

WS43 Briefing information

I. Overview

Since the second half of 1990s, China has been seeing a rapid development in international studies, to wit, the considerable expansion of research topics in this area, leading to faster responses in tackling China's diplomatic relations and major international issues. This also enables the Chinese to better apprehend research achievements and directions in international academic circles, and diversify their research activities. Likewise, promoted by both China and Europe, European studies have flourished in China during the past decade, and have entered into an unprecedented active and fruitful stage.

China and Europe have tremendous influence in the world, and are both exploring ways to better exercise their unique influence in order to maintain the stability of regional and world order. They both aim to manoeuvre towards a fairer, more democratic and civilised way. While many common interests exist between China and Europe, there are also many points of divergence. It is therefore important to have strategic dialogue to increase bilateral understanding. China has focused its recent European studies research and related policy designs against this background, which can be divided into the following five categories:

1. The contemporary international status that China and Europe hold respectively, as well as their geo-strategic options.
2. Strategic significance of the Sino-European relations.
3. Comparative studies on regions from the new regionalism perspective, including similarities and differences between Europe and Asia in the regional cooperation and integration process, as well as their inter-regional cooperation inter alia.
4. Respective relations that China and Europe hold with other great powers, as well as their impact on them.
5. Profound changes in the domestic and external environments and respective major challenges that China and Europe face.

All these issues are essential and extensive, and are subject to debate. We have selected ten articles published by renowned Chinese academics or research institutes, in order to further apprehend the reflections made by Chinese academic circles and policy-making units. This will provide a basis for discussion and enable scholars from across the world to exchange their views.

II. Article summary

The following articles can be roughly divided into three categories:

The first category investigates theories and practices of basic strategies that China has deployed in recent years.

Since the second half of 1990s, geo-strategic studies have been highly regarded in China. Cooperation between the government and Chinese intellectuals has been conducive to swiftly introducing thoughts and theories from Western academic circles into the country; moreover, channels for policy recommendations are getting more diversified, dialogue between China and the rest of the world has become more active.

It is a general consensus that Chinese geo-strategy since the 1990s has been based on the principle

of multi-polarisation. In recent years, China has clearly emphasised its 'China's peaceful rise / peaceful development' and 'Building a harmonious world' approaches, and become more enthusiastic in participating in international operations and in promoting multilateral cooperation.

Looking at the responses from the international community, the 'China threat theory' in vogue after the first half of 1990s seems to be losing ground. China's rapid and continuous economic growth and increased regional and global influence has led the U.S. to suggest a 'Responsible state theory' in recent years. This theory reflects the change of China's international status and the re-positioning of China's global role by the great powers. The response from China towards this contentious 'responsibility' reflects its own understandings of its global mission and status. It also forms the background for China's geo-strategy.

Ma Zhengang, director of the China Institute of International Studies, has written 'China's responsibility and the Responsible state theory', which is a response to the theory that has been very fashionable in the international community in recent years. Ma believes that after the theories of 'Threat' and 'Collapse', the 'Responsible state theory' brought forward by the U.S. is currently the most popular sermon preached to the Western public about China. This approach has become an extension to China policies adopted by certain Western countries such as the United States. Its basic idea is to encourage and enhance China's integration into the current international system, regularising and constraining China through the international system, and making China assume the responsibility of safeguarding and developing this system through persuasion and pressure.

The author agrees that 'Responsible state' sounds more positive than 'Chinese threat'. Firstly, adherents of the 'responsibility' theory accept that China is getting stronger and have begun to recognise its role and influence as a world power. This is, after all, a realistic attitude, which can help to perceive and tackle relations with China in a pragmatic manner. Secondly, the 'Chinese threat' theory basically portrays China as a 'competitive rival' and 'potential enemy', and opts for a containment and confrontation position. Although the 'Responsible state theory' still carries core elements of the 'Threat theory', its supporters have perceived a deepened interest and interdependent relationship with China leading them to downplay confrontations in favour of a boost in cooperation. This has created a better climate for both sides to develop mutually beneficial cooperation. But if one take a closer look at the various concrete 'demands' that Western countries such as the U.S. made to China, it is apparent that on the one hand, the U.S. wants China to become a 'responsible stakeholder', on the other hand, it insists on the 'Two bets' policy, and is striving to plant 'hedgerows' around China, that is, to isolate China from its neighbours. This is still the policy of 'containment and engagement' revisited. In fact, the 'responsible state theory' has simply interpreted the word 'engagement' in a more explicit and comprehensive way, which is after all a derivative of America's China strategy under new circumstances.

