

34 VALDAI PAPERS

November 2015



THE BACKGROUND AND PROSPECTS OF THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S FOREIGN STRATEGIES IN THE NEW CENTURY

Feng Shaolei

About the author:

Feng Shaolei

Dean, School of Advanced International and Area Studies (SAIAS); Director, Center for Russian Studies, East China Normal University, China

Several significant changes have taken place with regard to China's foreign strategies in the last 50 odd years.

From the beginning of the 1960s till the end of "the Proletarian Cultural Revolution", China's foreign strategies once aimed at anti-revisionism and anti-hegemony, spreading "left-wing extremism" and achieving the world revolution.

China began to carry out reform and opening-up policy after the end of "the Cultural Revolution" in 1976. The Chinese negated the radical route, based on extreme thoughts, in a relatively thorough way of its foreign strategies. It was advocated to open up to the whole world, learning management experience from more developed countries, especially from the West, to participate in the grand cycle of the world economy and to reform the old-fashioned and overly centralized political and economic systems. Guided by such thinking patterns, the 30-year reform has facilitated China to achieve continuous high-speed development.

Since the new century, with the development of Chinese economy and social progress, in addition to the changing international situation, China has been committed to shoulder more international responsibilities, which suit its own national capacities, while maintaining its consistent principles for all these years. As a result, this leads to rather positive, active and progressive route in its foreign strategies. The main connotation of such a route is to develop relationships between the South and the North, the East and the West, in a just, mutually beneficial, balanced and continuous way. It also focuses on mutual coordination between internal and external policies, striving to achieve balance between learning advanced experience from the outside and establishing autonomy based on its own national conditions, in order to form favorable international circumstances for modernization and prevent its core interests from being harmed.

Such a change in China's foreign strategies has been gradually manifested with the brand-new characteristics of both external situation and internal development since the new century.

The Changing International Situation since the New Century

Firstly, two phases can be roughly divided by the international financial crisis in 2008 in the 20 odd years of international politics evolution since 1989 till 1991.

From 1989-1991 till the breakout of international financial crisis in 2008, namely, the so-called first phase of international relationship shortly after the Cold War, domestically speaking, then emerging countries and former socialist countries imitated European and American countries and carried out large-scaled political, economic and

social transition, among which China and Russia were representative countries in this regard. However, since the new century, a new tendency has appeared in these nations and regions, which have put more and more emphasis on independence and locality of their internal transition processes, paying more attention to the combination of external experience and local practices.

As for external changes, against the backdrop of the inability of the world economy, dominated by Europe and the America, in supervising and controlling the global financial crisis when it broke out in 2008, the appearance of G20 and enhanced cooperation among the BRICS evidently indicate the quickly increasing influences of emerging countries on global affairs. At the same time, the severe turbulence caused by the series of “revolutions” in Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, let alone the refugee crisis now pervasive in Europe, fully suggests the embarrassing scenario where Western countries are actually unable to uphold the “post-revolution” situation despite their willingness to advance “revolutions”.

As a result, since the 2008 global financial crisis, with the series of changes such as the “revolutions” in the Middle East, North Africa and Ukrainian crisis and so on, the international landscape after the Cold War where the West sang triumphantly and held the monopolistic position over the world affairs has decayed. Though there are no fundamental changes in the configuration where the West dominates the world affairs with the U.S.A as its leader, a more diversified world is emerging.

Secondly, the globalization process is encountering a complicated situation with unprecedented boycott, confrontation and restructuring, although it is also making unprecedented progress.

Since the new century, the global multilateral trade and financial institutions such as the WTO generally have remained stagnant, except for partial progress in some individual areas, after their promotion of economic development for many years. Exactly contrary to the situation in the former 30 years, the growth of global trade lags behind that of GDP, which is a rare phenomenon indeed.

On the one hand, the information revolution, accompanying the globalization, is making great progress, while on the other hand, there also appears sharp collision in terms of the balance between traditional management modes and the impact of the huge information flow that transcends national boundaries, legal rights and even personal privacy.

