

IV. Interview

INTERVIEW: Professor Li Xing

Cooperate with China— It Is Not the Enemy

The following is an edited transcription of an interview with Prof. Li Xing, PhD, conducted on Jan. 26 by Michelle Rasmussen, Vice President of the Schiller Institute in Denmark. Dr. Li is a professor of Development and International Relations in the Department of Politics and Society, Faculty in Humanities and Social Sciences, Aalborg University. Li Xing was born in Jiaxing, China, near Shanghai. He earned his BA at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages. He came to Denmark from Beijing in 1988 for his MA and later completed his PhD studies at Aalborg University.



Aalborg University

Professor Li Xing

Subheads have been added. A video of the interview is available [here](#).

Michelle Rasmussen: Welcome, Professor Li Xing, thank you so much for allowing me to interview you.

Prof. Li Xing: Thank you too.

Michelle Rasmussen: Li Xing, as we speak, there is an overhanging threat of war between the United States and NATO against Russia and China, countries which the war faction in the West sees as a threat to the disintegrating, unipolar Anglo-American world dominance.

On the other hand, the Schiller Institute has led an international campaign to try to get the U.S. and Europe to cooperate with Russia and China to solve the great crises in the world, especially the pandemic, the financial and economic crises, the underdevelopment of the poor countries, and the cultural crisis in the West. Our international president, Helga Zepp-



LaRouche, has stated that the U.S.-China relationship will be the most important relationship in the future.

You recently gave a lecture at the Danish Institute for International Studies about the U.S.-China rivalry. And you are a contributor to the book, *The Telegram: A China Agenda for President Biden*, by Sarwar Kashmiri, which was published in 2021 by the Foreign Policy Association in New York City. The book is composed of statements by the contributors of what each would say if they were granted a personal meeting with President Biden. What would your advice be to President Biden regarding China?

Advice to President Biden

Prof. Li Xing: Thank you for giving me this chance for this interview. If I had the chance to meet the President, I would say to him:

Hello, President Biden. I think that it is a pity that you didn't change Trump's China policy, especially regarding the trade war and the tariff. We can see from the current situation that in the U.S., the shortages issue, the inflation issue, these are all connected with tariff issue. Many congressmen and senators are calling for the removal of the tariffs. So, I really think that the President should give second thoughts to continuing the trade war. Contrary to this, though, the data from 2020 and 2021 shows that the China-U.S. trade actually surged almost 30%, compared with early years. So, the trade war didn't work.

The second issue is the competition in the area of high technology areas, especially regarding the chip industry. I'd say to him:

Mr. President, the U.S. has the upper hand in that technology, and China has the largest market. I think that if the U.S. continues to use a technology sanction on Chinese chips, then the whole country and the whole nation will increase the investment on the chips. Once China has the technology, then the U.S. would both lose the market, and also lose [its advantage in the] technology

So, this is the second issue, I think the President should give a thought to.

The third issue, which I think is a very touchy issue, is the Taiwan issue. I would really advise the President:

Mr. President, to play the Taiwan card needs caution, because Taiwan is the center of Chinese politics, in its historical memory, and the most important national project in the unification process. So, to play the Taiwan card really needs caution.

But still, I would also say to the President:

Mr. President, China and the U.S. have a lot of areas for cooperation. For example, climate change; for example, North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan; and last but not least, because China has great technology and skill in terms of infrastructure, so you, Mr. President, should invite



White House/Katie Ricks

Joe Biden, President of the United States.