The author emphasises that it is important, in the first instance, to take a holistic approach in the analysis of the 'Responsible state theory'. Its nature should be identified for what it is, but positive elements should also be recognised for what they are worth. Secondly it is important to maintain an independent foreign policy in favour of peace; in particular, sticking to the principle of independence. It is also necessary to thoroughly reflect on the American phrasing of what constitutes 'Chinese responsibility', keeping the basics and knowing what to retain and what to disregard. It is vital to remain vigilant concerning this American 'vision' and not be blindly optimistic. More importantly, our own vision should not be blurred by complacency. Third, China should take stock of the nature and amount of responsibility that it can assume. With regards to what the US has put forward as being China's responsibilities, it would be wise to undertake only what is reasonable. In line with that, China should reinforce cooperation with the U.S. in areas that concern the interests of the Chinese people and the rest of the world, uphold world peace and enhance the common development of all countries. Fourth, it is necessary to appraise the existing

global system to understand how it works as a whole and contributes to maintaining basic world order. Drawbacks like injustice and irrationalities should be identified; improvements and developments of the system should be made in line with the course of development of the international situation and according to the will of peoples in the world. It is important to point out that, although the international responsibility that China shoulders shares some common ground with Western definitions of responsibility, it is very different in nature and cannot be considered the same. It is also crucial for China to adhere to peaceful development and take care of domestic affairs while at the same time build a harmonious society as speedily as possible. On the international scene, it is essential for China to reinforce cooperation with other countries in order to help build lasting peace and share prosperity in a harmonious world. This is the greatest and most sacred responsibility that China has towards the world and the inhabitants of all nations.

In recent years, regional strategy is gaining weight in China's foreign relations. As pointed out in the article *China's regional strategies* by Tang Shiping and Zhang Yunling, the country's regional strategies are also, to a great extent, its grand strategy. The article makes a methodical analysis of China's regional strategies, explores the idea and related actions, and evaluates their achievements. Finally, the article makes projections about the future of China's regional strategies and their regional influence, and that of Sino-U.S. relations.

The article points out that the essence of China's grand strategy can be summed up in one phrase: create and maintain a favourable climate, in terms of security, economy and politics, in order to focus on the country's socio-economic and political development. This grand scheme is composed of four core visions: 1) to conceptualise the notion of a great power; 2) to grasp the importance of a peaceful international climate and to acknowledge the existence of a regional 'security dilemma'; 3) to exercise self-restraint; 4) to become 'a responsible great power'.

China is actively practising its grand strategy, which has four major characteristics:

First, according to its self-positioning as a great power, China has always pursued an active 'great power diplomacy', which aims to maintain good relations with all superpowers and establish China's image of a great nation at home and abroad. Second, China is also keeping up friendly relations with its neighbours and stabilising peripheral countries to shield itself from a possible deterioration in relations with the U.S. Third, China is participating more actively in regional and global multilateral systems and initiatives. Fourth, China is circumspect about the share of responsibilities it is willing to undertake.

Two external factors will, as usual, affect the prospect of China's regional strategies.

