

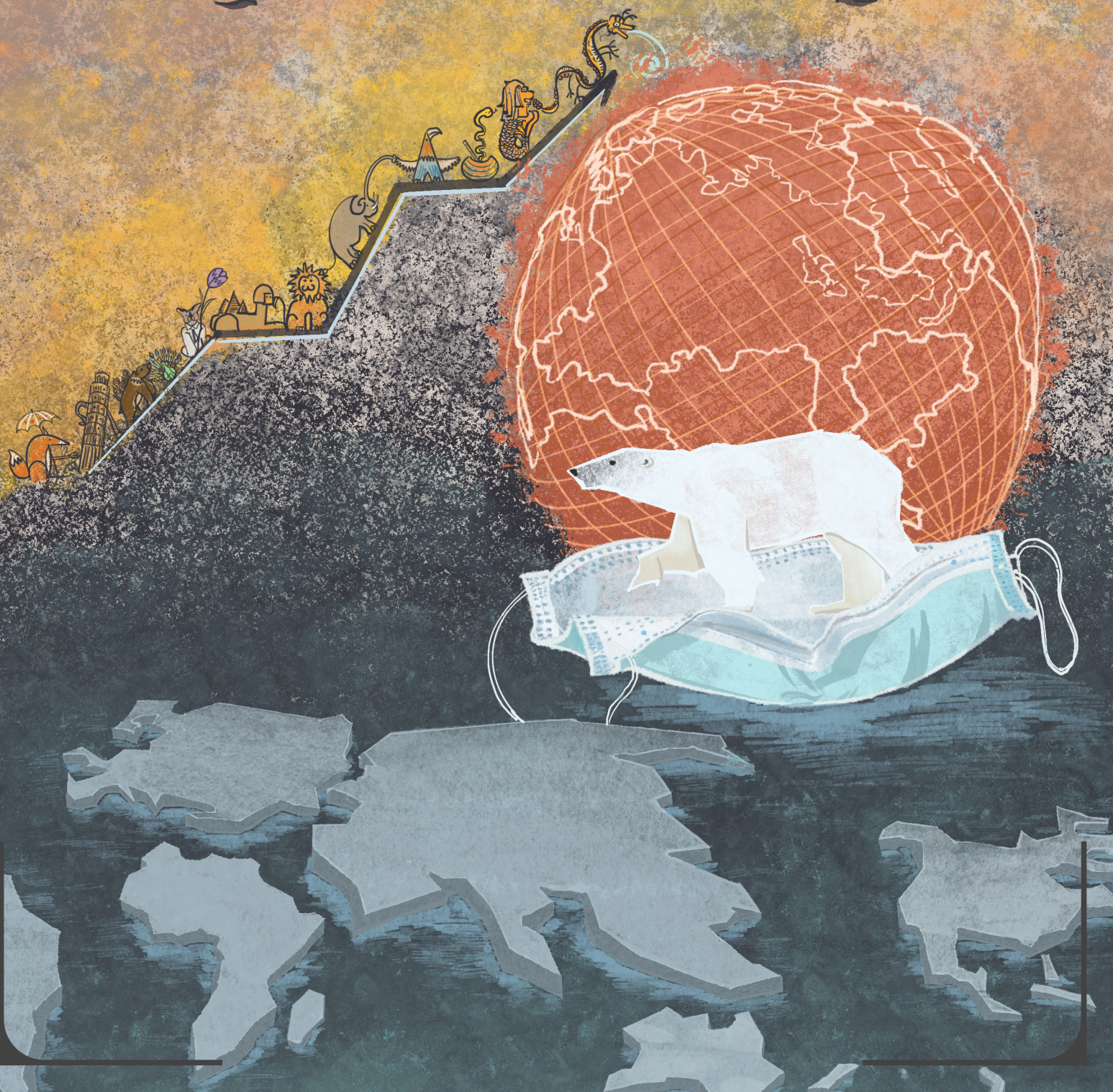
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**Solidarity Call to Action:
Global Governance in Face of
Common Challenges**



Contents

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| 01 | Sustainable Efforts on Global Governance Expected Wang Zaibang | 01 |
| 02 | Latin America and the Active Non-Alignment Option Jorge Heine | 06 |
| 03 | Adequate Financing — the Cornerstone of Fighting Against Climate Change Ahcene Boukhelfa | 09 |
| 04 | Dealing with Climate Change in the Developing World — An Indian Perspective Vikram Misri | 11 |
| 05 | Tackling Global Challenges: Are We On the Same Page? Luis Diego Monsalve | 14 |
| 06 | Is America Really Back? A Dialogue Between Thomas Fingar and Zhou Bo Moderated by Kang Yingyue | 17 |
| Youth Voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striking a Balance Between Small-State Diplomacy and Global Agenda: Is It Time? Bunthorn Sok • Should COP26 be Considered a Success? Austin Clayton • Empowering Chinese Youth at COP26 Bao Rong Interviewed by Walker Darke | 33 36 38 |

Sustainable Efforts on Global Governance Expected

Wang Zaibang



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This November is marked by big events, such as G20, COP26, APEC, the China-US Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s, and the China-U.S. presidential virtual meeting, all concerning global governance in one way or another.

Against the background of the most serious systematic crises like those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the power shifts in world politics unprecedented over the past 100 years, and weather extremes linked to climate change, sustainable efforts are greatly needed and are highly encouraging as they are often regarded as a sunbeam shining through the dark clouds.

It is reasonable for us to be optimistic on global governance in the coming decades, especially in dealing with climate change. There are three main reasons for this:

1. **A stronger sense of crisis.** The fact that these efforts were made in the face of systematic crises shows that there has been a strong sense of crisis on the part of international community.
2. **Achievements in utilizing new energy.** Over the past two decades from the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Climate Accord, a lot of progress have been made in terms of the development and utilization of new energy in many countries. This has laid a solid foundation for future efforts to address major problems facing all mankind.
3. **Effective leadership of major powers.** The responsible actions taken by major powers, especially those by China and the U.S., were broadly appreciated by the rest of the world. The pledges and road maps made by both countries in the Joint Glasgow Declaration were considered

substantive and feasible. The announcement was cited by some media as pleasant and warmly welcomed by world leaders. “We need to.....work together.....especially on vital global issues like climate change,” US president Joe Biden responded clearly during the virtual meeting to the proposal advanced by Chinese President Xi Jinping that a sound and steady China-U.S. relationship is required for advancing the two countries’ respective development and for safeguarding a peaceful and stable international environment, including finding effective responses to global challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

For all this, however, there also exists a lot of skepticism about the sustainability of the efforts made by the international community on global governance. These doubts largely derive from the existence of negative factors in ways as follows:

1. **Cold War Mentality.** There are some politicians and scholars who tend to focus exclusively on the geopolitical, ideological, and power rivalries among major countries. They care about the narrow national interests much more than the wider interests of the international community. Some of them are self-absorbed in launching a so-called new Cold War against their proclaimed adversaries.
2. **Lack of Policy Continuity.** The political regimes and mechanisms in some countries often cast a shadow on the potential of further achievement in global governance because some of the newly elected leaders in the West tend to lay aside or completely abandon the policies and commitments made by their predecessors. In other words, we might find the sustainability of efforts on global governance discounted by the changes of government regimes in some countries. For example, the official withdrawal of the United States under the Donald Trump administration from the Paris Agreement to fight climate change in 2020 is still alive in our memory. And since he left the White House, Donald Trump has been busy preparing for his return in 2024. Nobody could be sure if he will win the next presidential election and withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement thereafter.
3. **Inertia of Geopolitics.** The aspirations for national geopolitical interests and the strategic inertia of national security inevitably obstruct international cooperation required for effective global governance

¹ “Xi Calls for sound China-US relationship.” China Daily, Nov. 17, 2021, accessed Nov. 22, 2021. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202111/17/WS61944155a310cdd39b-c75b99.html>.



The United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals

Source: www.un.org

among the countries with geopolitical competitions in particular. This situation exists among the major countries at the global level as well as those at the regional level. This also means that developed countries would reluctantly accept the rising influence of new economies and work together with the latter. It is reported that the United States falls into a dilemma as it tries to achieve its climate pledges while banning imports of solar-power equipment from China because the ban “creates pressure on the ability of utilities to get modules or to get them at the right price.”²

4. **The West Paying Lip Service to Climate Action.** The performance records of the developed countries are not as satisfactory as expected. So far, they haven't acted on the pledge they made at the Copenhagen Conference in 2009 to provide assistance of 100 billion USD to the developing countries for energy saving and emission reduction. Therefore, it would be difficult for anyone to believe that these countries could do much better than before.

