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Review article**THE NEW WORLD ORDER FROM CHINESE PERSPECTIVE****Abstract:**

Nowadays, people, states and international organizations feel more threatened and insecure, more than in the past, and this has contributed to an increase in need for security and the establishment of a new order and rules through which the world's problems will be successfully solved. One of the leading countries is the People's Republic of China, which is taking an increasing share on the global stage and is striving to reduce the dominance and role of the United States and European countries. The rise of China as an economic, security-military and information-technological power has contributed to the shift of the centre of gravity and power from the West to the East, and a lot of opportunities have been created for other Asian countries to find their place and role and be an important subject in the new international structure.

With the inclusion of new actors on the international stage, the balance of power changes and new rules of the game are imposed, contrary to the Western countries. The "new managers" are expected to have greater responsibility and influence in reforming the existing international institutions, as well as reducing the factors that cause instability and lead to an anarchic world order. However, due to the different values, interests and goals promoted by the PRC, a number of security implications of an international nature, intensification of geopolitical and geo-economics rivalries, polarization, emergence of new risks and dangers, and increased tension between great powers are expected.

Keywords: PRC, socialism, Chinese characteristics, world order, strategic rivalry.

Introduction

Asia is the largest continent in the world containing more than half of the world's population and covering one third of the world's land area. As in the past years and in the future, the importance of the continent will increase due to the power and global influence of several Asian countries. We are talking about the People's Republic of China and India, countries that have not yet entered the group of developed countries, but are a driving economic, security-military and information technology powers. It foreshadows that the 21st century will be an Asian or Asia-Pacific century, in which the centre of world power will shift from the West to the East(Thatcher, 2002). Many see the rise of the PRC as ushering in a "golden age" of Asian prosperity in which Chinese values, culture and products will set the standard around the world. In fact, China has been the most productive economy and busiest trading area for centuries, as early as 1820 it produced more than 30% of the world's GDP, surpassing the gross domestic product of Western and Eastern Europe and the United States combined(Kissinger, 2012). Statistical data show that in the near future the People's Republic of China will take the lead from the USA, that is, it will "become the number one country in the world".

Since its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China has been under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, which has succeeded in transforming the country from a semi-feudal society to a modern society. During the past 74 years, China has made profound changes and achieved tremendous progress unprecedented in human history. It is one of the most populous countries in the world with about 1.4 billion people, and in just a few decades it has become the world's second largest economic power. According to economic indicators for the period from 1952 to 2018, China's gross domestic product increased by 174 times, and GDP per capita increased by 70 times. Thanks to their rapid growth, the poverty rate fell from 10.2% to 1.7%, lifting more than 800 million people out of poverty, making it the first developing country to achieve the goal of reducing poverty under the UN Millennium Development Goals(China and the World in the New Era, 2019).

In addition to being an economic power, it is increasingly intensifying its role in other spheres, such as in security, defence, energy and infrastructure. The PRC is the second military power in the world whose defence budget for 2022 was 292 billion dollars(Tian, Nan et al., 2023), and it is also the second country in the world with the largest contribution to the budget of the United Nations, and it has also participated in 24 peacekeeping operations. It is still considered the country with the largest contribution of military forces among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The military rise, the participation in international organizations and the global initiatives enable China to compete with the great powers and win the struggle for strategic supremacy, and also reshaping the world order in accordance with the Chinese characteristics.

Since its independence, the PRC has not started a single war or conflict, and this has given it an advantage and a higher position in international relations. In addition to the economic and military rise, it also focused on strengthening its “soft” power (through the Confucius Institute, established in several cities around the world), advocated for maintaining world peace through multilateralism and cooperation with other countries. As most powerful Asian country, it tends to solve regional and global problems through participation in numerous international organizations, the most significant of which are BRICS, WTO, IMF, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, APEC, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and others (China and the World in the New Era, 2019). One of China’s most important strategic initiatives is the “Belt and Road Initiative”¹ (BRI), with which 147 countries (accounting for two-thirds of the world’s population and 40% of global GDP) have signed cooperation agreements with the Chinese government (McBride, Berman and Chatzky, 2023).

All indicators are in favour of China, because it has a huge labour force, production, finance, energy and scientific and technological potential, enough to be the leader of the new era. China is expected to make a revival in international relations and determine the new structure and direction in which the modern globalization will move.