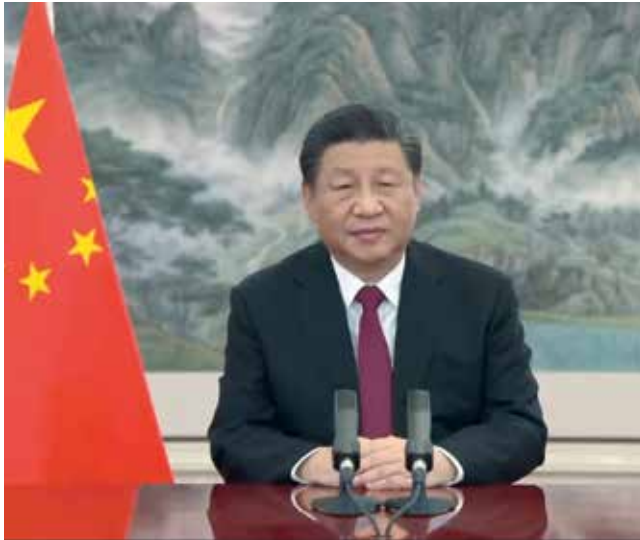
China to come to the U.S. and play a role in the U.S. infrastructure construction projects. That would be an ideal situation to promote bilateral relations.

Attitude of the U.S. Toward China

Michelle Rasmussen: In your statement in the book, *The Telegram*, you address whether the United States should consider China as an enemy or as rival. What would you say to the American people about the attitude that the United States should have towards China?

Prof. Li Xing: I don't think that the U.S. should regard China as an enemy, but as a rival. I think there is a truth in that because China is obviously a rival to the United States on many, many grounds, both in materials and also in ideation. Nevertheless, it is not an enemy. China and the U.S. have so many areas of cooperation as you point out, that this bilateral relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world. Were this relationship turned into an enemy relationship, it would be a disaster for the world.

Michelle Rasmussen: On January 17, Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos. What do you think is most important



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Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, addresses the Davos Agenda 2022 Conference, Jan. 17, 2022.

for people in the West to understand about his speech?

Prof. Li Xing: Xi Jinping was invited to the World Economic Forum, and he sent some messages. In his address he admitted that economic globalization has created problems, but that this should not constitute a justification to write off everything regarding globalization, regarding international cooperation. So, he suggested that the world should adapt and guide globalization.

He also rejected the protectionist forces on the rise in the West, saying that history has proved time and time again that confrontation does not solve problems; it only invites catastrophic consequences.

President Xi also particularly mentioned protectionism, unilateralism, indirectly referring to the U.S., emphasizing that this phenomenon will only hurt the interest of others as well as itself, meaning that the U.S. trade war, or sanctions against China, will hurt both. It's not a win-win, it's a lose-lose. President Xi delivered a message that rejects a "zero sum" approach. I think it was a very constructive message from President Xi Jinping. He totally rejects, if I interpret his address

correctly, the Cold War mentality. He doesn't want to see a Cold War mentality emerge in either the U.S., or in China.

The Belt and Road Concept

Michelle Rasmussen: Let's move on now to the question of the Belt and Road Initiative. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Schiller Institute has worked to establish a new Silk Road, the World Land-Bridge, and many of these economic principles have been coming to life through China's Belt and Road Initiative. Li Xing, in 2019 you wrote a book, *Mapping China's One Belt One Road Initiative*, and have lectured on this. How has the Belt and Road Initiative created economic development in the underdeveloped countries?

Prof. Li Xing: First of all, I think that we need to understand the Belt and Road concept—the historicity behind the Belt and Road; that the Belt and Road is not an international aid program. We have to keep that in mind. It is an infrastructure project attempting to link Eurasia. It has two routes. One is a land route, consisting of six corridors. Then, it has another route called the Maritime Silk Road. Globally, about 138 countries, ranging from Italy to Saudi Arabia to Cambodia, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China. Just recently another country in Latin America signed up with the Belt and Road.

