Annex

An Important and Creative Contribution from China to the Ideology of Third World—A Comment on Professor An CHEN’s Article: “A Reflection on the South-South Coalition in the Last Half Century from the Perspective of International Economic Law-making: From Bandung, Doha and Cancun to Hong Kong”

Branislav Gosovic

Abstract Professor An CHEN portrays the dynamics of power that prevail in the WTO processes and the emergence of developing countries’ group action. He has also demonstrated the validity of the underlying premises of South–South Cooperation and South struggle. He greatly helps his readers, especially the younger ones who are not necessarily aware of the historical background or sensitized to the continuity and interrelatedness of issues, to grasp the challenges at stake. His positive attitude towards South–South Cooperation is very encouraging and most welcome. While fully cognizant of problems and difficulties, his 6C Rule

1Branislav Gosovic holds Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley, and is a retired UN career official, who worked in UNCTAD, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and was also a member of the secretariats in the World Commission on Environment and Development and in the South Commission. He was officer in charge of the secretariat of the South Centre 1991–2005. Dr. Gosovic is the author of a number of books and articles, including UNCTAD Conflict and Compromise—The Third World’s Quest for an Equitable World Economic Order through the United Nations, Sijthoff, Leiden, 1972. He is currently associated with Development Alternatives Global (DAG), an NGO located in Geneva, of which he is a founding member and acting secretary.

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(contradiction, conflict, consultation, compromise, cooperation, coordination, new contradiction) should be impressed on developing countries. The optimism and determination that the article conveys are most heartening. It is of special importance that this article comes from China, the country with an increasingly important force and leading factor in South–South Cooperation. This article is likely to remain as a standard reference, both for students and scholars, as well as for policy makers and those involved in negotiations and day-to-day actions, and not only in the WTO. Indeed, the significance of this long article is in its serving as a theoretical and empirical tool for the globally weak nations in their confronting the strong and resisting hegemony in contemporary world.

In writing the present article, Professor An CHEN has made an important contribution to the study of South–South Cooperation and to the Third World thinking on this important subject. More generally, the author has enriched the international scholarship and literature on the topic of the often unrewarding and frustrating North–South development dialogue and negotiations. Indeed, what makes this study rather unique and valuable is that it is contributed by a distinguished academic from China, a country that has not been so far well represented in the international literature dealing with this highly important subject matter.

By making a broad historical view of developing countries’ efforts to act and negotiate collectively and as a group in the world arena, starting with the 1955 Bandung Conference, and linking this with the contemporary events taking place in the WTO on which the article focuses, Professor An CHEN has highlighted two fundamental facts:

The continuity of developing countries’ joint action and the validity of their struggle

That this joint group action is now also beginning to take place in the WTO—unlike in GATT before it, the Uruguay Round or the WTO in its very early stages, where it was each country for itself and South group action was considered as “intrusion of UN and G77 politics,” was discouraged and even actively opposed.

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2 The present article written by Professor An CHEN of Xiamen University in China has won wide attention in international academic circles. The concluding section of this article was first published under the title “South-North Conflicts in a Historical Perspective,” in the authoritative South Bulletin, no. 120, 2006. Consequently, its full version entitled “A reflection on the South-South Coalition in the Last Half Century from the Perspective of International Economic Law-making” was published in The Journal of World Investment & Trade (JWIT), Vol. 7, No. 2, April 2006. At the request of JWIT’s editor, Mr. Jacques Werner, the said version was rewritten and published under a new title “Weak versus Strong at the WTO” in The Geneva Post Quarterly (The Journal of World Affairs, JWA), Vol. I, No. 1, April 2006. With time passing, this article received growing attention in international academic circles. Its newly updated version was translated into Korean language and published in the leading Korean academic journal, The Journal of Inha Law, Vol. IX, No. 2, June 2006. Most recently, its updated English version was included in the volume edited by Professor Yong-Shik Lee, entitled “Economic Law through World Trade: A Developing World Perspective,” Kluwer Law International, Alphen aan den Rijn, 2007.
It is their difficult experiences in the WTO, in application of various often unequal agreements that had emerged from the Uruguay Round in facing the pressures from the countries of the North, that contributed to developing countries accepting the necessity of collective action as the sole means of promoting and protecting their interests, in supposedly “level playing fields” that in fact are highly lopsided in favor of the developed countries.

In his excellent article, Professor An CHEN portrays the dynamics of power that prevail in the WTO processes and the emergence of developing countries’ group action, and helps to highlight the strategic, vital importance of close and effective South–South Cooperation in this important organization. By linking up events and efforts that span decades, he has thrown light on the continuity of efforts, challenges, and obstacles that the countries of the South have been facing in the global arena and in their efforts to bring about a more just and equitable world economic order, helpful and conducive to their development efforts. He has also demonstrated the validity of the underlying premises of South–South Cooperation and South struggle.

By providing sufficient but never overwhelming empirical detail, while keeping an overall vision and offering a comprehensive view, Professor An CHEN greatly helps his readers, especially the younger ones who are not necessarily aware of the historical background or sensitized to the continuity and interrelatedness of issues, to grasp the challenges at stake.

Finally, Professor An CHEN’s positive attitude towards South–South Cooperation, including the vital importance of adequate institutional support for such cooperation, is very encouraging and most welcome. While fully cognizant of problems and difficulties, his 6C Rule (contradiction, conflict, consultation, compromise, cooperation, coordination, new contradiction), and his stressing the importance of a tenacious and unrelenting struggle, including evolving equitable rules and practices of international economic law as one of the centerpieces of international cooperation, should be impressed on many of those in the developing countries who are often disheartened by the difficulties in the way and slow or lack of progress in both North–South Dialogue and in South–South Cooperation. The optimism and determination that the article conveys are most heartening. It is of special importance that this article comes from China, that it will be widely read in this country and make an impression on its readers, including those in policy and decision-making positions that can make their country an increasingly important force and leading factor in all spheres of South–South Cooperation. For, if there is one conclusion that emerges clearly from the article, and its recommendations, it is that a great lot can be achieved through determined and sustained collective action and South–South Cooperation, and with necessary human, institutional, and financial support devoted to this purpose.

While the WTO story dealt with ends with Hong Kong Ministerial Conference, this does not make the article dated. On the contrary, the basic themes of the article illustrated by the story remain valid and are of a longer-term significance, as the events since Hong Kong amply illustrate. Thus, Professor An CHEN’s article is likely to remain as a standard reference, both for students and scholars, as well as for policy makers and those involved in negotiations and day-to-day actions, and not
only in the WTO. Hopefully, also, it will have some positive impact on strengthening South–South Cooperation, and its mechanisms and institutions.

Indeed, the significance of this long article is in its serving as a theoretical and empirical tool for the globally weak nations in their confronting the strong and resisting hegemony in contemporary world.

**WTO Citadel Needs to Be Challenged by the South—

Branislav Gosovic

**Abstract**

Professor CHEN offers a comprehensive analysis and addresses some vital, structural, and policy issues concerning the GATT/WTO institutional stronghold and the now 60-year-old efforts of the developing countries of the South to secure a rightful place in this mechanism for governing international trade and to have their specific conditions and development needs properly recognized. These initial and promising inroads of the South in GATT/WTO were resisted from any significant change by the developed countries. The South–South “axis” may prove an effective way to advance and challenge the global status quo embodied in the WTO and pressure the North by power of example of collective, autonomous self-reliance and by establishing in mutual relations elements of an “economic order with South–South characteristics.” Professor CHEN’s article should be made subject for required reading and study by leaders and policy makers in all developing countries. The article should also be part of the curriculum in developing countries’ ministries, universities, and institutes of higher learning that prepare new cadres and officials for participation and work in the multilateral sphere, including South–South mechanisms, the UN and the UN system, and of course in the WTO and its sister organizations, IMF and the World Bank.

