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Abstract - *This analytical dossier compares the National Security Strategies of China and the United States, situating them within a broader geopolitical context that also includes Russia. It argues that, despite different political systems and strategic cultures, the Chinese and U.S. documents share a “holistic” approach that tightly links foreign policy, internal stability, economic strategy, and security. The study highlights how both strategies respond to systemic pressures: U.S. relative decline and reindustrialization efforts on one side, and China’s expansionary model and need for controlled openness on the other. Particular attention is paid to multilateralism, alliance restructuring, production chains, and the strategic use of investments abroad. The dossier concludes that these strategies foreshadow a world marked by intensified competition, selective cooperation, and a progressive fragmentation of geopolitical spaces and operational standards rather than stable strategic agreements.*

Keywords: *National Security Strategy, Geopolitical Competition, Multipolar Order*

The international political-strategic debate of the past month has focused almost exclusively on the U.S. NSS (National Security Strategy) 2025. What has slipped into the background is the fact that the Chinese government, last May, and the Russian government, two months ago, also presented analogous documents. One corollary of this relative “attention” has been a rather thin output of comparative analyses of the three documents produced by the three main geopolitical actors.

A certain lack of attention to the Russian document is, in some ways, understandable, since it is entirely centered on the internal situation and, in particular, on managing the ethnic and national differences present within the Russian Federation. This is not to say that the Russian administration has neglected issues of social cohesion, economic development and domestic productive diversification, geopolitical posture, and military strategy – quite the opposite. It has simply set these out in clearly separate, stand-alone documents.

What stands out, instead, is the emphasis on the “holistic” approach emanating from the Chinese and U.S. documents—openly displayed and continually declared, almost obsessively, in the former, and more implicit in the latter.

We therefore have three different approaches which, in their own way, reveal three different orientations and urgencies: the Russian one, apparently more regional—if one can speak that way of a country spread across four continents—at least because it is justifiably preoccupied with the security of its borders and now reassured by a developed and dynamic economy that can rely on domestic resources that are even redundant.

The other two are exactly specular in their acute attention to geopolitical positioning and to the link between foreign policy and the internal situation.

The current U.S. leadership, back in government for about a year but not yet firmly in power—if it ever will be fully and stably—has grasped the connection between its unsustainable and insufficiently selective international overexposure, the universalistic approach of American exceptionalism, the professed globalism, and the alarming internal fragility of its own social formation. A fragility caused and fueled by previous governing leaderships, which still hold significant levers of power, and which have allowed the country to be “parasitized” by external forces of which they are an expression. This narrative of a country being parasitized is, moreover, not very credible in the eyes of the rest of the world, though it has some basis in situations of imperial decline; it nevertheless aims to identify and point to an external enemy—even if, for the moment, of a different nature from previous narratives—and to label and delegitimize, albeit for good reasons, the internal political opponent as an enemy.

This results in a radical change—at least in intentions—in priorities and in the ways political commitment is exercised and results are obtained, in descending order:

1. **Defense and impermeability of national borders** and the purging of illegal and precarious immigrants. Reconstruction of the country’s industrial base grounded in the technological primacy it possesses, and restoration on new foundations of social cohesion based on the valorization of productive strata.
2. **Limitation, as far as possible, of direct and proactive intervention** in its many forms to its own “backyard,” extending from Greenland to Latin America. This should therefore be the arena of the most direct confrontation with Russia and China, but under conditions very different from those of only a few decades ago. Russia, and especially China, have had time to weave important political and economic relations with the countries of that continent, aided also by U.S. “complicity” in past deindustrialization processes in those areas; local political elites are no longer, moreover, a strict and total emanation of North America.
3. **Confrontation with the major emerging powers, China and Russia**, is—or rather is intended to be—transformed into a relationship of intense but long-term competition and tactical cooperation, pending the reaccumulation of the forces needed to sustain a possible open confrontation.
4. **An ever-stricter subsumption of economic strategies and policies, and even production chains**, under political, geopolitical, and military strategies. In practice, production chains in strategic sectors must involve only the circle of the most trusted countries, leaving trade and production chains in complementary sectors free.