² “Bans on Chinese solar-power equipment make US face climate dilemma: company.” China Daily, Nov 14, 2021, last accessed Nov. 22, 2021. <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202111/14/WS-619089f8a310cdd39bc75390.html>

In order to keep the efforts on global governance sustainable, special and further endeavors are needed on some fronts. These include:

1. **Intensifying the sense of human destiny community.** This means the social and political elites need to be educated with a sense of urgency. They must realize that the crises facing human beings today are global, huge in scale, systematic, and complicated. No country could fight by itself against them. No one could stay out of trouble as well. All countries are in the same boat. Global governance itself is just like mending the fold after the sheep is lost. It would work only if all countries and governments further raise their awareness of the whole world being one community with a shared destiny.
2. **More positive role of major countries.** It must be underlined that big powers at the global and regional levels should play a more positive role in global governance. On the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, every country has its corresponding responsibilities. For example, developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, as the forerunner of the industrial revolution and carbon emission, should take the lead in emission reduction and provide financial assistance to developing countries in this regard. On the other hand, regional major powers and regional new economies, in particular, could contribute much more to global governance issues such as regional peace-keeping, anti-terrorism, and economic cooperation. The major powers on the global level, like China and the United States, should take the lead in setting up a schedule for global governance and take broad responsibilities.
3. **Effective supervision over the fulfillment of commitments.** The role of NGOs should be considered in this regard. It is possible and would be constructive to set up a platform to share information among the parties about the performance of related countries, make comparative analysis, and put forward suggestions for improvement. By doing so, we could generate public opinion pressure and promote relevant countries to do as expected.
4. **Global governance over the artificial intelligence (AI) society.** The development of artificial intelligence should be put on the agenda of global governance. Increasing application of AI technology on issues that matter is the latest objective of technological development in 21st

century. Yet, as the technology began to change the structures and ways of our economies, societies, military forces, and governance, more and more scholars and experts have become aware that the rapid development of the AI technology could be a great challenge to the current social order and management, and that global governance of the world based on AI would be full of risks. Some kind of international cooperation among powerful think tanks should be encouraged to examine the ways of global governance in the era of AI. It might be helpful for maintaining the momentum of global governance by adding new issues such as AI management to the agenda, thus binding countries together in a joint effort to fight for a safer, more prosperous, and cleaner future for all humanities.

Latin America and the Active Non-Alignment Option

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The recent round of major summit meetings, including the G20 in Rome and COP26 in Glasgow, has underlined how urgent it is for Latin America to rethink its approach to the conduct of its international relations. Although three Latin American countries, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, are part of the G20, and countries from the region participated actively in Glasgow, the region was far from coming up with a common position. The region has been the most affected by the pandemic. With eight percent of the world's population, it has endured 30 percent of the fatalities caused by Covid-19. Yet even this has not led to greater regional coordination. If anything, the pandemic has only increased the divisions we have seen in the past few years. If this were to continue, Latin America would keep losing weight in international affairs, moving from its current peripheral position to one of utter marginality.

It is for that reason that in a recent book, with my colleagues Carlos Fortin and Carlos Ominami, we have set forth what we have called the Active Non-Alignment option for Latin America.¹ This proposal is rooted in a certain diagnosis of the current international system. The latter is transitioning from the United States' "unipolar moment" to a very different "multiplex world," in the words of Amitav Acharya, in which the Global South is bound to play a much more significant role.² The world's geo-economic axis has shifted from the North Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific, and we are moving towards what Oliver Stuenkel has referred to as a Post Western World. But the foundations for this new building are being laid now. Those that do not partake in laying the bricks and cementing the walls, will have to conform themselves with rooms in the basement or in the attic. The main rooms will all have been occupied by the time the building is up and running.

As Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci put it, the crisis erupts precisely when the

1 Carlos Fortin, Jorge Heine y Carlos Ominami, *El No Alineamiento Activo y América Latina: Una doctrina para el nuevo siglo*. Santiago: Catalonia, 2021.

2 Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

old dies and the new is not yet born. And that is the *conjuncture* we find ourselves in right now. The old rules no longer hold, and nobody knows what the new ones are. The United Kingdom, in its infinite wisdom, leaves the European Union, the biggest market in the world. The United States creates an unnecessary spat with France, a 200-year-plus ally, to curry favor with a *finis terrae* power like Australia; the pandemic highlights the North-South divide, yet there is no sense of urgency to fight the virus in the developing world.

In this context, the distribution of power in the world is highly unfavorable to Latin America. This was so even under the best of circumstances and has only gotten worse in recent years. Thus, our proposal of Active Non-Alignment. Some have suggested a “mini-lateralist” approach, a low-profile foreign policy, so as not “to rock the boat,” and not “upset the apple-cart.” We think that it is too late for that. The crisis has reached such a boiling point that we need a comprehensive approach, one that provides broad guidelines and a certain direction to the foreign policies to be followed. The basic principle is NOT to take sides in the current tensions between the United States and China but to put the national interest of Latin American countries front and center. The last thing the region needs is to be caught up in geopolitical power struggles not of its making.

The Active Non-Alignment option draws on the honorable tradition of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), of autonomy and independence from the big powers, based on the principles of political self-determination, mutual respect of sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs and equality. In the fifties and sixties, many developing countries refused to be drawn into the Cold War being fought between the United States and the Soviet Union. The same principle holds today, as the pressure to take sides with one or another of the big powers grows. At the same time, it responds to the realities of the new century and the rise of this Post Western World mentioned above. The future is no longer being forged in Europe or in North America. It is being forged in Asia, the most dynamic and fastest-growing continent.

The old Third World gave way to a New South, and the action today is in China, in India, and in the countries of ASEAN. The diplomacy of the *cahiers des doléances* of yesteryear, the one that fought, in the seventies and eighties, for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), albeit from a position of weakness, is displaced by what Leslie Armijo has called “collective financial statecraft.” Entities like the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (the so-called “BRICS bank”) address the challenges of the Global South from a position of strength. Five Latin American countries, namely

Ecuador, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile have joined the former as full members, and Brazil and Uruguay, the latter.

The strengthening of regional bodies, a commitment to multilateralism, regional coordination in matters of global economic governance and a radical reorientation of foreign policies and of the priorities of foreign ministries are some of the steps any such policy of Active Non-Alignment would entail. The time is now.

Adequate Financing — the Cornerstone of Fighting Against Climate Change

Ahcene Boukhelfa



Former Ambassador of Algeria to China

In Europe, North America, and most developed countries, for the majority of the inhabitants and especially the urban dwellers among them, climate change is a rather vague notion that politicians and some environmental activists handle according to circumstances and political deadlines. Scientists also talk about it, but their language is only accessible to a tiny minority.

In Africa and elsewhere, in poor countries in Asia and Latin America, climate change is present in people's lives through its effects: floods, forest fires, droughts, tropical storms, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. These destructive manifestations of nature are becoming more and more frequent. On another note, climate change has disrupted the lives and rhythm of farmers who no longer know when they should plough and sow and when they can harvest. The science or know-how acquired over thousands of years is no longer useful when there is no more winter, spring, summer, and autumn.

At the same time, at major diplomatic conferences devoted to climate change such as the last COP 26, demands for adaptation of the industrial production apparatus as well as reductions in carbon emissions are made to both without great distinction. While many island countries are threatened with outright disappearance as a result of rising ocean waters, the rate of reduction in carbon emissions continues to be discussed. While millions of peasants in Africa and Asia are gambling for their survival, politicians, opinion leaders, and even a few scientists continue to deny the evidence of climate change and what its consequences entail.

This difference in perception, apprehension, and understanding of the phenomenon called climate change is currently the great problem to be solved between a developed world locked in these certainties and a developing world

that cannot cope alone with this phenomenon and which is rather suffering the most serious and destructive consequences.

Africa is the least responsible but remains the most exposed to climate change and disasters.

The position of my country Algeria in the fight against climate change, is unchanged since it was expressed in 2015, for the needs of COP21 (Paris, 30 November to 12 December 2015), is articulated around three points:

- Climate ethics (the duties of "historically responsible" countries);
- Climate justice (obligations based on national capacities);
- Climate solidarity (aid to the poorest and most vulnerable countries).

