

# Ways for China to Solve Thucydides Trap in the Perspective of Globalization

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**Abstract**—With the continuous deepening of globalization, the Thucydides Trap became popular in the international public opinion and became a shadow that affected Sino-US relations. Although Xi Jinping showed China's attitude, it still prevails in the field of international relations, and it has shown a tendency to become a road obstacle for China. It is necessary to lift the veil of the false proposition of Thucydides Trap, build a new relationship between major countries in terms of mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation, promote the building of a community of shared future for mankind, start a new journey of great-power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, and remove the magic obstacles to the realization of the Chinese dream.

**Keywords:** *Thucydides Trap, Sino-US relations, new relationship between major countries*

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the deepening development of globalization, international public opinion has been worried that China will fall into the Thucydides Trap with the United States with its rapid rise. In an exclusive interview with the World Post published by the Huffington Post in January 2014, Xi Jinping said that China and the United States have the responsibility to avoid falling into the Thucydides Trap. China does not have the gene of seeking hegemony after becoming a great power. In September 2015, when Xi Jinping visited the United States, he emphasized again that "there is no Thucydides Trap in the world, but the strategic miscarriage of justice among the great powers is likely to cause itself to Thucydides Trap". Why do international public opinion worries that China and the United States will fall into the Thucydides Trap? Will China and the United States fall into the Thucydides Trap? How can China really avoid the Thucydides Trap caused by strategic miscalculation? The Chinese Communists have given a resounding answer with Chinese wisdom: it is to build a new type of relationship between major countries featuring mutual respect, fairness and justice, win-win cooperation, and promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

## II. FALSE PROPOSITION OF THUCYDIDES TRAP

With the rise of China, the Thucydides Trap is like a magic spell tightly covering Sino-US relations. Generally speaking, Thucydides Trap means that a newly rising power is bound to challenge the existing power, and the existing power is bound to respond to this threat, so that war becomes inevitable. However, with the widespread concern and heated discussion on this issue, the truth gradually emerges, and the truth of a false proposition under the cold war thinking is clearly revealed.

### A. *The history of Thucydides Trap*

Since the Thucydides Trap is named after Thucydides, a famous historian in ancient Greece, the logical starting point should be traced back to the times of Thucydides, the historical facts and thoughts of that era. From 431 B.C. to 404 B.C., there were hundreds of city states in ancient Greece. The wars were frequent, but the scale was far smaller than that of Peloponnesian War. Thucydides pointed out in his masterpiece, the history of Peloponnesian War, that when Athens became more and more powerful, the Spartans chose to ignore it, but when Athens became so powerful that they could invade other countries, the Spartans began to be intolerable, and started a war with the intention of destroying the power of Athens. Historians have long concluded the cause of the Peloponnesian War. It is worth noting that Thucydides himself never mentioned Athens as a new rising power and Sparta as an existing hegemon. Is it really the "iron law" of history for the two to fight? Who defined the Thucydides Trap?

In the early 1980s, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for hegemony in full swing. Herman Wouk, an American, put forward that "Athens and Sparta are two rivals, and they are the" two superpowers "of the Greek world. More than two thousand years later, China still seem to be trapped in the world where Thucydides live. How can we get rid of the Thucydides Trap, which suffocates the world even if it is not destroyed?" This is the first time that the term Thucydides Trap has appeared, aiming at the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union under the cold war, comparing Athens and Sparta in those days. It is Graham Ellison, a political scientist at Harvard University, who brings the Thucydides Trap to the public.

He throws out "Thucydides Trap has been highlighted in the Pacific" and "2014: is it a high-risk year of war?" Borrowing the shell of Thucydides Trap defined by Herman Wouk to metaphor the Sino-US relations in the 21st century, two articles hold that the new rising power (China) will inevitably challenge the existing power (America), and the direct response made by the defending power is war, and China and the United States will fall into the Thucydides Trap, thus causing widespread concern of international public opinion.