The ups and downs of the prices of bulk commodity, resources and energy indicates that the relationship between export and import nations in commodities and resources is becoming closer and closer. The global economy is becoming mutually inseparable, and there exist deep-rooted structural contradictions in the development of the world economy.

With the economic growth brought about by the globalization, the widening of the gap between the wealthy and the poor is causing more and more general grievances, which consequently becomes the root of the series of turbulence.

One dramatic change in the recovery period of the financial crisis is that although the expectation for the future long-term growth is still maintained, the present weak rebound in the emerging countries isn't as good as the slow but relatively stable recovery performance in the major industrial countries.

It is a both funny and annoying fact that though great diversified development opportunities have been provided by the globalization process in the last decades, the whole world still has to keep a close eye on when the Federal Reserve in the U.S.A will end its Quantitative Easing policy. This is because that not only the industrial countries, but also the emerging ones in the course of opening-up, are worrying about the giant impacts that may be brought about by this policy change on their respective economies.

Thirdly, the development of globalization is far from being smooth, and the competition and cooperation at the global level are being transferred to those regionally, the situation of which is becoming a focal point again in the international game.

In the security field, the first and foremost country is the U.S.A, the global superpower. The Obama administration has adjusted its strategies and withdrawn troops from the Afghanistan and the Iraqi battle fields since the global anti-terrorism war was waged by the U.S.A after the 9/11 terrorist attack. Whether these measures can make sure that the conflict zones for many years in these regions can take a turn for the better and be out of danger always remains an intense concern for the people. It is proved that the continuous turbulence of the situation in these two places and the appearance of the monster of the Islamic State are the outstanding illustrations of the complicated and intertwined contradictions difficult to overcome in these areas. It is not difficult to understand that people will presume whether Afghanistan will become the second new battle field for Russia to replace the U.S. military forces after its strikes on Syria.¹

The turbulence that took place almost simultaneously in the surrounding areas of the other power centers such as the European Union, Russia and China show that the strength of the present international system to control the power scheme changes doesn't match its ambition.

In the economic field, a conspicuous change is that the construction of the regional cooperation organizations with the Western developed countries as the lead, the cooperation among the high-level markets as the foundation, and the obvious characteristic of the regional divisions, is speeding up. Although there are various controversies in the negotiation processes of the conclusion of TPP or TTIP, the framework agreement of TPP was finally reached at the beginning of October, 2015. The above-mentioned negotiation processes are facilitated by such measures as the establishment of the speedy legislative authorization in the U.S. not long ago. Without doubt, the appearance of TPP will play a leading role in guiding the existing multilateral and bilateral economic cooperation frameworks in different regions, and it will also pose challenges to these frameworks to varying degrees. Obviously, the different regions will become the starting points

¹ Gilles Paris et Benjamin Barthe, *Washington Acte le Fiasco de la "Division 30" en Syrie*, *le Monde*, 10 Oct, 2015.

in a relatively long period in the future, and fierce competitions in terms of different cooperation patterns will be initiated among different regions and inside the same region as well.

Suited to the above-mentioned tendency of the security and the economic fields to return to their respective regions, both the expectation and ambition of the ancient civilization centers, in various regions, are once again highlighted. Although Huntington's prophecy of "the clash of civilizations" has not been widely accepted, it is partly a refraction of the regional real situation.

Though the above-mentioned three tendencies belong to external environmental factors with regard to the evolution of Chinese foreign strategies, they have profound influences on China's diplomacy and internal changes under current situation.

The Domestic Political and Economic Development and Institutional Changes as the Background for China's Foreign Strategies

Firstly, China's economic development has a close relevance to its diplomacy strategies.