COP26 adopted on Saturday, November 13, 2021, a "Glasgow Pact" intended to accelerate the fight against global warming, but without ensuring to contain it at 1.5 °C or respond to requests for aid from poor countries. While a signed consensus is to be welcomed, it remains at a discount in terms of financial support to vulnerable countries. There have been some announcements for adaptation funding. But the \$100 billion a year promised will still not be reached in 2023.

Adequate financing is "the cornerstone" on which all approaches to combating climate change are based. In other words, without financial assistance from developed countries, there is no mitigation among developing countries.

Dealing with Climate Change in the Developing World — An Indian Perspective

Vikram Misri



Ambassador of India to China

Over the past few weeks, the world witnessed an unprecedented mobilization of global leaders, experts, and other representatives from various countries to address a trifecta of crises facing the planet in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic, uneven economic momentum, and accelerating climate change. India's participation in the 16th G20 Summit in Rome and the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow was driven by a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, as well as a quest for fairness and justice.

At the G20, the Prime Minister of India touched on various themes. He highlighted our vision of "One Earth – One Health" and how India rose to the COVID-19 challenge by accelerating vaccine research and manufacturing and, besides developing indigenous vaccines and administering over one billion vaccine doses domestically, also supplied medicines and vaccines to over 150 countries, thus shouldering our share of responsibility in keeping with our role as "the Pharmacy of the World."

India also underlined the need for resilient supply chains and the Prime Minister announced that India would produce more than five billion vaccine doses for the world next year. In the session on "Sustainable Development," India offered to share its experience in multiple developmental tools, including in digital connectivity, financial inclusion, and immunization of children by providing these tools as open-source platforms to other developing countries.

The G20 meeting also previewed the more detailed climate discussions that would follow at the COP26 in Glasgow. India, which is amongst the very few countries whose Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were already compatible with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement, highlighted its strategy on mitigation, having set a target of rehabilitation of 26 million hectares

of wastelands. Indian Railways, the world's largest passenger carrier serving an average of eight billion passengers every year, has also resolved to achieve "Net Zero by 2030," thus mitigating carbon emission by 60 million tons per annum. India has also demonstrated its commitment to conservation by successfully increasing its count of Asiatic lions, tigers, rhinos, and dolphins.

At the same time, Prime Minister Modi reminded the world of the importance of "Climate Justice" and how, without concrete progress on climate finance and technology, it was unjust to pressure developing countries for climate action. Urging developed countries to make at least one percent of their GDP available to finance green projects in developing countries, the Prime Minister proposed that G20 leaders create (i) a "clean energy projects fund" to support countries where peaking has not happened yet; (ii) a network of research institutions to work on clean energy technologies and their deployment and (iii) a G20 institution to create global standards to promote the use of green hydrogen.

India's ambitions and commitments with regard to climate were on further display at the COP26 in Glasgow. Despite being a country with a very low carbon footprint in terms of historical cumulative emissions at four percent, current annual emissions at about seven percent, and per capita emissions of less than one-third of the global average, India is a climate leader choosing forward-looking policies for a green transition. Our achievements thus far speak for themselves. We have already achieved a reduction of 24 percent in emission intensity of our GDP between 2005 and 2016, thereby meeting our pre-2020 voluntary target. A total of 53.7 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions have been reduced due to the adoption of supercritical units in India. India also ranks fourth in the world in terms of installed renewable energy capacity. Non-fossil fuel energy has increased by more than 25 percent in the last seven years and now accounts for 40 percent of our energy mix.

India's ambitious new targets, announced by the Prime Minister in Glasgow, include the following: (i) Achieve non-fossil fuel energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030; (ii) 50 percent of electric power requirements to be met from non-fossil energy by 2030; (iii) Reduction in total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030; (iv) Reduction in the carbon intensity of the GDP by 45 percent by 2030 (compared to 2005); (v) Achieve Net Zero by 2070. With the announcement of these new targets, India has demonstrated significant ambition and courage in tackling climate change.

India has also been an institutional innovator in the climate space and has taken

the lead to establish institutional solutions at the international level in the form of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) as well as the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) for climate adaptation.

On the sidelines of COP26, India launched another two initiatives. Together with the UK and Australia and with the participation of small island developing states (SIDS), including Mauritius, Fiji, and Jamaica, India launched the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS), which aims to develop climate-resilient infrastructure and mobilize technology, finance and necessary information for SIDS and would be spearheaded by CDRI. Under this initiative, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) will build a special data window for SIDS and provide them timely information about cyclones, coral-reef monitoring, coast-line monitoring, etc. India also launched the Green Grids Initiative – One Sun One World One Grid (GGI – OSOWOG), with the UK, which aims to address the challenge of solar energy supply during nighttime by making clean energy from a worldwide grid available everywhere at all times.

India's participation in these Summits has demonstrated our approach to solving complex global problems and positively contributing to multilateral platforms for finding collective solutions. The suggestion made by Prime Minister Modi in the form of "LIFE – Lifestyles For Sustainable Environment" aptly represents India's philosophy of mindful consumption, avoiding waste, and respecting nature, which is deeply rooted in Indian culture and ethos. India is pushing itself to undertake ambitious climate actions while meeting its critical developmental needs. We hope that developed countries will meet us halfway in fulfilling their pledges through climate funding and transfer of climate-friendly technologies as enshrined in the UNFCCC.

Tackling Global Challenges: Are We On the Same Page?

Luis Diego Monsalve



Ambassador of Columbia to China

An Interview with the Ambassador of Columbia to China on the G20 and COP26 Meetings

TIO: What are the top three issues facing your country and region in terms of necessities?

Colombia faces challenges similar to those of other countries in the world.

The first one is the pandemic. Our main current goals are to reach high vaccination rates and achieve economic recovery.

Second, Colombia is working on the consolidation of peace and legality to overcome the persistent challenges in the country after ending a five-decade conflict, seeking lasting peace and sustainable development.

Third, climate change and the protection of biodiversity are crucial for Colombia. Although we only represent 0.6% of global emissions, we are among the countries most affected by the effects of Climate Change. Our NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution), under the Paris Agreement, commits us to a 51% reduction in gas emissions by 2030, including an ambitious and achievable black carbon target that put us on the path to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

TIO: Were the needs of your country addressed at the two meetings?

Both meetings reflected the agreement to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees within reach,

to accelerate actions towards net zero emissions by mid-century and a reaffirmation of the climate finance commitment of developed countries that will jointly mobilize USD 100 billion.

Regarding biodiversity, they echoed the COP15 commitment to halt and reverse the loss by 2030 and ensure that at least 30% of the global land and 30% of the global oceans and seas are conserved or protected in the same year. Colombia is committed to achieving this goal by 2022 with the announced planting of 180 million trees in our territory.

With the pandemic, the agreement was to ensure timely access to vaccines in low- and middle-income countries and to establish a well-received joint finance and health task force to ensure funding for prevention, preparedness, and response faced with a pandemic, while addressing vulnerable groups such as women, youth, informal and low-skilled workers, and inequality, pledging to continue sustaining recovery and avoiding premature withdrawal of support measures.

We value the benefit of multilateral bank loans and bilateral donations, and we believe that all efforts made for economic recovery are welcomed by all nations.

Colombia has just announced in Glasgow our advances in green hydrogen and the proposal to create a global coalition to obtain fairer prices in the carbon markets. In addition, our President launched the Long-Term Climate Strategy, comprising a 30-year plan to achieve carbon neutrality as a climate-resilient and adapted country by 2050.

In addition, Colombia was chosen together with the EU to lead the COP26 Global Balance negotiations, as a process established in the Paris Agreement to monitor the status of each country's climate commitments. This role represents the will of Colombia to promote the concert of nations towards the achievement of all the agreed goals.

TIO: What needs to happen, to make the global governance system more responsive?

Definitely, there must be a decision to truly strengthen multilateralism. Although the multilateral system may have weaknesses, it has contributed positively to face common goals such as climate change, poverty reduction, peace, and stability, among others. Additionally, it allows countries to hold open discussions and dialogues on successful policies.

Everything can always be improved, and of course it is necessary to implement some

reforms to the system and its institutions. For example, in matters of health and recognition and distribution of vaccines. If vaccines distribution is delayed, everyone will remain exposed. During the UN General Assembly this year, our President affirmed that “Global immunity requires solidarity and for some countries to not hoard vaccines in the face of the needs of others”.

