



The U.S./Russia/China in new global system of international relations



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Abstract

In international system, the major appearance of international relations is reflected as the whole interactions among states. The international state system, which in a general sense refers to a set of interrelated units and a pattern of interaction among them, is more demonstrated as structural power to alter the structure of the global political economy.¹ From the definition of Balaam and Veseth (2005), power is the ability of one state (or actor) to get another state (or actor) to do something, even if they don't want to. Generally, state power can be appeared as capabilities which refer to "Hard Power" and influence as "Soft Power".² The U.S, Russia, and China, as three of five permanent members of the UN Security Council, are currently playing as the major powers in international systems. Those three major power relations are an important component of the international relations and an important factor that impacts the evolution of world configuration and international order. In a sense, to study the international order is to study major power structure.³ The final disappearance of the world's two confronting camps by end of the Cold War, and the resulting U.S. sole superpower status, have brought about important changes in the major power relations and international order. After 9/11, the unilateralism and preemptive strategy adopted by the Bush administration strongly affected the major power relations and international order. Therefore, this paper is to examine the basic features and major mechanisms of the present major power relations among those three states, and their interactions to influence the international order.

Keywords

U.S. , Russia, China, global system, international relations

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1 Sevgi. O, 2007, Lecture Notes Week 8 "International Political Economy Basics and Overview of Three Theories"

2 Balaam, David N.; Veseth, Michael, 2005, Introduction to International Political Economy, Prentice Hall press

3 T.V. Paul and John A. Hall, "Introduction" in International Order and the Future of World Politics, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.2

Overall international relations in new global systems

With catalysts of the globalization, multipolarization, regionalization, the rise of developing powers, the sole superpower of the U.S. and so on, the major power relations in the new century have greatly shifted, which represented the change of the time, the change of the nations and change of ideas.

The overall international relations among those three major powers, first of all, are featured by the alternative and parallel development of the multipolarization and unipolarization caused by the imbalance of major powers. Today and over the coming decades, the U.S. enjoys the superior comprehensive national strengths and, therefore, serves not only as the leading force to integrate major power relations and but also as the leading factor that evokes major power contradictions.⁴ On the one hand, the U.S. had adopted the “selective” unilateralism so as to establish the “Pax Americana”, on the other hand, other two major powers are striving in various ways to resist and offset the U.S. unilateralism. Although their strength cannot match U.S. for the time being, the two major powers or groups of states, as trends of their development indicate, are rising in their strength, which put together has already over passed that of the U.S., and representing the direction of the multipolarization process.⁵

Another key feature for those three major powers is the multi-complex relations of them. Thanks to the new developments of international situation, those three states not only underscore high politics such as politics, foreign relations, security, and strategy and so on, but also attach great importance to low politics such as economic relations, trade, culture, etc. Those three major powers no longer distinguish along the line of ideologies, but instead adopt different policies in the light of interests and stances.⁶ For instance, the U.S., U.K. and Japan together took different side from that of Germany, France, Russia and China on the issue of Iraq. On the issue of UN reform, China and U. S. had in fact jointly vetoed the motion raised by Japan, Germany, India and Brazil. Russia, China and Japan had formed a delicate triangular relationship on the issue of oil pipelines. The U. S. deemed Russia as its ally on 9/11, but relentlessly squeezed Russia on the issue of “strategic space”. The U.S. seeks to build “constructive cooperation relations” with China on bilateral relations in general, but hedges against China in military aspect. Therefore, the contemporary major power relations have extricated altogether from the bloc politics prevailed in the Cold War, though more diversified and complicated.

In a word, major powers or dominant powers have been the prime deciders of the international order with no exception. Generally speaking, The United States, with the strategically offensive posture, attempts to establish the U.S. dominated international order by launching of important regional wars, by its comprehensive superiority and by exporting American values and so on. The U.S. has also explicitly dismissed the multipolarity as a theory of rivalry; of competing interests and at its worst competing values.⁷ Russia endeavors to maintain its status equal to other major powers in the international order and to

4 Sun Lide, *The Present Major Power Relations: Features and Trends*, Qiushi(seek truth), 2004, No. 1, p. 46.

5 Yang jieming, 2007, *Interaction and Trends of Major Power Relations and International Order: China's Related Strategy and Policies*, P3, 5, 6-12

