

A Reading into China's Strategic Vision and the Shift in Its International Policy

(Translated)

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I begin with an introduction necessitated by the need to understand the major strategic transformations that China is undergoing. It is essential to examine the underlying reasons, conditions, and strategic as well as geostrategic opportunities behind China's emergence on the international stage as a major power. This includes looking into the growth of its economic, military, technological, and political power, alongside its global ambitions, to the point where it now exerts its own distinct influence on the international situation and global politics. Recently, on June 17, 2026, The Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued a white paper titled "More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions," which expressed China's strategic vision and its future global outlook.

China's rise to become a global power was not an isolated event detached from the international environment, the geopolitical conditions surrounding the global situation, or the severe crises facing the Western American international order. Instead, this power grew and accumulated through pivotal historical moments, most notably the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of American unipolarity. In the euphoria of victory over the Soviet Union, America's strategic preoccupation and primary concern was building an empire and controlling the tools of hegemony to manage the world as the sole dominant pole. These tools were nothing other than energy sources, raw materials, and primary natural resources. The Muslim World—with its wealth, its sea of oil and gas, and its latent, deeply rooted Islam that had regained its strategic vitality—became America's strategic preoccupation and core concern. Consequently, America's wars in the Gulf, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa were strategic wars aimed at building its empire and cementing its unipolar hegemony, which it marketed as the establishment of a "New World Order." This exceptional international circumstance created a historic strategic opportunity and moment for China. Amid America's distraction with its imperial adventures, China quietly and steadily built its economy, developed its infrastructure and manufacturing capabilities, and established its technological base by advancing its educational system and strengthening the capacity of its research, testing, and innovation centers. Although this historical moment appeared to be one of absolute American dominance, it provided China with a favorable external environment to achieve net strategic gains free from American containment and sanctions. This was further aided by Beijing's adoption during this phase of a cautious approach inspired by the famous saying of Deng Xiaoping (the architect of modern China's reforms), "Hide your capabilities and bide your time," where the goal was to avoid direct confrontation with the dominant American power. Furthermore, in light of the defeat of the communist system, the collapse of the European Eastern Bloc states, and the end of the Cold War, America relied on a deeply flawed strategic assessment: that the socialist People's Republic of China would suffer the same fate as the European socialist bloc nations, and that disintegration would inevitably strike the Chinese socialist state and governance system. This completely overlooked the reality of China, whose hybrid system was closer to state capitalist socialism than to state socialism within the communist framework, not to mention the cultural and civilizational differences between the Chinese East and the European East.

Then, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the removal of communist barriers, liberal conditions became ripe for capitalism to reclaim its dominance and hegemony over the

economy, politics, and daily life. Among the outcomes of this new form of liberalism—"neoliberalism"—was the globalization of the Western liberal model and the elimination of all restrictions and barriers to global trade (the trade of capitalist corporations), as embodied in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agreement and the World Trade Organization established in 1995. As a result of this economic globalization, the world witnessed an unprecedented expansion in international trade and the relocation of industrial production to regions with lower costs and fewer regulations. China capitalized on this wave by attracting foreign investment and enhancing its industrial capabilities, technical competencies, and workforce skills. China's role in the global economy began to grow until it was described as the "workshop of the world." This status was reinforced when it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 and became firmly established during the 2003–2008 period as its industrial exports doubled. China became widely known as the "world's factory," a phrase that became widely used and popular in international institution reports and financial newspapers. Thus, China transformed from a peripheral state in the Western capitalist production chain into a primary, central nation in global economic supply chains.

With this Chinese boom, the center of economic gravity began shifting toward Asia through Asia's rising contribution to global production and trade, with China being one of the biggest beneficiaries. This success was bolstered by its political leadership, its vast domestic market, its broad industrial base, and its heavy, high-level investments in infrastructure, education, and technology.