After maintaining almost 30-year high-speed development, the growth rate of Chinese economy is decreasing against the background of the downward cycles of both international and domestic economies, together with present profound transformation of its national economic structure. Though faced with big challenges, the development of Chinese economy still maintains overall stability. In the first half of 2015, China's GDP growth rate is 7%, which indicates that \$700 to \$800 billion has increased in just a year, equivalent to the economic aggregate of a medium-sized nation. According to the conclusion of the latest business report in the *Economist* in Britain, it is expected that China will keep the growth rate of 6% to 7% till 2025. Chinese private enterprises account for two-thirds of the whole economic output, undertaking 90% of the export tasks, and their huge vitality will determine the future of Chinese economy.² In accordance with such kind of growth rate, the aim, already set to "comprehensively build a prosperous society in all aspects" is very likely to be achieved in 2020. Upon realizing this aim, the per-capita GDP will double that of 2010 and quadruple that of 2000. At that time, Chinese economic aggregate will reach almost \$17 trillion, and people's living standards will be

² "Still made in China. Chinese manufacturing remains second to none." *The Economist*, Sep 12th 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21663332-chinese-manufacturing-remains-second-none-still-made-china>.

significantly increased. This is one of the most critical domestic background for China's foreign strategies.

Secondly, the institutional reform is another important background that affects China's diplomacy.

Similar to the transformation process of the Eurasian national systems since the end of the Cold War, generally, China has also experienced two phases. China began to experience the first phase at the end of the 1970s when the "Cultural Revolution" ended, while the former Soviet Union countries began to experience that at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This was a liberalism-oriented transformation process led by the *Washington Consensus*, which included privatization, marketization and political democratization and so on, familiar to most of us. The second phase roughly began at the beginning of the new century. It is a phase that adjusts and corrects the consequences caused by the liberal route in the previous phase with the changes of the world economic situation and elevation of national strength. The similar trends appeared in such Eurasian countries as China, Russia, and Kazakhstan. The national strength has increased with the economic development, the effects of the state-owned departments on the national economy have been enhanced, and the national subjectivity in both internal and external affairs has been highlighted. This is a historic phase whose connotation has undergone great changes, compared with the previous phase.

The major countries in this region are likely to enter a new transformation phase after going through these two phases, from the financial crisis since the new century till the occurrence of the Ukrainian crisis, and a series of global and regional significant changes. In the next upcoming phase, the national macro-dominance and regulation are required to be continuously highlighted and enhanced during both internal transformation and external communication, in order to improve national governance level. It is proved that without highlighted and enhanced national functions, neither the transformation and reform nor the modernization process, can be continued. However, another important aspect is that the requirement for true reforms is again becoming prominent, which means the market's basic functions should be further brought into play, especially the functions of small and medium-sized enterprises, the positive factors in different areas and classes of the society should be mobilized, the level of political civilization and democratic decision-making should be elevated, and the construction of legal system should be strengthened.

It seems to indicate that a new phase different from the internal transformation in the previous phase is coming. The Kazakhstan president is seriously getting ready for and advancing the comprehensive reform in five fields after its early general election. The Russian elites are actively thinking about the "crisis political economics" since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, which is to explore the existence and development routes through further opening up and reform. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, Chinese national construction is strengthened, and national consensus is reached. It is emphasized that the national core interests are to be ensured and the basic functions of the market should be earnestly brought into play. The unnecessary governmental

intervention should be reduced, and streamlining the administration and delegating power to the lower level should be practiced. All these measures indicate such reform impulses in the “New Normal”.

It is not easy at all to both enhance the national regulation and bring the forces of market and the society into play in a simultaneous way. Besides the coordination and balance in the internal development strategies, another important step is to develop the mutual cooperation between both developing countries and transition ones. The “overflow of problems” during system transformation should be avoided, and the benign international situation should be kept for the sake of internal reforms. With such “a counteract by means of opening up”, they should open up not only to the Western countries but also to the developing and transition ones, which will further advance their internal system reforms.