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3 Branislav Gosovic holds PhD from University of California, Berkeley, and is a retired UN career official, who worked in UNCTAD, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and was also a member of the secretariats in the World Commission on Environment and Development and in the South Commission. He was officer in charge of the secretariat of the South Centre 1991–2005. Dr. Gosovic is the author of a number of books and articles, including *UNCTAD Conflict and Compromise—The Third World’s Quest for an Equitable World Economic Order through the United Nations*, Sijthoff, Leiden, 1972. He is currently associated with Development Alternatives Global (DAG), an NGO located in Geneva, of which he is a founding member and acting secretary.

The present comment and essay contributed by Professor Branislav Gosovic was first published bilingually in the *Journal of International Economic Law (Chinese)*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Beijing University Press, 2013.
In his inimitable style, Professor An CHEN has written yet another perceptive, exceptional article on the WTO [1]. It should be required background reading for all those dealing with and trying to understand this organization and the persistent, overarching North–South tensions that have characterized it.

Professor CHEN offers a comprehensive analysis and addresses some vital, structural, and policy issues concerning the GATT/WTO institutional stronghold and the now 60-year-old efforts of the developing countries of the South to secure a rightful place in this mechanism for governing international trade and to have their specific conditions and development needs properly recognized. The translation of given Chinese expressions from the original text into English is picturesque and helps convey the basic message in an effective way. For example, in speaking about the WTO Dispute Settlement Body, the author mentions its due but unfulfilled function “of protecting the weak, strengthening the just, and eliminating the evil.”

Professor CHEN’s optimism about possibilities of improvements in accommodating development and developing countries’ needs in the fold of the WTO and before it in GATT, in spite of often very slow progress, is possibly justified in the longer term and from a historical perspective. However, this may not be of much comfort for impatient and hard-pressed developing countries and for many of those who have been involved in slow, frustrating negotiations that drag on for years and decades without major advances, including most recently the Doha “Development” Round.

It is even less of a consolation to those who remember the days, also depicted in this article, of the successful developing countries’ challenge to GATT—the post-World War II “agreement,” thus a “noninstitution,” often referred to as “rich men’s club,” which was the bastion of North dominance of the global trading system. This challenge was mounted in the 1960s by the developing countries, collectively as a group, and by UNCTAD, the new UN organization established in 1964 against the wishes of the North, mandated to deal with trade and development.

These initial and promising inroads of the South in GATT, as well as the institutional challenge embodied in UNCTAD, were not to the liking of the developed countries. They managed eventually to neutralize and roll back these advances, as part of the broader, strategic offensive to counter the organized group action of developing countries to place development at the very center of global trade agenda and of UN preoccupations. This drive by the North led to the termination of the North–South development dialogue. It culminated in the Uruguay Round negotiations and agreements, including the establishment of a new institution, the World Trade Organization. The WTO institutional construct was conceived and designed in OECD to replace the ephemeral GATT and unveiled by the developed countries at the closing stage of the Round.

Trade and trade-related agreements resulting from the Uruguay Round and the institutional design embodied in the WTO were along the lines desired by the developed countries. They were meant to sustain the existing system and to serve as a vehicle for advancing and translating into worldwide practice the rising neoliberal globalization and the Washington consensus model.

The developing countries, mostly each one on its own during these negotiations and without the necessary intellectual and technical resources, or institutional
backup necessary to assume a group stand and initiative, fought a defensive battle and tried to dull the sharp edge of the draft proposals and agreements initiated by the developed countries. In contrast, the developed countries acted as a group on all key policy issues, especially when it came to dealings with the developing countries. They were well prepared and organized and could draw on their own institutions, in particular the OECD. Importantly, they were backed by corporate interests, which had clear objectives and specific proposals for the new trade and trade-related global regime that were included in the negotiating agenda by the North.

While the Uruguay Round outcomes do recognize the development needs and challenges, on the whole, one can observe that inadequate or lip service was paid to these. Also, as Professor CHEN points out, it became evident later that the developed countries were not serious about implementing many of their promises and commitments on the basis of which they persuaded developing countries to accept the agreements. Furthermore, the underlying premises, in particular, the principle of the “level playing fields,” by treating all “players” as equals, effectively pulled the rug from under the feet of trade and development link. It thus negated the corresponding development-related changes in GATT, painstakingly secured by joint efforts of G77 and UNCTAD during the preceding period.

As highlighted by Professor CHEN in his scholarly article, the “rules of the game” that were put in place in this manner and given the force of binding international law were ab initio biased against and prejudicial to the “weak group,” i.e., the South. Once developing countries signed the set of Uruguay Round agreements in Marrakech, these were for all practical purposes cast in concrete, impossible to change or reform without the consent of major players, who have not shown any intention or interest in possible modifications of international law embodied in these agreements (e.g., TRIPS) or in changing the status quo in a significant way.

Professor CHEN’s article should be made subject for required reading and study by leaders and policy makers in all developing countries. The study offers an analysis which is not commonly encountered in the literature today. The article provides the essential background knowledge that they need to be familiar with and insights regarding challenges their countries face in this all-important global organization. In particular, those few South leaders taking part in G20 or other more limited forums would benefit from the overview by the author.

The article should also be part of the curriculum in developing countries’ ministries, universities, and institutes of higher learning that prepare new cadres and officials for participation and work in the multilateral sphere, including South–South mechanisms, the UN and the UN system, and of course in the WTO and its sister organizations, IMF and the World Bank. As it happens, in their learning, they often rely exclusively on sources and literature originating in the developed countries, which may not be adequate or sufficient to prepare them to defend and promote their own countries’ interests or the joint cause of the South in the global arena.

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4 The text of the article has been sent by the author of this comment to the Group of 77 in New York and the South Centre, for circulation and as material that should be made available to those engaged in related work and activities.
The countries of the South and their representatives should be knowledgeable, technically and politically well equipped, and firm in dealings with the North in the WTO and generally in multilateral negotiations and processes.

The author’s underlying message that unfair and biased outcomes were transformed into “international law” which is hard to change is the key challenge for the South. It needs to be recognized and dealt with. Developing countries’ hands will be bound, and they will remain “entrapped,” “choiceless,” and “helpless” to use Professor CHEN’s words, as long as they do not dare, together as a group, to question, challenge, and reject these fundamental biases, the “loaded dice,” unfairness of rules, and the institution itself that embodies and promotes these.

As for the North, it will use all means possible to protect its citadel from any significant change that may affect its basic interests or cast doubt on the integrity of the existing system. It will continue to use fully its technical edge and institutional superiority to dominate the process, negotiations, rule making and implementation, and institutions, and, indeed, to neutralize possible group action of developing countries and keep them on the defensive.

The GATT/WTO experience of the last 60 years, encapsulated in Professor CHEN’s treatise, leads one to conclude:

- That an effective challenge to the WTO and to “deep frozen,” “sacred” rules of the game it embodies as international law is not likely to be mounted successfully from within this organization and by relying on its internal procedures and dynamics.
- That such a challenge from within the WTO is hardly possible as long as the developing countries continue to be fragmented and give absolute priority to national interest only, are driven by conflicting interests when it comes to specific issues of current concern which as a rule tend to take precedence over systemic questions, and are exposed and vulnerable to carrots/sticks arsenal and tactics skillfully administered by the North to each developing country according to its circumstances and urgent needs, which includes “taming” individual negotiators via bilateral pressure on their capitals.\(^5\)
- That the North which acts as a group in the WTO on matters which concern the South will continue to do so and will remain resilient and adaptive.
- That the only way for the South to challenge the North and the WTO effectively is to put its collective act together, as it succeeded in doing for a period in the 1960s and 1970s. This, however, could prove difficult in the WTO where group action of developing countries has been rather tenuous and tentative, an organization where multidimensional global power politics are practiced by the North and the cost-benefit, economic trade-offs and bottom line reasoning of daily survival prevails in individual developing countries.

