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## **Transregional Security Impacts of the Special Military Operation and Strategic Interests of the United States and China\***

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**Abstract:** The launch of special military operations and a new round of Russia-Ukraine conflict are essentially the outbreak of decades of grievances between Russia and the United States over the issue of NATO's eastward expansion. After the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the United States entered the "unilateral era" and continued to promote NATO's eastward expansion and strategically squeezed Russia, causing Russia's insecurity to continue to rise. At the same time, this Russia-Ukraine conflict also occurred against the backdrop of the United States' comprehensive advancement of strategic competition with China. By hyping up the joint statement issued by China and Russia in February 2022 and spreading rumors about China's advance knowledge of its actions against Russia, the United States is trying to direct international pressure on China.

Although China is not a party to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the deep-seated impact of the conflict on the global political, economic, and security landscape has gradually spread to China-US relations, and several sets of "big triangle" relationships involving China, such as China-US-Russia, China-US-Europe, and other groups of China-US-EU, are also facing profound adjustments. Globalization and regional security have been further frustrated by geopolitical conflicts, the "economic war" and "political war" between major powers have been deepened, the status of the United Nations has been declining day by day, and the global arms race has suddenly intensified. Based on the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), this paper comprehensively analyzes the regional and global impacts of special military operations, geo-security contradictions, and the conflict of interests between the two most important world powers, China and the United States. The Russia-Ukraine conflict will continue to affect the adjustment of strategic interests among major powers, and the prospects of China-Russia

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cooperation and the Asia-Pacific region will determine the direction of the evolution of the future world pattern.

**Keywords:** Special Military Operation, Russia-Ukraine conflict, Regional Security, China and the United States, Strategic Interests.

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## **Последствия специальной военной операции для трансрегиональной безопасности и стратегические интересы США и Китая**

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**Резюме:** Начало специальной военной операции и новый виток российско-украинского конфликта – это, по сути, вспышка десятилетий недовольства между Россией и США по вопросу расширения НАТО на восток. После окончания холодной войны в 1990-х годах, Соединённые Штаты вступили в «эпоху односторонних действий», продолжая содействовать расширению Североатлантического альянса и оказывая стратегическое давление на Россию, что привело к дальнейшему росту её ощущения небезопасности. В то же время российско-украинский конфликт произошёл на фоне всестороннего развития стратегического соперничества США с Китаем. Раздувая совместное заявление Китая и России, опубликованное в феврале 2022 года, и распространяя слухи о том, что Китай заранее знает о действиях России, Соединённые Штаты пытаются оказывать международное давление на Китай.

Хотя Китай не является стороной российско-украинского конфликта, глубокое влияние конфликта на глобальную политику, экономику и безопасность постепенно распространилось на отношения Китая и США, а несколько комплексов отношений «большого треугольника» с участием Китая, таких как Китай – США – Россия, Китай – США – Европа, также подвергаются серьёзной трансформации. Глобализация и региональная безопасность ещё больше усугубляются геополитическими конфликтами, усиливается «экономическая и политическая война» между крупными державами, статус Организации Объединённых Наций падает с каждым днём, а глобальная гонка

вооружений резко обостряется. На основе теории комплекса региональной безопасности (КРБ) в данной статье всесторонне анализируются региональные и глобальные последствия специальной военной операции, противоречия в сфере глобальной безопасности и конфликт интересов между двумя важнейшими мировыми державами – Китаем и США. Российско-украинский конфликт будет продолжать влиять на изменение стратегических интересов между ведущими державами, а перспективы сотрудничества Китая и России и стран Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона будут определять направление эволюции будущей модели мира.

**Ключевые слова:** специальная военная операция, российско-украинский конфликт, региональная безопасность, Китай и США, стратегические интересы

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## SECURITY COMPLEX AND REGIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

As a representative of the British School and the Copenhagen School, **RSCT** is the core theoretical achievement of **Barry Buzan's** security research. Unlike the sectoral approach in "New Security Theory" which focuses on expanding the security agenda and seeks to build a new comprehensive research framework, the RCST attempts to develop a workable general regional theory of international security by focusing on the regional level. If the opponents of Buzan et al.'s New Security are traditional strategic analysts who insist on military and state centrality [Buzan et al. 1998:25], then the first thing they need to break in this book is the neorealists' and globalists' attachment to the global level. Therefore, the distinction between the global level and the regional level from an analytical point of view is the basis of the author's argument.