### *B. The historical truth of Thucydides Trap*

Is Thucydides Trap really the iron law of international relations? Qian Chengdan, a professor in the Department of history of Peking University, gave the historical truth of Thucydides Trap — "the Trap" is fabricated, not "the iron law". In fact, Graham Ellison has made the mistake of logical confusion. He stressed that the First World War was in line with the iron law of Thucydides Trap. It was the new rising Germany (Athens) challenging the defending country Britain (Sparta), and the world disaster was caused by Britain's response to the challenge. However, in the Western thinking, Sparta is full of the labels of power, autocracy, militarism and irrationality. Athens is the perfect display of democracy, freedom, rationality and wisdom. Therefore, the victory of the Peloponnesian War should be attributed to the newly rising Athenian Empire representing Western values. However, in the First World War, the newly rising Germany was not the perfect Athens. The defending Britain represented democracy and freedom, rationality and wisdom. In fact, the nature of the First World War and the Second World War is totally different. There is no difference between justice and injustice, but two military groups fighting for colonies. It is not difficult to find out that Thucydides Trap actually continues the cold war thinking and exudes strong ideological thinking. It is not an iron law of international relations, but a fabricated statement.

### *C. The realistic soil of "Thucydides Trap"*

The reason why Thucydides Trap suddenly became popular in recent years is that it conforms to the Western inertial thinking and predicts the future trend of Sino-US relations. First of all, the core of Thucydides Trap is power determinism. The growth of newly rising national strength is the objective existence of forming the "Thucydides Trap", and the one with strong strength has the right of discourse and dominant power. Therefore, the growth of national strength is the key determinant. Secondly, the growth of China's strength is obvious to all in the world, which makes its neighboring countries and the United States deeply panic. In addition, China and the United States are two countries with totally opposite values. The inertia of cold war thinking makes western society not believe in China's peaceful rise. Thirdly, the practice of modern western colonialism makes people believe that war is an important means and way for the development and rise of a country. Based on the presupposition of this kind of war benefit, the theoretical logic of Thucydides Trap is undoubtedly that the emerging powers benefit from the war and bear the main responsibility.

In fact, the logic thinking of the west is a continuation of the cold war thinking. American scholars try to use this concept and the simplistic conclusion of "hegemony fighting" to copy and warn the Sino-US relations. With "trap" thinking, it is "the heart of Sima Zhao, and everyone knows". The growth of China's strength is obvious to the entire world. Today's rise of China challenges the vested interests of the United States. Will tomorrow's rise of other powers also challenge China's vested interests? China has the traditional cultural wisdom of "making peace at home, making peace with friends, and making peace with the country" and will not let the Thucydides Trap damage its own interests and affect world peace. China is bound to break the Thucydides Trap, build a new type of relations among major countries, and embark on a path of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

In September 2015, when Xi Jinping visited the United States, China's attitude was shown: "there is no Thucydides Trap in the world". There is a possibility that if there are many strategic miscalculations among the major powers, they may dig up "traps". How to avoid misjudgment and digging trap? In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it is proposed to continue to build the diplomacy of great powers with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and to walk out of a new road of great power relations is the solution that embodies China's wisdom.

### III. BREAKING THE THUCYDIDES TRAP AND BUILDING A NEW TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG MAJOR COUNTRIES

As the two most influential countries in the world, building a new type of relationship among major countries cannot be separated from Sino-US relations. In the eyes of western people with ulterior motives, the United States is a defending power while China is a rising power. It is the two fall of Thucydides Trap. In fact, in the complex and changeable international relations, in the process of strengthening global governance and promoting the reform of global governance system, China and the United States have both the same and differences. The process of promoting the reform of the global governance system is also the process of the development and adjustment of Sino-US relations. As long as the two countries deal with it well and can truly achieve mutual respect, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation, there will be no so-called Thucydides Trap.

The influence of globalization is growing. Although developed countries such as the United States have reaped a lot of globalization dividends, now the United States is taking the lead in spreading Thucydides Trap theory with the stick of trade protectionism. China must draw on Chinese cultural elements, build a community of shared future for mankind with a new model of major-country relations featuring mutual respect, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation, and build an open and inclusive international security system and a global economic governance system. This is China's wisdom and plans to promote the construction of a just and reasonable international order and

global governance system, which shows the historical mission and era responsibility of China as a responsible world power.