The first factor concerns U.S. judgement and Sino-American interaction. China faces a "catch 22" situation in trying to establish regional order with countries in the region: if it refuses to join and maintain this order, some may think that China is ready to challenge global rules and order (or its status quo). If China participates actively in regional affairs and rule-making, people may believe that China is trying to challenge American dominance by building regional influence. Consequently, no matter what it does, China will be in a difficult situation. A classical security dilemma would arise if the U.S. took active measures to block or even repress China's rise, and China was less attentive to America while busy working with other countries in the region. The existing mutual suspicion between the two could only aggravate the situation and such a dilemma would add another factor of uncertainty to their bilateral relations. It is therefore important for the two countries to maintain contact, understand each other's intents and seek peaceful co-existence.

The second factor affecting China's future regional strategy is the possibility for the country of having a self-strengthening virtuous circle of benevolent regional strategies and active policy-

making. Thanks to China's efforts in promoting good-neighbourly relations during the past 20 years, the 'China threat' theory has lost some proponents. It can be foreseen that if China maintains its optimistic evaluation of the external climate and self-recognition as a 'responsible state', it may pursue its current grand and regional strategies. If the world and the region accept China's rise and hence actively re-adjust their China policies, this will in turn engender more domestic support for China's global and regional geo-strategies.

Finally, the future of the Asia-Pacific region depends not only on China's strategic options, but also those of the U.S. and the countries in the region. Continual mistrust towards China may create a new 'victimisation syndrome' in the country. The outside world must realise that an overwhelming mistrust of China's goodwill can only lead to a disastrous consequence: a China that has lost patience and no longer wishes to befriend others. Countries in the region and China itself must work together to prevent the advent of such a catastrophe.

The author's conclusion: some ten years ago, many observers noticed that China was still rebuilding its self-image, and was less aware of its rightful position in the region. Today, however, we can say that the quest for such an image is over, and the country is optimistic about its development in the region.

The second set of articles mainly examines the European experience and its global emulation. In his article *What is the European experience*, Feng Zhongping, director of Institute of European Studies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, points out that the European experience can be seen in a narrow and a broad sense. In the narrow-sense it includes a series of laws and regulations as well as some unwritten conventions. In the broad-sense it refers to a new set of theories, methods and behaviour adopted by Europe since the Second World War. This is the gradual consolidation of experiences that Europe has accumulated over the past 50 years as it tried to settle conflicts between countries and maintain regional stability and development through trial and error, echoing the Chinese saying: 'wading across the stream by feeling the way.' The European experience has become an essential constituent of so-called European 'soft power'.

His view is echoed in the article written by Zhang Jun: *A study of the 'European model' and the development of its international relations from the perspective of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)*. The article also stresses the prominent role of "regional organisations" on the international scene in the post WWII era – especially that of the EU. The way Europe participated in global affairs differed greatly from the U.S., and was considered to be a civilian power. What exactly is this power, and how can it inspire a fresh approach in international relations? The author argues that Europe's integration process is an 'institutionalising integration': since Europe's internal experience determines the E.U. and member state external action. When involved in global affairs, the E.U. and its major member states usually assert the importance of a multi-lateral mechanism. Not only are they trying to consolidate a multilateral system framework across the globe, the E.U and its members are also dedicated to promoting the development of a multilateral mechanism in other regions.

A 'European model' based mainly on 'institutionalisation' and 'multilateral system construction' stands out when the E.U. handles international relations. This model first and foremost reflects that Europeans have dispensed with bilateral diplomacy, and in particular, the 'balance of power diplomacy'. Second, through conscious participation in system building, Europeans are indirectly yet effectively influencing the world. The E.U. channels its civilian power mainly through this 'institution', which is also the source of its influence. The progress of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) clearly shows that this 'indirect institutional influence' that E.U. member states possess, is promoting European conventions, norms and values in ASEM meetings, indirectly securing their own interests by influencing the behavioural patterns and norms of their Asian counterparts.

In his article A preliminary study of the East Asia Community issue, Liu Changli, professor at Dongbei University of Finance and Economics and PhD supervisor, thoroughly traces the historical process of an East Asia Community. He thinks that after the 9th 'ASEAN 10+3' leaders' meeting and the first East Asia Summit, the construction of an East Asia Community has become a common goal for East Asian countries. However, their attitude and stance vary because of differences in their perspective. Looking to the future, it would be beneficial to reinforce regional interdependence, facilitate bilateral free trade within the region and promote trade liberalisation within the APEC framework, in order to make East Asia Community a reality. However, uncertain factors also loom on the horizon, such as divergent opinions on the coverage of such a community and Japan's intended dominance. The road to its consolidation will be long, arduous and piecemeal.