From this follows a reconsideration of a new stratification of the alliance system; a more proactive role, in their respective areas, for actors to be aggregated and/or re-aggregated; and a different quality in the operational modes and exercise of foreign, diplomatic, economic, and military policy.

All these aims and implementation schemes envisage a transitional phase of disruption of the consolidated system of relations, which can be framed within a particular and unflinching – typically Trumpian – definition of multilateralism.

Curiously, one sees the use of a first term common to the two specular strategic options, Chinese and American: **multilateralism**.

The other trait common to the Chinese one, which stands out in the NSS, is the transformation of so-called aid policy – linked to the notorious activities of NGOs – into **productive investments**, apparently also with forms of co-participation by local elites in management. Africa and Latin America are the continents most designated to receive such attention. If for the Chinese the practice of productive and infrastructural investment has been foundational to economic relations from the start, for the United States it could amount to a return to a distant past compared to the almost exclusively directly financial-predatory or assistance-based policies of recent times. Shares, methods, and demands will have to be verified in order to reveal real intentions.

There are, however, aspects that in some way differentiate these two “common” traits:

1. While it is true that the NSS presupposes an initial, disruptive, molecular and variable dynamic of relations with individual countries, it is equally true that the objective of the current U.S. leadership is to rebuild as quickly as possible new networks of alliances in concentric structures with the countries and leaderships closest in political and cultural terms; the document speaks precisely of *de facto* juxtaposed civilizations in the band closest to the center of gravity. Examples of this first band certainly include AUKUS and the “*pax silica*” area (Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Taiwan unofficially, South Korea, Singapore, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel and, presumably, Saudi Arabia). These are countries which, in the latter case, are granted – at various levels and degrees – the privilege of co-participation in major strategic economic-scientific-military projects, such as artificial intelligence and the associated hardware cycle. They are countries that are particularly encouraged and delegated to assume a peripheral and regional leadership role in managing competition and confrontation, first and foremost with China, but always on the basis of primary, strategic bilateral relations between the lead country, the United States, and each of them. And always with an awareness of the uncertainty and mutability – the mistrust – that characterizes this transitional phase. To underline how much deeper this awareness is than what emerges from the NSS, this revelation may suffice: the NSS document repeatedly

highlights the concrete risk that, because of the elites governing them and the consequent uncontrolled migration processes, the countries of Europe and the EU – especially the most important ones (the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy) – may change in nature and lose the specific imprint of their civilization, distancing them, through the prevalence of radical Islamic forces now entrenched, in a hostile way from the current deep ties that allow close cooperation and even military synergies. Two of these, the United Kingdom and France, possess their own nuclear arsenals. The White House and the Department of War have tasked the State Department with preparing a security plan by 2028, to be followed by an operational plan by the Pentagon and intelligence services, to be completed by 2035, which envisages the use of a large number of special forces, already present locally, to seize and remove the entire nuclear arsenal—initially, that of the United Kingdom. This will be discussed more extensively on other occasions. As a corollary, the United States is already severely restricting entry visas from the United Kingdom. The recent ban on entry into the U.S. of the former EU Commissioner, Breton, is another indication of the seriousness of these intentions.

2. There is a second band, in an advanced stage of formation, of “allies” designated to be particularly squeezed and stripped, in their dual function as tributary countries and frontline states willing to assume the suicidal and self-destructive role of directly managing regional military confrontation. The EU countries, almost in their entirety, are knowingly destined to immolate themselves in this sacrifice.
3. The third band consists of hunting grounds: (1) Africa in particular, where competition and conflict will be possible without spilling into an uncontrolled generalized clash, though with an additional factor of unpredictability compared to a few decades ago: the presence of local elites that are more independent and aware of the room for maneuver offered by multipolar forces; and (2) the Arctic regions; (3) the Caucasus and Turkmen (Kazakh, etc.) regions; and Arctic areas, these last three dangerously close to the borders of the competing powers.
4. A fourth band—destined to play supporting roles in a multipolar world and to expand spaces of maneuverability and unpredictability—currently includes in particular India, Turkey, Iran, and Brazil (?), interested in prolonging as much as possible, and in this sense tending to be more consonant with Russia and China, a transitional phase free of rigidly defined political alliances.