A new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics

For the first time in 2012, the President of the People’s Republic of China presented the vision of revitalizing China as a great power, called the “Chinese Dream”. This dream was aimed at ensuring economic prosperity, social stability and a higher standard of living for the citizens. The main goal was to restore national prestige and ensure China’s rise as a great and powerful socialist country (Heath, Gunness and Cooper, 2016). In 2017, at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping announced that “socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era”, that is, an age in which the country has moved closer to the centre stage (Munich Security Report, 2018: 24).

According to Article 1 of the 1982 constitution of the PRC, it is defined as “a socialist state under a people’s democratic dictatorship led by the working class”. China’s development philosophy is based on adhering to the “Four Cardinal Principles”, namely: (1) adhering to the road of socialism; (2) upholding the people’s democratic dictatorship; (3) support of the leadership of the Communist Party and (4) upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (Jinping, 2022:22). For China’s political leadership, Marxism is a fundamental guiding ideology that is adapted to China’s needs and the new era. And in the future, China will try to maintain this ideological direction, supplementing it with new ideas, thoughts and strategies, and does not plan to leave or change the political system.

¹The PRC aims to rediscover the ancient Silk Road linking Asia with Europe and Africa through major infrastructure investments in maritime, road and rail projects.

China's progress is due to the country having a unique, centralized, and authoritative political system that differs from the Western democratic system. It has a one-party system of government by the Communist Party of China which has ruled the country since 1949 until today (**Constitution of the People's Republic of China**, 1982). The Communist Party of China has infiltrated all state institutions and organizations, controlling the administration, congress, judiciary, security, military, media, social organizations and all other societal entities.

Therefore, in the past years, Western countries (primarily the United States), and organizations, have often criticized the Chinese communist regime for disregarding human rights and freedoms and repression of ethnic communities. Western leaders believed that communism in China would fall because of the country's rapid economic progress. However, China has not deviated from its strict political control and autocratic governance model. On the contrary, it managed to make the most of the benefits of capitalism and become an economic superpower, without risking the implementation of democracy. As the most powerful country in the world under the control of communism,² it strengthened its international position and influence. Especially, after the global financial recession in 2008, when the developed countries of the West saw China as a "saviour country" that was expected to save the "drowning" (pay off their debt), and bring them back to life. Obviously, the West needs Communist China more than China needs the West and neoliberal values.

On the other hand, at the global level, radical changes have taken place in the democratic model of governance – for sixteen years in a row, political rights and civil liberties in the world have been declining. By 2022, 72% of the world's population, or 5.7 billion people, live in autocratic regimes, which is 46% more than ten years ago, while 13% of the world's population (or about 1 billion people), live in liberal democracies. From an economic perspective, autocratic countries account for 46% of global gross domestic product (Papada, et al., 2023). Due to this negative trend, the intensification of geopolitical rivalries, security implications, polarization and tension between states with different system arrangements is expected. It seems that the clash between the forces of democracy and autocracy is inevitable in the coming years due to the marked division in the world between countries with liberal-democratic values and autocratic countries. The concern is particularly expressed among highly developed Western countries that an alternative non-Western model of world order led by autocratic countries (headed by China and Russia) may "emerge" as a replacement for the capitalist neoliberal order.

²Communism is the official form of government in only five countries, the People's Republic of China, North Korea, Laos, Cuba and Vietnam, which together account for about 20% of the world's population.

China's role in reshaping the international order

For a long time, the global security system has been seriously weakened and does not provide guarantees to protect the world from future shocks and crises. In the past decade, several significant events emphasized the need for structural changes in the international political, economic and security system, namely: the Russian annexation of Crimea (in 2014); Brexit (in 2016); the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States (in 2017), which intensified the trade war between the United States and China; rise of nationalism (in 2018); the global pandemic of the coronavirus (in 2020); withdrawal of US troops and NATO forces from Afghanistan (in 2021); the war in Ukraine (in 2022), and global economic uncertainty (in 2023).

