Guo Shuyong "Lun zhongguo jueqi yu shijie zhixu de guanxi." Guo Shuyong, "On the Relation between the Rise of China and the World Order," pp.7-10.

²⁷ Cao Wenzhen, Ding Yi "Zhongguo jueqi yu shijie zhixu de chongsu" Taipingyang Xuebao. Cao Wenzhen, Ding Yi, "The Rise of China and the Reconstruction of the World Order", *Pacific Journal*, vol.21, no.3, (March 2013), pp.28-29.

²⁸ Li Jiehao, Yan Zhiqiang "Lun zhongguo heping fazhan jiqi dui guoji zhixu de yingxiang." Li Jiehao, Yan Zhiqiang, "On China's Peaceful Development and its Influence on the World Order", p.52.

²⁹ Guo Shuyong "Lun zhongguo jueqi yu shijie zhixu de guanxi". Guo Shuyong, "On the Relation between the Rise of China and the World Order," p.10.

2. Modern China's Perspective on the International Order

(1) Perspective on the post-financial crisis China-U.S. power balance

When the 2008 financial crisis hit, China recovered from the economic recession relatively quickly by implementing a stimulus package amounting to a monumental 4 trillion yuan. China succeeded in sustaining strong growth, while other countries reeled from the effects of the crisis. This significantly changed the relative power balance between China and the United States and expanded China's presence. Additionally, the Group of Two (G2) theory emerged in the United States, calling for China and the United States to jointly lead the world order going forward.³⁰

It is unquestionable that China gained more confidence under these circumstances. At the conference of diplomatic envoys held in 2009, China announced it would implement a more aggressive foreign policy amid prospects of further multipolarization of the international system, changing China's conventional policy of "tao guang yang hui you suo zuo wei" (hide our capacities and bide our time, but also get some things done) to "jianchi 'tao guang yang hui' jiji you suo zuo wei" (uphold "hide our capacities and bide our time" and actively get some things done).³¹ It is considered that this policy led to China's adoption of a more hardline foreign policy, and China has since begun to incite quarrels with neighboring countries.

China's confidence in its rise and the international situation has been expressed on various occasions. For example, on March 3, 2011, Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi stated that not only is the period of strategic chance continuing, another historic opportunity has arrived as a result of the changes in the situation over the past several years. According to the Minister, the trend towards a multipolar world is becoming more visible, and China can expect international order to evolve in a fairer and more reasonable direction through further reforms of the governance mechanisms of the world economy.³²

National confidence and pride have increased in China. According to public opinion polls conducted by the Pew Research Center, in response to the question of whether China will surpass the United States and become a superpower, 20% of the respondents in China answered "never" while 59% replied "will/has." The results show that the Chinese public generally has confidence in the country's future.³³

The Chinese government and experts are more cautious in their assessment of whether or not China will surpass the United States. According to a survey of experts in various countries conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Chinese experts do not consider that China will surpass the United States and become a hegemon.³⁴ In response to the question, "which country will exert the greatest power in 10 years," 26% of the experts answered China, while 71% answered the United States. As regards the desirable future for international relations in East Asia, around 10% of the experts answered that continued U.S. leadership is desirable, and

³⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Group of Two that could change the world," *Financial Times*, January 13, 2009.

³¹ "Di shiyi ci zhuwai shijie huiyi zhaokai Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao jianghua" zhongyang zhengfu menhu wang. "Speeches Delivered by Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao at the Opening of the 11th Conference of Chinese Diplomatic Envoys Stationed Abroad" The Central Government's Portal Site, July 20, 2009.

³² Yang Jiechi "Yonghao zhongyao zhanlue jiyu qi kaituo waijiao gongzuo xinjunian" renmin ribao. Yang Jiechi, "Take Advantage of the Period of Important Strategic Opportunities to Develop a New Phase in Diplomatic Work" *People's Daily*, March 3, 2011.

³³ "Views of the United States and American Foreign Policy," Pew Research Center, July 14, 2014.

³⁴ "Power and Order in Asia: A Survey of Regional Expectations," CSIS, July 2014.

more than 50% of the experts replied they expected the leadership of the United States to continue.