The emphasis—still somewhat approximate—on these four points helps to better define the cultural foundations, the common characteristics, and the differences of the “holistic” approach in the two documents and of the terminology and schemes adopted, as well as the “hypocrisies” present above all in the Chinese document.

- If the underlying, implicit nature of the holistic approach in the U.S. document derives from the pragmatic-empirical foundation of the Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage, the continually reiterated approach in the Chinese document derives from the Confucian cultural attention to and belonging to the “whole,” and from the peculiar Communist schema of proceeding rigorously—in exposition and mental framework—from the general to the particular. Approaches reinforced by the professional formation of the two ruling classes and, in particular, of the two presidents.
- The greater insistence—indeed obsession—that pushes Chinese drafters to affirm a multilateral dynamic of atomized actors not specifically bound in consolidated alliances arises from an aspiration, probably genuine at present, and from the awareness that a rigid system of alliances, especially in a tripolar scheme, constitutes the prelude to catastrophic generalized conflict.
- Multilateralism in the Chinese sense consists in an egalitarian relationship among states that allows compromise and diplomatic relations not conditioned by politico-military alliances or ideological identities but regulated by international institutions governed by consensual procedures. It is the vision of an expanding country that must sustain, through exports, its massive industrial productive apparatus and its need to import raw materials and energy. The nature and limits of the BRICS are the most evident product of this vision, typical of an elite free from the internal remnants of a recent imperial legacy and therefore nourished by a progressive vision of the development of its social formation.
- A vision that induces and supports a dualistic and simplistic opposition—steeped in hypocrisy—between positive forces advocating globalization as a source of shared benefits and regulated peaceful relations, of which China presents itself as champion, and protectionist forces, proponents of unilateral and arbitrary destabilizing actions, embodied by the United States. Hence the resurrection of the marvels of David Ricardo’s theory of comparative advantage, which makes it possible to proclaim everyone a winner in international competition. Reality calls for a more prosaic interpretation of the relational system of a country and its ruling class: China is capable of using protectionist practices and selective market openings with great skill in support of exports, and of exploiting the spaces offered by a globalization fueled by a U.S. ruling class so presumptuous and blinded by its mission as to believe global hegemonic control possible thanks to its complex and sophisticated predominance—military, technological, politico-cultural, financial, and managerial—while relinquishing its own national productive base and sufficient cohesion of its national social formation. A dynamic that is producing new losers and new winners in the world, as well as new destabilizing imbalances that will not be long in producing new conflicts and new re-compositions, albeit within

a general tendency toward medium development. A country, the United States, that bases its existence and predominance on colossal debt and on military-financial rent, and a country that bases much of its power on holding 40% of world exports – with all the distortions this surplus entails and all the dependencies on trade routes and extraction bases it induces – are both, for the moment to different degrees, factors that fuel new imbalances, contradictions and conflicts, as well as new hierarchies.

- Reading between the lines of the Chinese document, the fog of irenic statements is widely – if subtly – pierced by the light of the realism of a ruling class that emphasizes the theme of flexible internal control and places, within the same document and at the same level, the theme of security and expansion; of control and internal development of strategic activities and technologies; of control and security of trade routes; of regulating specific international relations under its own jurisdiction; and of a selective internal opening enabled by the sufficient acquisition of technological-financial power and predominance. Even if unspoken, the problems created by the difficult progress of the “Belt and Road,” by the recovery of large credits from third countries and the draconian guarantees imposed, and by the obviously self-interested nature of overseas infrastructure investments do exist and will sooner or later lead to an accentuation of influence policies.