According to Barry Buzan, since decolonization, regional security has become more independent and more conspicuous in international politics. The end of the Cold War has greatly accelerated this process. Relative autonomy constitutes a model of international security relations that is fundamentally different from the rigid bipolar superpower structure that had a decisive impact on the Cold War.

**One initial assumption is that** the regional level is becoming increasingly important in the international security architecture, and that it is important, if not dominant, "except when global powers are extremely dominant, such as those of the imperial era, regional security dynamics are generally an important component of the overall security constellation in the international system." From the perspective of regionalism, the neo-realist idea of "polarity" and the globalist theory of "core-

periphery" all fail to grasp this model. The crux of this model is that "they exaggerate the role of the global level and underestimate the importance of the regional level". In order to distinguish between the global and regional levels after the Cold War, Barry Buzan proposed a "three-tier ladder of defining criteria": superpowers (the United States), systemic (global) powers (the European Union, Japan, China, and Russia), and regional powers. Among them, superpowers and great powers determine the polarity of the global level, and the boundaries between them and regional powers determine the difference between the global security situation and the regional security situation. In regional security complex theory, the regional level is where the two extremes of national security and global security meet each other, and where most actions take place. Russia and Ukraine, as direct belligerents in this special military operation, fully reflect this feature. A battle in eastern Ukraine constituted a global security incident and had a systemic impact. Accordingly, the distinction and linkage between the global level and the regional level pave the way for the development of regional security complex theory.

In fact, "region" is the proper meaning in the title of the security complex theory, except that "security complex is a region seen through a security lens." The definition of a "security complex" can be summarized as follows: a group of units whose main processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so closely linked that their security problems cannot be rationally analyzed or solved in isolation from each other. The core idea of RSCT is that since most threats spread more easily in close quarters than over long distances, security interdependencies are often combined into region-based groups, that is, security complexes.

The key analytical concepts of the regional security complex used in this article are mainly "structure, typology and change". **First**, four variables define the core structure of the regional security complex: **1)** boundaries, which distinguish the regional security complex from its immediate neighbors; **2)** anarchic structure, meaning the regional security complex must include more than two autonomous units; **3)** polarity, which involves the distribution of power between units; **4)** social construction, which involves patterns of friendship and hostility between units, meaning "security is created by actors." More precisely, within the anarchic structure, the core structure and characteristics of the regional security complex are defined by two relations, namely "power relations, friendly and hostile modes". Among these, power relations range from unipolar to multipolar, while the spectrum of friendly and hostile modes is divided into three forms of "sub-global, geographically closely related" security interdependence: conflict, security mechanism and security community".

**Second**, distinguish four basic types of regional security complexes: **1)** standard regional security complexes, which do not include global-level powers and whose local polarity is entirely defined by internal regional powers (such as the Middle

East); **2)** centralized security complex, a security complex dominated by a single global level power (such as North America), or a security complex that has the identity attributes of a global actor through full integration of collective systems (such as the European Union); **3)** great power security complex, a security complex whose polarity is defined by more than one global-level power (such as East Asia); **4)** super complex, a group of regional security complexes that have a relatively high level and a coherent inter-regional security posture due to the existence of one or more major powers (for example, East Asia and South Asia are connected to form the Asian super complex).

**Third**, explore the development and reform prospects of the regional security complex. According to the components of the core structure of the regional security complex, there are three possible evolutions of any regional security complex: **1)** maintaining the status quo, that is, no major changes have occurred in the core structure; **2)** internal change, that is, changes in the core structure occur within the existing external boundaries; **3)** external changes, that is, the expansion or contraction of the existing external boundaries, leading to changes in its core structure. Specifically, the potential for immanent change can be monitored by examining the material conditions of possible polarity changes (or lack thereof), and the discursive conditions of possible changes (or lack thereof) of friendly / hostile relations. The potential for external change can be monitored by examining the strength of interregional security postures that can serve as precursors to change. In addition, prospects for change need to consider additional variables such as interaction capabilities, power differences, and system polarity. The results of development can have three possibilities: "conflict, security mechanism and security community".