Then came the third millennium, bringing signs of erosion and exhaustion within the Western American international order, alongside worsening crises in the Western capitalist system. Among these, the 2008 global financial crisis proved to be a strategic inflection point and a profound turning point in Chinese strategy. China's relative isolation from the global economy's speculative financial mechanisms and institutions protected it from the catastrophic fallout of the 2008 Western debt crisis. This protection was further bolstered by its massive foreign exchange reserves, a state-dominated banking sector, high domestic savings, and a robust capacity to mobilize public investment and stimulate internal demand. Consequently, China did not view the 2008 crisis merely as a harsh economic test, but rather as a defining moment that exposed the limitations of the Western financial model. It reinforced the confidence of the Chinese elite in their model's resilience, with central state control over finance, production, and trade, and served as a turning point that propelled China from a strategy of integration into the international order toward thinking far more ambitiously about actively reshaping it. Thus, in 2013, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), signaling its transition from an economic power into a global geopolitical actor. Additionally, the political, strategic, and military crisis of the American state acted as a supporting factor. This crisis stemmed from capitalist domestic divisions and their political and cultural repercussions, rising internal American polarization and its impact on the state and its foreign policy, and setbacks to American military power that laid bare the boundaries and limitations of U.S. strength in maintaining unilateral hegemony. Later, under the Trump administration and its erosion of the appeal of Western American leadership, Beijing capitalized on the crisis of the American state by expanding its industrial, technological, and financial base and international relations, transforming its economic weight into geopolitical influence to evolve from a beneficiary of the Western international order into a power challenging and reshaping its rules.

This was further reinforced by the digital and technological revolution. With the rise of the digital economy, power was no longer measured by industrial output alone, but also by artificial intelligence, telecommunications, data, and semiconductors. China recognized early on that future competition would center on technology and technical standards. Therefore, it intensified investment in scientific research to develop its own proprietary Chinese technology, specifically to reduce reliance on foreign technologies in sensitive fields, and subsequently swept global markets with its innovations.

China's rise was not solely the product of its internal strength; it was also the result of the gradual erosion of the international order established and led by America after World War II

and reinforced after the end of the Cold War. The pillars of that order were Western economic dominance—led by the U.S. economy—military superiority under American leadership, international institutions serving the system, and economic globalization. Over decades, these elements reinforced one another: military power provided the security umbrella for America and the West; international institutions regulated a major portion of global economic relations and served as soft tools of coercion to impose Western hegemony; and globalization firmly tied the economies of the world to the Western economy.

However, recent decades have witnessed changes that weakened the pillars of the Western international order. The West's relative share of the global economy shrank with the rise of Asian economies, competition intensified in technology and manufacturing, and regional powers emerged that were more independent in their decision-making. Additionally, some international institutions faced criticism regarding representation and legitimacy, while discourse surrounding multipolarity gained momentum. At the same time, globalization entered a more complex phase: instead of serving as a tool to deepen dependence on the Western economy, it also became a tool and arena for competing with the West. This prompted a reassessment of supply chains, technology security, vital resources, and foreign dependence. Globalization, along with its philosophy and rules, became a subject of contention and debate, while protectionist policies—alongside sanctions and tariff wars—were proposed as alternatives, thereby placing geopolitical considerations back at the heart of the global economy.

As the pillars of the Western international order were shaken, a shift also emerged in the very concept of power. While influence was once tied primarily to military and financial capabilities, technology—along with its hardware, data, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, technical standards, and digital infrastructure—became central instruments in global competition, with cyber warfare taking center stage in the strategic priorities of nations. With this shift, the rules formulated in the mid-twentieth century became inadequate to address many emerging issues, opening a wide debate on updating or re-drafting them. Thus, political friction and polarization began regarding whether the Western American order should continue in its current form or be modified and reshaped, alongside America's calls to preserve it while reforming and adapting it to new developments.

On the other side, led by China, discussions began regarding the redistribution of influence within the institutions of the international order or the establishment of new frameworks reflecting shifts in the global economy and new balances of power. This strategic shift reflected China's transition from a state seeking integration into the Western international order to one aspiring to reshape it. This Chinese strategic transformation should not be read merely as the rise of a new economic power, but as a gradual, cumulative strategic shift in China's view of itself, its position within the international order, and the global situation.