*A. Politics: highlighting the "grand pattern" of the great power and major party*

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China further emphasized the development of partnership with mutual respect and equal consultation with other countries, resolutely abandoned the Cold War mentality and power politics, and took the road of dialogue without confrontation, partnership without alliance. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has deepened its relations with its neighboring countries in accordance with the principle of "being good neighbors". The "belt and road" initiative has received positive responses from neighboring countries, and cooperation with developing countries in Africa and Latin America has also been strengthened. China has consolidated good friend and comradeship relations with Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and other socialist countries, and further developed stable relations with Russia, the EU and other major countries and groups of countries. It will continue to strengthen communication and contacts with other countries around the world, expand the convergence of interests, build a framework for overall stable and balanced development of international relations based on coordination and cooperation, and contribute China's strength to promoting world peace and stable development.

*B. Economics: working together to move towards common prosperity*

According to the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China's economy has become one of the largest in the world, contributing more than 30 percent to world economic growth. In fact, since the end of the cold war, it has become the common aspiration of most countries in the world to change the old unfair and unreasonable international economic order. In 2008, the global financial crisis caused by the U.S. sub-prime crisis intensified the dissatisfaction of all countries and regions in the world. At the same time, the U.S. has been unable to maintain its dominant position. In this context, China's performance in the global financial crisis is particularly striking. China's road not only dispels the myth of the "Washington consensus", but also gradually becomes a new choice for many countries and nations to learn and imitate. The "belt and road" development strategy, the APEC, the group of twenty countries, the BRICs and other international cooperation mechanisms have further enhanced China's international influence, charisma and shaping power, and advocated the common destiny of mankind.

*C. Culture: respecting the diversity of world civilization and advocating an open and inclusive view of civilization*

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China raised the "cultural issue" to a

new height and proposed to "strengthen cultural self-confidence and promote the prosperity of socialist culture". World civilization is colorful, equal and inclusive. It is the common heritage of human society and the precious source of prosperity. The difference of civilization is the starting point of communication. Different civilizations do not necessarily lead to civilization conflict. China advocates an open and inclusive view of civilization. On the basis of equality, it is required to take dialogue as a mechanism, respect the development path we choose, exchange development experience with each other, learn from each other's development model, and jointly promote the progress of human civilization.

*D. Security: settling disputes through dialogue and resolving differences through consultation*

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that China must adhere to the supremacy of national interests. In recent years, China has actively called for the adoption of a new international security concept that promotes trust through dialogue and security through cooperation. China has solved most of the land border disputes through peaceful negotiations, such as the signing of the Beibu Gulf demarcation agreement between China and Vietnam. Also, China has basically reached a consensus on the outstanding issues, namely, maintaining peace and stability in the disputed areas and solving the problems through peaceful means. At present, China and its neighboring countries enjoy good neighborly friendship, cooperation and coordination, and jointly build regional security protection. Territorial and territorial water disputes are no longer obstacles to development.

*E. Ecological environment: adhering to environmental friendliness and protecting the earth on which mankind depends*

In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it is pointed out that "the construction of ecological civilization is in the present age, and its benefits are in the future." Xi Jinping once stressed: "mankind has only one earth, and all countries live together in a world." The ecological environment is a global common problem, which is no different for any country. No country can stay away from it. China and the United States have already established a foundation for cooperation in global climate governance. In the future, China needs to stand at a strategic height, work together, think creatively, explore cooperation issues in depth, and actively expand cooperation space, so as to effectively promote the development of bilateral relations and good global climate governance. China itself is also actively guiding international cooperation in response to climate change, striving to become an important participant, contributor and leader in the construction of global ecological civilization.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

There is no Thucydides Trap in the world, but it is said by people with ulterior motives that makes the world panic. China's diplomacy in the new era needs to restore the truth of history, break the traditional logic of confrontation and conflict between great powers in history, explore new ways to develop the relationship between great powers in the new era, and avoid falling into the trap of Western inertial thinking. Globalization is an irreversible historical trend. Under the correct leadership of the Party Central Leadership with Xi Jinping as the core, China will surely strengthen its confidence and be bold in its role, and wisely use the Chinese diplomatic plan, which is based on the community of human destiny and externally embodied in the new international relations. It has provided great stability to the uncertain international situation, injected strong positive energy into the pursuit of a better future for human society, and blazed a new path of major-country relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, and justice and win-win cooperation.

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