Therefore, any such challenge by the South has to be first conceptualized and organized outside the ramparts of the WTO, where attempts of this nature are hamstrung by power and legal and procedural obstacles.

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\(^5\) See Fatoumata Jawara and Aileen Kwa [2].
Considering international trade as an aspect of economic and social development, and a dimension of the global economic and political order, requires a comprehensive review of the WTO and of its rules of the game. Indeed, such a review is called for being that very soon two decades will have elapsed since WTO’s establishment and that the world and national economies have been experiencing major political, social, and economic turbulences of a systemic nature and causation, a system of which the WTO is an integral component.

Based on such an analysis, objectives and proposals for revising the rules of the game will need to be advanced. This should include principles that recognize the highly unequal or tilted playing fields that exist in practice and are biased and prejudicial to and exploitative of the weak. The South could demand that these be modified and leveled in a manner that prioritizes and accommodates development conditions and needs of developing countries. The new orientation and underlying premises need to be reflected appropriately in the institutional structure and processes in order to assure equitable follow-up and outcomes in the future.

The above then is a political challenge to the South which at first sight appears as a “mission impossible.” Indeed, it is not likely to be mounted by commerce and finance ministries, or technocrats and bureaucrats on their own. It calls for genuine political leadership and a global vision at the highest level, which is not common among national leaders today, engulfed deeply in domestic politics and priorities. It is also a technical and organizational challenge and requires full and adequate institutional backup and expertise which cannot be mobilized within individual countries and, in principle, should come from the UN and in particular its body dedicated to trade and development, UNCTAD, as it did during a period in the past.

These desiderata, however, may appear difficult to attain in practice. One would doubt that South can mount sufficient political enthusiasm, solidarity, and power to bring about required changes within the WTO, by acting as the Group of 77 as it did in the 1960s in GATT when UNCTAD was launched. One can also assume that the North would be hardly willing to agree to weaken its hold on the UN and UNCTAD and allow them to offer leadership and a helping hand to the South in a renewed quest for a just international economic order.

However, the recently concluded UNCTAD XIII in Doha, what preceded it and what transpired there, offers a ray of hope that this organization may yet see its fortunes revived, if and provided the developing countries put together their collective act and use their political and economic clout to elaborate their common agenda and to give support to and act with determination within UNCTAD.

The meeting in Doha witnessed yet another assault on UNCTAD’s mandate by developed countries. This was nothing new or unexpected, but part and parcel of their determined and continuous drive over the last three decades to marginalize UNCTAD and neutralize any potential threat it represents to the GATT/WTO, and indeed IMF/World Bank, global economic order.

They still remember preparations for UNCTAD I in 1964 and the developing countries’ initiatives which forced their hand to make significant concessions, including the adoption of Part IV in GATT, in order to weaken the political pressure and assure the survival of this agreement. They also recalled the UNCTAD-led
study on the creation of an International Trade Organization (ITO) and the alarm that this caused in the GATT secretariat worried about the survival of their abode, at that time located in Villa Le Bocage on the UN grounds in Geneva.6

And in preparations for the planned new round of negotiations in GATT, which eventually was dubbed the Uruguay Round because the conference which launched it in September 1986 was held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, they were careful not to allow the renewal of the full term mandate of the then secretary-general of UNCTAD, Gamani Corea of Sri Lanka, limiting him to a 1-year extension only.

This was a precautionary measure for fear that he, as an active and articulate secretary-general of UNCTAD, would be too nettlesome in the planned negotiations and would back up and inspire the Group of 77 in the process of determining the nature of the Round and eventually in the negotiations that were to follow.7 This “personnel” act of selecting and approving the heads of UN organizations became an essential element of what has been aptly referred to as “the conservative counter-revolution of the 1980s”8 and of the new power politics practiced by the North in the multilateral organizations in the post-Cold War age.

The covert and overt drive to diminish UNCTAD intensified and at UNCTAD VIII, held in 1992 in Cartagena, Colombia. The organization saw a number of its key functions and critical roles simply eliminated, including those concerning commodities, finance, and negotiation of international agreements.


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6 Originally, GATT was housed in Villa Le Bocage on the grounds of the Palais des Nations. This small building could accommodate the tiny secretariat of GATT headed by Wyndham White. Eventually, an annex was built where additional staff was deployed. After UNCTAD was established in 1964, the lack of space in the original UN building which was constructed for the League of Nations made it necessary to build a new wing to house UNCTAD and UNHCR staff. This building was placed within shouting distance from Villa Le Bocage, blocking its idyllic, unimpeded view of the Lake Geneva and of the Alps. It also separated physically Villa Le Bocage from Villa La Pelouse, another small building on the UN grounds but closer to the lake, which was used as residence of Raul Prebisch when he became the first secretary-general of UNCTAD. GATT and then the WTO regained their central position and an unobstructed view on the local panorama when the organization was moved to the original ILO headquarters on the lakefront, in the beginning shared with UNHCR until the latter moved into a new building of its own.

7 Gamani Corea was UNCTAD secretary-general during the period 1974–1984. He was a secretary-general in the mold of Raul Prebisch, an economist with experience in national and international affairs and negotiations, someone who spoke well and conceptualized and wrote documents and speeches himself, and who had close to his heart the cause of the developing countries and was an activist for the cause of development. During his tenure, for example, he initiated the Integrated Programme for Commodities and was responsible for a number of initiatives which were not to the liking of the major developed countries. He was targeted by the Heritage Foundation as a personality for criticism in the context of its larger campaign directed at the UN, and at UNCTAD in particular. See, for example, the Heritage Foundation website backgrounders on UNCTAD by Stanley Michalak, Nos. 348, 374, 394, 438, and 477.

8 See John Toye and Richard Toye [3]. See also by the same authors [4].

longer mattered and that at the dawn of the new post-Cold War, in what has elsewhere been referred to as “end of history” age, there was no need for UNCTAD and UNIDO and that these two UN organizations should be simply closed down because “their reason for existing has disappeared.” And if kept retained in some form, they should only provide support to least developed and smallest countries.10

This recommendation by an “independent commission” was singled out and seized with enthusiasm from the body of the report by the developed countries. They began to agitate for the closure of UNCTAD, and rumors had it that this issue was to figure at the G7 Summit in Lyon, France, held in June 1996. It is only the spirited and elaborate defense of UNCTAD by the Group of 77, using a detailed position paper prepared with the assistance of the South Centre, that this attempt by the North to dispense with UNCTAD was successfully resisted.

Undeterred, the group of developed countries continued their systematic efforts to marginalize and diminish UNCTAD and shrink further its mandate, at UNCTAD IX in Midrand, South Africa, in 1996, and in the years that followed.

