

How national aspirations, globalization, technology and climate change, supported by 5-S holistic harmonization of human progress, will bring America and China closer together in pursuit of a New Era of Common Destiny

Abstract

Jeffersonian exceptionalism holds that the United States is blessed with Manifest Destiny. America regards itself as a “shining city on a hill” with unparalleled military and economic might and robust institutions. This has spawned a West-dominated world order underpinned by Pax Americana since the Second World War. Much of this American soft power, however, has been squandered by “America First” Trumpism. Meanwhile, impassioned with a dream of national renaissance, a more powerful China is rejecting unipolar hegemony. It is seeking to be accommodated on its own terms, driven by “new era socialism with Chinese characteristics”. This has resulted in redoubled US-China rivalry, a Cold War mindset, sinophobia, and a regression in some countries to self-centred nationalism. Historically, there are similar aspirations between America and China. Through the ages China had regarded itself as an exceptional nation, the Middle Kingdom, informed with a Mandate of Heaven, as a benefactor for order, a promoter of win-win relationships and harmony between peoples in a perceived China-centric world. Now, China is soon to become the largest and most-connected economy in the world. It has also embraced the zeitgeist of the 21st Century, characterised by innovation and a digitized Fourth Industrial Revolution. Against this epochal backdrop, the globe is becoming even more inter-connected and inter-dependent. The ravages of climate change have proved no national boundaries. Dramatic improvements in standards of living cannot hide widening inequality between and within nations. While systemic retreat by any country to self-interest isolationism is well-nigh impossible, a stronger and more prosperous China may offer vast opportunities to the rest of the world, not least the United States. Examples include finance, commerce, energy, better goods and services, as well as new roles to counter terrorism, regional instability, poverty traps, epidemic diseases, and climate change. Such dramatic shifts in the world order resonate with China’s ancient I Ching (Book of Changes), its hexagrams reflecting the ebbs and flows of history. President Xi envisions as a New Era of Common Destiny. To realize this, however, China and the rest of the world, including individuals, organizations, society and governments, must constantly be on the lookout to see what changes lie ahead, to adapt, to re-organize, to re-group, to re-order, and to embrace the evolution of an ecological civilization. Such noble quest could do well with a 5-S holistic assessment of human progress – to Scrutinize and explore global geopolitical and socio-economic horizons, to Systematize international institutions, including free trade agreements and multilateral organizations, to Sanitize the environment and means of production, to Standardize trade and economic practices as well as international norms of behavior, and to exercise Self-discipline in rooting out power corruption and in achieving good and more equitable governance.

Key Words

American Exceptionalism, Mandate of Heaven, Fourth Industrial Revolution,
Rising China, US-China rivalry, 5-S holistic harmonization, New Era of Common
Destiny