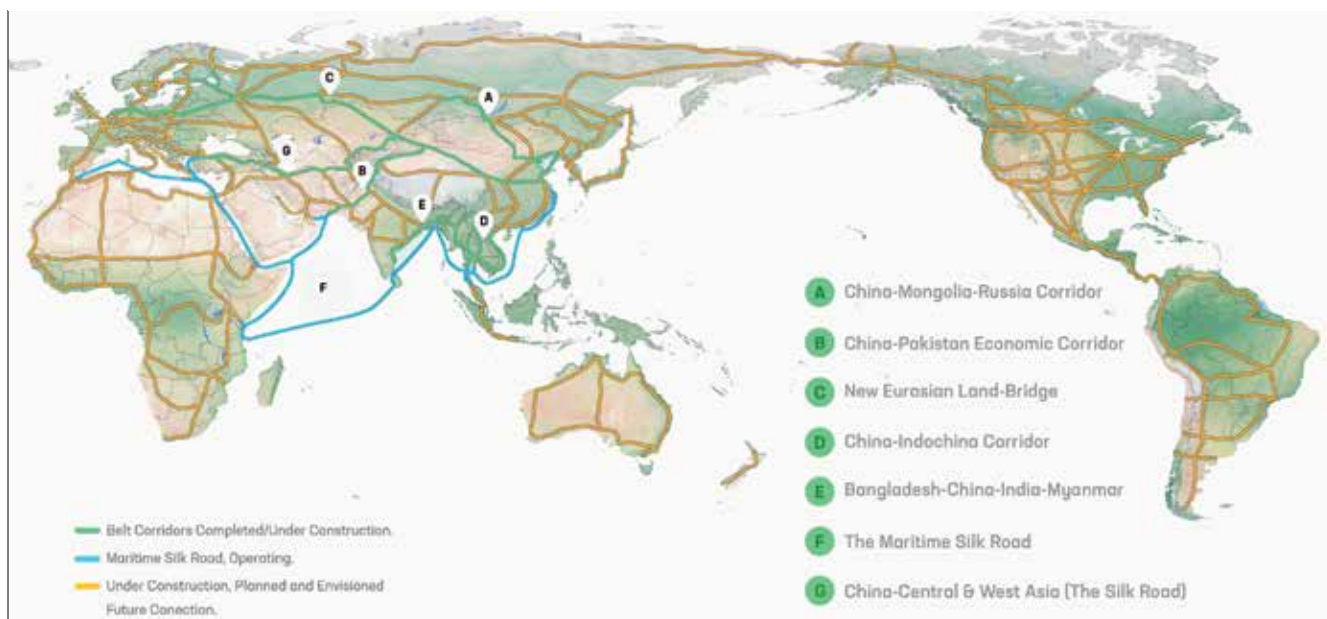
The idea of the Belt and Road is founded on two basic Chinese economic strengths. One is surplus capital. China has a huge amount of surplus capital in its banks, which it can use for investments. The second is that after 40 years of infrastructure development in China, China has huge technology and skill, particularly in the

infrastructure development area. So, the Belt and Road is basically an infrastructure development project.

The driving force of China's Belt and Road is that after 40 years of economic development, China is experiencing a similar situation experienced by the advanced countries in world economic history—for



Development Corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative



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example, rising wages, overproduction, overcapacity, and a lot of surplus capital.

So, China is looking for what the Marxist analytical lens calls a "spatial fix," as in its domestic market, the mass production manufacturing is getting extremely large. In looking beyond Chinese territory at Chinese neighbors, China has discovered that all the countries around China are actually very, very far behind in infrastructure development. So, it's kind of a win-win situation. The idea behind the Belt and Road is a kind of a win-win situation.

Historically, the post-World War II Marshall Plan in Europe, and the military aid to East Asia, were, you could say, like Belt and Road projects, helping those countries to enhance economic development. I recently came across a World Bank study pointing out that if the Belt and Road projects were successfully implemented, the real income level throughout the entire region would rise between two or four times. At the global level, the real income can rise between 0.7–2.9%. So, you can say, the international financial institutions, and economic institutions like World Bank, are also very positive toward the Belt and Road.

However, the Belt and Road also has four areas which we need to be concerned about. Number one: the debt trap, which has been discussed quite a lot at

the global level. Number two: transparency, whether the Belt and Road projects in different countries are transparent. This, too, is an issue for debate. Number three: corruption, whether Chinese investments in countries creates corruption by local officials. The number four area for concern is the environmental and social cost. So, these definitely need to be taken care of, both by China and those countries.