By the way, new phenomena are taking place in Chinese political life. Firstly, since the new century, China has successfully and stably undergone three successive political changes of top leaders from JIANG Zemin, HU Jintao to XI Jinping, which is a phenomenon that had never happened before throughout the several-thousand years of China’s political history. Secondly, the anti-corruption campaign has continued for several years in China, which garners strong support from the majority of the people, and hopefully will have profound influence on the improvement of Chinese legal system and its official management. Thirdly, it is worth mentioning that all the above changes are accompanied by the gradual opening up of the political discourse in the internet age and the unprecedented open discussion held by both domestic elites and internet populace with regard to Chinese political life. It is also a brand-new political situation against the backdrop of the coming up to the front stage of young people born in the 1980s and even in the 1990s. It is evident that the internal change process will promote the quality elevation, updating and opening up of Chinese foreign strategies from multiple facets.

It has to be stated that neither China nor the whole world has experienced such changes in international, domestic systems and environment, which will turn the world upside down. Consequently, no one dares to say that he has made all necessary preparations for the future changes.

Chinese goods markets mostly rely on abroad and most of China’s foreign currency reserves are left in the United States as government bonds. Energy and resources, which China earnestly needs, heavily depends on imports from abroad. Such a situation forces China to take opener foreign strategies, paying more attention to international harmony.

China is an ancient country with 5000-year civilization, and it has its own fabulous history and rich accumulation. Nevertheless, China lags behind with regard to the learning of the West and the participation in the common world history, even compared with any one of the emerging countries. This indicates that China is both a fast growing member of the international community and the biggest developing country, which could be improved in many aspects. This “unexceptional” but really rather unique national development “path” will restrain various aspects of China’s foreign strategies in a rather long period.

The Trend and the Prospect of China's Foreign Strategies

In this article, the trend and prospects of China's foreign strategies have been explored at global, regional and neighboring levels.

i) China is participant, builder, contributor and reformer of the existing international system.

When interviewed by *Wall Street Journal* before his state visit to the U.S.A, Xi Jinping noted, "The global governance system was built together and is shared by the whole world, which can't be controlled by a single country. China never thinks about doing so, and will definitely not do so. China is the participant, builder and contributor of the current international system." Meanwhile, Xi Jinping also pointed out that with the development and changes of the world, as well as more and more challenges, "It is a must to adjust and reform the global governance system accordingly. Such kind of reforms is not to demolish and rebuild, nor to set up a new system, but to innovate and perfect the system."³ As one of the Permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, undoubtedly, China should make concerted efforts with other countries. In my opinion, China advocates to develop a new model of great power relationship, which means it will develop friendship with both the U.S. and other developed countries, in addition to BRICS players with global influences.

China's development benefits from international cooperation, and accordingly it has obligations to contribute to the international development cause. The construction of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is a concrete measure to make efforts in this regard. According to the estimation of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, there is a funding shortage of \$800 billion with regard to the annual infrastructure construction in the Asian region from 2010 to 2020.⁴ China is willing to make contribution in this regard. To the surprise of many people, including the Chinese themselves, besides the Asian countries, Germany, France, Britain and other countries also joined in the AIIB, which means this initiative fits the desire of the international community. However, AIIB is only one aspect of the way to solve the problems, it is not a panacea. It has to cooperate with the existing international financial institutions and welcome the participation of the U.S.A. as well.

The Chinese government has expressed for many times that in the next five years, China is estimated to import \$5 trillion worth of commodities, the overseas investment will exceed more than \$500 billion, and its outbound tourists will surpass 500 million.⁵ This shows that at the critical moment of the 13th five-year plan to comprehensively build a prosperous society in all aspects, China is willing to share the opportunities and meet challenges together with the whole world with more open attitudes. In the meantime, this will provide material foundation

³ "习近平接受《华尔街日报》采访", 2015年9月22日, 新华网, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-09/22/c_1116642032.htm

⁴ "习近平接受《华尔街日报》采访", 2015年9月22日, 新华网, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-09/22/c_1116642032.htm.