We also have limited fiscal space to maneuver, which can become an obstacle to growing sustainably. Colombia proposed for a period, with the support of the IMF, in which a rule can be established where structural investment on climate is estimated outside the line of measurement of the fiscal deficit, as well as the unconditional application of debt relief or cancellations towards concrete achievements in the field of climate action.

Our region needs to strengthen green financing and the capitalization of the Inter-American Development Bank and CAF, the development bank of Latin America, to attend to urgent investments that should not be subject to political debate or internal conflicts regarding the allocation of resources.

TIO: What should be done and by whom?

The Colombian government has called for a global consensus, led by the IMF and multilateral development banks to establish new criteria for minimum fiscal risk in times of economic reactivation, otherwise, in the short term, the high demand for debt and rising capital costs could lead to a debt crisis with further setbacks.

On the other hand, each country must act decisively on the climate crisis and the search for equality, the adaptability of the market, the creation of policies and the role of society around current needs. Governments, in particular, play a decisive role in this effort.

TIO: What is the priority in which these issues should be addressed?

This needs a holistic approach. There is no economic recovery without action on global health and there is no sustainable and green development without fiscal measures that seek to alleviate debt, but the most important thing is that there is no case if humanity is not on the same page. We should all strive and prosper in a world that recognizes its differences but is capable of addressing common problems.

Is America Really Back?

A Dialogue Between Thomas Fingar and Zhou Bo

Thomas Fingar



Shorenstein APARC Fellow, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University

Zhou Bo



Senior Fellow, Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University

Moderated by Kang Yingyue,
International Communications Officer
at Taihe Institute

Following the 2021 Taihe Civilization Forum, the Taihe Institute Communications Center hosted an online discussion that captures the candid and profound reflections of senior officials whose actions have shaped the course of ties between China and the United States. Dr. Thomas Fingar, Shorenstein APARC Fellow in the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University, former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, and former Assistant Secretary of State, and Senior Colonel Zhou Bo (ret.), Senior Fellow at Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University, China Forum Expert, and former Director of Center for Security Cooperation of the Office for International Military Cooperation of Ministry of National Defense, were invited to join this dialogue. During their conversation, Dr. Fingar and Senior Colonel Zhou exchanged ideas on important topics such as the current state of China-U.S. relations, the future development of the two countries' bilateral ties, the rationale behind the US foreign policy and the American alliance system, as well as the "extreme competition" that China and the U.S. are trapped in.

Moderator

Today we have convened two very distinguished experts to discuss the current state of China-U.S. relations. Thank you, Professor Thomas Fingar and Senior Colonel Zhou Bo(ret.) for being here. I think this is a great opportunity for us to understand what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen between China and the United States. Particularly, as 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the China-U.S. rapprochement, also given the virtual summit

between President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden that happened on November 16th, I believe that it would be constructive to take some time to look back and envision the future.

Today's topic is China-U.S. relations after the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. But before we get into the implications of this event for the relationship between the two countries in question, let's first talk about its impact on the American alliance system in general. More specifically, how has the withdrawal affected the US allies? How about the American soft power and the American role and standing in the world?

Thomas Fingar I will begin by asking a question. Why would one ask questions about the impact of Afghanistan on US relations with its allies? Certainly, the way in which the last month of the departure from Afghanistan played out is not pretty. But I don't see how that affects the security commitments that the United States has to its NATO and other allies or the expectations that allies have of the United States.

Afghanistan was not an ally. There is an important distinction between allies and non-allies, or even allies and partners. Commentators, erroneously in my view, have said that because the United States left Afghanistan in the way that it did, allies will lose confidence in the United States, and that the United States must do something to bolster the confidence of its allies. Historically, there was no precedent for that. US alliances remained strong or became stronger after the US defeat in Vietnam, for example. But even more to the point, to the extent I've seen commentary, from other allied governments, it mostly indicates expectation that because the United States is no longer bogged down in Afghanistan, it is now better prepared to respond to a common security challenge, should there be one.

Zhou Bo I hope to first make it clear that the question was not about how the event directly impacted US allies, but in what ways has the American alliance system developed against the general background of the US drawdown from Afghanistan. Still, I believe that the event is one of the key elements affecting the overall American alliance system. Actually, it can be perceived as a lens through which we envision how the American alliance system might evolve in the future.

I believe that the overall American-led alliance will gradually decline in the future,

both in Europe and in Asia. Let's talk about Europe first. It is pretty clear that the U.S. wants more NATO members to pay their 2% defense spending benchmark. So far, there are ten countries that have met this standard, thanks mostly to the rude and ruthless bashing of President Trump. And I assume in the future, with more countries meeting this benchmark, sharing the burden of the United States that now accounts for approximately 37% of the world military spending and more than 70% of NATO's combined defense expenditure, the American-led alliance in Europe, or the Trans-Atlantic alliance will actually become weaker because the more self-reliant NATO becomes, the easier it will be for America to shift its focus elsewhere. Washington has already made it clear that it will focus on the Indo-Pacific in its foreign policy. When President Biden said to the world that America is back, I wondered what the statement really means. It sounds rhetorical in that as a whole, the U.S. is in retrenchment. It has shifted its focus from global issues to address domestic issues and competition with China in the Indo-Pacific region. The European Union will have to figure out its own way of achieving the so-called "strategic autonomy" in the years ahead.

"I believe that the overall American-led alliance will gradually decline in the future, both in Europe and in Asia."

Now let's look at the Asia-Pacific. The American effort of persuading Australia to purchase British or American-made nuclear submarines is not really a success. Yes, it has succeeded in convincing a half-hearted ally to take the risk of involving in a potential conflict with China in the future. But this was achieved at a cost of sacrificing the huge interests of France, another ally. Therefore, I don't believe the U.S. has gained much. And in the Asia-Pacific region, most of the countries, including America's allies and partners, have taken China as their largest trading partner. Any effort to strengthen this kind of military alliance would put third-party countries in a "us or them" situation. This is what regional countries are most reluctant to do. Considering all these, I believe that the American alliance system would decline in the years to come.

Thomas Fingar Let me pick up on four points.

One is the new alliance. It has not changed much as the U.S. had the remnants of the ANZUS alliance with Australia but now Britain is in it. So if one were to look at this one development after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, one sees a new three-way alliance—an alliance that did not exist previously. This does not

indicate diminished confidence in the United States.

Second is the Australian decision to buy nuclear-powered rather than diesel submarines. I suspect that this was not something the U.S. had to push Australia to do. I think that any country able to buy nuclear-powered submarines would do so. All would rather have nuclear-powered submarines rather than diesel submarines because they have a much greater range. That is particularly the case for a country that is as far from everything as is Australia.

The third point has to do with the concept of the US alliances as military alliances. Certainly, most of them began that way, and there is certainly an important military component. But most of the American alliances, whether with NATO, Australia, Japan, or other nations are alliances of interests that go far beyond shared military concerns. Shared values and common interests have been part of the fabric that has developed over more than 50 years, linking the countries to one another and to the United States and making us far more than a grouping of countries that come together because of a perceived common adversary. The importance of the development of ties, many of which grew out of the transparency necessary for the alliance to succeed, should not be underestimated.

The final point I hope to pick up out of what you just said is that to me there is nothing magical about the 2% figure. That figure has been around for a long time. And most of the increases in the American allies' military budgets began before Mr. Trump became the President. The idea of the American public accepting a disproportionate responsibility for the defense of its alliance members was a deliberate part of US policy after World War II. The idea was to bear a disproportionate responsibility and financial burden for the Cold War alliances. We did that because we could; we did it in part to dissuade our allies from seeking nuclear weapons themselves; and we did it so that they could devote more of their budgets to economic development, from rebuilding and expansion to becoming more prosperous, to improve the lives of their citizens, and to make themselves stronger so that they would be stronger partners of the United States. As they became stronger, the alliance became stronger. As the alliance became stronger, the United States became more secure. That was the logic and it was not limited to the impact on the United States. It was beneficial to all in the alliance system.

