

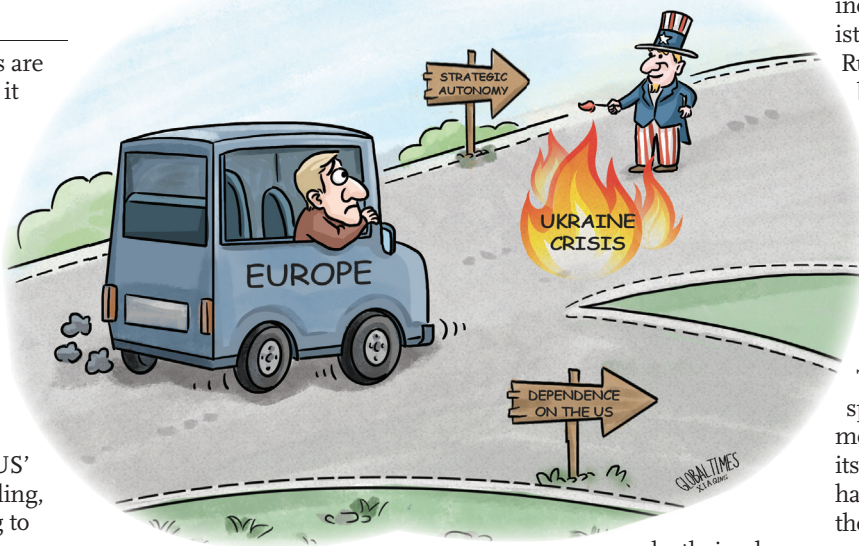
US efforts to shift costs of Ukraine crisis to Europe futile

By Timofei Bordachev

Conspiracy theories are attractive because it makes the opponent mysterious and powerful. And it is, of course, very tempting to assume that the US originally conceived the whole adventure around Ukraine in order to drag its European allies into a worthless struggle with Russia. In reality, however, things are much simpler – the US' strategy in Ukraine is failing, and Washington is trying to find a way out of the impasse. But it is unlikely that attempts to shift all responsibility and costs to the Europeans will prove to be a simple and effective solution.

Since US strategy here is not part of a long-term plan, the reaction to failure becomes chaotic and characterized by poorly chosen decision-making. A few days ago, the National Interest magazine published an article by two American colleagues. The piece actually strikes the reader with its savage sincerity: the authors insist that it is time for Europe to take from the US the main burden of the Ukrainian crisis. And, first of all, start buying outdated American

Illustration: Xia Qing/Global Times



weapons in order to hand them over to Kiev. The authors conveniently forget, of course, that American “investments” in Ukraine mean huge profits for the US military-industrial complex. In other words, Washington is not even giving money to Kiev, but to its own oligarchs.

This point of view is increasingly common in the American expert community. Two years ago, a conflict with Russia seemed a convenient way for Washington to strengthen its control over Europe and achieve a major diplomatic victory. Now, cornered

by their adventurism, Americans realize the futility of trying to isolate Russia internationally or defeat it on the battlefield.

At the same time, they are beginning to recognize that for the US, the entire conflict over Ukraine is not a national security issue. This is a fairly new idea. A few months ago, Washington argued quite the opposite and insisted that a Russian success would mean a significant American defeat. This rapid shift in arguments shows that the entire US strategy is exceptionally ill-conceived.

Washington is also aware that positional gridlock is becoming dangerous for the

incumbent Democratic administration. Hybrid warfare with Russia is no longer an asset, but a liability for the US election campaign. Now the attempt to shift responsibility to Europe before the US election is an effort to hand over a toxic burden.

To prove their point, US colleagues resort to the well-known argument about military spending. They suggest that Europe is spending too little on armaments and thus needs to boost its military industry. This is hard to argue against. But it is the cause, not the effect, that counts. Europe spends little on armaments because it does not feel threatened by Russia or any other major power. The maximum that European states have expected after the Cold War is counterterrorism and peacekeeping operations. Russia has pursued a friendly policy toward Europe, while China's interest is to create a common area of prosperity throughout Eurasia. The leaders of France and Germany, until the very last days of February 2022, tried to find grounds for a compromise, but the efforts were blocked by the US.

In fact, the US goal of shifting the burden of conflict to the Europeans has been

hampered by America's own policies for several decades. Europe's strategic autonomy, which its leaders often talk about, is exactly what Washington will try to block by all means.