⁵ "习近平在中美省州长论坛上的讲话", 2015年9月23日, 新华网, http://news.xinhuanet.com/finance/2015-09/23/c_1116653149.htm.

for the improvement of global governance and international order in the next years, including the implementation of the new-round development goals of the United Nations.

The reforms of international governance involve a series of adjustment and improvement of the existing international institutions. The most conspicuous change after the international financial crisis is the transfer of the important coordination system with regard to the global macro economy from the former G8 to G20. China pays intense attention to the cooperation with the developed industrial countries and emerging countries as well in G20, in order to advance the stable transformation of international economy. China is a member of the BRICS, and it earnestly hopes to promote the transformation of the global governance system through this cooperation platform for emerging countries. The New Development Bank of the BRICS was established in Shanghai, with the Indian financial expert as its first president and the member countries as the vice presidents. China is willing to make the New Development Bank a complement to the existing international financial institutions and will be committed to establish a more just, transparent, and effective system and to contribute to the developing world together with its partners.

Beneficial from its participation in the WTO, China has become one of the biggest trade exporters in the present world. China will steadfastly support the reform and the development of this multilateral trade system. By means of the support of the international financial system in the past, China has become the biggest investor and one of the countries with gold reserve. China advocates that the international financial and currency system should be promoted and the common development of the world should be supported through the steady push forward of the reforms, which involve the reforms of voting rights mechanism of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the reevaluation of the basket of Special Drawing Rights of the IMF.

Particularly worth mentioning, when Chinese currency RMB has become the world's fourth global payment currency exceeding Japanese Yen, only behind the U.S. dollar, the euro and the sterling in Aug, 2015, in addition to stricter requirements for RMB cross-border payment and settlement, the first RMB CIPS, established by the People's Bank of China on 8 Oct 2015, was formally brought into on-line operation. Actually the CIPS system was just set up in Shanghai, matching the experiment of the Pilot Free Trade Zone. As a matter of fact, there have already been 19 well-known Chinese and foreign banks directly participating in this totally new financial "global highway", along with 176 large banks' indirect participation from five continents. This is an important part of RMB's further internationalization.

Chinese are clearly aware that it is a necessary step for promoting international system towards further freedom and opening either for global financial mechanism or for multilateral trade system reform. Meanwhile, it will also be a profound process of historic changes with long-term coexistence of cooperation and competition.

ii). China's Position and Policy towards Regional Cooperation

It is a significant change in China's foreign strategies since the new century to spare no efforts to learn and participate in regional multilateral cooperation mechanism. Since 1980s and

1990s, numerous researches have been made in China revolving around regional cooperation. At that time, the starting point of China's foreign strategy mainly lies in striving to join in the process of regional integration and promoting China's development and reform with export-oriented economy as its hold. China's strategy in participating in the regional cooperation is a product of learning advanced experience in other regions and Europe in particular, in combination with practice within the local area.

It is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established in 2001 together with Russia and Central Asian countries, that China really launches and organizes its own regional cooperation organization. This is the first regional cooperation organization with China as founding member. However, from the very beginning, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with China's participation, clearly claims maintaining common development and security, striving for mutual benefits and win-win interests, being inclusive of a variety of civilizations, non ideological, non-alliance, not against the third party, as its principle in regional cooperation.

For years, China has been participating in de facto cross-region multilateral cooperation organizations, such as the APEC. In early 1990s, the APEC, as an important international platform in pushing countries against tariff barriers and promoting regional marketization, used to provide inspiration and dynamics for China's reform and opening up. China has been in active cooperation with the ASEAN, a regional organization with the highest level of cooperation in Asia, in the form of "1 plus 10", and later "3 plus 10". For decades, this has been an important channel for China to participate in maintaining common development and stability of Asia. Since the beginning of the new century, China- Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation, once actively promoted by then Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's cabinet, including attempts to taking Japanese yen as "Asian dollar", quickly disappeared by the blow of the United States. In the wake of the financial crisis, proposed by the ASEAN, the "Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)" gained full support of P.R.C., which includes 16 countries, that is, the ASEAN 10 countries plus China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and Singapore.