What has changed, however, is the willingness of much of the American public to continue to pay such a disproportionate share. What made sense fifty or sixty

“Alliances are not all about American influence. They are also about collective ability to pursue shared objectives and deter unwanted actions by other countries. It is a mechanism for maintaining harmony in the sharing of information among the countries that now have a high degree of shared values.”

years ago, when our allies and partners were weak and poor and recovering, does not seem to make as much sense now. So there will be adjustments to military requirements in a post-Cold War environment, which will be manifested by increased military expenditures, or what you mentioned as greater strategic autonomy or capacity. Frankly, speaking for myself, I wish those countries had a greater autonomous capability because it would not make us so liable or vulnerable to being pulled into situations that are of greater interest to our European partners than to the United States. Libya is an example. We did not have the same interests or involvement with Libya that our allies did. But they didn't have the intelligence or supply capacity that was necessary for what they wanted to do. Alliances are not all about American influence. They are also about collective ability to pursue shared objectives and deter unwanted actions by other countries. It is a mechanism for maintaining harmony in the sharing of information among the countries that now have a high degree of shared values.

I have a question for you. If your analysis is right, that the American alliance network is on a trajectory of decline, what are the implications of that for China?

Zhou Bo

The U.S. has always been relying on its alliance system to secure its predominance in the world, and it will become more so in the future because its own strength is declining especially in relation to that of China. I believe what President Biden has said about America wishing to strengthen its alliance system is genuine. But he simply couldn't do much to strengthen the alliance even if he wants.

There are several reasons for this. One is the collapse of the overarching framework that once legitimized the existence of the alliance structure. The end of the Cold War marked the dismantling of the strategic framework for the existing security equation. NATO remained in place and has been in continuous

expansion. But it has largely lost momentum short of an obvious enemy. Yes. NATO still harps on the so-called “Russian threat.” But how big is the Russian threat? Admittedly, some small European countries, especially those that were in the blocs of the USSR, are afraid of Russia, but Russia is unlikely to pose a threat to all NATO members. The Russian economy today is basically at the same level as Spain or Italy. Within NATO, apart from the United States, which is dominating the alliance structure, there are two other nuclear-weapon states. Besides, Russia enjoys a very good relationship with some NATO members such as Turkey, which, in spite of the American protest, bought the Russian air defense system S-400.

In Europe, the momentum of sustaining NATO has, in fact, stalled for a long time. French President Macron described NATO as “brain-dead.” NATO still wants to show the world that it is attractive in that there are still countries that aspire to join NATO such as Georgia and Ukraine. But I don’t think they will join soon. In the case of Ukraine, given the historical and cultural connectivity between Ukraine and Russia, it is impossible that Russia will bear with Ukraine’s entry into NATO. Russia’s foreign ministry spokesperson warned that Ukraine’s bid for NATO membership could entail irreversible consequences for the Ukrainian statehood. President Vladimir Putin cautioned the West against crossing Russia’s red lines. It is not entirely impossible that Russia will use military force to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from joining NATO.

NATO is also said to serve as a force to address terrorism. I think precisely because NATO doesn’t have an obvious military adversary, it has to take such things as terrorism to be the main threat and amplify it so as to sustain the alliance. But NATO is too big and inflexible for addressing terrorism that is gusty and capricious in nature. Terrorist attacks won’t occur in all NATO member states at the same time, so NATO can hardly take collective actions. If a few drones could have reduced the oil output of Saudi Arabia by half as we have seen in 2019, then how flexible could NATO become to respond to such small and sudden attacks?

The influence of a declining American alliance system on China is a very interesting question. I believe that the United States wholeheartedly wants NATO to be involved in the US-led efforts against China. But there is a fundamental obstacle as most of the NATO members are also members of the European Union, who maintain a generally good relationship with China. Besides, there is the “tyranny of geography” in that Europe is too far away from China. China has some working relationships with NATO. It is not that the two are at each other’s throats. In the past, NATO’s policy on China was based on three “No”s: no policy on the South China Sea, no policy on Taiwan, no policy regarding Diaoyu Islands.

Basically, the two sides just wanted to cultivate a pragmatic relationship with each other, while NATO would not get too much involved politically or militarily in the Asia Pacific region. But in recent years, I have taken notice of some changes. One notable is the remarks made by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who said repeatedly that China's rise has become a challenge for NATO. This is the reversal of what he said in previous years when he described China more as an opportunity. Still, I believe that the same logic applies here. His comment is yet again another attempt of legitimizing NATO's existence by hyping up external threats, which, in this case, is China's rise. But he has softened his tone a bit recently. In a virtual meeting with State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi in September, Mr. Stoltenberg said that NATO does not see China as an adversary. On some other occasions, he said that NATO should seek to cooperate with China on global issues like climate change. I am a bit curious why and how the largest military bloc would cooperate with China on climate change rather than on military issues given that China and NATO used to have excellent cooperation in counter-piracy in the Indian Ocean.

Thomas Fingar

I'd like to pick up on what you have said about the purpose of the alliances. In my view, they are overwhelmingly for deterrence and collective security, not expansion. They are not designed to acquire territory from some other countries. They are not intended for forceful democracy promotion. Are there threats from uncertainty and extant vulnerabilities? The answer is yes. You mentioned access to energy from the Persian Gulf region as one of the reasons the United States and its European allies got involved in the region. Now, our dependence could be zero as we don't need any from that area. The Europeans are now less dependent on the area and they will become less so as they transition to greener energy systems and economies. The United States has borne disproportionate political costs to protect European access to oil in that region. Now, arguably, we are bearing economic and political costs to protect tankers that are going to China, Japan, Korea, as well as other places. The Europeans understand that and probably think about the need to acquire greater capabilities in that regard. But I don't see the relationship among countries that are in this alliance as being in grave danger of abandoning the alliance. The interdependence and the shared interest and the common values are really strong. And it's hard to imagine the birth and expansion of the success of the European Union without NATO not only because it left more money for non-military purposes, but also because it helped to develop patterns of cooperation among longtime adversaries like France and Germany. If you're going to be a serious ally in a military confrontation like the one that NATO was organized to address, you can't do it without a high degree

of transparency and sharing of information and cooperation and divisions of labor that made it much easier to move into economic and societal forms of cooperation and more open borders. I don't see any desire on the part of our European partners, or certainly, the United States, to have that unravel. The alliances have benefited everybody. And to the extent that there are shared concerns about Chinese behavior, it's not primarily a military concern. Rather, it is mainly concerned about economic, societal, and other issues like social justice. The Europeans generally are more concerned in this arena than we are.

Moreover, no military alliance or national military like the PLA prepares for an abstract enemy. Doing so does not make sense. You build to deter or defeat particular adversaries and capabilities. Unless you have an immediate neighbor threatening to attack, you prepare to defeat the strongest possible adversary because if you're ready for the strongest one, you're ready for anybody else that's not as strong. Right now, the three strongest militaries are the United States, Russia, and China. I don't envision NATO preparing for war or against the force structure and weapons of the United States. So that leaves two and the configuration of the expansion of military capabilities of Russia and China are different. They both sell weapons to other countries, so it would be almost unimaginable not to think about plans to prepare for the strongest potential adversary. I'm sure that is why China is reorienting its military, modernizing its forces, and building up its deployment against the United States. You are not doing it against Malawi. You are doing it against us because we are the strongest potential adversary, and countries we sell weaponry to would be the most likely opponent. It doesn't mean anybody expects war. But militaries are supposed to prepare for the unthinkable and be ready for the most formidable adversary they can imagine. That's why they exist.

Zhou Bo

There are a few points that I would like to raise. First, precisely because America is in what President Biden calls a "stiff competition" with China, the U.S. will naturally focus less on Europe in its foreign policy. With more European countries meeting the 2% defense benchmark, the US withdrawal from Europe, however gradual, is inevitable. The more European countries pay their dues for NATO, the easier it is for the Americans to leave Europe to the Europeans. I agree with you that the alliance itself is not in danger now, but I think that it will decline because its primary role of counterbalancing the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War is over and no alliance will last forever. NATO is simply becoming more and more irrelevant as the relative strength of the United States, in fact, is in decline. Therefore, to a certain extent, your attractiveness to European countries has weakened.