European autonomy in international politics does not suit the US's interests in principle. Even a relatively independent Europe will focus more on its own interests. And this means that the opinion of the voters will have to be considered. The interests of the European population demand cooperation with China and negotiations with Russia. And this is exactly what the US needs the least. European states are well aware of this and are not going to go for catastrophic expenditures to save the reputation of their American ally.

During its dominance, the US has created a system in which no one can act independently. This is the main vulnerability of its position in international politics. In order to become a full-fledged member of the international community again, the US will have to reconsider its entire foreign policy philosophy.

The author is Moscow-based Valdai Club program director. opinion@globaltimes.com.cn

My first-hand observation of Xizang education proves West's slander, distortion wrong

By Roland Boer

To begin with a simple statistic: before the peaceful liberation of Xizang (Tibet) in 1951, literacy was less than 5 percent of the population; today, literacy is more than 95.5 percent. Before 1951 education was only for the children of the aristocratic ruling elite; after liberation, education became available for everyone. However, achieving universal literacy did not happen overnight.

During a week in May of this year, I was able to inspect first-hand some of the results of all this hard work. I was part of a research field trip. In a very busy daily schedule, of great importance were our visits to a primary school and middle/high school. Our visits also included many conversations about education across Xizang.

On the third day of our field trip, we visited Nyingchi (Linzhi) No. 2 Primary School, initially founded in 1971. We were free to enter and spend time in classrooms while lessons were underway (science, literature, Xizang calligraphy, mathematics, English language, and so on), watch children practicing Xizang dances, participate in the physical education class on one of the sports fields, and watch one of the teachers of Xizang calligraphy show us how it is done.

While experiencing all these educational activities, I paid attention to the grounds and buildings. Set against a stunning backdrop of snow-capped mountains, the quality and upkeep of the buildings was obvious, as were the state-of-the-art facilities in the science labs, multimedia rooms, and recording and broadcasting room. Outside, there was careful attention to green space for the children.

The next day, we travelled on the newly-completed leg of the high-speed rail line to the higher city of Lhasa. Not long after arrival, we visited the Beijing Experimental High School, which includes both lower and higher middle school education for 2,434 students. Again, we were free to examine many educational activities, but I would like to note two specific features of this school.

The first is the policy of pairing, in the sense that a region with significant educational resources pairs with a region that faces more challenges so as to improve the latter's educational level. The second feature was our visit to one of the dormitory buildings for students from further afield. For someone who was raised in a Western country, with its liberal ideology and the idea of a “room of one's own,” the common and assumed practice across China of dormitory-style accommodation at all levels of educa-

tion interests me greatly. What would it be like, I wonder, to have spent my high school and university years sharing my sleeping and living quarters with others of my own age? Would I have learned more about what it means to live in harmony with one another? On this visit, I once again asked myself these questions. By way of answer, I noted carefully the great emphasis on precisely the virtues that come from deep in the Chinese, and indeed Xizang, cultural tradition: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity.

Now, someone who has unfortunately been influenced by the rounds of Western attempts to slander and distort China's monumental efforts in Xizang might ask: “Weren't you simply shown some ‘model’ schools and kept away from other poor schools?” By way of reply, let me mention a conversation at one of the schools. About a decade ago, one aspect of a new round of educational reforms was to close many small village schools in the high-altitude countryside in Xizang. Teaching quality in these small schools was still of poor quality. Instead, the children were required to travel to the nearest regional center to attend a newer and better-quality school. However, in some cases, this meant a round trip for the child of two hours each way, due to the still inadequate in-

frastructure in remote areas. Sometimes grandparents had to take the children, or they had to board at the school already at a young age. Ten years later, the same trip takes 20 minutes by bus each way.

Not only does this information tell us something about a problem-based approach to educational improvement across all of Xizang, but it also indicates the need for a comprehensive approach. Here it was the need to consider both education and infrastructure.

One final experience: as our group was leaving the dormitory at the Experimental High School, students began passing by us on their way back from the dining hall. They called out to us, saying “hello,” joking and laughing. Clearly, they were enjoying their education, but they also had notable ease and youthful confidence. After all, the future of Xizang, as of the whole of China, is in their hands.

The author is a Marxist scholar from Australia, overseas talent professor in the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China, and on the editorial board of the Australian Marxist Review. opinion@globaltimes.com.cn