While striving to practice regional cooperation, China is against tension caused by the expansion of exclusive regional organizations. In particular, China expresses its serious concern over action and orientation of military groups such as the NATO, which appeared during the Cold War, aiming at safeguarding the strategic security interests of the West. The Chinese government once positively evaluated and greatly supported the integration of the European Union, which is a historical product of European political and economic process after the end of the Cold War. China has already established its strategic partnership with the EU. Meanwhile, China also paid much attention to the EU's performance in the turbulence of Middle East and North Africa after the financial crisis, as well as debates on the EU's promoting its Eastern Partnership Program, its tough situation in current refugee crisis, and also the public opinion fluctuations through TTIP negotiations.

The TTP, dominated by the United States, reached a negotiated agreement in October 2015, which arouse heated debates no matter for international media, or among Chinese professionals and ordinary people. Some advocates that China should join in TTP, while others hold it is an example illustrating the U.S.'s containment against China. Spokesman of Chinese Ministry of Commerce expressed China's steady and broad-minded attitude, noting: "The TTP

is currently one of the important free trade agreements in Asia Pacific region. China is open to system construction which conforms to the WTO rules and facilitates economic integration in the Asia Pacific region. China hopes that the TTP and other free trade arrangements in this region will promote each other, jointly contributing to trade investment and economic development of the Asia Pacific region.”⁶ Currently speaking, all the predictions still lack sufficient factual basis either on China’s leading the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) negotiations towards a more extensive trade agreement, which will eventually include the TPP or regarding China’s final accession or rejection to TTP. China does not agree to any exclusive regional agreements’ deconstructing existing regional cooperation pattern, but instead attaching great importance to high standards of market principles of TPP. China, on the one hand, will promote pragmatic cooperation oriented in market economy in accordance with established regional cooperation framework and routes, and on the other hand, it will meet challenges with reform and opening up to a greater extent through “reversal domestic reform”.

iii). China’s Neighboring Policies in the New Century

The “neighbor” in China’s neighboring policies does not refer to dependent peripheral small countries compared with ancient central kingdoms, but instead means China’s neighboring countries and regions. China’s long history has provided rich experience in dealing with neighboring affairs, but also left various historic problems to be solved. The neighboring areas provide China with very broad space for its development. At the same time, it is imperative for China to construct the neighboring area by creatively working with its neighbors.

China plays a special role in the six-party talks of the Korean Peninsula. China adheres to the position of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and meanwhile, it also claims to achieve denuclearization of the peninsula and safeguard peace and stability on the Peninsula through peaceful means. Although the Korean Peninsula affairs have always been delicate and sensitive, yet in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Korean Labor Party, Chinese senior government official’s formal visit to the DPRK on 10 October, when Kim Jong Eun and Liu Yunshan, member of the politburo of the CPC, appeared on the tribune, indicates that the situation is moving forward in the direction of resuming Six Party Talks.

As for the South China Sea issue, China has sufficient historical and legal basis in proving that Nansha Islands has always been China’s territory since ancient times. China is committed to defending its own core interests, and also willing to settle disputes through dialogues and negotiations with related parties. China, in recent years, has already built lighthouses on constructed islands in order to further provide international public goods, safeguarding the freedom of navigation and safety on the South China Sea. Recently, the American army has announced to enter the neighboring sea 12 nautical miles away from the island built up by China, which indicates that there appear many problems urgently needed to be communicated and solved despite various and all-aspect cooperation between China and the U.S..

⁶ “高虎城部长就《跨太平洋伙伴关系协定》热点问题接受中央主流媒体采访”，商务部新闻办公室，2015年10月8日，<http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/ae/ai/201510/20151001128335.shtml>.

