

## **Focus: The Current Stage of China's Foreign and Security Policies** (Summary)

### **Essay: Will China Continue to Be a Nation that Challenges the Existing International Order?**

**Akio Takahara** (Emeritus Professor, The University of Tokyo; Distinguished Visiting Professor, Tokyo Woman's Christian University)

Today, many hold the view that the US-centric world order that has been in place since the end of World War II in 1945, and that has been strengthened after the collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe around 1990, is beginning to crumble. The perception that the norms that have supported this order are now in flux, both internationally and domestically, is a key cause of people's anxiety about the future. Many countries in the so-called Global South, as they increase their relative national power and become more resistant to the West, hope to join BRICS. China, along with Russia, advocates the preservation of the international order as a principle, but in reality, it does not support the current "rules-based international order". China aims to reform various international institutions, the ways they are operated, and the ways of rulemaking so that the interests, views, and initiatives of China, now a powerful player, can be better reflected and demonstrated. Challenges to the US military alliance network, the dollar's position as a key currency, and the dominance of Western media in the distribution of information around the world will continue.

### **1 Deepening Sino-Russian Alignment**

**Shinji Yamaguchi** (Senior Research Fellow, China Division, The National Institute for Defense Studies)

When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, some predicted that China would not be able to support Russia, creating a turning point in relations between the two countries, resulting in China's giving up on Russia. Yet, after two years since the war broke out, their bilateral relationship has deepened. How have Sino-Russian relations developed during the Russia-Ukraine war, and what were the driving forces behind this deepening of relations? Since President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in 2023, China has altered its position from pro-Russian neutral stance and increased its level of support for Russia, supplying it with military equipment and technology. The aim of the Sino-Russian partnership is to pursue a common strategic goal of countering the United States. In this deepening of relations, the personal ties between the leaders played a significant role.

### **2 The Linchpin of Chinese Diplomacy: China's Approach to the Israel-Gaza War**

**Rumi Aoyama** (Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University)

More than a year has passed since the Gaza War began when the Islamist group Hamas launched a cross-border attack on Israel, but it is still uncertain whether tensions in the Middle East can be alleviated. Amid the regional upheaval, China has come forward as a mediator for peace and is actively pursuing Middle East diplomacy. However, China's stance is to exert its influence without deep involvement, as it believes that remaining a mediator for peace is the best solution. The Middle East is also one of the regions affected by the US-China conflict. The US is leveraging the shared perception over Iran as a threat to promote cooperation among the US, Israel and Arab countries, aiming to counter the "Axis of Evil" formed by Iran, Russia and China. On the other hand, China is

encouraging reconciliation between Iran and Arab countries, seeking to reduce tensions between Iran and Arab countries. Whether China's Middle East strategy - reconciling Iran and the Arab countries - succeeds or not is the linchpin of Chinese diplomacy, and it is no exaggeration to say that China cannot afford to see this strategy fail.

### 3 The Japan “Three-Sea Linkage” Argument in China

**Aki Sakabe-Mori** (Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of International Studies, University of Tsukuba)

The proposition that Japan is seeking to constrain China through a “Three-Sea Linkage” (the East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the South China Sea) strategy has gained traction among Chinese researchers in recent years, reflecting the perception in China that Japan aligned itself with the US's security strategy following the Abe administration and has been increasingly interfering in China's internal affairs through its involvement in the Taiwan issue. This Japan-focused “Three-Sea Linkage” argument in China is first and foremost an assertion drawing on China's “unresolved war issues” framework and constituting part of the “history wars” that regard Taiwan, the Senkaku Islands, and Okinawa as unresolved issues with Japan. At the root of this is strong beliefs held in China contending that Japan has not sufficiently reflected on its history and continues to harbor ambitions towards Taiwan. Secondly, the Chinese “Three-Sea Linkage” perspective on the US alliance system regards Japan as an entity that participates in trilateral cooperation with the US and the Philippines and in bilateral cooperation with the Philippines in keeping with the US's policy of “intervention” in the Taiwan issue, rather than as an autonomous actor vis-à-vis the US.

### 4 China Confronting the Lai Administration

**Madoka Fukuda** (Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, National Defense Academy of Japan)

The Xi Jinping administration's policy towards Taiwan appears to lack consistency at first glance, but it is easier to understand when analyzed using the logic of united front work. While increasing military pressure on Taiwan, the Xi administration has not changed its basic policy of “peaceful reunification” with Taiwan and it is stepping up its united front work against the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) across Taiwanese society as well as its united front work against the US in the international community. Nevertheless, military activities and exercises near Taiwan are more likely to be key means of united front work to combat “Taiwan independence” and “external interference.” Following the Taiwanese presidential and legislative elections in January 2024, the Xi administration saw the potential for further united front work in Taiwan's current circumstances. Consequently, punitive policies to isolate and criticize “Taiwan independence” and “external interference” increased in intensity when Lai Ching-te took office, with military exercises at the forefront. Still, policies to promote “integrated development” with Taiwanese society have also been implemented earnestly.