It is in this context that on the eve of UNCTAD XIII in Doha, the Geneva grapevine was abuzz with the rumor that this would be the last UNCTAD conference. Supposedly, the developed countries were unhappy with its work, and in particular with the “dissenting” views expressed in its annual flagship “Trade and Development Report” concerning world economic crisis and its causes, and were determined to shut down the organization once and for all, relegating its mission and objectives to oblivion.11

And indeed, the negative attitude of the developed countries during the preparatory negotiations in Geneva was such that the chairman of the Group of 77 was sufficiently bold to state in public that the negotiating “partners” from the North were reviving “neocolonialism.”12

The negative vibes and the attempts to diminish the importance of the Doha gathering were given a further impulse by the decision of the UN secretary-general not to attend this major UN conference, the first such high-level absence since UNCTAD was established in 1964. One can only surmise that a strong policy signal

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11 The rumors were so persistent that the former staff members of UNCTAD signed and made public a powerful joint statement “Silencing the message..or the messenger..or both?” which addressed the issues openly by calling “a spade a spade,” and had an obvious impact on the proceedings and on the stance of the developing countries. (The statement can be found on the website of the South Centre and on the web).
12 See statement by Ambassador Pisanu Chanvitan of Thailand on behalf of the G77 and China on 13 April 2012. He said inter alia: “we have seen strong opposition from our partners for one of the central themes running through the work and engagement of our Group: that the global economic and financial crisis marks for once and for all the end of the bad old days, and perhaps a dawn of an international regime of global economic governance based on the highest principles and ideals of the United Nations, including sovereignty, equality, and mutual respect. Instead we see behaviour that seems to indicate a desire for the dawn of a new neocolonialism. We cannot, we will not accept this.”
to skip the event must have been received on the 38th floor of the UN building, where the offices of the secretary-general are located.

One of the main contentious issues at this short, 1-week conference was whether UNCTAD should be permitted to venture into the domain having to do with the world economy and the international economic order, which were supposedly within the exclusive mandate of “other” organizations; read IMF, World Bank, and WTO.

After hard fought negotiations, the UNCTAD mandate as the “focal point in the United Nations for the integrated treatment of trade and development, and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development,” was preserved. Thus, in principle, the door was left open for the organization to say and argue conclusions and approaches which may differ from the established wisdom preferred and demanded by the North and articulated by the institutions under its control.

The “Doha mandate,” adopted by UNCTAD XIII, was thus in the end hailed as a “success,” given the deep divide and tensions that were evident during the negotiations between the North and the South, the extremely negative posture of some key developed countries, and the uncertainty that prevailed until the very end whether an agreed document will emerge.

In their final statement on the outcome of UNCTAD XIII, civil society groups said, inter alia: “we witnessed outrageous attempts by developed countries to change the policy basis and mandate of UNCTAD’s work with respect to key areas, such as the financial crisis, macroeconomic policy, debt management, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other trade agreements, intellectual property, industrial policy and other issues, toward reflecting more the interests of the developed countries corporations and investors, rather than maintaining historical policy commitments to assist developing countries to utilize trade and investment for inclusive and sustainable development.”

The Doha outcome document in addressing the role of UNCTAD appears somewhat as a long laundry list, where UNCTAD is assigned many tasks and responsibilities vis-à-vis developing countries, including to provide technical assistance to the least developed, landlocked, and island states, many of which are of marginal importance and which the secretariat does not have the capacity or resources to deliver properly. This multitude of roles and activities demanded from a small organization, drowning already in excess administrative duties, detracts from its capacity to address the larger, strategic issues that concern international economic order and the global system and structures that underline it, including those embodied in the WTO, which by the way does not figure in an important way in the outcome document.

The impression, then, is that the North is rather determined to keep UNCTAD in its place and that its posture during the Doha negotiations was a warning to the organization “not to rock the boat” and one more indication by developed countries

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13 See “Final Statement of Civil Society on the Outcome of UNCTAD XIII,” 26 April 2012, which can be found on website UNCTADXIII.org.
that they may not look kindly or indeed tolerate dissent and divergence originating from UNCTAD. This concerns its annual Trade and Development Report (TDR), which has been questioning and doubting the reigning wisdom and analysis emanating from the key organizations where the developed countries are still in full control.

In view of the above, and in the context of the broader drive by the North to harness the UN in service of its goals and to practice “damage control” given the “bad” experience with the organization in the 1960s and 1970s, the developing countries cannot place all their expectations and hopes to get heard and listened to by relying on UNCTAD in its present state.

This UN outpost, which the South and G77 and China are linked to with the umbilical cord, is likely to be kept on a tight leash by the North, including via control of its budget, personnel and appointment policies, work program, activities, and outputs. However, an active and supportive South and G77 can give a new lease to life to this organization. In particular, this concerns UNCTAD’s secretariat which with the help of a sustained political impulse from the South, and the like-minded civil society organizations, could see its breathing space and latitude for policy initiative enlarged, especially after the Doha confrontation which has reopened old issues and brought into the open the long-suppressed, simmering passions in the developing countries.

In parallel, however, the developing countries will need to seek other means to regain the position of a real challenger in the world arena that they used to enjoy during a period of time, as G77 and NAM.

An indirect approach is promising, without confronting head on the “stonewalling” developed countries, and indeed by deliberately ignoring them. This can be achieved via dynamic and innovative South–South Cooperation, “at home,” so to say, within the South, and thus influence the North and world economic affairs by example and by action from outside the perimeter of the “playing field,” dominated and controlled by developed countries, as implied by Professor CHEN in his study. Today, the importance and role of the global South in the world economy is such that it provides developing countries with needed scope and sufficient power to renew with collective self-reliance approaches, which are also sure to have a significant policy impact on the global system and the state of North–South relations.

This could be initiated by adopting and putting into practice the desired objectives and rules of the game in one’s own backyard or sphere and in various South–South trade and development arrangements and practices. For example, this possibility exists in Africa, where China, India, and Brazil are beginning to play important roles as “locomotives” of innovative forms of South–South Cooperation and development.

One can argue that these inroads in Africa have prompted the interest and support for South–South Cooperation by the North, especially keen on its triangular forms with the participation of developed countries, and often critical of the budding ventures. The demonstration effect has brought about this major geopolitical shift on the part of the developed countries, after decades of having blocked and
undermined such South–South efforts, including regional integration. (One may remember, thus, that in 1995 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for a UN Conference on South–South Cooperation to be held; because of opposition by some key developed countries, this conference took place only in 2009.)

As a collateral benefit of this change, it has thus proven possible to reestablish in 2009 a unit on South–South Cooperation in UNCTAD, named Economic Cooperation and Integration among Developing Countries (ECIDC). To recall, UNCTAD’s pioneering work and mandate in regional integration and economic cooperation among developing countries was neutralized when its secretariat division on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (ECDC) was shut down in 1996, based on the decision taken at UNCTAD XI in Midrand.14

The South–South “axis” may prove also an effective way to advance and challenge the global status quo embodied in the WTO and pressure the North by power of example of collective, autonomous self-reliance and by establishing in mutual relations elements of an “economic order with South–South characteristics.” Such an approach would create significant leverage in dealing with the developed countries which always play hard ball, power politics with the South. They seem to respond much more readily to this approach, in contrast with the mostly futile practice by developing countries of pleading as mere supplicants for favors and concessions from traditionally unwilling partners, now even less willing to respond as they have to cope with their own deep systemic crisis.

The South–South institutions exist today that can provide the necessary and credible backup to such self-help efforts of the developing countries. For example, at the global level, the South Centre, as an intergovernmental organization and think tank of the developing countries (located within walking distance of both UNCTAD and WTO), were it fully funded and adequately staffed with the best expertise (e.g., 25 top notch, motivated experts as in the time of early UNCTAD under Raul Prebisch, led by an inspiring world renowned personality committed to cause of global equity, cooperation, and justice), offers a ready-made institutional platform on which to build and could provide the necessary, genuinely South backup to energize, inspire, and guide the action of what the author calls the “weak group,” thus helping to transform it again into a strong and influential one.

Professor CHEN’s article is a plea for a renewed, reinvigorated drive by the Global South in the field of trade and development, and international economic order. This is an undertaking where key developing countries, including his own, can provide the economic weight, financial support, and political leadership needed, provided they decide to do so and if they assign high priority to South’s common goals in the world arena. This is not a dream; it is a logical continuation of the historic struggle that began six decades ago, a short span on the historic scale.