Secondly, when it comes to competition with China, I wish to say America's withdrawal from Afghanistan is significant in that it marks the ending of the American-led global crusade against terrorism. It also marks the beginning of extreme competition between China and the U.S. I agree with you that neither the United States nor China wants a war with each other, but the problem is, when we are in extreme competition, then probably conflict is not so far away. So why should we begin extreme or stiff competition? When we come to the question of cooperation or competition, we have a cultural difference. China always calls for cooperation while the U.S. encourages competition because it thinks that competition is healthy. But in China, very few people would consider competition "healthy." To me personally, competition in the military field is unhealthy. It is ugly in nature. The only question is how less ugly it can be. The frequency of American ships and aircraft sailing or flying over China's periphery has been on the rise. It's seldom that China sent ships to sail in American waters. The stronger China becomes, the less likely it is to bear with what it perceives to be America's provocations at its doorsteps. Therefore, the situation is becoming more dangerous. I know there are regular talks on confidence-building measures. They are useful but not really fruitful. I still cannot figure out how we might solve the problem if the United States insists on conducting all these activities that were taken by China essentially as detrimental to Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity. For me, the confusion is, if you do not want the water to boil, why would you throw the woods into the fire?

Thomas Fingar Let me comment briefly on President Biden's wording about competition. I don't mean to suggest that the few words are not meaningful. But I think that as Chinese people hear them, they need to think of them in multiple ways.


One of them is that unless we were to do away with our military, which is not

"I still cannot figure out how we might solve the problem if the United States insists on conducting all these activities that were taken by China essentially as detrimental to Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity. For me, the confusion is, if you do not want the water to boil, why would you throw the woods into the fire?"


going to happen, you have to have some competitors in mind. After twenty years of war, we have to replace and rebuild a lot of equipment. Much of the equipment that we had and most of what we still have was built for Europe. It was designed for European conditions. That makes absolutely no sense in the 21st century. We need to build for longer distances, and that means Asian distances. Part of the rationale for why we need to do things, why do we need this type of equipment, this range on an airplane, or that capability for communication. We can't say we do this because of some unknown, unforeseen adversary in the future so must justify expenditures with reference to what's there now and what's visibly on the horizon. For better or worse, that's China.

The second way to think about it is its instrumental purpose. President Biden's agenda, which I think is an appropriate one, is largely one of retrenchment and rebuilding. It is largely about making up for lost time by addressing problems in our own country. Healthcare, education, infrastructure, social justice, research and development. It's a list of very difficult and expensive challenges. How does one persuade the American people to spend money on those? How should we allocate or assign to Washington responsibilities for activities that traditionally have been left to states and localities? The problem is partly economic and partly political. There has to be a persuasive rationale for making major changes. The example of how to do so that's in the head of anybody older than 65 or 70 is the way in which the Eisenhower administration used the Soviet Union to justify major policy initiatives after the launch of Sputnik. He justified a wide range of programs as necessary to win the competition with the Soviet Union. Posing issues in this way helps to move proposals through our political system. Characterizing them as national security challenges is done for domestic political reasons. I wish it were not necessary to do this but recognize that it is efficacious to do so.

A third way to think about Biden's statement is, again, in terms of American domestic politics as it plays out in Washington. That is, which oversight committees in Congress, which departments and pieces of the bureaucracy within the executive branch will handle what kinds of questions, and what kind



“President Biden’s agenda, which I think is an appropriate one, is largely one of retrenchment and rebuilding. It is largely about making up for lost time by addressing problems in our own country.”



of special interest groups have the greatest influence. That is another reason for wanting to get issues into the national security bucket. At least a portion of the rationale for declaring the competition with China to be a driving one is that it affects the steering of proposals within the American policymaking process. It doesn't mean there's no reality to competition with China. It doesn't mean that it's all made up and it's not real. But it needs to be understood as something other than a no holds barred struggle in which we must defeat China in every arena. I'm quite confident that is not the way in which President Biden is using the term competition.

Zhou Bo

It's intriguing to me when you talked about American retrenchment. I remember a few years ago when I was in the UK, one of the most persuasive explanations for the UK's failure of meeting its defense benchmark was that you simply cannot convince your people that spending money on defense in a time when there are no immediate external threats is more important than investing in education and public health. So, for the United States, I think it is really a challenge to reconcile the two objectives of invigorating the United States domestically and preparing for countering China in the Western Pacific. I understand a rising power would certainly make the existing power somewhat worried. But if you look at China's international behavior, I would argue that China's rise is achieved within the international system from which China has benefited tremendously. It has benefited from learning advanced technology and management from the West and it is still learning. This is why we have been sending many students to the United States. At the end of 2020, we had 382,500 students in the U.S. Therefore, we do not wish to challenge the international system, and this is why China has in recent years changed its old narratives of "building a reasonable new international political and economic order" which essentially means the international political and economic order is not reasonable! Now we are no longer shy to admit that China is a beneficiary of the international system. This is why China talks about itself as being a guardian of the international order.

Just now you mentioned the word democracy. While I am not a political scientist, I cannot help but think about this issue: to what extent does the Western liberal democracy matter to the world? I think it matters to you because you choose it. This concept first came up during the European Enlightenment and it started to develop quickly after the British Industrial Revolution. But still, it is less than three hundred years old and I am not very optimistic about the future of it. I'm not saying that because I come from a country of a different social system. According to Freedom House, a watchdog of global democracy, ever since 2006, democracy

has been in decline. This is true even in some of the “established democracies” like the United States and India. The world was shocked to see what happened in Washington on January 6. The American President instigated the mobs to take over Capitol Hill, the US’ supreme seat of democracy. That was really an eye-opener for us outsiders.

Throughout history, there was no country powerful enough to take over the whole world. The world is always about the coexistence of different cultures, different societies, and different religions. While the American-style democracy as a system might work for the West, it is not universal and should not be elevated to the level where it is considered as the supreme form of governance applicable to all. China upholds different ideologies from its American peer. But we do not export ours. We do not intend to transform anyone’s values and culture. It seems rather confusing to me why the U.S. thinks that China raising its voice in the international arena through ways like calling for multilateralism and distributing vaccines to those in need to combat the pandemic is wrong. It is perplexing why the U.S. thinks that coming into competition with China, which might slide into confrontation, is fine. Right now, the only area of cooperation that the U.S. would essentially agree to terms with China is climate change. If maintaining our relationship only depends on one or two issues like climate change, then I can’t be too optimistic about our future. I have one question for you. Do you believe there is a new Cold War between us?

“The world is always about the coexistence of different cultures, different societies, and different religions.”

Thomas Fingar No. I lived through the Cold War. We're not in one and we're not headed for one. The Cold War was seen as an existential competition by both sides. I was about ideology, economic systems, social systems, and military capabilities and competition in a world that was very different than today. I don't see any of those as extant today in anything approaching the same dimensions.

Let me pick up three points of what you said. The first is the rising versus the existing leading power argument. I have issues with it. I don't side with the academic types that think in terms of rising powers and the status quo. I spent enough time in senior jobs in Washington to say with confidence that almost nobody thinks that way. This isn't about some abstract rising and challenging powers. It's about specific areas of disagreement, specific behaviors on our part,

on your part, and on the part of third countries. It's not that China's rise must be resisted because we don't want anybody else to be the tiger on the top of the mountain. If one looks at the history of the post-World War II period, the US approach has not been "I'm the king of the mountain, and I'm not letting anybody up here." It has been: "I'm up here, I've got more capabilities and I've got a lot of economic strength, but I sure would like more people to be up here with me." The 2% percent figure for defense may be one way of illustrating this point. We want others to be prosperous because if they are prosperous, we can sell them more stuff. If other people were more engaged and developed more forms of civil society, we would have more ways to interact with them. If others were stronger and more capable, they could pick up some of the responsibilities that we have borne. I think that's what the history of US engagement demonstrates.

Where the U.S. will look to cooperate has essentially nothing to do with abstract, defensive realist theories of constraining and thwarting. The way to win a competition is to make yourself better, not to try to make the other guy worse. This is true in sports, and it is true in economic competition and technological competition. The belated attention we are now devoting to problems we should have been addressing while we were preoccupied elsewhere is intended to make us stronger and more prosperous. The American people should be willing to pay for it.

I think there are many areas where we should be cooperating besides climate change. But in my view, cooperation should come about to solve a problem, not for the sake of building trust or strengthening the bilateral relationship. We are not going to do or not do things to reduce carbon to make one another happy. We are going to do it because we both understand the threat to life on earth and we both want to improve the living conditions of our people. We should cooperate on climate change to persuade third countries to do more to combat climate change. But given the wide range of things that both our countries want to do, if it's not easy to cooperate in one area, we will go on to something else rather than to bog

“I think there are many areas where we should be cooperating besides climate change. But in my view, cooperation should come about to solve a problem, not for the sake of building trust or strengthening the bilateral relationship.”

down on one. I think that's the approach Washington is taking now.