A number of experts also expressed support for China-U.S. condominium as represented by the G2 theory. For example, Yan Xuetong describes that the world order is shifting from “one superpower and many great powers” to “two superpowers and many great powers” as an outcome of China’s rise and the relative decline of the United States and European countries.³⁵ Likewise, in the CSIS survey of experts, around 20% of the Chinese experts responded that “Sino-U.S. condominium” is desirable with regard to future international relations in East Asia, while 15% expected to see “Sino-U.S. condominium,” which was a higher percentage compared to other countries’ experts.³⁶

(2) China-U.S. relations

China’s current policy towards the United States is based on a mixture of confidence and distrust. Firstly, China recognizes that with the changes in the power balance it has not overtaken the United States overall, but that it has become powerful enough not to easily succumb to U.S. coercion and is able to make the United States acknowledge China’s interests, particularly regarding regional issues. What this means is that even if China takes a firmer stance against neighboring countries in the region, the United States may not necessarily intervene. Hence, China gradually began to coerce states that have competing claims over territory and other issues, using non-military means that are difficult for the United States to react to.

Secondly, China simultaneously has strong distrust of the motives of the United States. This has translated into China’s perception that: (i) the United States is attempting to restrain China through constraints using encirclement and systems provided by its alliance network; and (ii) the United States is attempting to overthrow the Chinese Communist Party’s rule.

This type of Chinese perception is manifested in China’s response to U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region. The United States announced its policy of rebalancing to Asia at a time when the importance of Asia was increasing for economic and security reasons, and disputes were arising due to China’s hardline foreign policy against neighboring countries. China initially forecasted that rebalancing would not be very feasible. Factors that make rebalancing difficult include: lack of economic power; the policy is centered on military capability; and the policy asks countries to choose between the United States and China and thus countries do not follow suit. For example, in an editorial published in the October 17, 2011 issue of the *People’s Daily*, Zhong Sheng writes, (i) the United States sought to secure its further interests through the development of Asia and wished to attain hegemonic status. (ii) However, the United States faces two challenges. The first is coexistence with China. An attempt to draw on U.S. military capability to rebalance towards rising China has the risk of turning into a zero-sum game. Secondly, the U.S. strategy cannot be materialized by U.S. will alone. Zhong explains that the United States needs to demonstrate constructive capability in regional economic development but lacks this ability.³⁷ An article in

³⁵ Yan Xuetong “yichao duoqiang xiang zhongmei liangchao duojihua shiwei” *Huanqiu Shibao*. Yan Xuetong, “The ‘One Superpower and Many Strong Nations’ Situation Shifting into the Bipolarization of China and the US, causing Multipolarization to Decline,” *Global Times*, December 30, 2011.

³⁶ “Power and Order in Asia: A Survey of Regional Expectations.”

³⁷ Zhong Sheng “Xiang qingchu huilai le daodi gan shenme” *renmin ribao*. Zhong Sheng, “Think Clearly What on Earth You Are Going to Do after Coming Back,” *People’s Daily*, October 17, 2011.

the Defense Times (local newspaper of Chongqing) describes more directly that, "As a long-term trend, the United States will gradually withdraw from Asia. This is unrelated to U.S. motives and is a consequence of U.S. national power."³⁸

On the other hand, the rebalancing policy also raised suspicions that the United States was strengthening its alliance network in order to contain China. On June 4, 2012, a spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that it was unfitting for the Shangri-La Dialogue to artificially single out the military and security agenda or intensify military deployment and alliance in the Asia-Pacific in a timely manner. With regard to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's announcement that 60% of the U.S. Navy would be deployed to the Asia-Pacific, the spokesperson commented, "The pursuit of peace, efforts towards cooperation, and promotion of development are the general trend of the times and the common aspiration of the people in the Asia-Pacific region. All parties should be committed to safeguarding and promoting peace, stability, and development in the Asia-Pacific."³⁹ Furthermore, in an editorial in the June 5 issue of the People's Daily, Zhong Sheng criticizes that while the United States that the rebalancing policy is not aimed at China, its rhetoric and behavior are not in alignment and this will spark concerns among Asia-Pacific countries.⁴⁰

Through 2014, China anticipated that the United States, with limits to its capabilities, would attach priority to stable relations with China, and not interfere heavily in regional affairs. China sought to establish a "new type of great power relations" with the United States, building win-win relations in which the two countries respect their mutual core interests without vying with each other.