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14 The ECDC division was abolished following the decision on restructuring taken at UNCTAD XI in Midrand based on the rationale that this cross-sectoral issue can best be dealt with by integrating it into the work programs of other secretariat divisions.
China: “Threat” or “Opportunity”? Professor An CHEN’s Article on “Yellow Peril”/“China Threat” Doctrines—An Important Contribution to the Study and Understanding of Contemporary World Politics

Branislav Gosovic

Abstract The continued global intellectual hegemony, projected and carefully nurtured by the North, is conspicuous in the domain of political theory, social sciences, economics, and world politics. It represents an important, supportive ingredient of the North’s global empire. China was depicted as a new exploiter and accused of replicating actions and behavior characteristic of the classical colonial powers. It is stimulating when conformity, self-censorship, or resignation vis-à-vis the reigning storyline is widespread in governments, the media, as well as the academia, Professor CHEN has successfully countered the various calumnies directed at China and penned an outstanding and very rare treatise on this important issue. This article is indeed a major contribution to the study and understanding of contemporary world politics. Sincerely people would expect to see leaders, policy- and opinion-makers, not only in China but also in other developing countries, including those involved in Group of 77 and NAM activities; read and study Professor CHEN’s article and absorb the insights and conclusions presented by the author. The changing of the nature of international discourse and relations and the reintroducing of the progressive option on the world scene, which would require the overcoming of the powerful, well-organized, and aggressive structural-status-quo forces, would represent a delayed fruition of unfinished processes initiated in the twentieth century and amount to a twenty-first-century global revolution and renaissance by peaceful means. China’s potential contribution to this objective would be of epochal significance.

In 2007, I read The Coming China Trade and Economic Wars, How to Fight and Win Them, authored by Peter Navarro, from University of California, Irvine. At that time, I had already begun to follow how China was being portrayed by the media in the West, especially its presence in Africa and in the South in general. The surge of

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15 Branislav Gosovic holds PhD from University of California, Berkeley, and is a retired UN career official, who worked in UNCTAD, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and was also a member of the secretariats in the World Commission on Environment and Development and in the South Commission. He was officer in charge of the secretariat of the South Centre 1991–2005. Dr. Gosovic is the author of a number of books and articles, including UNCTAD Conflict and Compromise—The Third World’s Quest for an Equitable World Economic Order through the United Nations, Sijthoff, Leiden, 1972. He is currently associated with Development Alternatives Global (DAG), an NGO located in Geneva, of which he is a founding member and acting secretary.

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biased, openly hostile, and “finding fault with everything” coverage was striking. China was depicted as a new exploiter and accused of replicating actions and behavior characteristic of the classical colonial powers. Positive and balanced comments were rare, while isolated incidents were given prominence. There is no doubt that this still ongoing campaign, conducted on a global scale, aims to influence the world public opinion. But it is also meant to generate antagonism, fear, and anti-China sentiment in developing countries and discredit China’s presence and contribution to their national development. This has affected even the developing countries where China had enjoyed respect and admiration from the early years when it began to provide generous and vital support to their development and struggle for independence.

Thus, I was pleased to read the recent article on “Yellow Peril”/“China Threat” doctrines by Senior Professor An CHEN, a prominent Chinese academic and scholar, from Xiamen University, who sheds light on the roots, intellectual and policy antecedents, i.e., the “family tree,” of these doctrines and elaborates the latest variant and meaning in the contemporary world’s geopolitics [6]. Professor An CHEN has penned an outstanding treatise on an important issue, and the *Journal of World Investment & Trade* has done a major service to the international community and scholarship by printing its English translation. It is stimulating to read such a rich and enlightening analysis coming from a developing country at a time when conformity, self-censorship, or resignation vis-à-vis the reigning storyline is widespread in governments, the media, as well as the academia. One would like to see leaders, policy- and opinion-makers, not only in China but also in other developing countries, including those involved in Group of 77 and NAM activities; read and study Professor CHEN’s article and absorb the insights and conclusions presented by the author. It is a “must reading” for those who study or are trying to understand China–West relations of today. It helps one to appreciate China’s sensitivities and reactions, as well as to grasp the Western, US-led, global, all-azimuth offensive against this country, of which the “China threat” intellectual construct, as a contemporary iteration of the earlier “yellow peril” doctrine, represents the overarching framework.

**Introduction**

The continued global intellectual hegemony, projected and carefully nurtured by the North, is conspicuous in the domain of political theory, social sciences, economics, and world politics.\(^\text{16}\) It represents an important, supportive ingredient of the North’s global empire.

The resulting intellectual, knowledge, and policy advantage enjoyed by the developed countries has been an important aspect of the structural asymmetries in the

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\(^{16}\) For an attempt to flesh out the concept of “global intellectual hegemony,” in the context of international development politics and discourse, see my article “Global Intellectual Hegemony and the International Development Agenda,” UNESCO *International Social Science Journal*, 166, December 2000, pp. 447–456.
world arena between the dominant North and the aspiring South. The latter has been struggling, with mixed success, for emancipation ever since the age of colonialism and imperialism was proclaimed in the United Nations as having ended more than 50 years ago. In the conceptual domain, which represents one of the essential pillars of such emancipation, the South seems to be chronically ensnared and kept off balance and is often intellectually overwhelmed and disarmed. This situation, which has become more pronounced in the recent period of “neoliberal/neo-con” ascendance, one characterized by the marginalization, dismissing or belittling of alternative or dissenting views, is both an element and a consequence of the North-centered unipolar world.

It is in this global context that one needs to view the article by Professor An CHEN and appreciate its wider relevance. His analysis is a challenge from within the South to the North’s domination in the global policy and intellectual spheres, and a gauntlet thrown down to opinion-makers (“commentariat”), professoriat, and intellectuals that follow and support the North’s global outlook, interests, and declared or hidden agendas.

Similar scholarly challenges to the current state of affairs exist, both in the North and the South, but they remain spotty and marginal. Prominent among these are the four highly significant books written by the late Professor Chalmers Johnson, then at University of California, San Diego. He was an insider and a well-known “establishment intellectual” in the 1960s during his tenure at University of California, Berkeley—“a spear-carrier for the Empire” as he described himself. To the dismay of his academic colleagues, Professor Johnson radically changed his stand and analysis in the late years of his academic career, becoming openly critical in his writings of global empire-building and hegemonic claims and aspirations of his country.17 Hopefully, the readers of the “yellow peril-China threat” doctrines article, who have not read these books of Professor Chalmers Johnson, will do so, as they are essential for understanding the global posture of the United States and complement and substantiate Professor CHEN’s analysis.

The pending task is to counter the global policy and intellectual domination exercised by the North. In part, this needs to be done by unmasking and deconstructing the historical and intellectual origins that feed, underpin, and legitimize the North’s contemporary global designs and help to nurture the persistence of its colonial and imperialist cum Cold War mindset, freshly packaged and adapted to suit evolving conditions and modern times.

This calls for an intellectual effort and building up of capacities that challenge such dominance on its own ground by resorting to a historical, empirical, juridical, political theory analysis of the kind undertaken by Professor An CHEN. It is important

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that such engaged scholarship be encouraged and sustained, be given visibility, be 
popularized, and, most of all, be used and internalized by political and opinion 
leaders. It needs to be drawn upon systematically by the South in its collective 
challenge to the West-dominated international order. This is a struggle that it 
initiated as a group more than half a century ago with high hopes and expectations, 
but, for a variety of reasons, failed to pursue effectively in the global hiatus of the 
ensuing period.¹⁸

Works of this nature need to be studied also by the young in the developing 
countries, who are preparing for active life and careers. Often, they are dependent 
on and formed by the Western mainstream scholarship, while being unaware of its 
intellectual and political pedigree and historical background, and are thus unprepared 
to assess and understand critically what they read, which, as a rule, is considered 
and touted as objective and unbiased scholarship.