As a whole, I think the Belt and Road project is huge. It's very constructive. But we also need to consider its potential to create bad effects. We need to tackle all these effects collectively.

'Debt Trap' Diplomacy

Michelle Rasmussen: When you spoke just now about a debt trap, our correspondent Hussein Askary, who covers the Muslim world, and also developments in Africa, has argued against the idea that China is creating a debt trap, pointing out that many of the countries owe much more money to Western powers, than they do to China, and that China has done things like forgiving debt, or transferring physical assets to those governments, because the debt trap accusation has been used as the primary argument against the Belt and Road. Do you think that this is a legitimate argument or that this is overplayed to try to just create suspicion about the Belt and Road?

Prof. Li Xing: No, I fully agree, actually, with the comment you just quoted from another study. It is true that the “debt trap” has been used by Western media, or those politicians who are against the Belt and Road, as an excuse, as a kind of a dark picture. But, according to my research, China actually understands this problem, and very often, the Chinese government uses different measures, or different policies, to tackle this problem. One is to write off the debt entirely, when the borrowing country would really suffer, if it had to repay. For example, the Chinese government announced that during the pandemic, debt service payments from some poor countries are suspended until their economic situation improves.

China is a central-government-based country. State policy plays a bigger role than in the political system of the West, where different interest groups drive their countries’ policies into different directions. Therefore, the Chinese central government is able to play a bigger role than Western governments in tackling debt problems.

Michelle Rasmussen: What has this meant for the underdeveloped countries, for example, in Africa, and other poor countries in Asia, in Ibero-America? What has the Belt and Road Initiative meant for their economic development?

Prof. Li Xing: The increasing number of countries that have signed up with the Belt and Road, shows that the Belt Road project is comparatively quite welcomed. I have also followed many debates in Africa, where many African leaders were asked the question and they completely agree. They say that the situation regarding the debt of the old time, their experiences with the colonial countries, is quite different from the debt incurred with China’s investment projects or development projects. So, they still have confidence in China’s foreign development policies, especially in the Belt and Road project. From the many studies and reports I have read so far, they have strong confidence in that.

Infrastructure Means Development

Michelle Rasmussen: What would you say about the role of infrastructure development in China in creating this unprecedented economic growth and lifting people out of poverty? What role has infrastructure played in the incredible poverty elimination policy that China

actually succeeded in achieving this year?

Prof. Li Xing: The entire 40-year history of China’s economic growth and economic development, and China’s prosperity, is based on the lesson that infrastructure is one of the most important factors leading to China’s economic success. China has a slogan: “If you want to get rich, build a road.” Infrastructure is connected with every aspect of national economy. The raw materials industry, the metal industry, you name it. Cement industry, etc. Infrastructure is really the center of a nation’s economy, which can really get different areas of the country running. So, I think this experience of China is really a good lesson, not only for China itself, but also for the rest of the world, especially for developing countries.

That’s why China’s Belt and Road project, identified as infrastructure projects, is really welcomed by many people, and especially President Biden. Even though his budget was not passed, because of the resistance, or even if it’s shrunken, the idea about improving U.S. infrastructure, became a kind of hot spot. I think that the U.S. needs to increase its infrastructure investment as well. Definitely.

Europe-China Relations

Michelle Rasmussen: Let’s move on to Europe and China relations. You have edited the book *China-U.S. Relations at a Crossroads: “Systemic Rivalry” or “Strategic Partnership.”* What is your evaluation and recommendation about European-Chinese relations? When we spoke earlier, you had a comment about how the impact of African development, if there would be development or not in Africa, would impact Europe. Could you also include your idea about that?

