

GLOBAL VIEWS

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Epoch-making change

China is in unique position to influence the evolution of the world order as it is more capable than any other country of promoting the common interests of all

Over the past decades, China has adhered to its own development path and in the process it has broken the center-periphery system of dependency among countries to create a new three-part interaction system.

This system consists of three types of relations — China's relations with "periphery" countries (the non-Western world and developing countries), China's relations with "central" countries (major Western countries) and interactions between the two aforementioned relations.

In the new pattern, China is in a unique position to influence the future evolution of the world order as it is more capable of substantially promoting the common interests of all countries than any other country in the world. Hence, China's peaceful rise is of epoch-making significance.

To start with, China's relations with the "periphery" countries are better than ever, as evidenced by the strong support from developing countries for China's Belt and Road Initiative. Since Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the initiative in 2013, a total of 126 countries, most of which are developing ones, and 29 international organizations have signed cooperation agreements with China on the Belt and Road Initiative. From 2013 to 2018, the value of trade in goods between China and the Belt and Road economies exceeded \$6 trillion, an average annual growth of 4 percent, higher than the overall growth of China's foreign trade.

The Belt and Road Initiative's popularity among developing countries comes from the fact that China is the only country that can provide products, services and experience related to the four industrial revolutions.

For the developing countries, China, with a sense of realism, provides products and services catering to their development stage and in the meantime reserves the possibility of upgrading such products and services in the future. Take the China-aided Mombasa-Nairobi Railway as an example. Currently, the railway system uses diesel locomotives, which is more suitable to Kenya's present conditions than other options. However, preparations have been made for its future electrification.

Another example is China-Africa trade. Ten years ago, the United States was Africa's largest trading partner. Now China has taken that position, and the volume of China-

Africa trade is twice that of US-Africa trade. Similar changes are taking place in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

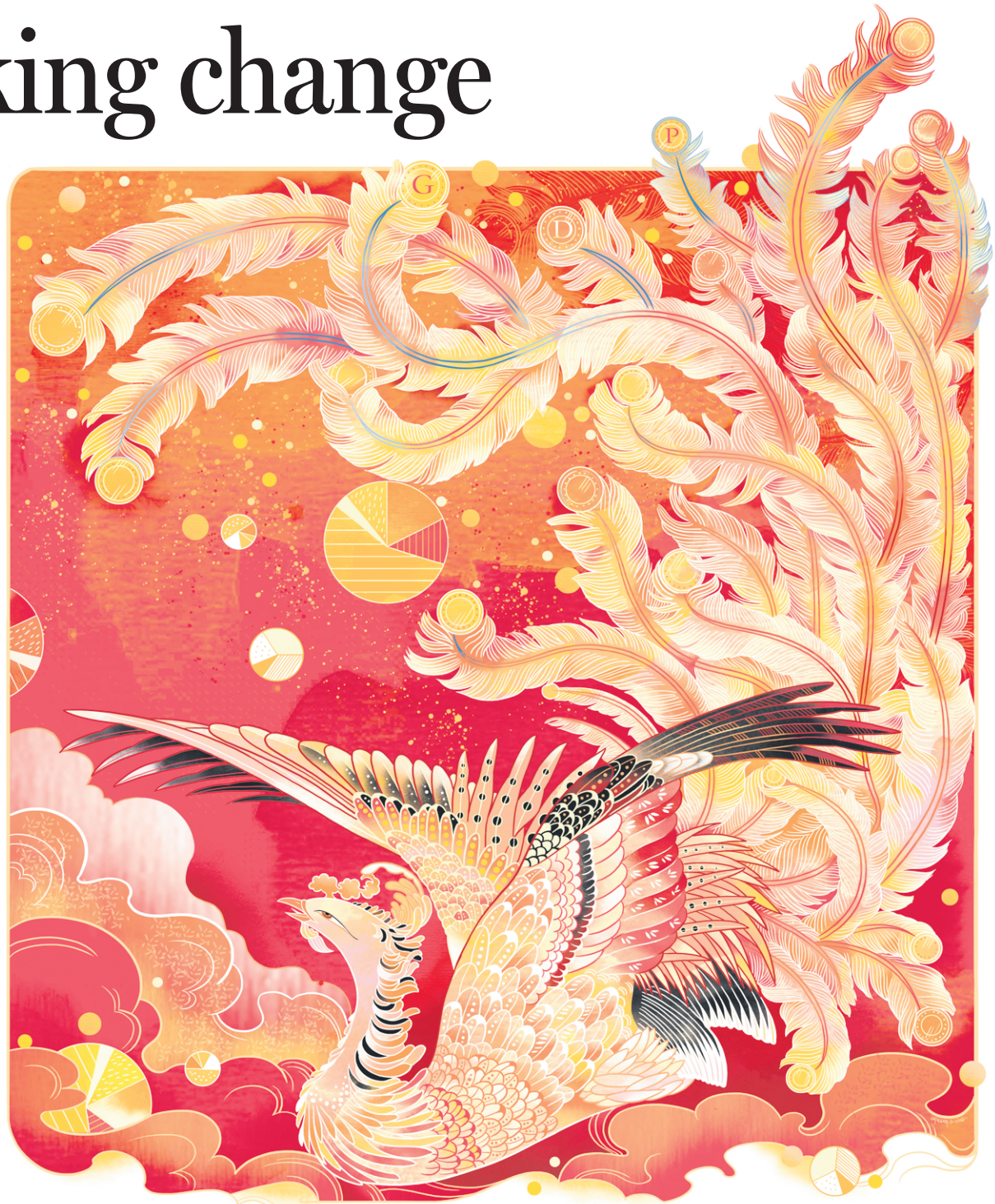
In May, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad offered a forceful defense of Chinese tech giant Huawei. He said Huawei currently boasted "the best technology in the world", and that the US had to accept the new status quo. "We have to accept that the US cannot forever be the supreme nation [with] the best technology ... [The West] must accept that this capability can also be found in the East. But they want to have a situation where they are always ahead, and if not [they] will ban you, [they] will send warships to your country, that is not competition. That is threatening people."