The United States, however, went onto strengthen its commitment to its allies and partners amid escalating confrontations in the South and East China Seas and other areas. When President Barack Obama visited Japan in April 2014, he declared that the Senkaku Islands fall within the scope of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. And that same month, President Obama signed a new military agreement with the Philippines. At the Shangri-La Dialogue held from the end of May 2014, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel condemned China's establishment of oil drilling machinery in the South China Sea and had a heated exchange with Deputy Chief of the General Staff Wang Guanzhong.

The strengthening of the alliance network began to draw stronger backlash from China. Concurrently, Chinese experts began to focus their discourse on the view that the U.S. rebalancing policy was an attempt to restrain China and to keep China in check. In the CSIS survey of experts, 23% of the Chinese experts supported the U.S. rebalancing policy, the lowest percentage among the surveyed countries, indicating that experts see the U.S. rebalance as excessively antagonistic towards China.⁴¹

³⁸ "Meiguo hui huan man tuichu yazhou" Guofang Shibao. "The United States will Slowly Withdraw from Asia," *Defense Times*, August 8, 2011.

³⁹ "Zhongguo waijiaobu fayanren: jiaqiang yatai junshi bushu bu he shiyi" Xinhuashe. "Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Strengthening the Military Deployment in the Asia Pacific Region Is Untimely," Xinhua News Agency, June 4, 2012.

⁴⁰ Zhong Sheng "Yanxingbuyi sunhao meiguo yatai yingxiangli" Renmin Ribao. Zhong Sheng, "Saying One Thing and Doing Another Makes the United States Weaken its Influence in the Asia Pacific Region," *People's Daily*, June 5, 2012.

⁴¹ "Power and Order in Asia: A Survey of Regional Expectations."

According to Gao Cheng, there was a system of coexistence between China and the United States in East Asia until 2009. This system, however, was eroded, and transformed into a mutually exclusive international structure. In 2009, China became the largest trading partner or export market for major industrialized countries, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Australia. As China's influence increased, the U.S. strategic focus shifted towards developing a firmer and stronger military alliance system in East Asia and regional hegemony. Simultaneously, China attempted to gain regional influence that corresponds to its ability and contribution to the periphery area. Gao explains that as a result, the China-U.S. relationship has become a zero-sum game over competition for power and international influence.⁴²

Zhou Fangyin first analyzes the vulnerabilities of the U.S. alliance network in order to counter the strengthening of the network under the rebalance, and notes that the vulnerabilities lie in the internal management of the alliance. That is, the issue of fear of abandonment and of involvement. In particular, the U.S.-ROK alliance is a typical example. During the Cold War period, the ROK was caught up in preventing abandonment by the United States, where as now, the ROK is caught up in preventing embroilment in U.S. wars. According to Zhou, China has four options in regard to the U.S. alliance network: (i) watch and do nothing; (ii) weaken the cohesion of the alliance system by implementing policies targeted at U.S. allies; (iii) carry out security cooperation with the United States and thereby decrease the role of the alliance system; and (iv) establish a regional security cooperation system.⁴³

In addition, the Chinese Communist Party fears that forces of other countries including the United States will make use of the protest movements within China to overthrow Communist Party rule. Against the backdrop of China's continued high economic growth, numerous protests have taken place against social contradictions, including disparities between the rich and the poor. In China, following the Jasmine Revolution in the Middle East in early 2011, calls for protests began to be made online, and activities encouraging China to follow suit were observed. Consequently, the Chinese Communist Party became ever more sensitive to problems that threaten the stability of the government. Chen Jiping, former deputy secretary of the party's Political and Legal Affairs Commission and former deputy head of the Comprehensive Management Commission, admitted in a February 2011 interview that domestic contradictions were worsening, while expressing alarm that "Western forces are trying to lend a hand to the contradictions in China, using such banners as protecting human rights."⁴⁴ When the Umbrella Revolution unfolded in Hong Kong in 2014, China expressed strong wariness and criticism of the influence and involvement of the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries. The media repeatedly published articles criticizing the United States for being behind the demonstrations. Further, a delegation from the British House of

⁴² Gao Cheng "Zhongguo jueqi beijing xia de zhoubian geju bianhua yu zhanlue tiaozheng" Guoji Jingji Ping lun. Gao Cheng, "Changes in the Peripheral Setup and Strategic Adjustments under the Background of China's Rise," *International Economic Review*, no.2, (2014), pp.34-38.