Professor CHEN’s article is of added value because it sets the North’s present-
day attitudes and approaches towards China, spearheaded by the United States, in 
their historical context and identifies their policy and intellectual antecedents. It 
offers the background of relations between China and the imperialist powers that 
coveted and preyed on this country in the earlier periods.

China’s position at that time was similar in many ways to the situations of depen-
dence on exogenous forces that most developing countries still face in one form or 
another. Professor CHEN’s description of China’s early experiences with the impe-
rialist states will strike a familiar chord in many developing countries today, espe-
cially African, which, in dealings with those same powers, are exposed to a variety 
of pressures, among these, to accept inequitable free trade agreements and bilateral 
investment treaties, as well as military intervention, presence, and bases.

All too often, the colonial-age history and facts are forgotten as no longer 
“relevant” and people in many developing countries, especially younger generations, 
are not sufficiently aware of the realities of the past and are deprived of an important 
dimension for understanding and dealing with the present challenges and for 
shaping their own future. They are thus handicapped in coping with colonialism’s 
and imperialism’s legacies that emanate in novel forms from the same traditional 
centers of power, which are unwilling to shed and transcend their “basic instincts,” 
deep-seated habits and behavior rooted in and inspired by their past.

¹⁸ For a pioneering and so far unique effort, by someone from the South sympathetic to the develop-
ing countries and their cause, to depict the shared history of the developing countries in their com-
mon quest to change the North-dominated global order, see two volumes by Vijay Prashad [7], 
and [8]. These two books represent an instance of a challenge to the dominance of Western scholars 
and commentators in analysis of the Third World and the Global South, who, ever since the 
Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 emerged on the global scene, have spared no effort, 
much like their own countries in international forums, to deny and discredit the notion of the 
South, dismiss the commonalities among developing countries, and highlight what divides them. 
Their inspiration, no doubt, is quite similar to that which fuels media coverage and academic 
analysis of China in the West today.
The “China Threat” Versus the “West Threat”

The “yellow peril” doctrine was in vogue during an epoch when China was weak and defenseless vis-à-vis the imperialist powers, which used their collective clout to satisfy and legitimize their appetites, including imposing unequal and debasing treaties and arrangements. The “China threat” doctrine version, on the other hand, is issued from the discomfort and self-doubt of these same powers. Today, they face a rising and determined counterforce that can not only match but is beginning to overtake them in a variety of domains, to challenge their continuing global dominance and, potentially, the very essence of the world system they have evolved and continue to sustain.

This contemporary “China threat” pastiche consists of a number of elements:

- The tenacious, racist bogey-talk about “yellow peril,” with “hordes” of yellow race people spreading over the meridians and supplanting the currently dominant white race by virtue of their greatly superior numbers.
- The “Red China menace,” or “communist yellow peril,” with China exporting worldwide its revolutionary credo, a “danger” that became topical with the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the defeat of the Kuomintang, a readily flammable paranoia still quite strong and continuously stoked, especially in the US conservative policy circles.
- Following the demise of the USSR, it was only logical for China to be tapped for the role of the single global enemy cum ideological villain, a supposed aggressor and threat, traditionally needed and used by the United States governing elites to galvanize the nation and domestic constituencies in support of their country’s global outreach in “self-defense” and in pursuit of national interests and of supposedly higher “universal” goals.
- The anxiety, awe, and envy some “white men”—convinced of their own racial superiority and god-assigned civilizational mission—harbor vis-à-vis the “rising China” and its development and modernization strides, which have been transforming the country, virtually overnight in historical terms, into a global economic superpower, a powerful competitor, and an equal in world political and economic arena and multilateral organizations.
- China’s growing political and economic presence and influence in developing countries, especially in regions endowed with oil and other natural resources, is particularly disturbing and disquieting for the developed countries, which continue to consider the South, especially their former colonies or spheres of influence, as their eminent domain.
- The China-driven diversifying and expanding of South–South Cooperation is challenging and diluting the traditional political and economic links of dependence on the North that most developing countries have not been able to shake off since gaining political independence.
- The new forms of cooperation, mutual benefit, and equal partnership practiced by China—which are not burdened by colonial past, intrusiveness, paternalism,
and myriad, often political, conditionalities demanded and imposed by the developed countries, all too often based on their self-interest and geopolitical strategies yet meted from a pedestal of superiority, integrity, and altruism—are seen and appreciated by developing countries as contributing to their development and economic diversification. These approaches by China, such as in the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), demonstrate that alternative forms of development cooperation between equal partners, directed at countries’ expressed needs, emancipation, and genuine development, more equitable and appealing to the developing countries than those emanating from the North, exist, are possible, and can be successful.

- The steadily growing number of highly qualified human resources in China in diverse domains of endeavor and the resources and efforts devoted to quality education of young generations, including in S&T and other advanced fields crucial for the functioning of modern society and knowledge economy, are propelling this country into the forefront in terms of diverse, wide ranging capacities and availability of a large pool of skilled population.

- The major knowledge advances made by China in cutting-edge sciences and technologies, including military, space, cyber, information, biology, and renewable energy, which challenge some of the main pillars of the developed countries’ global dominance and capability to project political, military, and economic power and their agendas worldwide.

- China’s growing military power, its political influence and economic presence in East and Southeast Asia, which the United States has considered traditionally to be its preserve of vital importance to its national security, global aspirations, and position.

- The fact that China—thanks to its size, prowess, long-term vision, continuity of underlying objectives and government, and ability to take decisions and follow these with action—has recorded major successes in implementing the development agenda and achieving goals that all developing countries have been aspiring and striving to accomplish. This aspirational agenda includes technological development, economic diversification, modernized infrastructure, trade opportunities via exports, inflow of capital and finance directed at nationally defined development needs, achieving of sovereign control of one’s own economy and natural resources, making of notable strides in overcoming poverty and underdevelopment and meeting basic human needs, and transforming country’s economy and society.

- Last, but not least, a major political and ideological irritant in the “China threat” concoction is that the PR China is the heir of the Chinese People’s Revolution and continues to adhere to its basic revolutionary goals, values, and ideology.

Indeed, China has recorded its monumental achievements in a very short period of time without doubting or renouncing its principal political fundamentals, ideals, and heritage. This is contrary to the wishful thinking widespread in the North that countries led by communist parties cannot succeed and that China is bound to fail as “the last remaining communist state.”
What China has achieved it has done via “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and “modern socialist economic construction.” It has relied on a corresponding theoretical and political framework that has independence, national self-reliance, and autonomy as its strategic ingredients and differs radically from the model preferred and purveyed by the West. China has acted based on its own conclusions and not following, blindly and uncritically, the prevailing “wisdom” preached by the West and global institutions and structures under its control, or “one model fits all” prescriptions and instructions the West has imposed on the South and the world, including how one’s own polity, society, and economy should be “reformed” and organized and government and daily affairs run.

Today, China enjoys full political and economic independence and has not been kept on a leash of subservience and in check by the North. No doubt this is not to the liking of the traditional global establishment. Unlike other developing countries, China has adequate power to stand its ground, refuse to submit to the diktat and pressure of the North, and resist and counter its vindictiveness and retribution. It is the leading country of the South that has achieved emancipation from the enduring yoke and web of dependence imposed on the global periphery by the core developed countries during the age of colonialism and imperialism. China has been able to resist and neutralize new forms of dependence and to avoid being kept in or relegated to the inferior, submissive position of a client state. Indeed, it is treated as an equal, albeit reluctantly, by the countries accustomed to their position of unrivalled hegemony that are respectful only of matching or superior power.