China's peaceful rise has ended many "periphery" countries' blind belief in the Western political and economic model. China's success has set an appealing example for "periphery" countries. This is an important part of China's soft power. China does not "export" its development model, but its success means more and more "periphery" countries are turning to China with the hope of learning from China's experience. This is conducive to increasing their global influence and accelerating global governance reforms.

Second, China's relations with "central" countries have significantly improved over the past decades. The progress has been slowed down by the resurgence of protectionism and unilateralism of some Western countries. Despite that, the European Union is China's largest trading partner, while China is the largest creditor country of the US and its second-largest trading partner.

Upholding the principle of win-win cooperation, China has acceded to many institutional arrangements as exemplified by the World Trade Organization, integrated with the global production system and trading system, and formed deeply intertwined interests with major economies in the world. China has become an indispensable part of the global industrial chain, thus significantly reducing the risks of military confrontations between great powers and promoting world peace.

China's ascent to be in the first rank leading the fourth industrial revolution has shocked many Western countries. Although there are some forces in the US that want the country to decouple with China, they are incapable of doing that. Most made-in-China products are irreplaceable in ordinary people's



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lives. Despite frictions with some "central" countries, China has an enormous market and the most complete industrial chain and upholds the principle of win-win cooperation, making it impossible for the US to rally its allies to jointly obstruct China's development.

Finally, with regard to interactions between the two aforementioned relations, the closer "periphery" countries are with China, the more leeway they will have when dealing with conflicts with "central" countries and the more likely that the US will lose the trade war it waged against China. The improved rela-

tions between China and the "periphery" countries has also expedited the process of decentralization in the world, bring to an end the model of the "periphery feeding the central" and profoundly changing the international landscape.

China is in a unique and advantageous position in this ternary pattern. As one of the world's largest economies and a peace-loving country, China is genuinely committed to the path of win-win cooperation, at the same time with a strong capacity to deter wars. China can thus substantially promote world peace and development as it

is more capable of substantially promoting all countries' common interests than any other country in the world. China has accumulated rich experience in promoting both peace and development, making it possible for the country to become a major guiding force in the world.

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TOM HARPER

London's eye on Beijing post Brexit

With impending exit from the EU, deeper relationship with China is imperative for the UK

The United Kingdom got its third prime minister since the European referendum of 2016 in the form of Boris Johnson, but many of the problems that plagued his predecessor persist.

While the question of how to implement Brexit continues to dominate headlines, the issue of Britain's relationship with China has not received the same amount of coverage even though it is an equally important issue for Britain's future.

The Sino-British relationship was recently invoked by Johnson's apparent endorsement of China's Belt and the Road Initiative. This has come as something of a surprise given the assumption that a Johnson premiership would further ties with the United States rather than China. But judging by his record, this should not have been so unexpected. After all Johnson served in the Cameron government in what was the "golden era" of Sino-British ties, as declared by the then chancellor of the exchequer, George Osborne. This saw Britain join the Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank.

As the UK inches closer to Brexit, a deeper Sino-British relationship has become imperative for the new leadership's foreign policy. This is a priority. Another "golden era" is required to further these ties in the face of the wider pivot of economic and political power toward Asia.

One area where these ties can be furthered is the trading relationship between the two countries. China is the UK's second-largest trading partner outside of the European Union, being the destination for British exports worth £22.3 million (\$27.14 million) and has often been held up as an alternative to the EU for Britain's trade relations. Should Britain leave the EU, it would be necessary to deepen trading ties between the UK and China. And that would require greater exports of British produce to China.

China's centrality to Britain is evident in the role it plays in the British economy, where London has become the European capital of the renminbi. It has seen the daily trade of offshore renminbi reach £69 billion in the second quarter of



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2018. London's status has been further cemented in that it now accounts for 38.63 percent of transactions in offshore renminbi, overtaking Hong Kong. It is this role that will play a significant part in shaping a stronger Sino-British relationship.

China has also become an integral factor in British higher education, with Chinese students coming in droves to study at British universities. This has seen Chinese scholars become the largest contingent of foreign students in the United Kingdom, with a 30 percent

increase in the number applications from China. While this can be attributed to Britain's prestige in education, it is also a result of the seemingly hostile environment Chinese students face in the US. This has thus made the UK an attractive alternative.

Chinese scholars will also become more important for Britain's higher education sector, if the apparent drop in applications from EU nations by 3 percent, according to data from the Russell Group in 2018, is an indication of developments to come.

On the other hand, it is possible that China will also become an attractive destination for British scholars. Chinese universities have launched a push to recruit students and academics with several events aimed at achieving this held in London. China is presently the third most popular overseas study destination, with 379,000 students coming to study in China in 2015. British students have contributed to this figure, with the number of students seeking to work and study in China tripling in the same year. This has also seen a growing rela-

tionship between British and Chinese universities, with several, such as Liverpool and Nottingham, establishing campuses in China. It is the field of education that is an expression of the wider Sino-British exchanges.

While the Sino-British relationship continues to grow, remaining a constant regardless of the change in prime minister, the overall importance of ties has grown, with the post-2016 world making it a further imperative. While Britain's departure from the EU and the consequences of it are still uncertain, what is certain is the need for a stronger relationship between London and Beijing and the continuation of the golden era of this relationship to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.

The author is a doctoral researcher in politics and international relations at the University of Surrey. He specializes in Chinese foreign policy in the developing world. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.