The 2008 global financial crisis marked a turning point in Chinese strategic thinking, as Beijing concluded that the Western model no longer enjoyed the intellectual and economic dominance it possessed following the Cold War. Since then, China has not remained content with merely capitalizing on the benefits of the international order; instead, it began building independent tools of influence. These include the Belt and Road Initiative, new financial institutions, such as the BRICS Bank, the expansion of its technological presence and leverage, and the enhancement of its geostrategic influence across the Global South, that includes Africa, Latin America and Asian nations. These steps expressed China's transition from integration to influence, which was subsequently followed by the phase of attempting to reshape the Western international order.

The beginning of this decade marked a pivotal moment in China's strategic transformation. Since 2020, a succession of white papers has articulated China's strategic vision, revealing that Beijing has moved from the stage of integration into the international order to the stage of formulating an alternative vision to manage it and reshape its rules. China is no longer content with merely demanding a larger share within the existing system;

rather, it has begun presenting standards, rules, institutions, and concepts that reflect its strategic vision and elements of its Chinese culture in direct competition with the Western model. In the 2021 white paper, “China: Democracy That Works,” Beijing redefined democracy outside the Western liberal framework, offering what it termed “whole-process democracy”—defined as the system’s ability to serve the people’s interests, development, and stability—marking the beginning of a rebellion against the normative hegemony of America and the West. In its 2023 white paper, “A Global Community of Shared Future: China’s Proposals and Actions,” Beijing articulated its vision for the international order even more clearly, embedding a critique of the existing order and questioning the legitimacy of the intellectual foundations upon which that order was built after the Cold War. In the 2023 Belt and Road white paper, China presented its initiative to the world not merely as an infrastructure project, but as a geostrategy to reshape global trade, finance, and connectivity networks according to a Chinese vision. Similarly, in the 2025 white paper, “National Security in the New Era,” Beijing focused on characterizing the world under American leadership and its international order as turbulent and volatile. It linked Chinese security to structural transformations that the international order must undergo to protect China’s trajectory of rise, emphasizing that the issue with America and the West lies in the very structure of relations and rules of the order, rather than a mere circumstantial dispute that can be settled. The latest white papers of this year, 2026, represent the clearest expression of China’s endeavor to reshape the international order, moving beyond discussions of domestic development and a secure regional perimeter to advocate for building a global governance system, global security, global development, global civilization, and a community with a shared future for mankind.

In its strategic transformation, China also seeks the cultural reframing of concepts and the reshaping of standards and rules to serve as its gateway to constructing the international order according to its vision and interests. It strives to shift the focus of power and security away from an exclusive linkage to hard military power, expanding the concept of power and security to encompass technology, data, industrial and digital standards, and cyber capabilities as primary levers of strength, security, and deterrence. It then emphasizes China’s status and position as a global center of power in these critical issues affecting world security, qualifying it to be a key party in drafting rules and standards and reshaping the international order as a major geopolitical actor within it.

China views reshaping the international environment as a decisive factor in reshaping the order itself, such that the new balances of power become a natural result of changing the rules. This concept finds its roots in Chinese cultural heritage far more than can be explained by Western theories, as China repurposes concepts from its own culture in modern language. Henry Kissinger pointed to this matter in his recent analyses, noting that China operates from a different concept of international order and draws inspiration for its strategic vision from the idea of equilibrium in Asian history, where no single power should impose its will upon all others.

Chinese political history—rooted in the rule of successive imperial dynasties—and Chinese political culture find their foundation and grounding in Confucianism as an intellectual, moral, and political system founded by Confucius in the sixth century BCE. For over two thousand years, Confucianism shaped the cultural, political, and administrative foundation of Chinese state, society, and culture. Its influence remains clearly visible in China’s culture, politics, and administration today, even after the fall of dynastic rule in 1912, the establishment of the Republic, and the state’s adoption of the socialist system. Thus, the Chinese strategic mind is saturated with its political history and Chinese political culture. Indeed, one of the major flaws in analyzing the Chinese issue is overlooking China’s distinct cultural, civilizational, and political character.