6 Yang jieming, 2007, *Interaction and Trends of Major Power Relations and International Order: China's Related Strategy and Policies*, P2

7 Remarks by Dr. Condoleezza Rice at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, United Kingdom, June 26, 2003.

preserve the order of hierarchy and intervention in its near abroad.⁸ While China appeals for “promoting democratization of international relations” and “pushing for establishing a new fair and just international political and economic order.”⁹

U.S. --- China relations

As mentioned above, for U.S., its principle on international order mainly consists of two parts, i.e., the neo-conservative Republican administration emphasizes “balance of power” and “deterrence” among major powers, whereas the neo-liberal Democratic administration appreciates values and international regimes, though both administrations conceive “Pax Americana” or international order under U. S. leadership.¹⁰ However, China’s growth in power has posed both challenges and opportunities in U.S.-China relations, and for the effect on the global economy. Economically, militarily and politically, China and the U.S. are playing on tumultuous turf.¹¹

In the viewpoint of U.S., the most important issue for China’s rising is how to deal with it in economic and trade aspects, in order to enjoy the greatest benefit in the new system relations. First of all, it aims to prepare itself for the rise of China and shaping the surrounding environment in our favor a top, sustained priority, and equip Americans to compete in the global economy and provide social insurance in support of mobility and opportunity. For example, to pursue critical trade enforcement actions which have the greatest consequences for American competitiveness-with intellectual property theft and China’s comprehensive subsidization of its exports as central targets, and to push for more rapid adjustment of China’s currency as a critical component of a broader policy to induce appreciation in Asian currencies and to facilitate an orderly decline in global trade imbalances. On the other hand, U.S. also wants to undertake sustained economic diplomacy at the highest levels to shape multilateral and regional economic structures and agreements favorably.¹²

From China’s perspective, the present peaceful change of international order is in agreement with China’s diplomatic strategy of peace, development and cooperation. As the world’s distribution of power greatly shifted, China hopes to readjust, and is adjusting, its relations with the U.S. However, China enjoys not only opportunity but challenges deriving from the United States. With the international distribution of power seriously shifted, the world runs deficit in checking the U.S. power, nor can the world fully stop the U.S. upsetting the present international order. Therefore, it has become a grave challenge to the international society to deal with U.S. that has repeatedly breached or violated the prevalent international laws and rules. Since international customary derives from the practice of states at the first place, this practice, if repeatedly employed and conceived as laws, will due to upgrade to the status of unwritten law. If it has become a timehonored “fact” that the U.S. has constantly violated certain international laws and rules, it is challenging whether new unwritten international laws will ensue.¹³ Therefore, the international community should not only condemn it, but also create a kind of criteria of international laws concerning the strategies of “humanitarian

8 Javier Solana, 2003, “A Secure Europe in a Eetter World - the European Security Strategy”, Le Figaro

9 <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjdt/wjzc/t24778.htm>

10 Yang jieming, 2007, Interaction and Trends of Major Power Relations and International Order: China’s Related Strategy and Policies, P4

11 <http://my.opera.com/PRC/blog/opportunity-08-fostering-u-s-china-relations>

12 <http://my.opera.com/PRC/blog/opportunity-08-fostering-u-s-china-relations>

13 Yuan Song, “‘Preemption’ and the Development of International Laws”, Henan Sheng Zhengfa Ganbu Guanli Xueyuan Xuebao (Journal of the Institute of Administrative Cadre Management, Henan Province), 2005, No.1, p.115.

intervention”, “preemption” and so on¹⁴, which is the worst thing china would never be willing to see.