The final point I'd like to make picks up on your description of the genesis and fate of democracy. I don't agree with your prediction and am struck by how non-Marxist it is. A key insight that I've drawn from my study of Marx is that the political superstructure is shaped—he would say determined—by the economic base. According to Marx, democracy is not something that came out of abstract thinking in the Enlightenment and it's not something that can be forcibly imposed on another country. What he said was that when a country reaches a certain stage of development, its political system changes, and one of the stages of that development is what Marx called bourgeois democracy. A bourgeois democracy can last for a long time before it transforms into something else. I was intrigued that your description of the dynamics either ignored or dismissed what to me is pretty basic Marxist theory.

Zhou Bo

I fully agree with you that we should cooperate on concrete, specific issues rather than abstract concepts, but I believe unless we agree on some general guidelines that suggest our relationship is essentially one of cooperation rather than competition, cooperation on specific issues would be difficult. Washington's China policy has made a U-turn since Mr. Trump took office. It has largely been driven by an emotional rather than rational resentment against China simply because China has become stronger but has not become what the United States has expected. Simply put, China hasn't become "one of you" –a liberal democracy. In 2018, former American Vice President Michael Pence talked in Hudson Institute about how in the past the United States had believed that a free China was inevitable. Of course, this turned out to be wishful thinking.

Liberal democracy is the choice for some countries, but it is not the aspiration of the whole world. The world does not belong

to the West. According to the Freedom House, only fewer than a fifth of the world's people now live in fully free countries. So, you just simply cannot impose your own system on other countries through the so-called democracy promotion or humanitarian intervention.

I am wondering what the future looks like for

“ Liberal democracy is the choice for some countries, but it is not the aspiration of the whole world. The world does not belong to the West. ”

western democracies. Not very rosy, I am afraid. A century ago, Oswald Spengler published his book *The Decline of the West* where he predicted the impending decay and ultimate fall of western civilization. The 2020 Munich Security Conference used the word “westernlessness” as the title of its report. The conclusion is that not only is the world becoming less Western, but also the West itself is becoming less Western. The West is threatened from inside with the rise of illiberalism and the return of isolationism. This is a threat to the foundations of the West and its collective identity as a community of liberal democracies.

China never said it wants to become a liberal democracy. That means China has never lied to the US. From day one when the People’s Republic of China was established, China maintains that it is a socialist country led by the Chinese Communist Party. I think China’s only “mistake” in America’s eye is that it has not become what the U.S. has expected. Washington has claimed that it wanted China to be strong and prosperous for many decades. But since we have managed to do that without changing our own system, the U.S. lost patience and became frustrated and panicked. This is essentially how we view the changing dynamics in recent years, and this is how we understand why the U.S. is bent on competing on almost every front with China.

I felt relieved when you said there would not be another Cold War. But I'm not so assured because the word “new” entails so many uncertainties. A new Cold War means that it may be different from the previous one. In China, at least at the government level, we're not talking about a new Cold War because we also want to avoid that. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has more than once talked about the possibility of a fractured world brought about by a US-China Cold War. So, my real concern is if the U.S. and China were eventually wired up in an increasingly fierce competition, given that the competition is already stiff or extreme, as Biden puts it, how could we manage to stay away from engaging in a confrontation that apparently nobody wants? And what can be done to stop us from entering a new Cold War?

Thomas Fingar I'd like to pick up on two points. One of them goes back to your description of the US alleged disappointment that China has not changed to become like us. You said the United States has aspired to transform China into a liberal democracy. Regardless of what Mr. Pence and some American politicians said, transforming China into a liberal democracy was never a goal of US policy. I say that as someone that was the youngest guy in the room back when the US-China rapprochement and engagement began in the 1970s. Modernization and the transformative

effects of modernization were both an objective and an expectation. We certainly expected that China would change. But that China would become a democratic system like the United States was something I honestly never heard asserted during the 30 years of meetings on and around the making of US policy. For various reasons, people who were dissatisfied with engagement have declared democratization to have been a goal of what they maintain was a naive and counterproductive policy. But it really is important to distinguish between what some Americans have said and what the US policy was. For as long as I have been involved in US-China relations, which is since the early 1970s, China has seemed to believe and often said that regime change, or political transformation, was the goal of the U.S. But that wasn't true in the past and it isn't true now.

Youth

Voices



Striking a Balance Between Small-State Diplomacy and Global Agenda: Is It Time?



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Although Cambodia had enjoyed its annual economic growth rate of around 7% for over decades since 1998, the country's economy has been ravaged by the looming Covid-19 pandemic since 2020. Its upcoming ASEAN Chairmanship 2022 generates an extra burden to its current endeavors. As a least-developing country (LDC), Cambodia undertakes a careful navigation in its foreign policy through small-state diplomacy. Its adherence to states' political sovereignty, cultural divergences, and economic interdependence aims for nothing but a global state of harmony and peaceful coexistence. While power politics is presently putting multilateralism at risk, as manifested by WTO functional paralysis, unilateral trade-war measures, climate change conceptualization differences, refugee crisis, terrorism, etc., Cambodia is left with fewer options in its political and economic diplomacy.

Cambodia's signings of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in November 2020, and of bilateral Free Trade Agreements with China (CCFTA) in October 2020 and with South Korea (CKFTA) in October 2021 constitute an urgent economic remedy to diminish its suffering incurred from those global crises. However, the country's political determination is still witnessing prejudice and judgements drawn up by powerful states seeking to indoctrinate their leadership philosophy in Cambodia's unique context. Moreover, as Cambodia is set to rid itself of the LDC status by 2028, aiming to be an upper middle-income and high-income economy by 2030 and 2050 respectively, the country not only tries to speed up its economic development, but also to strike a balance between its national, context-based development objectives and the global development agenda. Therefore, it needs regional and global supports for its trade integration strategies in terms of more market access for potential goods and services, promotion of human resources of both skilled workers and know-hows, science and technology transfers and innovations for the advancement of medium- and high-end tech, and sustainable development, which includes funding into green-energy development projects such as smart cities, renewable



Protests in Dusseldorf, Germany to demand climate change action in the lead up to COP26
Source: www.bbc.com

energy plants, and deforestation fighting campaigns, by 2030.

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) hosted by the UK from October 31 to November 13 is of critical importance to Cambodia's development agenda as the 197 Parties made a positive breakthrough in three key areas of actions: adapting to climate crisis, financing climate-vulnerable developing countries (100 billion USD annually), and mitigating carbon emissions (limiting a rise of average temperature by 1.5 degrees Celsius, if not lower). The way of financing, however, shall emphasize transparency and accountability whereby politicization of funding should be avoided and flexibilities for developing countries accorded. The environmental measures for developing countries should not constitute a barrier to their critically needed development spaces, including promoting investments and external trades and creating more job opportunities for their peoples, therefore contributing to raising their living standards. This purpose was also highly underscored in the Marrakesh Agreement 1995 (preamble clause, para 1) and the GATT 1947 (Art. XXXVI), among others. As climate change is borderless, so is the Covid-19 pandemic. Joint global efforts are critically imperative to ascertain the respect of rights to life of peoples around the world, not of a few developed nations.

Should COP26 be Considered a Success?



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In their current form, many international institutions, including the United Nations, offer potential for increased cooperation and the creation of tangible results in addressing global crises. However, there are also major shortfalls that largely hold back the effectiveness of these platforms. Looking at the recent COP26 conference, it would be fair to assess the “success” of the conference in this way: countries that are serious about cutting greenhouse gas emissions promised to adopt aggressive policies and set ambitious deadlines, while others fell victim to the pressures of domestic politics, pushing back on the targets that the Convention on Climate Change sought to implement. The success of international platforms requires cooperation, consensus, and compromise, but with crises that affect the entire global population, emergency situations cannot be treated lightly.

Prior to the conference, a series of documents were leaked, showing that several states sought to downplay the need to move away from fossil fuels and adopt green technologies in an urgent manner. In its contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s assessment report, the oil ministry of Saudi Arabia pushed to remove language expressing the urgency of moving away from fossil fuels. Australia issued “recommendations” to remove parts of the assessment recommending the closure of power plants utilizing coal to produce electricity.

