

# Foreword\*

*Wang Jisi*

SINCE ITS LAUNCH IN 2008, the *China International Strategy Review* has published annual reports that follow, analyze and review the significant changes taking place in global politics today. By way of introducing this fifth volume of the review, I will reflect upon and offer a few thoughts about the international developments of recent years.

The financial turbulence that began in the United States in 2008 triggered the most serious global financial crisis since the 1930s, bursting the economic bubbles of many countries around the world. Europe remains mired in the sovereign debt crisis, which poses a severe challenge to European integration. In addition, the Fukushima earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident of 2011 dealt a further blow to Japan's faltering economy. Europe and Japan, two of the world's major economic and political entities, are lacking confidence and are facing a bleak future. "The rise of Japan" and "the rise of the European Union," both frequently heralded in recent decades, have now been forgotten by the public. The American economy is making a slow recovery, with its share of the world economy decreasing year on year. Many Americans and international observers are eagerly anticipating the dawn of "a post-American era" multipolar world, while "the shadow of a unipolar world" appears to have already vanished.

Since Osama bin Laden, the spiritual leader of Al Qaeda, was killed in Pakistan in 2011, the number of terrorist bombing attacks worldwide has fallen. Muammar Gaddafi, Libya's leader and long-standing enemy of the West, was also killed in the midst of war

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\* This foreword is originally written in Chinese.

earlier this year. However, the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East that began in early 2011 has given the Western world little reason to celebrate. Egypt descended into political chaos after President Hosni Mubarak resigned, and Muslim influence in the country has grown stronger. The conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in Islamic countries has become increasingly fierce; Iran's influence over the Middle East is expanding; Israel's domestic and external environments are growing tenser by the day. These events have been noted with great concern in Western countries. As the security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan deteriorates, the United States and other NATO member states have had no choice but to withdraw from the region. In general, public opinion holds that the "Arab Spring" and its chain effects inspire greater fear than hope, as they have reduced Western influence globally.

Meanwhile, the increasing strength of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and their growing cooperation in global affairs is another important trend that is being closely followed across the world, particularly in China. China's growing economic and military strength is most prominent among the newly emerging powers. In the coming ten years, the overall strength of the BRICS countries will grow further. In addition, the economic strength of Indonesia, Vietnam, Turkey and other emerging market countries is also on the rise. The founding of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) marks a new stage in the Latin American integration process. Many Chinese observers believe that the increasing power of developing countries as a group will lead to greater clashes with the current international political and economic order, which, in turn, will pose a significant challenge to the dominant role that developed countries currently play in the global order.

The aforementioned change in the international pattern has been described as "the rise of the East and the fall of the West." This should have resulted in a marked improvement in China's international strategic environment, on account of the fact that the international pressure China faces comes mainly from the West, while the support it receives comes mainly from developing countries. However, according to the articles published in this

volume of the *Review*, the fact is that China's international environment is becoming increasingly unfavorable. What is the reason for the gaping contrast between the "favorable global pattern" and the "deteriorating international environment?" Why is China's increasing national strength not bringing with it an improvement in its external environment? I believe that the potential reasons for this are as follows:

Firstly, the global financial crisis not only dealt a heavy blow to the economies of Western countries, but also damaged the economies of newly emerging powers. In this era of globalization, the major world economies are hugely interdependent, meaning that the fate of one affects all. The Western powers are pleased to observe the growth of the newly emerging economies, and newly rising countries should not gloat over the Western economic downturn. In the case of China, the shrinking market and declining credit of financial institutions in Western countries have increased export and investment difficulties, which have had a negative impact on China's economy. India's recent economic misfortunes have also had much to do with the increasing negative elements in its external environment. Therefore, "the rise of the East" and "the fall of the West" do not have a straightforward cause and effect relationship. With this in mind, it is not easy to be optimistic about the state of China's international political and economic environment.

Secondly, Chinese strategic thinkers have traditionally taken state-centered viewpoints in their analyses, and focus on comparisons of the strength of major powers and the relationships between them. The disadvantage of such an analytical framework is that it may easily overlook global trends at levels above and below that of the state. One example is the severe imbalance in world population growth. The population growth rates in Russia and developed countries are close to or below zero. These countries, along with China, are facing the problem of population aging, while South Asia, the Middle East and Africa are challenged by rapid population growth. Therefore, global population migration has become an unstoppable trend, resulting in an increase in conflicts between new immigrants and locals and even leading to political

clashes. The bottlenecks brought about by large-scale urbanization in the realms of public health, social security, education, transport, environmental protection, and power and water supplies, are becoming increasingly narrow. The global economic imbalance, with high welfare and high consumption in developed countries, coupled with low welfare and low consumption in developing countries, will prove difficult to substantially level out in the foreseeable future. In the process of globalization, the imbalances in income distribution and the wealth gap have continued to widen, and the global ecological environment continues to deteriorate. By means of new technology, especially the Internet and other forms of electronic media, individuals and small groups now pose burgeoning challenges to states and the international community. As China adheres to its own path of development, while other countries adopt their own diversified modes of development, individual freedom, equality, human rights, democracy and other concepts have taken deeper root in the hearts of people worldwide. All of the above are unavoidable challenges that China is facing in its international strategic environment. Paradoxically, these challenges have also brought with them opportunities for China's reform and development.