One of the most evident influences on contemporary Chinese strategy finds its roots in the philosophy of war of Sun Tzu—the most famous military theorist in Chinese history, to whom the authorship of *The Art of War* is attributed, a book considered among the most influential works in Chinese military, strategic, and political thought. He did not view war as a

test of raw force, but rather as a test of intellect. His famous maxim, “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting,” is not a call to avoid conflict altogether, but rather an instruction to reshape the strategic environment so that direct confrontation becomes unnecessary—which constitutes the core philosophy of Chinese strategy today.

Thus, the Chinese strategic mind is actively guided and driven by its cultural background and distinct political tradition, constantly thinking about rearranging elements of reality to shape an international environment that serves its goals, so that its desired objective becomes the natural outcome of the unfolding course of events. For this reason, China appears less interested in declaring grand victories and far more focused on shaping the long-term environment and trends. It does not ask how to defeat the United States so much as it searches for ways to ensure that the structure of the global economy and networks of trade, technology, and finance evolve in a manner that makes the shift of the center of power to Asia and China a natural outcome.

From this perspective, the recent white papers can be read as documents aimed at redefining and reshaping the rules of the international order rather than papers signaling a direct strategic clash with the dominant power. These papers focus on rebuilding the global governance system, expanding the role of the Global South, promoting the use of local currencies, developing multilateral institutions, and drafting new standards in technology and the digital economy. All of these efforts converge toward a single objective: reshaping and transforming the environment that hosts the existing Western international order.

In its quest to reshape the international environment—and based on Beijing’s conviction that the West no longer represents the majority of the world’s population or economy—China addresses the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as key partners in the upcoming order. Its discourse is not ideological and does not rely on raising contentious cultural issues; instead, it leverages its economic tools and surplus liquidity in investment, finance, infrastructure, technology, and trade to build a broad coalition of shared interests. This makes Chinese influence an integral part of the economic development of Global South nations, thereby utilizing this bloc to reshape the international environment in service of Chinese strategy.

From this standpoint, one can understand China’s shift toward investing in infrastructure, supply chains, industrial standards, artificial intelligence, communications networks, and new financial institutions. These are not merely economic instruments; rather, China views them as means to reshape the environment within which international power operates. In its strategic vision, China does not proceed from the premise that overthrowing the dominant power is a prerequisite for changing the international order. Instead, it operates on a more complex and nuanced premise: that if the standards and rules by which the order functions are transformed, the natural result will be a shift and change in the center of the order itself—meaning that changing the rules precedes changing the institutions.

Among the measures China has taken to disrupt existing standards and rules are expanding the use of local currencies in trade to undermine the dominance of the U.S. dollar, constructing parallel payment and settlement networks to challenge the hegemony of the SWIFT system, establishing new development banks to break the monopoly of the Western World Bank and International Monetary Fund, setting technical standards to disrupt Western normative monopolies, and developing independent digital networks to counter Western digital hegemony. Through investment and financing, China works to make these practices widespread to create a parallel environment that compels international institutions to adapt to it, making rule changes a demand and a natural outcome while forcing others to operate within its new framework. This environment serving the reshaping of rules is precisely what China is attempting to build through supply chains, infrastructure, technology, finance, Chinese industrial, digital, and cyber standards, surplus liquidity, and financial incentives. Early signs of this gradual shift in the global center of gravity are already visible: the center of trade is moving to Asia, the center of manufacturing is already in Asia, the center of growth is heading toward Asia, an increasing share of technological innovation originates from Asia,

and geostrategic focus on Asia is mounting. Thus, China views the preparation of the international environment as a way to make its proposed changes to rules and standards appear as reforms to the system rather than its destruction.

China's strategic logic and planning are focused on solving the strategic equation: how to reshape and design the rules of the order such that China's rise becomes a logical and natural consequence of those rules. It views its strategic task not in the realm of hard power, but in reformulating rules, standards, and institutions to reorient and shift the global center of gravity by re-engineering the international environment, while drawing others to operate within the rules, standards, and institutions it has reshaped in complete alignment with its interests and vision. Its white papers serve essentially as strategic blueprints for its vision of its own international order, as China strives to be the principal architect of this new order rather than merely one of its poles—a long-term foundation for Chinese hegemony.