The advantage of borrowing this analytical framework is that RSCT provides a platform for the integration and application of geopolitical analysis, classical realism analysis and structural constructivism analysis. This approach not only ensures the explanatory power of regional-level case analysis but also comprehensively reflects structural changes and the interaction between unit behaviors, looks at changes in the security environment from a dynamic perspective.

## **STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN MAJOR SECURITY COMPLEXES AND WORLD ORDER**

### ***Regional Security Posture***

In the entire geo-environment in which special military operations take place, in general there is a standard regional security complex, two centralized complexes, three great power security complexes and three possible super complexes, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: The geopolitical environment in which the SMO operates**

<b>Basic Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Number of Boundaries</b>	<b>Patterns</b>
<i>Standard regional security complexes</i>	Russia-Ukraine	4	Conflict
<i>Centralized Security Complex</i>	European Union / European part of NATO	2	Security Mechanisms / Security Communities
	Post-Soviet space / CIS countries		Security Mechanisms
<i>Great power security complex</i>	Russia-Europe	4	Conflict
	USA-Europe	3	Security Mechanisms / Security Communities
	Russia-China	1	Security Mechanisms
<i>Super Complex</i>	Europe-Russia-China Asian super-complex Russian-Asian super complex	/	/

It can be seen that the security dynamics in the region are very complicated. The boundaries of the various security complexes overlap with each other, covering super-powers, systemic (global) powers and regional powers. Actors who are units in one security complex may become great power actors in another; the diversity of borders and the superposition of unit attributes make conflicts difficult to resolve, and the process of securitization is irreversible. With the failure of the second Minsk Agreement, the only remaining albeit unstable security mechanism at the regional level, de-securitization is no longer possible. In particular, although the United States and China are far

away from the conflict zone, the United States, as the only superpower, has been deeply involved in the current round of conflict economically, politically, and militarily, and China, as a close partner of Russia, is inevitably involved in the power game and interest game of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The polarity of great powers and the overlap of borders determine that special military operations **must be defined in terms of global security postures**, rather than regional security postures.

Due to the actual state of war between the conflicting parties and the persistence of this state, the changes in interstate boundaries and the tendencies of control zones and population movements have become increasingly unshakable in concept. That is, the decision-makers of both sides believe that the current situation can only proceed according to their own plans and actual conditions. The flow of materials and population also shows stability, whether it is aid entering Ukraine from the West and the Ukrainian population fleeing to the West, or the regions and people integrating into the Russian Federation territory to the East. Therefore, internal change will become the key variable in determining whether a new security mechanism can emerge in this region, which depends on the internal transformation of the Russia-Ukraine standard regional security complex (primarily Ukraine) and some external transformation (i.e., the European regional security complex, which is an internal transformation in its own right). This means that mediation or an overwhelming victory by one side appears to be difficult in the short term because an element within the complex is so significant that all stakeholders will try every means to exert influence and control over it. The following text will discuss in detail how the Russia-Ukraine conflict has become an important part of the United States' strategy to contain China.

### ***Special Military Operation in a Global Landscape***

The launch of the special military operation marks the beginning of a new round of adjustments to the global order after the end of the Cold War, and also marks the end of the "post-Cold War" era. The revolutionary impact and iconic nature of the Russia-Ukraine conflict lie in its status as a milestone event in the changes to the world's power structure caused by regional security crises. It also marks that in today's world of rapid technological advancement, highly interconnected information, and highly interconnected capital markets, the regional level has become a leading actor in changing the international security structure.

From a system/structural level, Russia in this conflict is also the first country since the end of the Cold War to initiate violent and material destruction of the power order established by the superpowers. According to American scholar John Mearsheimer, during the period of American unipolar hegemony at the beginning of the Cold War, the internal transformation of the country under the guidance of liberal principles could still be promoted, and the multipolar development trend could also be tolerated. However, once the multipolar trend of emerging forces rises strongly, the tension between

local autonomy and the "universality" of liberalism will emerge, and liberal principles will inevitably give in to the national and geopolitical interests of Europe and the United States. To a certain extent, his sharp remarks that liberalism will fail if it encounters nationalism and geopolitics reveal the crux of the problem from one aspect [Mearsheimer, 2018].