Some of these developments, to a lesser or greater extent, caused "deep fissures" in the international structure, prompting numerous debates and reflections on the future of the international order. In particular, the current Russian-Ukrainian war served as a "wake-up call" for reforming and shaping the world order. According to Russian President Vladimir Putin, the war in Ukraine represents "the beginning of a radical collapse of the American style of world order and a transition from liberal-globalist American egocentrism to a truly multipolar world" (Bunde, et al., 2023:14). A few years ago, at the "Global Governance Forum" in Paris, Chinese President Xi Jinping asked all countries to make efforts and jointly shape the future of humanity in order to deal with global challenges. He offered a four-pronged approach to solving the world's "four deficits." First, fairness and reasonableness are needed to address the "governance deficit". Second, consultation and understanding are necessary to overcome the "trust deficit". Third, addressing the "peace deficit" requires joint efforts and mutual assistance, and fourth, mutual benefit and cooperation to address the "development deficit" (China's solution to solving four deficits in global governance, 2019).

Due to the shortcomings of peace, security, development and global governance, fluctuations in the international order and possible fragmentation of the world into several security and economic blocs of different size, strength and sphere of interests are expected. Depending on the dynamics of the international scene, the change in the security environment (formation of new ad hoc coalitions or informal alliances in case of urgent need - wars, crises, etc.), the world order will also change.

The current international order is in a phase of transition from a unipolar to a bi-multipolar order, the appearance of which has yet to be defined by the main actors such as the US, China, the EU, Russia and India. It is a hybrid bipolar-multipolar order, which consists of two power centres, the USA and China, which are in a rigid relationship with each other, and several powers weaker than them (the EU, Russia and India), which gravitate around the superpowers. Such an order coincides with the statements of the "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck, who said "in the world order of five states, it is always desirable to be part of a

group consisting of three states. Applied to the interaction of three states, it is desirable to be part of a group consisting of two states” (Kissinger, 2012).

Although American power is gradually waning, they are still the only superpower with great influence in the world and in international organizations such as the UN, NATO, IMF, World Bank, WTO and G7. The only competitor of the United States in the struggle for global supremacy is the People’s Republic of China, which in the post-Cold War era has adapted to the changing international order. Hence, the questions arise, in which way will China move? What are China’s goals in shaping the world? Will it strive for cooperation or confrontation?

The first two decades of the 21st century represented a strategic period of opportunity for China as it sought various ways to build a new international political and economic order. It stands for true multilateralism and international cooperation, and is against all forms of hegemony, power politics, unilateralism, protectionism and neocolonization. It will also not follow the old path of war, the Cold War mentality and the “law of the jungle”. As a modern superpower that has risen without resorting to war or conflict in the past seventy years, it will promote a new model of international relations where the five principles of peaceful coexistence will be respected, namely: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Jinping, 2022: 53). One of the principles is non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, which is a fundamental interest of every state, and is not subject to compromise because it is a matter of high national security policy³ (Salivan, 2012: 287).

The new model of international relations should be built on the principles of mutual respect, cooperation, justice and equality between all countries (big and small, strong and weak, rich and poor countries). The PRC will advocate for all countries to participate in the new international structure, to contribute to solving global issues such as maintaining world peace and security, supporting multilateralism and free trade. Respecting common interests, instead of maximizing national interests and the “winner takes all” practice. In general,

³For years, China has grappled with issues surrounding the country’s territorial integrity and maintaining control over Taiwan and Tibet, as well as sovereignty over a disputed group of islands in the South China Sea. It opposes the attempts of foreign powers to interfere in the internal affairs of Hong Kong and Macao, and will especially prevent anti-Chinese intentions for the independence of Taiwan. The Taiwan issue represents a strategic line of separation between the major powers, further increasing the degree of uncertainty and confrontation between China and the United States. On the other hand, China still applies the concept of governance “one country, two systems”, which means that the socialist system is applied in most of the country, while the capitalist system and way of life is used in Hong Kong and Macao. Since the United Kingdom returned Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997, Beijing has promised broad autonomy, unlimited individual rights and judicial independence until 2047. But with the adoption of Hong Kong’s new National Security Law in 2020, China has restricted autonomy, freedoms and rights in the “name of national security”, and will prevent and punish attempts at secession, subversion of state power, terrorism and foreign interference in Hong Kong affairs.

China advocates peace, cooperation and development, as well as common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and will avoid isolation, confrontation, military conflicts and abuse of power in international relations. It is also against zero-sum game and blocks creation policy (Jinping, 2022).