This strategy remains a specific Chinese vision, and its limitations and shortcomings may well be argued. However, the crucial matter that must not be overlooked or ignored is that all this strategic effort is, in reality, an intellectual inquiry into how to achieve the goals and objectives of the cultural system—the root of philosophy and order. Strategy, despite its importance, is nothing more than the practical means to achieve the goals and purpose of the cultural idea, and the idea here is the Western capitalist liberal idea. On the level of the core idea, China creates nothing new and brings nothing novel; the imprint of its Confucian culture does not extend beyond certain practical procedures regarding means and strategic planning. It does not extend to the capitalist idea at the heart of the cultural system—the civilizational womb for creating values, birthing visions, generating systems, and defining meaning, goals, and objectives. Strategy remains subordinate to the idea and a servant to its goals and purposes, acting merely as its executive tool. China does not proclaim a distinct civilizational vision of its own; rather, since the beginning of the last century—following the founding of the Republic in 1912, the adoption of socialist governance, and later supplementing it with capitalist economics—it has been engaged with and committed to the Western civilizational-political vision, carrying no distinct cultural and civilizational project of its own, nor proclaiming one.

It is crucial to note that the world's dilemma today transcends strategy and the strategic mindset, reaching into the civilizational order concerned with man, his ultimate existential issues, his systems of life, and his happiness. The question presented today to human intellect is the search for an alternative to the Western secular capitalist civilizational order—with its catastrophic results and civilizational tragedy—and not a strategy to devise another route to reach the exact same toxic, destructive capitalist liberal outcomes and goals.

The issue lies in the crisis of the Western secular capitalist civilizational order, its philosophy of existence, its life systems, and its inhumane goals and objectives. This system has lost its *raison d'être*, exhausted all its purposes, and culminated in total nihilism, complete brutality, and the unchecked dominance of its capitalist gang. For the sake of its despicable ambitions, this faction is prepared to burn the earth and everyone on it. Therefore, the issue is not replacing a European-American capitalist faction with a Chinese capitalist faction, the Chinese Communist Party and its state. The toxic capitalist idea remains identical whether carried by Europe, America, or China, and its catastrophic results stem from the very nature of its culture and systems. The capitalist system—with the overflow of its brutal vision and the barbarism of its civilization—has become a site of tragedy and a project of destruction.

On a cultural level, China lays no new foundations, creates nothing novel, and neither carries nor proclaims any alternative cultural and civilizational project of its own. It is nothing more than the crisis-ridden capitalist system itself, and China's furthest step within it is wresting the pickaxe of capitalist destruction from America's hand to place it in its own through a strategy of changing the rules to transfer the center of gravity and capitalist hegemony from the American-European West to the Chinese East.

Humanity's dilemma will persist and its tragedy will remain as long as the capitalist system—the cause of the human catastrophe—remains standing. The solution does not lie alone in the demise of the order or the decay of its primary state, America, nor in its burial or the transfer of the center of gravity and capitalist hegemony to China. Instead, the solution lies in the cultural, civilizational, and political alternative that will liberate the world from the darkness of this blind *Jahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance) that the European and American West has driven the world into as misery and suicide. Most certainly, China will not be that alternative, for it is merely a continuation of the West's tyrannical *Jahiliyyah* in a Chinese edition—which is even more calamity-ridden and bitter. Instead, true salvation and true liberation lie in the message of the Lord of all creation: the unique civilizational project of Islam and its unique, distinguished Khilafah Rashidah (rightly-guided Caliphate). Will the sons of Islam not hasten their steps to demolish disbelief in all its forms and colors, and establish Islam's grand edifice and structure—a Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of the Prophethood, as light, guidance, justice, and mercy for the servants of Allah on His earth?

﴿الرَّكَابُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ﴾

“Alif, Lam, Ra. [This is] a Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darkneses into the light by permission of their Lord - to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy.” [Surah Ibrahim 14:1]

﴿الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ﴾

“[They are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give Zakat and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.” [Surah Al-Hajj 22:41]

﴿وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“And Allah is predominant over His affair, but most of the people do not know.” [Surah Yusuf 12:21]