**On the one hand**, there have been many changes and even blanks and gray areas in the original international institutions and mechanisms. For example, the most critical mechanism of the United Nations Security Council is still functioning, but due to the different parties involved in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the functions of the Security Council have been greatly weakened. The two Minsk Agreements were revealed by former German Chancellor Merkel to have been intended to delay Russia and give Ukraine sufficient time to prepare for a larger-scale conflict. Including regional international mechanisms that once played a coordination and management role, such as the functions of the CSCE, have been marginalized one by one.

**On the other hand**, since the turn of the century, almost every new administration in the United States has taken office and has been obsessed with restraining China by uniting with Russia and gaining an advantage in the framework of the triangular relationship between the United States, Russia, and China. But the situation suddenly changed after 2016. In 2017, the United States publicly regarded China and Russia as competitors simultaneously, indicating that the triangular interaction among the United States, China, and Russia could not be achieved as originally expected. At the same time, the escalation of special military operations shows that Europe's efforts to seek balance through trilateral interaction among Europe, the United States, and Russia have also failed. Against this background, the trilateral relations between Russia, the United States, and Europe, which were once active after the Cold War, and the triangular relations between the United States, China, and Russia have become relatively stagnant.

**From a global perspective**, Russia wants to end the unipolar world, China wants to pursue independent peaceful diplomacy and ensure the security of its surrounding environment and territorial integrity, but the United States and Europe strive to maintain Western dominance, which inevitably creates a huge range of structural contradictions. As President Putin said at the Valdai Forum on October 5, 2023, "Special military operations have nothing to do with territorial occupation, or even geopolitics." [1]. However, for the Western world, the issue of changing the international order is not only a matter of interests, but also a matter of glory. Former U.S. President Obama stated clearly at the graduation ceremony of the West Point Military Academy in May 2014: "Our military has no peer, [...] our economy remains the most dynamic on Earth, [...] From Europe to Asia, we are the hub of alliances unrivaled in the history of nations, [...] the United States is and remains the one indispensable nation. That has been true for the century past, and it will be true for the century to come." [2]. From this standpoint, it is



inevitable for the United States and Europe to restart their alliance and vigorously counter Russia, and China's firm stand on the side of peaceful conflict resolution, opposition to hegemonism and power politics, and maintain a high-level, bottom-line, and uncapped comprehensive strategic cooperative relationship with Russia is also an inevitable choice under this security structure.

However, it is particularly worth mentioning that Europe will not give up its pursuit of defense autonomy because of this. When the partisan struggles in the United States forced the suspension of aid to Ukraine in early 2024, the EU stepped forward and passed a 54-billion-euro aid plan to Ukraine in one fell swoop. The EU's move is not only seeking strategic autonomy but also, to a large extent, citing the so-called "changing times" as a reason. It aims to highlight its political ambition of supporting Ukraine, which has long been prepared to assume regional and even global leadership but has so far failed to achieve its ambition. For this reason, they completely ignored the deterioration of the economy and the people's struggles, contrary to the usual calmness and rationality of the European decision-making elites, and took desperate risks. A 2023 "Economist" commentary article has already foreseen this trend, pointing out that "Europe is now Ukraine's biggest supporter, not the United States." [3]. This is also a potential variable that can be exploited in the adjustment of U.S. strategy.

Under the confrontation between the two sides, which was related to the overall situation of the international order, a military conflict eventually broke out in the most fragile security field of the international structure – the relationship between Russia and NATO, focusing on Ukraine. Judging from the consequences, this conflict revealed the structural shortcomings of the existing international system – the functions of various global and regional organizations are still unable to prevent large-scale crises similar to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Therefore, it is imperative to reform, upgrade, and strengthen related fields, and the security mechanisms of major security complexes must be established, otherwise the world will not be peaceful. In short, Asia remains relatively stable, while Eurasia and the Middle East continue to be turbulent. This indicates a shift in the focus of conflict in terms of regional patterns. In terms of the balance of power on a deeper level, this is a sign of the shift in power in the world.