⁴³ Zhou Fangyin "Meiguo de yatai tongmeng tixi yu zhongguo yingdui shijie jingji yu zhengzhi." Zhou Fangyin, "The U.S. Alliance System in the Asia Pacific Region and China's Response," *World Economy and Politics*, no.11, (2013), pp.19-23.

⁴⁴ "Zhongyang zongzhiwei fuzhuren Chen Jiping tan jinnian shehui hexie wending xin bushu" Liaowang. "Chen Jiping, Deputy Head of the Central Commission for the Comprehensive Management of Public Security, Talks about This Year's New Deployment for Social Harmony and Stability," *LiaoWang*, February 20, 2011.

Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee was refused entry into Hong Kong.⁴⁵ From the perspective of China, "conspiracies" are being repeated, in which the United States and European countries are inserting their values such as democracy and freedom into countries under authoritarian rule, and this coupled with the social contradictions in the countries are generating revolutions. China has continued to have deep-seated distrust that this is what the United States is trying to do in China, and this sense of distrust has been deepening in recent years.

(3) Continuity and changes in the discourse on order

As was discussed earlier, China has consistently expressed the view that there are unfair and unreasonable aspects to the existing international order, and that they need to be corrected. It is incorrect to understand that China therefore went from fully accepting the international order to suddenly aiming to change the status quo. As regards China's objection to the U.S.-centered international order, China has long continued to call for the revision of the "unfair and unreasonable aspects" of the order. However, China rarely expressed its dissatisfaction through any form of action; nor did China have the influence to change the international order. It is precisely because China's power has increased that its assertions began to gain significance.

From the end of the Hu Jintao administration to the Xi Jinping administration, China gradually began not only to participate in the international order, but also to aim to revise it or create a new framework to ensure China can further expand its influence to serve China's interests. Although China has long referred to correcting the "unfair and unreasonable international order," China hardly took concrete actions to this end and rarely produced meaningful results. Correcting the international order became possible in the Xi Jinping administration, and furthermore, China began to perceive this as an imperative.

Amid advances in the world's multipolarization and globalization, Xi Jinping has advocated the necessity to "oppose hegemonism and authoritarianism and [promote] the democratization of international relations." In addition, Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi states, "Transforming the international system and improving global governance is the shared aspiration of all countries in the world."⁴⁶ At the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs held from November 28 to 29, 2014, Xi Jinping summarized China's foreign policy intentions, saying it was clear that the trend towards a multipolar world and globalization will not change, and recognized that while "being keenly aware of the protracted nature of contest over the international order," the direction of democratizing the international system will remain unchanged on the whole.

(i) China's expanded participation in the international order and exercise of influence

First, it is clear that China is attempting not only to expand its participation in the international order, but also to strengthen its influence and voice.

At a press conference during the National People's Assembly on March 7, 2012, Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi indicated that China would proactively expand its participation in global governance to reform the international system and structure in a way that would be beneficial to more developing countries, and would aim to expand China and many developing

⁴⁵ The National Institute for Defense Studies, ed., *East Asian Strategic Review 2015*, The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2015, pp.118-119.

⁴⁶ Renmin Ribao. *People's Daily*, January 1, 2014.

countries' right of representation and influence in international affairs.⁴⁷

On March 10, 2013, State Councilor Yang Jiechi stated that with the growing trend towards a multipolar world, "The international system of the 21st century needs to expand its representativeness, improve its fairness, and enhance its effectiveness. China is a participant, builder, and contributor to the international system, and we shall participate in international affairs with a proactive approach and play a role in developing a fairer and more reasonable international system."⁴⁸

This approach is considered to have led to China's proposal of the "New Asian Security Concept" at the Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and to China's attachment of importance on diplomacy with neighboring countries, such as the proposal of the Silk Road Economic Belt concept and the Maritime Silk Road concept.