China---Russia relations

General speaking, China and Russia, who are both the regional major power in its own area, their relations are more presented as the cooperation not conflictions. China and Russia had issued the “Sino-Russian Joint Statement on Worldwide Multi-Polarization and Establishment of New International Order” on April 23, 1997, which indicated that, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, both sides will promote the multipolarization of the world and the establishment of a new international order, and both sides maintain that mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful coexistence and other universally recognized principles of international law should serve as the basic norms governing state-to-state relations and the basis for the establishment of a new international order¹⁵. Furthermore, on 2005, a joint declaration, signed by Chinese president Hu Jintao and Russian president Vladimir Putin, to establish a multi-polarized, just and democratic international order based on accepted international norms and said rational mutual relations should be set up among countries so that they can co-exist in harmony.¹⁶

China and Russia share a broad range of common interests in international and regional affairs, and their strategic partnership of cooperation, as an important factor in international relations, is of fundamental importance to international politics in the future, preserving peace and maintaining global security and stability. They prefer that countries around the world should work for common prosperity and they should set up mutual relations on the basis of respect for each other's interests and encouraging and developing economic links and cooperation between them, boost cultural exchanges, build mutual trust and coordination in the field of security and foster a new security concept based on equality, cooperation and readiness to address each other's concerns. And conflicts and disputes should be settled through dialogue and cooperation and efforts should be made to improve and strengthen the system governing international relations, guarantee the central role of the United Nations in the present-day world and promote diversification of models of development.¹⁷

In a word, as the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated (2005), the China-Russia partnership, and their collaboration at the United Nations and other multilateral forums, have made great contributions to the strengthening of international and regional peace and security, and the diplomatic coordination between the two countries on a wide range of issues, conducted on a regular basis and through various channels and at different levels, has effectively helped the settlement of global and regional issues in today's world.¹⁸

U.S. --- Russia relations

Not like the U.S.-China relations are more based on political economy issues, U.S – Russia relations are more based on the military and regional issues. The end of the cold war left U.S.-Russian relations in a state of volatile ambiguity. Once implacable enemies, the two countries had to quickly work out new principles upon which to base their relationship. The

14 Jiang Haiping, “Opinions of International Law’s ‘Criterion Function’ under Realism”, *Contemporary International Relations*, 2004, No.1, p.48;

15 *People’s Daily*, April 24, 1997, p.1.

16 *People’s Daily*, Nov 18, 2005, p.1

17 http://www.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/2004/20041014_r_c_js.html

18 <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/2649/t165266.htm>

result has been a tragicomedy of tepid cooperation, mild saber-rattling, and missed opportunities.¹⁹ After 911, the two sides increased the cooperation in military and anti-terrorism. By accentuating the "positive" side of the ledger - enhanced cooperation in nuclear security and fighting terrorism - and relegating differences over democracy to second place, both U.S. and Russia have placed pragmatism over ideology.

For confictions, still there, Washington views Moscow as the primary force behind the unrecognized states' independence. Moreover, Russia's regional conduct, coupled with its retreat from democratic standards, revives old fears about Russian imperialism.²⁰ There are also some other troubling between them are Russia's relations with Iran and Syria. Moscow consciously speeded up cooperation with them on the eve of the Bratislava summit, a sort of "asymmetric reply" to the US involvement in Ukrainian elections and opposition movements throughout the CIS. If this cooperation turns out to be not just a tit-for-tat, but more a demonstration of Russia's decision to bury the past policy of cooperation, this could bode ill for both Russia and the United States.²¹

For the Russia, its modernization is impossible without the United States. Decision-making in world policy is also dependent on relations with Washington. For the United States, a declining agenda with Russia will sooner or later result in overextension of US resources and global disaster. Short- and middle-term reasons for engaging Russia lie in policy toward North Korea, Iraq, Iran, and China, and the long-term - in the broader Middle East. Russia, with its imperial history, vast experience, and readiness to invest in security, is the only US ally capable of collaborating to bring about Mideast stability- a rather imperial, but necessary mission. Neither Europe nor the southern CIS have the resources to accomplish the task.²²

Conclusion

U.S., Russia, and China, as the representatives advocating the unipolarization and multipolarization for major power relations, which is an important international relations per se, is hence an important factor that impacts the world configuration and international order, especially at this important juncture of envisioning and constructing a new international order.

Building international order in peacetime is proved to be a long, interwoven, complicated and professional endeavor. Those three major power cooperation and competition mainly involve regimes, organizations, norms, regulations and laws, etc. Enter the new century, the three major powers appears to have more chance in cooperation rather than confiction in all aspects, including economic, political, military, etc. Under such tendency, building international order and conducting international cooperation in the era of peace and development bears new significance: those three major powers and other players strive to avoid confrontation and competition and appeal for cooperation and win-win outcomes.

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