## **GLOBAL SECURITY IMPACT OF THE SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION**

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov made it clear that Russia's special military operations in Ukraine are, to a certain extent, aimed at ending the United States' "complete dominance" and "reckless expansion" on the world stage [4]. The all-out confrontation between the Western world and Russia triggered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as the escalation of the United States' strategic doubts about China and the acceleration of its Indo-Pacific strategy, have had a major negative impact on the international order in at least three aspects.

### ***The Differentiation and Factionalization of the International Political Order***

Centering on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the U.S. strategic competition against China, the current international political order has seen obvious differentiation and a certain trend of camp formation. First, on the issue of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and sanctions against Russia, the international community has become significantly divided. The West, led by the United States, advocates imposing more severe all-round economic sanctions on Russia, providing Ukraine with the large-scale military assistance it needs, and even directly sending mercenaries and instructors in order to curb Russia's successive victories on the battlefield, even tried to promote political changes within Russia by inciting color revolutions and supporting planned attacks in Russia. President Putin's re-election has further strengthened the West's determination to contain Russia. However, China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and other "Global South" countries refuse to participate in the U.S.-led all-round economic sanctions against Russia. They insist that their countries have the right to maintain normal economic and trade relations with Russia, refuse to provide weapons and equipment to any party, and oppose intensification situation, and advocates seeking a political solution to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and a ceasefire and restoration of peace through diplomacy, dialogue, and consultation.

**Second**, in the process of the United States exaggerating the "China threat" and the so-called opposition between "democracy and authoritarianism", and accelerating the advancement of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", the trend of campization in international politics has significantly intensified. **On the one hand**, under the pressure and encouragement of the United States, many countries – those American "like-minded people" have formed a closer political and security partnership with the United States, emphasizing the competition and opposition between the so-called "democracy and authoritarianism." For example, the EU and NATO both exaggerate that China is a "systemic challenge" they face and is "antagonistic" to it in terms of democracy, values, and even way of life. Australia and South Korea emphasized that they are "like-minded" with the United States in terms of Western-style democracy and values, and they should stand more closely with the United States. **On the other hand**, most ASEAN, African Union, Gulf, and Latin American countries reject the so-called "Democracy versus Authoritarian" narrative, refuse to choose sides between China and the United States and become "chess pieces" in the game of great powers, and reject the new Cold War. They advocate reducing strategic suspicion and misjudgment, reducing opposition and confrontation, easing international tensions through dialogue and contact, and promoting the peaceful coexistence of major powers and the harmony and stability of the international order.

**Third**, the "Global South" has gradually become an important international political force. Especially with the intensification of the strategic competition between the

United States and China, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and international economic inequality, the "Global South" has increasingly become an important international political force outside the West, and has also increasingly become a term on the lips of international organizations and leaders of some countries. Some countries in the "Global South" are unwilling to choose sides but want to bet on multiple sides, promoting the multipolarization of the international system [5].

And it is worth noting that **on the one hand**, the U.S. is trying its best to win over the "Global South" and hope that they will favor its side in terms of positions and policies, and on the other hand, it is driving a wedge between China and other countries in the "Global South" and denying China's identity as a "Global South" country. In February 2023, the Munich Security Conference set up a special agenda for "North-South Cooperation" and emphasized the need to win over the countries of the "Global South". In the security report released after the meeting, the term "global South" appeared 56 times, making it a high-frequency vocabulary [6]. At the G7 Summit held in May 2023, strengthening relations with "Global South" countries was also an important topic. The summit launched a number of measures to win over the "Global South" [7]. Suzanne Nossel, former deputy assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs at the U.S. State Department, called on the United States to go beyond its traditional staunch allies and seek broader support around the world, including India, Brazil, and other "Global South" countries, to initiate a reform agenda to expand the Security Council [Nossel, 2023]. The US Senate and House of Representatives have even sponsored a bill on China's not being a developing country and a bill to end China's status as a developing country, refusing to recognize China's status as a "Global South" country and driving a wedge between China and the countries of the "Global South." In this regard, Wang Yi, director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, refuted this during his attendance at the BRICS High Representatives' Meeting on Security Affairs in Johannesburg in July 2023 [8].