Likewise, scholars call on China to proactively participate in, expand its influence on, or become a builder of international institutions and rules. According to Liu Aming and Zhou Jianming, while China previously adopted the strategy of "hide our capacities and bide our time, but also get some things done," upheld the reform and opening policy, and stressed a new international political and economic order, China in fact did not have the suitable capability to do this. However, with continued high economic growth, China gained the confidence and ability to play a leading role in shaping the international order. Liu and Zhou argue that China should promote reforms of international rules and organizations by actively carrying out multilateral diplomacy, as well as by asserting a new international political order founded on equality among states, anti-hegemonism, and dialogue and cooperation.⁴⁹

According to Pang Zhongying, "China must extend beyond its self-definition of traditional regional power," and become "not only a participant in the world order but a builder of an open world order." China has indeed achieved economic growth under international rules and a world order led by the United States and Europe. Under the existing system, however, China will remain a second-rank country like Japan due to the existence of rules and restrictions on the order. The existing international institutions are not suited for the size of China; furthermore, reforming the existing international institutions is not in line with the reality and the trends of the world. Pang contends that China must therefore further underscore "global governance," and in particular, need to (i) reform the current international institutions, and (ii) create new international institutions.⁵⁰

Qin Yaqing of China Foreign Affairs University states that China's participation in the international order is not a process of socialization through passive participation, but a process that influences the international order under a Chinese approach. According to Qin, China has never

⁴⁷ Yang Jiechi "Jiu zhongguo wajijiao zhengce he duiwai guanxi da zhongwai jizhe wen" *Renmin Ribao*. Yang Jiechi, "Answers to Foreign Journalists' Questions as to China's Diplomatic Policy and External Relations," *People's Daily*, March 7, 2012.

⁴⁸ Yang Jiechi "Jiu zhongguo wajijiao zhengce he duiwai guanxi da zhongwai jizhe wen" *Renmin Ribao*. Yang Jiechi, "Answers to Foreign Journalists' Questions as to China's Diplomatic Policy and External Relations," *People's Daily*, March 10, 2013.

⁴⁹ Liu Aming, Zhou Jianming "Cong zhuzhang dao suzao" *Shehui Kexue*. Liu Aming, Zhou Jianmin, "From Assertion to Shaping" *Social Science*, no.4, (2012), pp.4-11.

⁵⁰ Pang Zhongying "Yazhou diqu zhixu de zhuanbian yu zhongguo" *Wajijiao Pinglun*. Pang Zhongying, "Shift in order in Asia and China," *Foreign Affairs Review*, no.4, (2005), pp.68-70.

participated in the international order by going so far as to compromise on legitimate rights and core interests related to the key issue of principles. China's participation in the international order will promote global pluralistic governance. In a hegemonic order, a hegemon creates the international order and provides international rules and public goods. This, however, leads to a monopolistic political orientation. A pluralistic order has diversity, openness, and a mutually complementary nature, and China's participation will promote a pluralistic order. At the same time, however, Qin maintains that while China's influence will increase and the international system will diversify, the basic structure led by the United States and Europe was created over a long period and will remain long unchanged.⁵¹

(ii) Rebuttals to the rule-based order theory

Next, we examine China's rebuttals to the discussion on rule-based order. Xi Jinping has expressed opposition to "bending international law and undermining, in the name of 'rule of law,' other countries' legitimate rights and interests as well as peace and stability." On October 24, 2014, Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi stated as follows. "Promoting international rule of law is still faced with many difficulties and challenges. Hegemonism, power politics and all forms of 'new interventionism' pose a direct challenge to basic principles of international law including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. Some countries follow a pragmatist or a double-standard approach to international law, using whatever that suits their interests and abandoning whatever that does not." Wang Yi expressed the view that international rules are formulated and applied inequitably, and that equal and democratic participation in the international rulemaking process was needed.⁵² Further, on November 27, 2014, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin expressed the following position: "China is a firm defender and active builder of the international rule of law and regional rules. China will defend regional maritime security and order, actively participate in the consultations on rules in new international domains such as cyberspace, and promote the fair and reasonable making of international rules that are universally acceptable."