Prof. Li Xing: EU-China relations are increasingly complex, and affected by a number of interrelated factors, such as China’s rise, the growing China-U.S. rivalry, U.S. global withdrawal, especially under the Trump administration, the trans-Atlantic split, the Brexit, and at the same time, the China-Russia comprehensive alliance. Under these broad transformations of the global order, EU-China relations are also getting very complex. Right now, I feel that the EU and China are struggling to find a dynamic and durable mode of engagement, to achieve a balance between opportunities on the one side, and challenges on the other, and

also between partnership and rivalry.

For instance, China and the EU successfully reached what is called the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment treaty in December 2020. It was a joyful moment. However, in 2021, due to the Hong Kong events, the Xinjiang issue, and mutual sanctions in 2021, this investment treaty was suspended. Not abandoned but suspended. You can see that the relationship can be hurt by events. It's really difficult to find a balance between strategic partnership and systemic rivalry. "Systemic rivalry" was the official term used in a European Commission document, "EU-China—A Strategic Outlook," issued March 12, 2019. That document states that China is "simultaneously ... an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance."

So, you can see that a systemic rival means alternative normative values. That's why it's a new term, when used in that way. It shows that China's development has both a material impact, and, also, an ideational impact—that many countries are becoming attracted by the Chinese success. For that reason, the Chinese, with the rise of China, are increasingly regarded as a systemic rival.

On the other hand, the message from my book is also that the EU must, one way or another, become autonomous, and design an independent China policy. Sometimes I feel that the EU-China policy is somehow pushed around or carried by U.S. global interests, or affected by the U.S.-China competition. I really think Europe needs an independent China policy. You know, the EU is thinking of developing "defense independence." That is, it is pursuing autonomy in defense. But that's something else.

According to data from Kishore Mahbubani, a very well-known Singaporean public intellectual and professor, the Belt and Road has special meaning for Europe in relation to Africa. This is of importance to your question about Africa.

According to his data on the demographic explosion in Africa, Africa's population in the 1950s was half of that of Europe. Today, Africa's population is 2.5 times that of Europe. By 2100, Africa's population will be 10 times of that of Europe. So, if Africa still suffers from underdevelopment, if any crisis appears, where will African refugees migrate? Europe!

From Kishore's point of view, the Belt and Road is doing Europe a "favor," so Europe should be very

supportive of China's Belt and Road project. I totally agree with that. What he says is also a part of the message of my book.

A 'Differentiated' Europe

Michelle Rasmussen: You were speaking about Europe becoming more autonomous in its relations with China. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stated openly that Germany should not be forced to choose between the United States and China, that Germany needs to have relations with both. Can you say more about that? Is China Europe's biggest trading partner?

Prof. Li Xing: Yes, since November last year.

Michelle Rasmussen: There's differentiation inside Europe. For example, the Eastern European countries have a forum called "16+1," where 16 Eastern European countries, plus China, have a more developed Belt and Road cooperation with China, than the Western countries. And there's differentiation in the western European countries. You mentioned that some are making Hong Kong and Xinjiang into obstacles to improving European relations to China. What would you say to these concerns?

Prof. Li Xing: China-EU relations are being affected by many, many factors. One is, as you mentioned, about 16+1, but now it's 17+1, because, I think two years ago, Greece became a part of 16+1, so now it's 17+1. And the western part of the EU, was quite worried about the 17+1 because some think that the Belt and Road plays a role in dividing Europe. Because Europe has this common policy, common strategy, and common action toward the Belt and Road, they also see the 17+1 grouping as somehow playing a divisive role. So, the EU is not very happy about that. Because you're right, the Belt and Road is more developed in the eastern part of the EU. This is one issue.

The second issue is that the EU has to make a balance between China on the one side, and the U.S. on the other. Right now, my assessment is that the EU is somehow being pushed to choose the U.S. side. It's fine with me, from my analytical point of view, that the EU, most of the countries in the West, the traditional U.S. allies—like including Denmark—if they choose the U.S., that's fine. But my position is that their choosing sides should be based on their own analysis,

their own national interests, not purely on the so-called values and norms, that the U.S. and EU share norms, and therefore should have a natural alliance. I think that is not correct. I always advise Western politicians, thinktanks, and policy makers that they should study China-U.S. relations or EU-China-U.S. relations and try to find their own foreign policies. What is the correct direction? And based on their own judgment, based on their own research results, not based on what the U.S. wants them to do.