An important point for the study of international relations and global “futures,” made by Professor CHEN, concerns the behavior and action of great powers, as the key global players on whose policy outlook and actions world peace and international cooperation depend. In the case of his own country China, Professor CHEN argues that history, its track record, past actions and deeds, paradigms, and legal/normative principles, which have oriented and inspired China in the past, will continue to play a significant, determinant role in its posture and goals in the global arena and to shape its behavior and actions.

Professor CHEN cites “independence and autonomy, together with equality and reciprocity” as the “fundamental jurisprudential principles and norms” of China’s traditional practices in its external relations. He underscores the five principles of PR China’s foreign policy defined in the 1982 Constitution—“the mutual respect to each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in each other’s domestic affairs, equality and reciprocity, and peaceful coexistence.” Professor CHEN underlines that, for its continuous “peaceful rising,” China, like other developing countries, needs and will strive for a “long-term peaceful international environment.”

This means that China will not seek global hegemony or follow the classic realpolitik and economic logic pursued by the traditional imperialist powers, which continue to be inspired and guided by the paradigms they have traditionally espoused, the precedents and examples in their past and present-day actions, and
the aggressive, expansionist geo-strategic objectives embedded in their national and military thinking and strategies, conscience and reflexes.

In the years and decades to come, scholars will be able to test empirically Professor CHEN’s thesis and arguments and, if he is proven right, counter the widespread view in the realist mode of thinking, especially in the West. This view holds that by the very dynamics of contemporary world, the “compulsions” of great powers, the militarization of the planet and outer space driven by advanced technologies, the nature of global capitalism and of modern economics, the global struggle for access to and control of limited renewable and nonrenewable natural resources, the corporate, financial, and big business logic, its own growing population, and indeed the “human nature”—China will be sucked into and be shaped by the existing system and will, in its global presence and policies, forego its roots and historical inspiration, and eventually morph into a hegemonic, expansionist, aggressive mode of reasoning and planetary behavior, imitating and following its former oppressors and colonizers with whom it will proceed to carve the planet into respective spheres of influence.

The fact that China is said to be and is depicted as a threat and increasingly an “aggressor,” including in cyber- and currency-warfare, and that a corresponding doctrine is “fabricated” by “hired scholars” to provide a new enemy in the post-Cold War period,\(^9\) Professor CHEN argues, is a theoretical precursor meant to prepare the ground for a policy of containment and possible aggression against China and means that “China Threat” is in fact a “China Threatening” scheme.

Professor CHEN does not delve on the question of what form such aggression could assume. But it is not difficult to visualize the basic scenario by observing the actions and behavior of the hegemonic powers in the post-Cold War unipolar and “transition” period, including the standard demands for “freedom,” “human rights,” “reform,” and “democratization,” all concepts to which these powers appear to claim exclusive ownership and thus the right to “champion,” define, interpret, and use them à la carte for unilateral, continuing intervention in domestic affairs of others, and to judge or bring to “justice” the selected ones, especially those who refuse to submit, including via military aggression. The precedent of Yugoslavia, which served as the pilot case to pave the way for and legitimize crass geopolitical interventionism in the period that has followed, is possibly an appropriate reference. Indeed, many similarities, parallels, and affinities exist between the now defunct SFR Yugoslavia and PR China.

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\(^9\)Professor CHEN offers an illustrative listing of this obsessive fixation with “bads” in China and “finding fault with everything,” including China’s development model, ideology, food consumption, exportation, stocks, immigrants, “spies,” and students abroad, all of which are labeled as “China threat.” He also notes that many problems confronting people in the North are linked or attributed to China and, for instance, claims made that taxes are needed to fund armaments to counterbalance China’s growing military power, that global warming is due to China’s emissions and high unemployment to China’s exports, that food safety is endangered by residues in China exports, etc.
Drawing on the Balkan precedent, one can easily think of elements of a scenario of aggression and “China threatening” scheme posited by Professor CHEN, including internal ethnic, religious, political, and class strife, fanned from without and within; civil wars, regime change, and emergence of “puppet,” pliant “reformist” establishments; military aggression and dismemberment; “transition”-phase multiparty politics, divisions, and conflicts; tearing apart of existing societal fabric; “balkanization” of provinces and peoples; de-development and predatory, savage privatization, or abolition of public goods and services, including education and health; marginalization of workers and peasants; rise of comprador neo-lib classes of exploiters, composed of economic and political elites that assume control of state and economy under exogenous sponsorship and tutelage; use of religion and ethnicity for control and disorientation of people and for *divide et impera* interventionism; and collective “brainwashing” and education, especially of the young, based on a new, externally imposed script, including a flood of books, educational materials, media and Internet, theater, and movies, all harnessed in wholesale denial and tarnishing of the achievements and legacies of the war of liberation, revolution, and socialist reconstruction period.

The chaos, disorder, and discontinuities that would engulf the country would give a free hand, once again, to external powers to manipulate and control the domestic situation and policies, foment internal divisions, and exploit weaknesses, with the ultimate goal of subjugating and fragmenting China anew, taming and disarming it politically and ideologically, making it fall in line and renounce its socialist heritage, cutting its traditional links with the developing countries and detaching it from the Group of 77 and the Global South, and converting and co-opting it to have it qualify for admission to membership in the so-called family of democratic nations, as “one of us,” and thus securing its exit from the global arena as an alternative force and power.

This would be the crowning success of the Cold War and neo-con drive to wipe the slate clean of what the hegemonic powers deem to be the last remaining structured, potential threat to the global imperialism and systemic status quo from among those challenges spawned by the revolutionary, national liberation upheavals and social movements that had swept the planet during the twentieth century.

**The “China Opportunity” and China’s Opportunity**

The People’s Republic of China is catching up and eclipsing the hitherto dominant Western powers by following its own homegrown, pragmatic, and eclectic yet, in its policy basics and overarching ideals, consistent path of development and national consolidation. In doing so, it draws on and learns from its own experiences, as well as from experiences of others in different parts of the world.

And, in the context of the more recent period of neoliberal globalization and exultant, unrestrained, hegemon-driven geopolitics, China is aware that it represents the ultimate prize and the main target which offers a potentially serious political, economic, and S&T resistance and challenge to the continuing global domination
exercised by the West and its power elites, assisted by and relying on local agents, allies, and global networks in countries that are studiously kept outside of the inner circle and remain on the “periphery” of the “center”. No doubt, conclusions are drawn from this and appropriate strategies and responses elaborated by China.

In the broader context of global system/structural change, as a key world power that has issued from a system-transformative revolution, it is to be expected that China, its leaders, and its peoples will also focus attention on how they can further contribute to evolving an enlightened, cooperative, equitable, democratic, and participatory global system, society, and community of nations and peoples, of what Professor CHEN has referred to as “long-term peaceful international environment,” to which one could add “people-oriented” and “development-friendly” one.

Indeed, China does find itself in a position to play an influential role in shaping the global prospects. A positive future of the planet significantly depends on China’s stability, actions, and outlook; its response to and success in dealing with global and domestic development challenges; and its example and contribution, through its actions and stand at home and abroad, to translating into reality and bringing to fruition many of the principles and goals launched in the United Nations but left unimplemented, including those championed by the G77 and NAM, such as in the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and the Declaration and Plan of Action for Establishing a New International Economic Order.

China can highlight the lessons of its own experiences including in terms of the leading social and economic role of the state in national development; the importance of collective and public goods and the key role of the public sector; the primacy of social equity and collective human rights; the focus on people’s needs, expectations, and aspirations; the “lifting up of the bottom half of population,” including through continued efforts to overcome poverty and backwardness and provide health, education, services, and employment for all based on national planning and distribution of national wealth and resources; the harnessing and orienting of S&T for the common welfare and as a public good; the achieving of sustainable development through purposeful and determined policies and objectives; and the overcoming and neutralizing of religious and ethnic dogmas and conflicts, their sources, and champions.