According to an interview with a scholar, China acknowledges the importance of rule-based order but is staunchly against the U.S. and Japan's use of this order in an attempt to put limits on the activities of China or to make unfair criticisms.⁵³

According to Jiang Zhida, conflicts between China and the United States over norms and institutions in East Asia are becoming more acute. He explains that amid its decline in relative power, the United States endeavors to maintain superiority in East Asia under existing and new norms, as well as to inhibit and limit China's rise through U.S.-led norms and institutions. The United States aspires to dismantle East Asian cooperation and create a separate framework that excludes China. To mitigate U.S. restrictions that make use of institutions, it is important that China not only participate in regional institutions, norms, and rules, but also become their builder

⁵¹ Qin Yaqing "Wei guoji zhixu biange gongxian zhongguo fangan" *Zhongguo Shehui Xuebao*. Qin Yaqing, "Contribute China's Plan to Changing International Order," *The Chinese Sociological Bulletin*, December 17, 2014.

⁵² Wang Yi "Zhongguo shi guoji fazhi de jianing weihuzhe he jianshezhe" *Waijiaobu*. Wang Yi, "China, a Staunch Defender and Builder of International Rule of Law," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 24, 2014.

⁵³ Interview, August 2014.

and creator.⁵⁴

Gao Cheng analyzes that amid its declining relative power, the United States leverages international rules to protect its hegemonic status, and is redefining and adjusting the principles of international rules in line with its strategic objectives. According to Gao, on the one hand, the United States is shifting the leading format of U.S.-led international organizations and rules from an open global model to a semi-closed “club approach” in core areas, such as military, financial, and energy affairs. On the other hand, the United States is sustaining an open multilateral world in non-core areas, such as climate change, the environment, and counter-terrorism, in which the United States is trying to distribute responsibility and burden of their global governance among countries that include emerging economies such as China. Gao contends that in view of these aspects, China should focus on diplomacy with nations that are low on the list of U.S. strategic priorities, or with U.S. allies with which China does not have territorial or other disputes and has close economic relations. Furthermore, in multilateral settings, China should play a global role by going beyond the traditional regional focus. In this context, China, as a representative of developing countries and emerging economies, should not only ensure that the benefits of its development reach other countries, but also propose an agenda, assertions, and principles of international order that will be jointly pursued by China and other nations.⁵⁵

In an article written in 2010, Pan Zhongqi describes China’s engagement in the international order as a transition from “following shi” to “seizing shi” to “shaping shi.” “Following shi” denotes skillfully keeping with and going along with the trend of the times. Since the policy of reform and opening, China has gotten on the development track by becoming an active participant and practical applier of the international order rather than being its objector. Following this, China needed to “seize shi,” which denotes skillfully seizing opportunities. In the present-day context, it means for China, the 2008 financial crisis presented a serious challenge to its peace and development, while simultaneously offering a historical opportunity to maintain China’s economic growth and elevate its international standing. To become a world power by rising further, China will now need to “shape shi.” “Shaping shi” refers to shaping international structures to China’s advantage, fully consciously and by anticipating the future, controlling the development trends in history, creating opportunities that are always favorable for safeguarding and carving out national core interests, and establishing a large space for development. Specifically, (i) China will actively participate in reforming international monetary systems, and will shape rules and agenda favorable to China by using the G20 and other new mechanisms. (ii) While the United States will maintain hegemonic status of a superpower for a long period in the future, China will continue to promote multipolarity and shape the development of the international system in a direction favorable to China, and thereby, constantly increase and make firm China’s strategic status in the international structure, while keeping the United States and Europe in check and reducing the obstacles imposed by them. Lastly, China will participate extensively in building an international regime as a participant, builder, and contributor to the international system, expand its influence in the structural reforms

⁵⁴ Jiang Zhida “Dong ya zhixu de yanjin yu zhongmei guifan jinghe” renmin wang. Jiang Zhida, “Evolution in East Asian Order and Competition between Chinese and U.S. Norms,” *People’s Daily Online*, August 11, 2014.

⁵⁵ Gao Cheng “Zhongguo jueqi beijing xia de zhoubian geju bianhua yu zhanlue tiaozheng.” Gao Cheng, “Changes in the Peripheral Setup and Strategic Adjustments under the Background of China’s Rise,” pp.89-97.

of the U.N., World Bank, IMF, and other institutions, and further increase China's voice.⁵⁶

(iii) What sort of order will China seek?