In conclusion, while the nature and quality of the two countries’ current foreign policies differ, the affinities present in the two documents are undeniable. Both grasp the link between foreign policy and domestic policy, but one – the Chinese – does so in order to affirm it fully, the other to free itself from it and reconstitute it on new foundations. Both are proponents of a Listian policy (after Friedrich List): for the United States it is a major novelty to have articulated and practiced it openly and forcefully, rather than in a covert manner; with different dynamics and operating conditions due to a more linear expansive reality in China, and one of retrenchment and readjustment in the United States.

Beyond the cultural reasons already cited, the link is openly proclaimed in the Chinese document because political confrontation and conflict are more controlled thanks to the system’s expansive phase and the current greater functionality of the institutional arrangement – more flexible than Western narratives claim, yet capable of hiding flaws from itself for too long; a theme nonetheless very present within the Chinese leadership, increasingly attentive to criteria of selection and verification of results. It is present, but implicit, in the U.S. document, prey to a violent internal political clash of uncertain outcome and to growing institutional disorder and realignment.

The United States, for its part, must manage – if not resolve – a paradox and face an additional risk.

- The paradox is determined by the tools available to trigger and carry out the process of reindustrialization. Some of these are the same tools that created the current situation and that will themselves have to be downsized and brought back under different modes of control and different functions: financial circuits and the role of the dollar. A paradox, but also because it contributes to making the composition of the social bloc supporting the current administration fluid and unstable.
- The risk is linked to the partial handing over – the small door left ajar, unwillingly – of the cage in which its little birds, i.e., its allies, live. Birds accustomed to cages rarely manage to appreciate the value of freedom and to take advantage of opportunities – the little door left ajar, precisely, in that cage. European countries are the most depressing example. Yet it is not certain that the current internal dynamics within NATO – so hardline and tied to a precise faction of the U.S. political spectrum – will not produce their own nemesis. Some little bird might attempt an adventure on its own.

China, on the other hand, runs risks of a different nature, first and foremost that other countries may rapidly arise intent on pursuing, with other instruments, the same goals of reorganization and rebalancing pursued by the United States, thereby calling into question the timing and modalities of posture rebalancing decided by the Chinese leadership. The dispute that is reopening in the “peripheral” areas of the world could open new spaces in this direction.

In conclusion, a conciliatory and irenic vision by a ruling class, however likely hypocritical, is certainly sustained by the country’s cultural humus and tradition, but it can be “adjusted” and overturned by external geopolitical dynamics capable of changing direction and reversing internal balances within the ruling class itself.

A latent concern in the Chinese document. A concern, therefore, for internal stability that also unites the two countries: China, engaged in building a universal welfare system that is still inadequate and discriminatory at present; and the United States, seeking – through the attempt at reindustrialization – to rebuild that productive middle-class indispensable to guaranteeing dynamism and cohesion. A concern masked by a triumphalism of “magnificent and progressive destinies” typical of U.S. self-confidence.

Two documents that, in effect, announce a progressive separation of areas and operating standards, intense competition, and domains of conditional cooperation, rather than strategic agreements.

Giuseppe Germinario is an independent geopolitical analyst. His research focuses on the analysis of power relations among states, transformations of the international system, and the conflict dynamics generated by global strategic competition. Shaped by a background combining trade union experience, scholarly activity, and collaboration with Professor Gianfranco La Grassa, his work integrates theoretical reflection with empirical observation of political-economic processes. During the 1990s, he analyzed the privatization of Italian public enterprises within the broader framework of Western systemic restructuring. Since 2010, he has contributed to the strategic debate on the blog *Conflitti e strategie*, and since 2016 he has been the founder and editor of the analytical platform *l'Italia e il mondo*, devoted to the study of geopolitics, conflicts, and international balances, with particular attention to the link between geopolitical dynamics and internal dynamics within social formations.



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