It can, together with other developing countries, and the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 as a collective voice of the Global South, defend and promote the all-important goals they all share: noninterference, peaceful coexistence, nonaggression, national independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

In this context, China can contribute to validating and returning to the world stage the concepts and aspirations that had given hope to millions of people. These concepts have been expunged from the international lexicon, including in the United Nations itself, and systematically belittled and negated by the global conservative crusade, launched by the reactionary governing forces in two major Western countries—with the support of academia, media, military-industrial complex, corporate and financial centers of power—and pursued aggressively and systematically with the design to bury the progressive agenda of social change and force-feed and impose their own political vision, preferences, and interests worldwide. It is how they have secured the discrediting of some key objectives and often reversal of
major political and social advances of the twentieth century and also contributed to the revival of many scourges faced by the humankind in the past, including aggression and wars, obscene concentration of wealth and rampant poverty, global spread of organized crime and high-level corruption, growing social and political divisions and violence, the resurgence and legitimization of neo-fascist ideologies, and rise of religious obscurantisms and fundamentalisms, which find fertile terrain in conditions of political and economic crises and social deprivation.

The South Commission, in its landmark 1990 report “The Challenge to the South,” placed major stress on collective self-reliance and South–South Cooperation as the vehicle for achieving many of the policy and development goals that the developing countries aspire to. In its deliberations, it highlighted the need for “locomotives of the South” and “engines of growth,” i.e., countries that, through their economic strength, could both energize (or pull) South–South Cooperation and use such cooperation also to influence and shape North–South relations, international development cooperation in general, and ultimately the world political and economic order.

South–South Cooperation offers such a historical opportunity for China. It is well placed to seize it and act upon it together with the other rising powers, in particular India, Brazil, and South Africa, and all other countries of the South, and with the involvement and support of their peoples, with all of whom it shares similar historical experiences, common development tasks, and strategic interests.


21The choice of Tanzania as the first stop on the African tour of the new Chinese President Xi Jinping was a clear reminder of the close cooperation between the two countries forged by their founding leaders 50 years ago. Symbolically, the major policy speech on China–Africa cooperation was delivered by President Xi at the new international convention center in Dar es Salaam, built with Chinese assistance and named after Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, who laid the foundations of China–Tanzania friendship and cooperation and made promotion of South solidarity, self-organization, and South–South Cooperation his principal mission in the closing years of his life, as the Chairman of the South Commission and then of the South Centre. President Xi’s speech in Dar es Salaam and China’s participation at the 2013 BRICS summit in Durban, South Africa, point in the direction of ever closer cooperation and mutual understanding between China and Africa, and China, Brazil, India, and South Africa as the four leading “locomotives” of the South. Sino-African and South–South Cooperation, in general, will encounter negative coverage by West-based analysts and commentators hostile to China and to developing countries’ mutual cooperation and collective self-reliance. China and other developing countries should thus themselves undertake careful scrutiny and monitoring of projects, activities, investments, behavior of public and private corporations, and indeed actions by partners in the field. The aim should be to present and publicize their perspective and end the monopoly by the North in depicting what is eminently a South–South domain. (For an example of a constructive analysis of China’s presence in Africa by someone hailing from the South, see Vijay Prashad “The Big BRICS—China Finds its Place,” www.counterpunch.org/2013/03/27/china-finds-its-place.) More importantly, such scrutiny should help identify problems and remedy possible deviations from the overall objectives and standards agreed, which tend to discredit achievements and significance of this cooperation. Efforts in this direction have been initiated in the framework of FOCAC, with the launching, in 2010, of the China-Africa Joint Research and Exchange Programme.
In conclusion, Professor An CHEN’s analysis reinforces the view that what some will decry as “China threat” is in fact “China opportunity.” Or, as Sun Yat-sen, who is quoted in the Professor’s article, said some 100 years ago, once it has acquired an independent and autonomous position in its interactions with foreign countries, China will prove to be a “Yellow Blessing” that will do good not only to the Chinese but to the world at large.

Today, more than a century after Sun Yat-sen formulated his optimistic prediction, China, a socialist country that is well on the way to becoming the world’s largest economy, accounting for one-fourth of the world’s total population, can make a crucial and determining difference in terms of dominant ideas, paradigms, and practices and help move forward the process of evolving and establishing an advanced, alternative model of a cooperative world system and institutions. In doing so, it can help bring to fruition many of the goals, ideas, and concepts that are embodied in the United Nations Charter, work, and deliberations, and hopes of the world’s peoples.

It is up to China’s leadership and people to seize this China’s opportunity. China’s assuming, through its actions and posture, of a proactive role on behalf of global and planetary issues and objectives of concern and interest to the humankind—an equitable, democratic development-centered international economic order, sustainable development, lifting of global masses out of poverty and deprivation, and harnessing, channeling, and sharing of human ingenuity and S&T potentials for achieving public good and collective and individual welfare for all peoples of the world—would be welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the humankind, including those many that belong to “another” North, all of whom continue to hope and believe that it is possible for a cooperative and peaceful world civilization still to emerge.

The changing of the nature of international discourse and relations and the reintroducing of the progressive option on the world scene, which would require the overcoming of the “stonewalling,” powerful, well-organized, and aggressive structural-status-quo forces, would represent a delayed fruition of unfinished processes initiated in the twentieth century and amount to a twenty-first-century global revolution and renaissance by peaceful means. China’s potential contribution to this objective would be of epochal significance.

Your Piece Makes Me Rethink Some of the Issues on Which I Have Gone Along Happily Accepting the “Conventional Wisdom” of My Colleagues. It Is a Bracing Experience

Lorin S. Weisenfeld

October 2, 2009

Dear Dean Chen,

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22 Former Principal Counsel of MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency).
I finally had a chance, this past weekend, to sit down with your article on China’s position regarding the new economic order. I found the piece brilliant. I think that it is the best of your articles that I have read.

I am struck by the breadth of the article’s scope and your mastery of relevant aspects of economic theory. The piece is more philosophical than the usual run of trade articles, and without resort to jingoism or crude nationalism, it presents a very cogent argument for China’s position regarding the establishment of a new economic order.

The article was particularly interesting to me, because it brought me up short at a number of junctures. As a lawyer educated in the Western tradition, with some knowledge of but no real expertise in, international trade issues, I have gone along happily accepting the “conventional wisdom” of my colleagues with respect to some of the issues that you discuss. Your piece, showing these questions from an entirely different perspective, makes me rethink some of the issues. It is a bracing experience.

I have only a minor quibble to raise. I would have benefited from some concrete examples at appropriate junctures in the text. You allude at different points to disputes with China’s trading partners or to unhelpful behavior by Western states, and I think that it would have been useful to set out the facts of these disputes to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the issues at play. Similarly, at least in my case, I would have benefited from a refresher section describing the origins and purpose of the proposal to establish a “new economic order.” The passage of time has blurred my grasp of this issue. Truth is, I thought the question had died some time ago!

When I tell people, wherever I go in China, that I am associated with our International Economic law Institute, I invariably receive a nod of recognition of the kind that suggests admiration. Articles like yours burnish the already sterling reputation of the Law School. You set a very high standard for the younger generation.

I had hoped to get this note off to you a week ago, so that it would have reached Xiamen before the National Day celebrations. That proved impossible, and so, belatedly, I want to wish you a very happy holiday.

...  
Cordially,
  Lorin  
Lorin S. Weisenfeld  
Felsberg & Associates  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 331-2492

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