The question, then, is what aspects is China attempting to reform to make the existing international order fairer and more reasonable, or what sort of order does China wish to establish? To this day China has not provided a concrete answer to these questions.

In advocating strengthening its influence on the international order, China is especially mindful of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Xi Jinping expressed the view that, "The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have effectively upheld the rights and interests of the developing world. The core of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is that there is sovereign equality among all countries and that no country should monopolize international affairs. These principles offer a powerful intellectual tool for developing countries to uphold their sovereignty and independence." Xi Jinping goes on to say that the Five Principles play a positive role in building a fairer and more reasonable international political and economic order. It is most important that sovereign equality is upheld. No infringement upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country is allowed. Countries should respect each other's core interests and key concerns. Furthermore, an international order that realizes fairness and justice is needed. Xi shared his view that, "We should jointly promote greater democracy in international relations," and that the notion of a single nation monopolizing international affairs is now obsolete.⁵⁷

It cannot be said that these discussions produced new norms. In this regard, as Schweller and Pu have argued, China is no more than a critic and a resistor within the existing international order framework.⁵⁸ Gao Cheng also recognizes this point, analyzing that, "China lacks a concrete sense of order and is focusing much of its attention on its own short-term gains and the specific issues associated with them."⁵⁹

Moreover, the term "maintenance of post-war international order" has come into increasing usage in recent years. It argues that the post-war international order originated as a result of World War II and the U.N., and any act that challenges this cannot be tolerated. This argument is used primarily for criticizing Japan. The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the Government of Japan's transfer of the ownership of the Senkaku Islands in September 2012 presents the view that, "[Nationalization] seriously tramples on historical facts and international jurisprudence," criticizing that "Japan's position on the issue of the Diaoyu Island is an outright denial of the outcomes of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and constitutes a grave challenge

⁵⁶ Pan Zhongqi "Cong suishi dao moushi" Shijie Zhengzhi. Pan Zhongqi, "From 'Following the Trends' to 'Creating the Environment,'" *World Politics*, no.2, (2010), pp.4-18.

⁵⁷ "Xi Jinping hongyang heping gongchu wuxiang yuanze jianshe hezuo gongying meihao shijie" Renmin Ribao. "Xi Jinping Carries forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to Build a Better World through Win-Win Cooperation," *People's Daily*, June 29, 2014.

⁵⁸ Schweller and Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline," pp.41-43.

⁵⁹ Gao Cheng "Zhongguo jueqi beijing xia de zhoubian geju bianhua yu zhanlue tiaozheng." Gao Cheng "Cong guize shijiao guan meiguo chonggou guoji zhixu de zhanlue tiaozheng." Gao Cheng, "Changes in the Peripheral Setup and Strategic Adjustments under the Background of China's Rise," p.43. Gao Cheng, "Observation of the U.S. Strategic Adjustments in Restructuring the International Order from the Viewpoint of Rules," p.96.

to the post-war international order.”⁶⁰ State Councilor Yang Jiechi in charge of diplomacy stated during his press conference on March 10, 2013 that Japan’s action constitutes a serious violation of China’s territorial sovereignty, and criticized that the action challenges the outcome of WWII and the post-war international order. The People’s Daily commented that, “The Cairo Declaration is the cornerstone of the post-WWII international order, and no nation should or can undermine its decisive role.”⁶¹ The logic of the “maintenance of post-war international order” is employed conceivably to underscore that it is not China but Japan that is challenging the international order.

This discourse became more prevalent in the lead-up to the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII in 2015. In the context of China-Russia relations, Xi Jinping stated that the two countries needed to work together “to firmly uphold the basic norms of the U.N. Charter and international relations, and to maintain the outcome of WWII and the post-war international order.” Furthermore, the China-Russia Joint Statement on a New Stage of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination of May 2014 enshrines that China and Russia will implement activities for the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, and “will continue to firmly oppose plots that distort history and destroy the post-war international order.”⁶² On November 27, 2014, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin remarked, “2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War. Nations in the region must make collective efforts to protect the achievements of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and to defend the post-war international order.”⁶³

Conclusion

China’s perception of the international order has been consistent on three points. Firstly, China believes that the international order is based on the power and interests of major countries, and that the existing order is the hegemonistic order imposed by the United States. Secondly, China argues that aspects of the aforementioned international order are unfair and unreasonable, and must be reformed. Thirdly, when discussing the international order, China will without fail refer to the U.N. Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Article 2 of the U.N. Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence provide for equality among sovereign states, noninterference in internal affairs, and peaceful coexistence of differing political regimes, and they are of vital importance for China, which sees the continuation of the administration of the Communist Party as an overriding imperative.