### ***The Fragmentation and Securitization of the International Economic Order***

After the conflict between Russia and Ukraine broke out, the US and its western allies imposed comprehensive economic sanctions on Russia and committed to cutting off energy and trade ties between Russia and Europe. The economic losses were ultimately borne by European allies. There are currently more and more voices of opposition within EU countries to the rising energy and electricity prices. Public dissatisfaction will inevitably lead to the government being forced to make concessions, which is not conducive to the national interests of the United States in the long run. On the other hand, the Biden administration is accelerating the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", increasing its technological blockade and "decoupling" from China, and promoting the localization of manufacturing and "outsourcing to friendly countries." Politicizing and securitizing

economic and trade relations, and weaponizing scientific and technological exchanges and supply chain dependencies have seriously interfered with normal international economic and trade exchanges and the division of labor in global industrial and value chains.

In addition, the rise of Western economic nationalism and trade protectionism in recent years has posed at least three challenges to the international economic order. One is the challenge to the free trade system. After the end of the Cold War, the United States relied on its unipolar status to vigorously advocate neoliberal economic concepts, vigorously promote globalization and trade liberalism, and pave the way for the global expansion of American companies. However, with the intensification of the polarization between the rich and poor in the United States, especially the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008-2009, anti-globalization and economic nationalism forces in the United States have gradually grown. After four years of Trump's administration, the U.S.' attitude towards free trade has undergone tremendous changes. It has transformed from the standard-bearer of free trade to the birthplace of disguised trade protectionism such as "fair trade" and "reciprocal trade", and has introduced a series of "**America First**" trade protectionist policies and launched a trade war and tariff war against China.

After Biden came to power, with the outbreak of the conflict and the accelerated advancement of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, the free trade system was further severely impacted. **On the one hand**, the principles of free trade, which focus on reducing tariffs, opening markets, and promoting the free flow of capital, goods, technology, and people, have been discarded and replaced by various protectionist policy measures, greatly hindering the development of global trade in goods and services. **On the other hand**, the Biden administration has established a series of "**sanctions alliances**" against Russia, the Science and Technology Export Control Alliance to China, the Supply Chain Alliance, the Critical Minerals Partnership, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, and other technology, supply chain, and economic and trade circles, weakening and hollowing out the multilateral free trade system with the **WTO** as the core.

**Second**, challenges to global supply chain security will inevitably interfere with China's economic recovery. The Biden administration's high-tech export controls and two-way investment restrictions on China, as well as the formation of various technology alliances and supply chain alliances, are politicizing and securitizing economic issues and weaponizing the interdependence of scientific and technological exchanges and supply chains. This not only undermines the basic principles of free trade but also impacts the normal international division of production and trade based on comparative advantage and utility maximization, leading to chaos and even fragmentation of global production and supply chains, undermining the international economic order. What is even more noteworthy is that the economic damage and development drag caused by trade protectionist measures and small economic, trade, and supply chain

circles to countries in the "Global South" obviously far exceeds their impact on developed countries. On the one hand, the United States attempts to weaken China's political influence by exerting pressure on small countries and wooing interests. On the other hand, it uses economic and industrial policies to undermine the industrial system that China has built, especially in Southeast Asia. In particular, the revival of local manufacturing, "America First" policies and "outsourcing to friendly countries" encouraged by the United States have trapped investment, production and manufacturing that originally went to developing countries in their own countries or "friendly countries", which will inevitably further exacerbate the development gap and international economic inequality.

One study by the WTO shows that great power competition, decoupling, and deglobalization not only increase global trade costs and reduce global welfare but also cause **asymmetric damage to developing countries**. The report points out that decoupling, link breaking, and trade grouping will increase trade costs; once the global economy is decoupled, welfare in some regions will drop by up to 12%, especially in low- and middle-income regions [9].