The third set of articles revolves around Sino-European relations, including evaluations of China and Europe's major geo-strategies and policies in recent years, as well as analyses of Sino-European relations in terms of their motives, bases, issues and trends inter alia.

Dai Bingran, professor at the Centre for European Studies of Fudan University, emphasizes in his article, "Towards mature, healthy and stable Sino-European relations - Speeches marking thirty years of diplomatic ties between China and Europe", that Sino-European relations are going through their best time in history. The ties have a solid base and sound prospects, China should therefore seize this opportunity to settle any remaining issues once and for all, such as getting the ban on arms sales to China lifted and the market economy status that the E.U. accords to China. It is important to plan carefully for the future and promote the development of mature, healthy and stable Sino-European relations.

In his article Conceptual changes and internal dynamism: exploring the origins of post Cold War Sino-European relations, Wu Baiyi, researcher and deputy director at the Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, points out that realistically speaking, post-Cold War Sino-European relations need to be examined in order to identify their respective ideological origins. Although their strength, nature, structure and speed of development are clearly different, China and the E.U. are exerting their influence across the world through self re-adjustment and reform. It is therefore easier for them to make concessions and cooperate. Their interests not only coincide in rich, multi-dimensional fields and structures within the Sino-European framework, but also in extending their innovative concepts and institutional "soft-power" towards third parties (namely other international players) in order to cope with various trends in economic globalisation and multi-polarised geopolitics. During this process, long-term mutual support and complementary benefits can be expected and there is likely to be greater peace, independence and breadth added to Sino-European relations.

In his article, Challenges faced by China, Europe and the U.S. in a new geo-strategic setting, Yan Xuetong, director of the Institute of International Studies at Tsinghua University, discusses some major transformations in the current global setting, and argues that a new phenomenon observed in recent years is a worldwide proliferation of double standards. This implies that the international community has progressively adopted a new norm for the implementation of international rules, that is, the applicability of international treaties to a country depends on its category and not on its actions. It is a well-known fact in international politics that great powers adopt double standards, but the scenario is somewhat different now. In the past, they criticised double standards adopted by other countries while practising double standards themselves, just as people condemn selfish behaviour while continuing to act self-centredly. The present-day situation is that great powers have stopped disapproving of each other's double-standard policy, and accept this principle: inasmuch as these double standards do not apply to them, they will recognise each other's double-standard policy. This has led increasingly to global action geared to allow great powers to take what they

want.

The author analyses the respective threats and challenges faced by China, Europe and the U.S. In terms of traditional security threats, apart from preventing the proliferation of weapons of massive destruction (WMD), China, Europe and the U.S. do not seem to face any real, common security threats. In the field of non-traditional security, however, China, Europe and the U.S. do confront a common enemy, namely terrorism. But China is only under the threat of common social insecurity such as that provoked by ordinary crime. The threat of terrorism to national security is far smaller than that of drugs, economic crime and underground triad societies. In the field of economic security, Europe and the U.S. do not have any real economic security issues, while China is facing very tangible threats in this area. From an environmental safety point of view, China is confronting very serious problems, while Europe and the U.S. are not. The most serious non-traditional security threat that China, Europe and the U.S. are facing is the problem of social stability. In terms of the geo-political challenges the three must deal with, it is necessary for Europe to reflect on ways to improve its efficiency, and for America to change its practice of unilateralism. It is equally important for China to alter its bystander attitude towards international affairs. The author concludes that China, Europe and the U.S. will need to consider how to establish commonly accepted international norms as well as to carry out joint action to tackle economic challenges such as unemployment, high oil prices and trade friction, and not just selecting what they want.



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