According to the Chinese vision, international institutions are expected to play the main role in dealing with security challenges and dangers, with the UN being the basic cornerstone for maintaining global security and the stability of the international order. Hence the need to redefine the existing model of the international system, which relies on organizations and institutions that have existed more than 75 years, and whose role is to prevent a regional or global crisis. In that context, China is taking an active role in reforming and developing the global governance system, including reforms of global economic institutions—the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the IMF. It will also promote the role of the G20 as the main forum for international economic cooperation and for taking anti-crisis measures, which will contribute to global economic governance. China will strive for the new model of economic globalization to be developed and shaped by all countries, firmly opposing unilateral approaches and protectionism (China and the World in the New Era, 2019).

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it also proposed several important global initiatives (concepts), such as the “Global Development Initiative” (GDI) and the “Global Security Initiative” (GSI). Global initiatives, in which core concepts⁴, principles and priorities are clearly defined, are the key to achieving sustainable security in the international community through global development and prosperity. In them, the solutions for the international economic-social and security challenges are proposed in detail. Advocating for respecting the diversity of civilizations, promoting the common values of humanity and coexistence between people, China also promoted the “Global Civilization Initiative” (GCI), which emphasizes that there is no difference between superior and inferior civilizations.

From the above, it is noted that China will act globally, and will best promote and open up to the world through the strategic initiative “Belt and Road Initiative - BRI”, and through other global connectivity initiatives “Polar Silk Road” and “Digital Silk Road” (DSR). While with its national strategic plans

⁴According to the “Global Security Initiative”, core concepts and principles are: (1) commitment to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; (2) respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; (3) respecting the purposes and principles of the UN Charter; (4) taking seriously the legitimate security concerns of all countries; (5) peaceful resolution of differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation and (6) maintenance of security in traditional and non-traditional domains (The Global Security Initiative, 2023). While, in the “Global Development Initiative” the following core concepts and principles are stated: (1) prioritizing development; (2) a people-centered approach; (3) leaving no country behind; (4) harmony between human and nature; (5) encouraging innovation; (6) global development partnership; (7) action-oriented approach and (8) synergy (Global Development Initiative, 2021).

“Made in China 2025” (MIC) and “China Standards 2035” it will strive for world dominance in the high-tech industry, establishing global standards for new technologies such as are 5G, Internet devices, advanced robotics and artificial intelligence.

The advantage of the PRC over other major powers is that it can use its capabilities in all three circles (the circle of superpowers, developed countries, and developing countries). Its uniqueness to cooperate and build friendship with all countries in the world (including countries that are long-time enemies of the United States, such as North Korea, Venezuela, Iran, etc.), allowed it to strengthen its position at the global level. It is also due to the shortcomings of the current Western-oriented world order, which the countries of the global South characterized as post-colonial dominance, double standards and neglect the problems of developing countries (Bunde, et al., 2023: 22). In particular, the war in Ukraine changed the “game”, with the rivalry between the US and Russia being a chance to position China as a leader in shaping the new world order.

The People’s Republic of China as partner, competitor and systemic rival

The increased geopolitical rivalries between the great powers have contributed to the strengthening of old alliances or the formation of new alliances and partnerships that directly affect the shaping of the international order. The question arises whether in the changed security environment the states will see China as a partner, competitor or systemic rival?

In the past seven decades, the PRC has built a strategic partnership with Russia, which was confirmed by the joint statements of the leaders of the two countries before the start of the invasion of Ukraine. Their deepened “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era” is a confirmation of “borderless” friendship and protection of their national values and interests (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2023). The two autocratic countries are developing special political, economic, military and energy relations that are likely to influence the future structure of the international order. By signing numerous documents for strategic cooperation, they announce their commitment to a multipolar world, democratization of international relations and preservation of the diversity of the world.

The Sino-Russian strategic partnership is especially highlighted within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), where cooperation in the fields of politics, security, defence and economy is strengthened. Therefore, from year to year, the interest of countries in membership or cooperation with these organizations grows. In addition, China and Russia seek to strengthen cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which in turn play a central role in the development of East Asia.