DoD/R.D. Ward
Friis Arne Petersen, Danish Ambassador to the U.S.

because of the global attraction to China, the Chinese development model will be consolidated and extended through the Belt and Road, and that is also not in the interest of the West. That's why China is a "systemic rival," because it has a norm diffusion effect. We have to understand these two aspects.

But why should Europe support the Belt and Road? I have already discussed this issue in my answer to your previous question regarding the importance of infrastructure development, and regarding why Europe should support the Belt and

Michelle Rasmussen: One of Denmark's top former diplomats, Friis Arne Petersen, has been Denmark's ambassador to the United States, to China, and to Germany. At the Danish Institute for International Studies, he recently called for Europe to join the Belt and Road Initiative. Why do you think it would be in the interest of Europe and the United States to join or cooperate with the Belt and Road Initiative, instead of treating it as a geopolitical threat?

Road, especially in the context of Africa.

Michelle Rasmussen: And you also spoke about the need for infrastructure development in the United States. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave the United States a grade point average of C- for the state of its infrastructure. Looking at high speed rail in China and in the United States, there's nothing to compare.

Prof. Li Xing: Well, on the Belt and Road, as we have already discussed, we must first understand what it is. I fully agree with Friis Arne Petersen. When he was Ambassador to Beijing, I met him at one of the international conferences. He was always very positive towards Denmark-China cooperation. I fully agree with his point on the Belt and Road. But we have to understand, first of all, why the West is nervous about the Belt and Road. This is very important, because the European's or the American's worry is based on two perspectives. One is geopolitics. The second is norm diffusion. Geopolitics means that through the Belt and Road, China's economic political influence will gradually expand to cover all of Eurasia, which is not in the interest of the West. This is a geopolitical rationale.

Prof. Li Xing: No, no.



CC/Pete Markham

The American Society of Civil Engineers gives the state of infrastructure in the U.S. a grade of C-. Here the collapsed 8-lane bridge that carried Interstate 35W traffic across the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. With bumper-to-bumper, rush-hour traffic on the bridge, it collapsed on Aug. 1, 2007. Thirteen people died and 145 were injured.



CC/Howchou

China's railway network as of February 29, 2020. Blue lines = Capable of speeds above 300 km/h. Green = Newly built, capable of up to 300 km/h. Orange = Upgraded high-speed service. Gray = Conventional service.

Michelle Rasmussen: In its 14th Five-Year Plan, China has committed itself to increase its high-speed rail lines by one third, from the present 38,000 kilometers to 50,000 kilometers by 2025. The U.S. has maybe a hundred and fifty kilometers.

Prof. Li Xing: I was told by American friends that the U.S. has not invested heavily in infrastructure for many, many decades, about half century, something like that. I was shocked to hear that. So, I think Biden's idea of infrastructure investment is great, but somehow the bill could not be agreed on by the Congress, and also the Senate, due to partisan conflict.

Michelle Rasmussen: And it was not very ambitious in any case.

Prof. Li Xing: Yes, totally.

Reordering the World Order

Michelle Rasmussen: It was a step in the right direction, but was not very ambitious.

Let's move on to Latin America, which we in the Schiller Institute call Ibero-America. That's because our

members say that the Spanish language did not proceed from Latin. The Iberian Peninsula is Portugal and Spain, so Ibero-America is a better term. In any case, Li Xing, you are working on a study, *China-U.S. Rivalry and Regional Reordering in Latin America*. Can you please share the main idea with us?