### ***Militarization and Rearmament of the International Security Order***

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the advancement of the US Indo-Pacific strategy have set off a new round of arms expansion in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, exacerbating regional and international tensions and promoting the militarization and rearmament of the international security order. According to statistics from Sweden's Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military spending in 2022 will reach a record high of 2.24 trillion U.S. dollars, with European military spending soaring by 13% and Asian military spending also rising [10]. Take Germany as an example: on February 27, 2022, the third day after the launch of the special military operation, German Chancellor Scholz announced at an emergency meeting of parliament that Germany would set up a special fund and allocate 100 billion euros at one time for national defense modernization. Not only that, but Germany will also increase its defense spending to more than 2% of its GDP in the future [11]. In July 2023, the German cabinet approved the draft budget for fiscal year 2024. Although the overall budget dropped by nearly 7% from the previous year, the defense budget increased by 1.7 billion euros to 51.8 billion euros. The German government stated that it plans to increase defense spending next year to the level of 2% of gross domestic product stipulated by NATO. Another important member of NATO, the United Kingdom announced in March 2023 that it would increase military spending by 6 billion U.S. dollars in the next two years to deal with the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the so-called "epoch-making challenge" from China [12].

**In the Asia-Pacific region**, staunch U.S. allies Japan, Australia, and South Korea, as well as security partner India, have also significantly increased defense spending.

In May 2022, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stated during his meeting with US President Biden that Japan is determined to significantly increase defense spending and fundamentally strengthen its defense capabilities [13]. In December 2022, Kishida requested a substantial increase in defense spending, increasing the defense budget for the fiscal years 2023 to 2027 to 318 billion U.S. dollars. In March 2023, the Japanese Ministry of Defense released a new version of the "Defense White Paper," declaring China as Japan's "biggest strategic challenge of all time" and proposing to nearly double the defense budget in the next five years to 43.5 trillion yen (approximately 322.2 billion U.S. dollars), and emphasized the need to acquire long-range strike capabilities and strengthen standoff defense capabilities [14]. In the direction of the South China Sea and the Western Pacific, Australia's national defense strategic review report released in April 2023 proposed an additional 42 billion U.S. dollars in defense spending over the next ten years to comprehensively enhance Australia's defense capabilities, promote the Australian version of the "denial strategy," and accelerate the procurement and deployment of long-range strike capabilities to "defend enemies outside the country's borders." [15]. South Korea has also significantly increased its defense budget. In August 2022, the South Korean Ministry of National Defense announced that the defense budget for the fiscal year 2023 will be 42.1 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 4.6% over the previous year [16]. In December 2022, it announced its new national defense plan for the fiscal years 2023 to 2027, that it would invest 331 trillion won (approximately 268.8 billion U.S. dollars) in national defense construction in the next five years, with annual defense expenditures increasing by as much as 6.8% [17].

**India**, the security partner that the U.S. strives to win over, is also actively expanding defense spending and improving its military strength. India's defense spending in 2022 increased by 6% over the previous year, reaching 81.4 billion U.S. dollars, making it the world's fourth-largest military spender after the United States, China, and Russia [18].

**Europe as a whole** is also accelerating the pace of "strategic autonomy." On March 21, all EU members adopted a "Strategic Compass" action plan. In the action plan, the EU stated that it will establish a European military with sea, land, and air capabilities by 2025. This means that the EU has officially taken the first step towards militarization. What the U.S. did in the Russia-Ukraine conflict has made many allies and partners more suspicious of it, believing that the U.S. is not willing to collide head-on with Russia militarily.

The sharp increase in military expenditures of major European and Asian countries, together with the shock of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Biden administration's establishment of a small multilateral security network against China in the Indo-Pacific region, has greatly promoted the militarization and groupization of the international security order, casting a shadow over world peace.

## CONCLUSION

The initial part delves into the RSCT as a framework to understand the dynamics of international security, particularly in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its ripple effects on global security architecture. There is no doubt that SPO have begun to reshape the current global order in theory and practice. We emphasized the growing significance of regional security in a post-Cold War world and highlighted the complexity and overlapping interests that challenge resolution efforts. The emergence of a more multipolar world, the differentiation and alignment of political blocs, and the increasing militarization and securitization of the international system are continuously impacting relations between major powers.

So, under the complex dynamics of a shifting international order, what new changes and challenges will emerge in the *Sino-U.S.-Russia* strategic triangle? In the next part, we will look more specifically at the adjustment of interests among major powers, with the efforts of China, Russia and other countries, it's possible to transform the Asia-Pacific region from a focus on geosecurity to joint development.

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