There is a possibility of forming parallel political, security-military and economic systems, as an alternative to the existing Western international organizations and institutions. So, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

(founded by China), can be competitive with the IMF and the World Bank, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can become the counterpart of NATO (Chomsky, 2016), while BRICS can be the equivalent of the G7 group. For those reasons, the Western countries through NATO, the EU and the G7 will try to protect the liberal-democratic order and their spheres of interests, while the member states of the SCO and BRICS will try to impose their values and "rules of the game" which are opposite of the western ones.

Many consider the Sino-Russian pact to be a major threat to the stability of the Western liberal order. Precisely because of this, Western countries and organizations such as the United States, NATO and the EU have begun to change their strategic security and defence documents, emphasizing China's triple role as economic partner, competitor and as a systemic rival. In practice, Sino-US relations are less of a partnership and more of a rivalry or "competitive coexistence", while the relationship between China and the EU are more trading partners than rivals. The PRC and the European Union have far more common interests than differences. Although they have different systemic values, both sides are building a comprehensive strategic partnership, support multilateralism and the work of international organizations that are guardians of peace and stability in the world. In contrast, the US is more inclined to unilateralism, "freedom of acting" and "trade at the tip of the bayonet" without restrictions from international institutions, because it is a significantly more powerful military force than China and the EU (Fukuyama, 2005).

In terms of rivalry, certain events (such as strained trade relations between the US and China, the origin of the coronavirus pandemic, accusations that the Chinese technology company Huawei and the TikTok app are a threat to US national security, support for independence of Taiwan), increased the intensity of the competition between the superpowers. Fear of China's economic, military, and information technology rise has forced Western allies and organizations to focus on developing engagement strategies in the Indo-Pacific region in order to limit China's influence and its aspirations for world leadership. One of the ways to prevent China's dominance in Asia and the formation of an Asian hostile bloc, the West sees through the creation of flexible cooperation formats such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (between Australia, India, Japan and the United States), the Trilateral Security Pact - AUKUS (between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the Five Eyes intelligence alliance (between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and other bilateral security and defence cooperation agreements.

The American-Chinese geostrategic rivalry is yet to intensify, especially around the Taiwan Strait, which is a critical security point of the Asia-Pacific region and the world. Due to the complex and mostly bad relations between the great powers, as well as between the regional powers, this region will represent a potential strategic and geopolitical battlefield in the future. For now, the Chinese leadership points out that the country is focused on a non-offensive national defence policy, that is, it is against expansionism and has no intention

of challenging the United States of America, which is still the most powerful military force in the world. On the other hand, the US and its allies seek to reduce their strategic dependence on China at any cost. However, any attempt to push China out of Asia or Europe will not succeed, because it is an indispensable trading partner of most countries, including EU countries and the United States. But any Chinese attempt to exclude the United States from Asian economic and security issues will face serious resistance from Asian countries that fear China's power and dominance (Kissinger, 2012). We believe that cooperation and peaceful coexistence is the only path that leads to a better future and that can reduce tensions between the superpowers, but also prevent a new Cold War and the polarization of Chinese and American blocs.

Conclusion

It is logical that the new international order will have a multipolar character and five or six great powers will exist in it and will compete with each other on the global stage. The multipolar model of world order represented by the People's Republic of China is of great importance, because it leads to an even distribution of power and benefits between countries, which has not been the case so far. In addition to the great powers that will bear the "weight" of the world, China advocates that all countries participate in the new international structure and contribute to solving global issues. It is crucial to recognize the legitimate interests of all states and peoples, as well as their equality in the institutions of the international system, regardless of their size, development or power. Therefore, the Chinese vision of the new world order focuses on equality, cooperation, development and peaceful coexistence, and is against isolation, hegemony and confrontation in international relations.

In the future, China will maintain its ideological direction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, supplementing it with new initiatives, strategies and plans for global influence and dominance. As the largest developing country, and also as the second economic and military power, it is the only country in the world that threatens the leadership position of the United States. According to several indicators, China is expected to become the leading superpower in the world by 2030 or at the latest by 2050. In doing so, new rules and values contrary to the Western ones will be established, which may lead to an increase in geopolitical rivalries, polarization and a number of security implications of an international nature. It remains to be seen whether due to the conflicting relations between East and West, the world will fragment into several security and economic blocs of different size, strength and sphere of interests, or whether the new Chinese model of a multipolar world order will be more stable, secure and fairer and will there are solutions in case of global economic, security and social crises.

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