Thirdly, the rise of the BRICS countries is, without doubt, a blow to the global order dominated by the Western world. The coordination of BRICS countries on major international political and economic issues has, to a certain extent, eased Western pressure on China. Nevertheless, there are remarkably large differences between China and the other BRICS countries, as well as the vast majority of other newly emerging countries, with regard to national interest and ideology. These countries have not shown clear support for China in its territorial disputes with neighboring countries, or in Sino-U.S. conflicts over arms sales to Taiwan, the Tibet and Xinjiang issues, human rights, religion and the renminbi exchange rate. In fact, some of these countries were even involved in the conflicts. Therefore, the role that the "group rise" of newly emerging developing countries can play in improving China's international status, international image and external political environment has its limitations.

Fourthly, as China's national strength increases, its "security dilemma" is worsening. This "security dilemma" is that, while China is building up its national defense capacities for the sake of its national security, both its neighboring countries and the United States not only doubt its intentions to pursue peaceful development, but are also strengthening countermeasures and developing coordinated strategies against China, which, in turn, is putting even more pressure on the country's security. Ironically, when compared with the weaker China of the past, some Chinese people now feel even more insecure and anxious, with a deeper "victim complex." One question is on the lips of all Chinese people: "Why is China's national security in greater jeopardy in spite of the country's increasing national strength?" There are two common answers to this question. The first is that China's investments in its national defense are still insufficient, and the second is that China's policies towards its neighboring countries and the United States are too weak. These viewpoints are reflected in the mass media, as well as in strategic analyses by experts and scholars. However, China's "security dilemma" cannot be resolved in the short-term. In terms of actual capabilities, policy tactics and strategic planning in its foreign policy, China will continue to lag behind domestic public expectations for many years to come.

Lastly, China's power with regard to foreign affairs is weakened by negative domestic factors. In recent years, China's foreign strategies and diplomatic actions have been considered "too weak" by the Chinese public. In reality, looking at it from an objective point of view, China's foreign policy is more enterprising and progressive than in the past, with more emphasis on the principle of safeguarding core national interests, and thus has even been considered "too aggressive" by most of the rest of the world. China's overseas investment and foreign trade have gone up remarkably in terms of both quantity and quality. Chinese citizens and businesses can be found in almost every corner of the world. The Chinese government has multiplied its investment in finance and knowledge to enhance its soft power. China is becoming more and more proactive in its high-level and public diplomacy efforts, with increasing actions to safeguard the country's overseas rights and interests.

However, rather than being significantly improved by its expanding overseas influence, China's overall international image remains barely satisfactory. The reason for this lies mainly in various negative phenomena and unstable factors within the country. For example, the violent incidents in Tibet and Xinjiang since 2008; mass incidents caused by domestic social conflict; concerns about product quality, food security, public morality and the ecological environment; corruption and malfeasance among high-ranking officials; as well as several cases of Chinese citizens fleeing to foreign embassies and consulates seeking asylum. All of these issues have consumed a huge amount of the country's political and foreign relations resources. According to some Chinese government departments, all of the aforementioned domestic issues were the result of meddling by hostile overseas forces. However, it was China that suffered damage to its reputation and interests. Enhancing inter-departmental coordination, improving government efficiency and transparency, as well as the administrative accountability system, combating corruption, and improving citizens' cultural understanding are all preconditions for the improvement of China's foreign policy. However, unlike in the case of economic reforms, the outcome of such changes will not be obvious immediately.

If the above analysis and conclusions hold true, China will face severe international challenges over the next few years. Although it is important for China to enhance diplomacy, national defense, overseas publicity and international economic relations, the key to meeting international challenges is to accelerate domestic reform and to address various political, economic and social issues both within and outside of the country. It is important to give people at home and abroad a comprehensive and objective understanding of China's domestic and international situations and the relations between the two.

Increasingly complex and ever-changing domestic and overseas environments offer Chinese scholars of international strategy a broader field of vision but, at the same time, raise the bar for academic research. What are the scope, theme, focus and theoretical basis for research on international strategy? What issues should Chinese international strategy scholars pay attention to, and what

role can they play in national decision-making? Although the five volumes of the annual *Review* do not offer specific answers to these questions, the diverse topics, opinions and perspectives put forward in this series should stimulate our imagination and enhance our strategic thinking.

In addition to the fourteen articles contributed by senior mainland Chinese officials, experts and scholars, this year's *Review* also includes eight articles by strategic thinkers from seven other countries and two articles by Taiwanese scholars. The inclusion of a higher proportion of articles written by overseas scholars this year is a mere coincidence, as all articles were selected based on the quality of their research and arguments. Hereby, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors to the *Review* over the years, and will strive to make further improvements in the coming years, while preserving the diversity of viewpoints and authors of this publication.

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