In both cases, this is simply a response to each country’s domestic situation. Saudi Arabia relies on its massive oil revenues, and a cut in fossil fuel consumption would damage the local economy, which is not diversified enough for the government to not rely on oil revenue. Coal mining is a large industry in Australia and India, and both countries profit handsomely from exporting the commodity. Both Australia and India resisted the statements issued on coal representing a major pollutant. As oil and coal are both targets of the UN’s climate plans, it makes sense for Saudi Arabia, Australia, and India to push back based on the possible economic impacts.

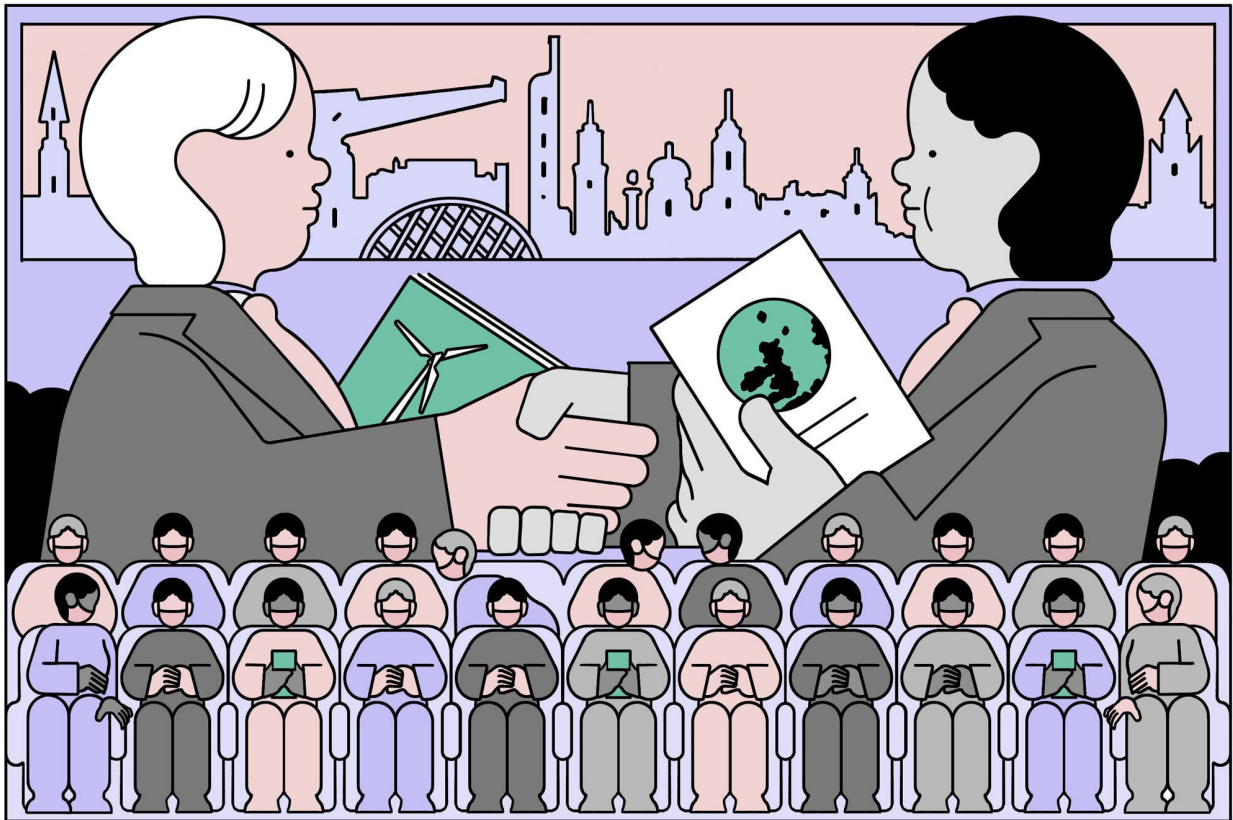


Illustration of COP26 by Nadia Hafid

Source: www.nytimes.com

At the same time, it is nothing but hypocritical for some countries to participate in international platforms, especially as they are larger and more economically powerful and often dictate what smaller, poorer nations can and should do, when in fact, they are reluctant to make the changes themselves.

One “problem” with many international organizations is the inability to truly enforce certain policies. While some penalties can be enacted, there isn’t a true punishment for countries that do not adhere to international agreements or recommendations. In the end, this waters down the true effectiveness of platforms such as the COP26. There is no way to force countries to agree to any targets set, and there is certainly no way to enforce what individual countries have pledged. For the future success of international organizations, especially committees and platforms designed to address global emergencies, ranging from climate change to responding to a global pandemic, there should be some consequence for not adhering to pledges. Perhaps this will lead to less ambitious statements, but it may be possible to increase accountability and see real results.

Empowering Chinese Youth at COP26



Bao Rong

Master of Environment Management at Yale School of the Environment
Co-Founder of the non-profit organization 2030 CLIMATE+ (2030 气候+) and Host of Let's TaIC (大声谈) podcast

Interviewed by Walker Darke



Walker Darke

Consultant at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and Ph.D Student at Fudan University

Walker Darke **Why is Climate Change important to you?**

Bao Rong

I'm really privileged to be an observer at the COP26 negotiations, as part of Yale University's delegation. For my master's degree at Yale School of the Environment, I specialize in Environmental Policy Analysis and Climate Change Science and Solutions. I'm particularly interested in global environmental governance and international climate policy from a comparative perspective. Therefore, coming to COP26 is a great opportunity for me to align my academic studies with real-world climate discussions.

Back home in China, climate change is a growing topic of discussion. However, there is little media targeted towards young people about climate solutions. That's why I and a few friends passionate about climate change started a Chinese non-profit organization and a podcast, Let's TaIC, to talk about solutions, not just problems, that we as individuals and as Chinese youth can do to tackle climate change.

We interview guests from across corporate, government, academia, and civil society to share good practices in reducing carbon footprints, local and national climate mitigation strategies as well as wider climate problems facing the developing world. This time at COP26, we are hosting a roundtable discussion as a side event at the China Corporate Pavilion. We hope to report on the conference by bringing frontline news from Glasgow to our listeners in China while delivering domestic voices to the international stage. We are immensely proud and grateful

that our podcast has been awarded the 2021 Climate Innovation Grant by Yale Center for Business and the Environment.

Walker Darke What are your key observations at COP26?

Bao Rong Youth empowerment is a massive driver towards some of the positive outcomes we have seen at COP26. Young people will be the most impacted by climate change and have a lot to offer in providing insights and sharing policy objectives towards long-term thinking. It is a positive step that governments at local, regional, and national levels are engaging more with young people to support climate solutions. I hope that this becomes the norm across climate policy decision-making.

On a more technical level, climate finance has been a really important topic of discussion at COP26. Developed countries need to be doing far more in providing financial support and technology transfer. Stronger recognition of the need to attain quality of life in developing countries requires a careful balancing of priorities and climate targets.

Finally, there has already been loss and damage of lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure, due to climate change. And the number is still on the rise. Adaptation funds for the development of resilient communities and infrastructure must be at the forefront of discussions. Good practice and a common understanding of climate-resilient solutions from all parts of the world should be embraced.

Walker Darke What's it like being Chinese at COP26?

Bao Rong I met with delegates from all over the world, and many of them said to me, "There are not many Chinese faces at COP26." Many Western media reports have also said that China is not present at COP26. I think this is a misunderstanding. China's national delegation is similar to that of many other nations. Chinese experts are in attendance to contribute to the conference's critical issues including climate finance, technology transfer, and natural resource management.



Bao Rong at COP26

Meanwhile, Chinese youth are making their voice heard. More and more Chinese youth are contributing to the international pool of voices to try to bridge the gap between a lack of communication between perspectives from inside and outside China. I'm proud and honored to be a part of this critical international dialogue on such important issues as climate change.

Though I cannot represent the whole population, I care about the health of people and our planet like many other Chinese people do. I am here to contribute a voice as an ordinary Chinese citizen, to deliver my point of view to the international conversation, to show the climate efforts I've witnessed in my country and bring international perspectives back to China: A bridge between geographic spheres.

Walker Darke **If you had one minute in front of World Leaders at COP26, what would you say?**

Bao Rong My name in Chinese is Bao Rong 包容, homophonic to 包容, a Chinese phrase meaning open-minded and inclusive. Climate problems are non-exclusive, impacting each country and every individual. Therefore, dialogues around climate should be inclusive, allowing diverse voices to be heard. Only with an open mind can we be understanding of each other and open to opportunities for solutions. This is my hope for future conversations and a lifelong philosophy I wish to sustain.

About this volume

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