While China’s aforementioned perception of the international order has remained largely consistent, China has in the past displayed passive resistance to the international order or participated only passively in it. Amid a shift in the balance of power, however, arguments calling for greater participation and communication in the existing international order are gradually gaining ground in China. Moreover, there has also emerged an argument for China’s involvement

⁶⁰ “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo waijiaobu shengming” Renmin Ribao. “Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China,” *People’s Daily*, September 11, 2012.

⁶¹ Renmin Ribao. *People’s Daily*, January 10, 2014.

⁶² “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo yu eluosi lianbang guanyu quanmian zhanlue xiezuo huoban guanxi xin jieduan de lianhe shengming” Renmin Ribao. “The China-Russia Joint Statement on a New Stage of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination,” *People’s Daily*, May 30, 2014.

⁶³ Liu Zhenmin “Wei goujian mingyun gongtongti yingzao heping wending de diqu huanjing” Renmin Ribao. Liu Zhenmin, “Create a Peaceful and Stable Regional Environment to Forge a Community of Shared Future,” *People’s Daily*, November 27, 2014.

in the restructuring and development of the international order.

At present, however, China has yet to generate new norms or values that are universally acceptable. An emphasis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is not expected to produce a concept of order that supersedes the strict application of the sovereign state system.

As Schweller and Pu have discussed, a limited challenge of this nature is mounted either to improve a country's standing in the existing order and implement limited reforms, or to ultimately overthrow the existing order. At this point in time, it is impossible to identify the ultimate objective of China. Furthermore, even if China's objective was to ultimately overthrow the order, it is also possible that China will become socialized by the existing order in the course of taking actions under the order. Conversely, even if the current objective was to increase China's standing in the existing order, it is also possible that the objective will evolve into something more ambitious as its relative power rises. Changes in relative power give motivation for creating a new order, and it is expected that China will continue to strengthen its assertions.

However, China argues that it is not a revisionist power in regard to the international order and that it is its defender. In recent years, the term "maintenance of post-war international order" has come into increasing usage. It argues that the post-war international order originated as a result of World War II and the U.N., and any act that challenges this cannot be tolerated. This argument is conceivably used for criticizing Japan's position on the Senkaku Islands, in order to publicize that it is not China but Japan that is challenging the international order.

Regardless of China's own perspective, China can be described as a revisionist power, in terms of its dissatisfaction with the status quo and its desire to reform it. However, China is not seeking to rapidly change the status quo by using force and without ruling out war; rather, China is attempting to gradually change the status quo by concurrently using various means including paramilitary means through a repetition of trial and error. Judging from this tendency, it can be said that the so-called integration approach, which involves China gradually accepting the web of regulations and rules and becoming a "responsible stakeholder" of the existing international order through internalization, has not panned out as expected.

What, then, is the future outlook? The power shift has entered a slow process, and the restraints that the international system imposes on China are considered not very strong. In this regard, the competition over the international order is expected to become a protracted one. At times the U.S.-led systems and the China-led systems may compete with one another, and at other times, may become complementary to one another.

Lastly, what are the policy implications? The following three aspects will be important for maintaining the stability of the international order. First, it is essential that the power balance be maintained. As long as China's perspective of the international order in essence attaches importance to the changes in the power balance, it will become critical to maintain the power balance. It is expected that this will be underpinned by the strengthening of the alliance network. Secondly, it will be vital to undertake multilateral efforts to establish institutions, which can maintain and strengthen functional principles that bring predictability and stability to international politics, i.e., principles such as rule of law, freedom of access to international public goods, freedom of navigation (and overflight), and peaceful settlement of disputes. Thirdly, the foundation provided by the power balance and institutions is pivotal for enabling realistic diplomacy and engagement with China.