China and Japan are close neighbors separated only by a strip of water. They been friends for two thousand years and the aggression war is only a short history. Although there always exists friction and disputes between China and Japan, yet there will not “necessarily occur a war”. After Abe launched the “security law”, there first comes rising Japanese domestic opposition, and then also appears widely criticism and resists of the international society including China. Nevertheless, regardless of hardships and dangers, Sino-Japanese relations still needs to move forward, and the basis for Sino-Japanese cooperation does not completely disappear either.

Russia and Central Asian countries are China's close strategic partners. We can always find Sino-Russian mutual echoes and close cooperation either in current close high-level political exchanges, mutual understanding during transition, especially on tough issues, due to their economic complementarities and similar historical experiences. Sino-Russian relationship has become an important chapter for great power relations. There exist rather firm basis for Sino-Russian close ties, including common morals and ideological principles on global affairs and regional politics, intense concern for stability and development of international society, severe challenges encountering international mechanism. Although on “the third place”, China and Russia have different interests and ways, it does not hinder the deepening and enhancement of Sino-Russian relations at all. Both countries' manifesto regarding dovetailing the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative and Eurasian Economic Union is the latest hallmark for current Sino-Russian cooperation level.

As to the construction of security mechanism in the Asia Pacific region, some once proposed that the OSCE could provide experience for the Asia Pacific. Indeed, the system, which has lasted from the Cold War till today, has a lot to learn from. However, due to different historic conditions, there is only a rather disperse sub-regional cooperation organization and mechanism, acting as forerunner for security cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. The Asia Pacific region is also not just the simplified so-called dual mechanism where “security depending on the U.S.” while “economy on China”. Many roles, be it Japan, the single country, or the ASEAN, a sub-regional organization, act on the Asia Pacific arena, providing numerous opportunities in “rent-seeking”. The opening up of the Asia Pacific region to the whole world, including, in recent years, the U.S.' “return to Asia and Pacific” or Russia's “pivot to Asia”, renders the future security cooperation in Asia Pacific to more rich and diverse scenarios.

Meanwhile, it also should be noticed that the high openness of the Asia Pacific region, the unprecedented economic development level and its contribution worldwide, objectively, has aroused more attention of all parties. On the other hand, there have never appeared big geopolitical transition or dramatic regime changes of a series of countries like those in Europe after the Cold War. Such a locality, evidently, will brand deeply the construction of future regional cooperation mechanism.

The “One Belt, One Road” strategic initiative, proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in Astana in September 2013, is a focus and highlight for China's foreign strategy in the new century. Whether at home or abroad, the “One Belt, One Road” initiative has been paid great attention to and heatedly discussed since its implementation. It is worth noting that, how the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, currently as cross-regional or inter-regional cooperation and driven by projects, will “link” the Eurasian Economic Union with systematic policies and

institutional designs, and how it will “link” the future more extensive regional cooperation organizations. This is key to implement the concept of “One Belt, One Road”. Just as Chinese ancient sages said “Perfect mastery works like water”. The promotion and implementation of the concept of “One Belt, One Road” is just like the flow of water, in all directions where it can. It is implemented through either specific cooperation projects or solutions to FTA negotiations, or signing of bilateral or multilateral agreements. We can notice that there always exists confrontation among different regional cooperation organizations or strategies within the same region and highly exclusive institutional construction in particular, resulting in serious regional crises. Because of such failures, the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, supported by strong economic strength and focusing on its role in linking different regional systems, may achieve remarkable results.

As for the future long term, it entirely depends on bilateral or multilateral requirements and acceptability in future practice whether the “One Belt, One Road” initiative could “link” with such regional cooperation mechanism as the Eurasian Economic Union and other regional political, economic structure. This is the most unique and long-term task for China’s foreign strategies in the new century, which could possibly achieve important progress through practice and innovation.

#Valdaiclub

 Valdai Club

 Valdai International
Discussion Club

www.valdaiclub.com

valdai@valdaiclub.com



Council on Foreign and Defense Policy



Russian International
Affairs Council



NATIONAL RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY