

Political-Economic Reconfigurations in Global Power Systems: From the 18th Century up Until Today



UFUK TUTAN

Prof. Dr.

Ufuk Tutan holds a B.A. in Economics and a B.A. in International Relations from Middle East Technical University (METU). He earned three master's degrees, which include a degree in International Relations from Bilkent University, a degree in Science and Technology Policy Studies from METU, and a degree in Economics from the University of Utah. He completed his PhD in Economics at the University of Utah. He made research visits to the University of Sussex's Science Policy Research Unit with the support of the British Council Chevening-TÜBİTAK Fellowship. Professor Tutan specializes in several areas of political economy: economic crises, developing countries, economic history, technology, and family-owned businesses.

ABSTRACT

This article examines political-economic strategies followed by the major countries that shaped the historical course of capitalism. Special attention will be paid to how these strategies have affected the configuration of power in the world. The aim is thus to understand the effect of global power systems on the world political economy and to make certain estimations regarding the course of the cooperative mechanisms that are being formed in today's environment under the initiative of People's Republic of China. As such, the article will undertake a geopolitical-economic analysis based on incorporated comparison and process tracing. This analysis is based on the case of Britain and the United States, which illustrates how unipolar power systems –characteristically underpinned by (neo)colonial exploitation, zero-sum policies, cyclical economic crises and belligerence– are doomed to long-term instabilities. The article also argues that a requisite condition for a stable system of multipolarity is to rely on nation-states as the primary political entity in world affairs, creating independently planned National Innovation Systems in selected strategic sectors, and providing an adequate educational system that responds to the requirements of these sectors. Economically weaker countries would not be able to fully benefit from multipolarity unless they satisfy the abovementioned three conditions, which also explains the historical success of countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea. The article maintains that, as the world is marching towards a multipolar system, leading economies of the Global South seem to establish closer partnership with peripheral economics based on socio-economic and political strategies inspiring humanitarian and peaceful values. However, peripheral economies can maximize the benefits of comprehensive partnerships such as the Belt and Road Initiative, only if they deepened their participation having fully determined their real necessities and aspirations.

Keywords: China, multipolarization, world system, globalization, unipolarity

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, IONIANS BELIEVED that the entire world consisted of the Mediterranean and its hinterland, while for Chinese living around the Yellow River the world was oceans at one end and great deserts on the other. Both cultures built their commercial, political and social networks according their worldview, with their respective founders using the boundaries of their world networks to conceive of a global world (Landes, 1998). Similarly, the Roman Empire had established a unipolar global world, which it perceived within the boundaries of its commercial, political and social networks. After its collapse, such a unipolar world did not emerge again until the 18th century when, following the discoveries of the Americas and the linking of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, the per-

ception of a global world was reshaped to embrace the entire world. In the latter half of the 18th century, after the Seven Years' War, the United Kingdom re-established a unipolar world power system (Arrighi, 2010).

The 18th-20th century period is referred to as Pax Britannica. This continued until World War II, following which the world entered the bipolar phase of the Cold War period, when it was shaped by the life or death struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bipolar world order temporarily gave way to the 1990s' Pax Americana. However, the brief time of this period has resulted in the persistence of political and economic instability and paved the way for uncertainty on a global scale. Driven by

such circumstances, we have witnessed the developing economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (collectively known as BRICS) trying to develop various alternatives to this unipolar global power (Gürcan, 2019a).

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This article examines political-economic strategies followed by the major countries that shaped the historical course of capitalism. Special attention will be paid to how these strategies have affected the configuration of power in the world. The aim is thus to understand the effect of global power systems on the world political economy and to make certain estimations regarding the course of the cooperative mechanisms that are being formed in today's environment under the initiative of People's Republic of China. As such, the article will undertake a geopolitical-economic analysis based on incorporated comparison and process tracing. This analysis is based on the case of Britain and the United States, which illustrates how unipolar power systems –characteristically underpinned by (neo) colonial exploitation, zero-sum policies, cyclical economic crises and belligerence– are doomed to long-term instabilities. The article also argues that a requisite condition for a stable “system” of multipolarity is to rely on nation-states as the primary political entity in world affairs, creating independently planned National Innovation Systems in selected strategic sectors, and providing an adequate edu-

cational system that responds to the requirements of these sectors. Here, “world system” describes the economically, socio-culturally and politically interdependence and mutual interactions of actors such as classes, states and companies, while “power” describes the influence of actors in giving direction to the general course of dependence and mutual interactions (Amin 2000; Chase-Dunn & Grimes 1995). In turn, National Innovation Systems can be defined as (Freeman, 1987, page 1) “the network among institutions which create, import, modify and spread new technologies in public and private sectors through their efficiency and interaction”.

Based on case studies, this article goes on to argue that economically weaker countries would not be able to fully benefit from multipolarity unless they satisfy the abovementioned three conditions (i.e. the strengthening of the nation-state system, the creation of National Innovation Systems, and the existence of a strong educational infrastructure), which also explains the historical success of countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea. The article maintains that, as the world is marching towards a multipolar system, leading economies of the Global South seem to establish closer partnership with peripheral economics based on socio-economic and political strategies inspiring humanitarian and peaceful values. However, peripheral economies can maximize the benefits of such comprehensive partnerships as the Belt and Road Initiative, only if they deepened their participation having fully determined their real necessities and aspirations.

The first section of the article introduces its theoretical and methodical framework. The section that follows addresses the global power strategy of the United Kingdom during the Pax Britannica. The third section focuses on the Cold War period, and the final section discusses the crisis of the United States' (US) unipolar strategy and China's central role in the shift towards multipolarity.

Theoretical and Methodical Framework

Geopolitical economy is a school of international relations established by Radhika Desai (2013) and developed by Efe Can Gürcan (2019a). This school's underlying argument is that international politics is shaped primarily by interstate struggles for economic power, which thus increases the importance of states as principal actors in globalization. The critique of imperialism and neoliberal capitalism is a defining element of geopolitical economy, which focuses on the manifestations of class struggle in the international arena (Desai 2010, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Gürcan 2019a, 2019b, 2019d).

In geopolitical economy, Gürcan highlights the concept of multipolarization rather than the concept of multipolarity because the United States still continues to maintain its economic, military and cultural superiority. Organizations such as BRICS have yet to provide a consistent alternative to American-patented neoliberal policies or establish a consistent political, economic and military unity among themselves (Gürcan 2019a, 2019b, 2019d). In this context, multipolarization is defined as “the increasing parity in the global distribution of political, economic, cultural, and military power” (Gürcan 2019d, page 557). Hence, the multipolarization struggle exists between “dominant states (for example, today's United States) and “contender states” wishing to lay claim to global governance. Thus, geopolitical economy provides a framework to understand global power struggles, which is the main focus of this article (Desai 2013; Gürcan 2019b).

Methodologically, geopolitical economy often uses incorporated comparison and process tracing. As is implied by the name, incorporated comparison addresses similarities, mutual interactions and dependencies across cases, alongside their temporal and spatial differences, specificities and tensions. The purpose is to comprehend the (re)configuration

of global phenomena (McMichael 1990, 2000; Gürcan 2019b). Case selection is made in accordance with the principle of historical relations and mutual determination (McMichael 1990, 2000; Gürcan 2019b). As discussed in this article, China's rise in the global power system during the transition from Pax Britannica to Pax Americana provides a sound example of the aforementioned historical relations and determination.

While making incorporated comparison, the article uses process tracing as a qualitative and interpretative technique. Process tracing aims to reveal causal processes in a narrative manner. It often resorts to logical inferences and refers to important historical developments (Gürcan 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). While doing this, process tracing gives primacy to understanding the tools used by key political actors, including their motives, priorities, perceptions and opportunities (Gürcan 2019d). Indeed, the actor-centered approach of process tracing is strongly compatible with the tradition of geopolitical thinking (Gürcan 2019d).

Unipolar Systems and the Strategy of Aggressive Capitalism

As a result of the Renaissance and Reform movements in the mid-16th century, inter-religious warfare brought political and economic chaos to Europe. In these circumstances, individual-based Protestant financial capital in Western Europe gravitated towards re-organising its guilds and entrepreneurial bourgeois groups around a nation-state ideology, while England's Queen Elizabeth decided to minimize foreign dominance in finance by nationalizing the country's Catholic capital. With the Spanish attempt to occupy the United Provinces Union (today's Holland), England's economy entered a new era (Arrighi, 2010), as individual Protestant capital fled the seemingly endless wars in Europe and sought refuge

in the economies of various countries, but primarily in England's. Thus, towards the end of 16th century, the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie of the United Provinces Union introduced new knowledge in the fields of finance and production to the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie of many countries. The United Provinces was essentially an agglomeration of individual international capital, and even though it appeared to be a nation-state governed by a Republic, it was not a mercantilist nation-state. As a consequence of its costly wars against Spain and its conception of competition advocating free trade at the international level, by the time the Westphalia Peace Treaty was signed in the mid-17th century, the inevitable collapse of the seemingly powerful United Provinces Union was already underway (Israel, 1989).

Following the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the second milestone to transform the United Kingdom socially, economically and politically was the Westphalia Peace Treaty. This brought sectarian wars in Europe to an end and introduced a new concept of international relations based on the concept of sovereignty as a dominant paradigm. Consequently, European empires started to evolve towards a nation-state system. Following Britain and the United Provinces, countries like Russia, Prussia and France strengthened their national entrepreneurial bourgeoisie as collective entities and joined the trade revolution, which was to spread across Europe. States-supported national entrepreneurial bourgeoisies entered into a process of becoming both internationally-operating entities and a national class, continuing to trade at a global level. The Puritan leader Cromwell, who seized rule in Britain immediately after the Westphalia Peace Treaty and the English Civil War, incorporated the British colonies in all aspects of nation-state sovereignty with practices such as the Cabotage Law, and implemented radical "national-economy" policies. English



Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping at the first round of the Leaders' Roundtable at the Second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, April 2019.

joint stock and commandite companies controlled by the national entrepreneurial bourgeoisie began trading under the political and military protection of the nation-state, not only in its colonies, but all over the world. In their own sphere of sovereignty, Spain, France and even the United States received an aggressive response from English pirates when they took a stand against this aggressive and expansionist British entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, and from time to time, there were regional wars with the English Royal Fleet. In the name of maintaining itself as an expansionist and global power, the British bourgeoisie and the state's military often acted and fought together in overseas regions. In 1707, England had established the United Kingdom, in which Wales and Scotland were included under the leadership of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie of these countries. Thereafter, the coalition wars, which had been occupying Europe since the 1660s, meant the United Kingdom was able to gradually seize control of the Atlantic Ocean and North America trade. Thus, until the Utrecht Peace Treaty of 1713, it reached across the Atlantic Ocean to any trade regions it wished from both France and Spain. With the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, the United Kingdom

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began to take control of other countries' colonies in North America and trade across the Atlantic. As of the third quarter of the 18th century, the British nation-state and its entrepreneurial bourgeoisie had snatched the Far East and Pacific colony trade from its global rival France and from the previous global power, the United Provinces. Thus, England established its unipolar system during this period (Arrighi, 2010).

While a unipolar system has the ability to forcefully constitute its own global commercial, political and social networks in its own interest, and to control these networks, it does not mean that, in practice, it can achieve global stability and order. The United Kingdom, for example, has been a leading player in a capitalist globalisation process that continuously struggled with economic crises (Polanyi, 2001). This being said, as in previous periods, one of the most dynamic forces of the global economic system has been the entrepreneurial class. This class initially emerged as an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, and by commandeering the nation-state government, came into power in various countries, but especially in Britain. Moreover, through its efficiency and dynamism, the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie has made significant contributions to maintaining the capitalist production system by bringing about social and cultural transformations at a global level (Hirschman, 1961), and the British entrepreneurial bourgeoisie has played a key role in making Britain a unipolar power since the mid-17th century. (An-

derson, 2013). In fact, by gradually expanding its areas of influence over time, the British entrepreneurial bourgeoisie has become one of the most efficient players, not only in the global economic system, but also in the global political system (Braudel, 1993). England's Civil War (1642-1651) and Glorious Revolution (1668), led to an understanding among the bourgeoisie of England, Wales and Scotland of the importance of unifying themselves under the umbrella of a British entrepreneurial bourgeoisie despite differences in belief and culture. With the Utrecht Peace Treaty, it was then able to test whether it could be efficient at a global level with its united and supra-national Britain entrepreneurial bourgeoisie identity.

When the British entrepreneurial bourgeoisie took control of nation-state government towards the end of 17th century, it began seeking solutions to some of the fundamental problems of the capitalist production system. In order to delay or overcome successive economic crises in a milder manner, it sought investment areas where growing capital could be absorbed and new markets to sell its stream of products. It transformed its currency into reserve money for international trade, and thus began using its overseas colonies for both investment and market purposes. In order to engage in production and investment outside its homeland, the British bourgeoisie created large scale commercial joint stock companies, which were vested with legal privileges and capable of doing business at the global level. By building railway and telegraph networks across North America and India within the first three quarters of the 19th century through these large scale companies, it established commercial, political and social network systems by means of which it could both liquefy its capital and market its products, and meet its need for natural resources. However, the economic interests of its colonies, and especially their needs for goods and services, were

not adequately taken into account while establishing these network systems. This unilateral growth strategy was able to prolong the existence of the United Kingdom as a unipolar global power for just over a quarter century (Dobb, 1967). Although the greatest economic crisis experienced by the United Kingdom was the global crisis in 1870s, it was observed that it experienced large and small crises every fifteen to twenty years between the 1760s and the 1870s. A significant portion of these large and small economic crises occurred in one or two areas of the “holy trinity” that was capital, investment and market, or, as in the 1870s crisis, in all three. The first signals of these global economic crises were decreases in the profit rates of the leading economies or secondary global economies (Tutan, 2003).

The Experience of Multipolarity and Bipolarity: Aggressive and Friendly Capitalism Strategies

The 1870s global economic crisis marked the beginning of the end for the United Kingdom’s adventure as a unipolar power, and the comeback of a multipolar system occurred towards the end of 19th century as states such as Germany, the United States and Japan challenged the United Kingdom, both politically and economically on the global stage (Hobsbawm, 1996).

A number of commonalities can be noted in examining how these three contending economies became competitors of the United Kingdom in a very short time. Firstly, all three economies began the process of becoming a nation-state immediately prior to or following the 1870s crisis by uniting economically, politically and socially. Secondly, in order to make a technological breakthrough, they first planned their industrialization program via a maximum of two industrial sectors by preparing their National Innovation Systems in the last quarter of 19th century, and then immediately prepared

their long-term education program according to the industrial sectors determined in the National Innovation System. The industrial sector common to all three of these economies was steel and its by-products. At the time, industrialisation was first and foremost considered in terms of steel and its sub-industries, and steel production was also one of the main inputs of many industrial sectors. (Freeman and Soete, 1997).

With the technological breakthrough in the sectors determined by the National Innovation System and its spread across the sub-sectors in the early 20th century, Germany, the United States and Japan had in fact fully established a multipolar system, but each acted as a unipolar power when the opportunity arose. These three economies, which began to face difficulties in meeting their market, investment and natural resources needs, decided to cooperate with some neighbouring independent economies to find solutions to these problems based on mutual interests in sectors such as goods movement,

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transportation, logistics and mining. The mutual-interest principles were based on cooperation in various fields in line with the needs of these three large economies, but also took into consideration the needs and demands of the neighbouring independent economies.

However, when these regional collaborations became insufficient for their increasing production capacities and capital generated as a result of their technological breakthroughs, the two great wars

of the 20th century were the inevitable outcome. Their ability to continue their collaborations with certain regional economies in various areas during the World Wars was also about respecting and remaining faithful to the mutual-interest principles as much as possible (Landes, 1993 and 1998).

The question comes to mind of why certain economies in South East Europe, the Middle East, Central America and South East Asia –who collaborated with Germany, the United States and Japan in this manner during the first half of 20th century– failed to match the technological development which these three economies achieved in the last quarter of 19th century.

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Part of the answer lies in the National Innovation System. Most of the former preferred to prepare mid-term industrial development plans instead of constituting their own National Innovation System. Moreover, various collaborations with the three major economies were determined according to the latter's cyclical needs, rather than according to industrialization programs. In other words, these regional economies did not spend much effort on long-term laborious work, but tried to achieve the goals of technological development by cutting corners (Lundvall, 1992).

Following World War II, the multipolar system evolved into a bipolar one, the two poles of which were the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. These actors transformed their currency into reserve money in economies within their sphere of influence, and collaborated with specific regional economies to meet their own market, investment and natural resources needs. For example, while the United States maintained multiple collaborations in

accordance with the principles of mutual interest in order to militarily and economically strengthen South Korea against North Korea, South Korea made good use of these collaborations and determined its own National Innovation System objectives in the early 1970s. Subsequently, it prepared its mid-term industrial development plans. Indeed, over time, South Korea chose to collaborate with United States in fields the former determined in accordance with its National Innovation System objectives. One such area was the steel sector and its by-products, still at that time one of the most important indicators of industrialization and one of the main inputs of many industrial sectors. The other area was the shipping sector, one of South Korea's historically strong sectors. In short, South Korea made long-term plans for use of its limited resources and capital in the most productive manner in order to make a technological breakthrough, carried out technology transfers in accordance with this plan, and shared its market under these conditions (Hobday, 1995 and Lundvall, 1992).

Towards the end of the 20th century, this bipolar system came to an end, as the world transitioned once again to a multipolar power system (Amin, 2000), despite the United States intention to re-establish its unipolar system. Its plans were stymied by the European Union under the leadership of Germany, the new Russian Republic of Vladimir Putin, which emerged after the disintegration of the old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and China, which rapidly grew and developed. In the years following the 2008 economic crisis, it was understood by all that the United States could not fully re-establish its own unipolar system.

Multipolar Global Power System: Belt and Road Initiative Project

The United Kingdom, together with its entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and commercial joint stock companies was the unipolar leader of the 18th and

19th centuries. It satisfied its own demand for raw materials and further increased its capital by setting up railway and telegraph networks in its colonies and making large scale investments in various sectors. While making these investments, it ensured its own currency was used in those economies within its sphere of influence, and made it obligatory for loans necessary for investment in these economies to be provided from its own financial resources. This leadership strategy became the starting point

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of aggressive capitalism. Its investment, for example, in India's railways and telegraph lines in mid-19th century was to serve its own needs and debts without taking into consideration the real needs of India and others (Hobsbawm, 1998). On the other hand, towards the end of 19th century, we see Germany, having been one of the leaders of multipolar system, providing financing under favourable conditions and taking into consideration the real needs and demands of independent economies and turning towards collaboration for various investments. The construction of railways by Germany for the Ottoman Empire at this time with the low-interest loans it provided under favourable conditions and taking in consideration the needs of the Ottomans, is one example of the so-called "friendly" capitalism strategies implemented by leading economies in a multipolar system (Hobsbawm, 1996). It has been observed that while the main heir of the United

Kingdom's historical aggressive capitalism was the United States in the post-WWII bipolar system, there were occasions when, in order to limit the sphere of influence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, it has provided relatively better investment and financial conditions in various sectors that did take into account the needs and demands of independent economies. Its above-mentioned relationship with South Korea provides one example of such "friendly" capitalism strategies (Hobsbawm, 1994).

The European Union, the United States and China are the leading economies of the multipolar system of the 21st century. However, many economic, political and social strategies followed by the former two resemble the aggressive capitalism strategies that were the hallmark of the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition, it has been seen that leading economies and their immediate followers adopting these aggressive strategies have, from time to time, interfered in the economic, political and social sovereignty of other countries in the system, and turned towards "post-modern colonization", with operations focusing on capital-investment- and market-related fields. These range from capturing the markets of economically weak nation-states through multi-national companies, to ensuring that, via global financial institutions, those nation-states with insufficient capital remain indebted, and limiting investment by these nation-states to sectors that they, the leaders, deem necessary. Thanks to such operations, the leading economies have found a way to exercise economic, political and social control over the economically weak nation-states without physically occupying them.

China was recognised as one of the leading economies of the multipolar system towards the end of the 20th century. As of 2018, China's economy was the world's largest in terms of purchasing pow-

er, and second only to the United States according to other financial criteria. China is the leading world economy in terms of direct investment, and is also the economy that makes the most national resources available to other economies. Yet, its economy

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does not appear to have reached the peak of both existing and potential capacity. Indeed, it has been observed that the slowdown in China's economy in recent years is not due to its internal dynamics, but rather to its need to reduce its production capacity and slow its growth rate due to the ongoing recession in many global economies (World Bank, 2019).

China has for a long time been in commercial and financial relationships predominantly with other global leading economies such as United States of America and Germany. However, it is understood that, in the near future, the demands both financially and for goods and services, of these leading economies will remain under China's potential economic capacity. Moreover, in today's multipolar system, these economies are China's main rivals. These and other similar reasons lie behind China's launching of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) at the end of 2013, which primarily aims to assist development in economies in Eurasia and the African continent through creating new markets, new investment areas, new raw materials resources and new social and political cooperation.

The BRI initially appeared to have been prepared to carry out infrastructural investments with

Africa and Eurasian economies through land and sea transportation routes, and then trade goods and services. However, at a global meeting held in Beijing in April 2019 attended by leaders of thirty-seven countries and representatives of one hundred and thirty countries, it was signaled that the BRI could become something greater than a post-modern "Silk Road" Project.

In order to correctly understand the BRI, it is useful to examine it in two different contexts: China's existence as a leading world economy within the multipolar system with the potential to improve its existing position through new economic and political relations, and its declared intention to follow a smoother and more sharing leadership strategy rather than through use of the strategy of aggressive capitalism.

As for the first point, we see that China has succeeded in becoming a leading economy in the multipolar system within a very brief period, and has done so operating well below its potential capacity. China has also understood that its economy will be unable to reach its potential capacity in the long-term with the industrial, commercial and financial collaboration it has undertaken in the last quarter century with other global leading economies. For this reason, it has implemented the BRI to reach out to a wider area in order to meet the raw material, energy, investment and market needs for sustainability of the rapidly growing capital and production capacity in the future. The BRI embraces two-thirds of the world's population and one-third of the world's annual Gross Domestic Product. However, rather than implementing colonization or making use of post-modern versions of the colonisation tactics, China's BRI proposes partnerships, collaborations and sharing networks in which everyone will gain, and through which China itself hopes to reach the long-term potential capacity of its economy.

The second context reveals that China has correctly come to the conclusion that as a leading economy within a multipolar system, not only is it in need of many economies within its new sphere of influence in order to gain superiority over other leading economies and to reach its potential capacity, but also that these many economies are also in

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need of China. It has understood that employment of the aggressive capitalism strategy by previous global leaders proved unsustainable in the long term. Armed with this knowledge, in 2013 China first invited many of Africa's and Eurasia's economies to join its BRI. The question is now whether it will employ a friendly capitalism strategy or friendly socialism strategy in establishing these new global partnerships, collaborations and sharing networks.

It has also become clear that the choice of strategy does not lie only with China. It also depends on joint decisions to be taken by dozens of economies in Africa and Eurasia. These are, for the most part, economies which are either underdeveloped or developing, economies which have never engaged in any long-term National Innovation System preparation and who have accepted inward foreign capital and investment flows throughout the last century based on their own mid-term industrialization programs and the demands of leading economies, and taking into consideration the needs of the moment.

The BRI is much more than the former Silk Road. Those who wish to implement this project

have made it clear that they want to take new steps to have policies different from the Marshall Aid, IMF programs or regime change of previous periods. Those who will decide on BRI strategies are the developing and underdeveloped economies in Eurasia and Africa, all of whom must first determine their wishes and needs to be set out in a long-term National Innovation System that each will prepare. Subsequently, they should put into practice their mid-term industrialization program in compliance with their National Innovation System. Only then, will these economies should decide whether they will sit at the table with China to participate in its BRI in accordance with the principles of mutual interest and equality.

Conclusion

Any political or economic rebuilding of the unipolar system in the near future seems unlikely, as does a resurgence of the recent bipolar system. Instead, we understand that the historical process has evolved towards a multipolar system in which leading economies form their own peripheral economies based on the political, economic and social strategies they will follow. The last two centuries of global power relations have demonstrated clearly to us the need for these strategies to be "friendly" and in accordance with the principle of mutual interest, whether they are in line with socialist or capitalist ideologies. Historical events have also taught us that today's world is rejecting aggressive strategies at the international level, and negatively reacts to global powers implementing these strategies at the first opportunity. With both unipolar and bipolar systems having a structural tendency to apply aggressive strategies, it is clear that a multipolar system will continue to grow for the foreseeable future.

The BRI is China's proposal for collaboration in a multipolar system. It has been prepared in accord-

ance with the principle of mutual interest, and while logistics, production, economy and trade connections between different economies within the BRI have been ensured, it is also clearly specified that its leading economy, China, will provide the necessary technology and finance to the participant economies. However, China is not the key to the BRI's success. This mostly depends on how much added value will be provided by its participant economies. Hence, each needs to determine one's expectations and needs and prepare a National Innovation System. BRI participants need to find ways to incorporate their designated industrial and commercial areas into the BRI in line with the principle of mutual interest. In other words, those economies who choose to sit at the table with China, the BRI sponsor, will decide on the seating arrangements themselves. 🌸

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