Prof. Li Xing: Yes. I'm working on this book, together with a group of Latin American scholars from different countries in the region. The objective of the book is to provide a good conceptualization, first, of the changing world order, and the reordering process. When we talk about that the world order is changing because of the U.S.-China rivalry, at the same time, we also suggest that the world is experiencing a reordering process, that we do not know the future order, or the new order, but the world is in the process of reordering, driven by the China-U.S. rivalry.

The book will also try to convey that the U.S.-China rivalry, according to our conceptualization, is "intra-core." According to the world system theory, you have a core which is the advanced economy countries, then you have a semi-periphery, and then you have a periphery. The semi-periphery is between periphery and the core, and the periphery is the vast number of developing countries. So the China-U.S. rivalry, competition, especially in high technologies in the security areas, is between these two core countries, or is intra-core.

The China-U.S. rivalry also represents a struggle between two types of capitalism. On the one side is Chinese state capitalism, very centralized, state led, with central planning. On the other side is the U.S. free market, individual capitalist economy. Somehow the China model is gradually appearing to be more competitive. Of course, the U.S. doesn't agree with that assessment, at least from the current perspectives.

So, this rivalry must have a great impact on the whole world, especially on the developing world we call the Global South. Here we've tried to focus on the U.S.-China rivalry, and its impact on the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The message of the book is, first, that global

redistribution of power is inevitable. It's still in process, and the emerging world order is likely to be dominated by more than one superpower, so the world order will likely look like a polycentric world, with a number of centripetals competing for high positions or strong positions. This is the first message.

The second message is that the situation shows that the world is in a reordering process driven by the competition between the two superpowers, and it poses opportunities, and also constraints, to different regions, especially for the Global South, such as Latin America, because Latin America is the U.S. backyard; it is the subject of American doctrines—that North America and South America, are a sphere of U.S. influence.

The Monroe Doctrine

Michelle Rasmussen: You're talking about the Monroe Doctrine?

Prof. Li Xing: The Monroe Doctrine. Thank you very much. North America and South America have to be within the U.S. hegemonic influence. No external power is allowed to have a hand in, or interference in these two regions. You can say that China's relations with Latin America has really been increasing tremendously during the past two decades.

At the same time, the U.S. was busy with its anti-terrorism wars, and its creation of color revolutions in other parts of the world. If you look at the investment in infrastructure, and also imports of agriculture, China-Latin American trade and Chinese investment in Latin America are increasing tremendously, dramatically, which becomes a worry, a really deep worry, to the U.S.

The different scholars, the book's chapter authors, will use different countries and country cases as examples to provide empirical evidence to our "theoretical conceptualization." This book will be published around summertime by Brill, a very good publisher in Holland.

Michelle Rasmussen: Well, actually, the Monroe Doctrine was adopted in 1823, in the very early history of the United States. This is after the United States had

become a republic and had freed itself from the British Empire. It was actually John Quincy Adams—

Prof. Li Xing: Exactly.

Michelle Rasmussen:—who was actually involved in the idea, which was that the United States would not allow imperialism, imperial powers to bring their great power games into Latin and South America, but that the United States would help those countries become independent republics. So the question becomes, will Chinese policy strengthen the ability of the Ibero-American



Li Xing: A world reordering process driven by competition between the U.S. and China poses opportunities, and constraints, especially for the Global South, such as Latin America. Shown: a Chinese assembly plant in Mexico in 2019.

countries to be republics and enjoy economic development, or is China's intention also a kind of imperialism?

Prof. Li Xing: Based on your definitions, on your conceptualization of the Monroe Doctrine, you can say that there are two implications. One is that the U.S. should defend these two regions from imperialist intervention. The U.S. itself was not an imperial power at that time. The U.S. didn't have intentions to become a global interventionist then, but today it is a different situation.

Second, that the U.S. definitely interprets Chinese investment and infrastructure cooperation, and economic investment in Latin America as "helping," to consolidate the country's independence? No, I don't think that is the case. That would be a kind of positive-

sum game. Today, unluckily, these two countries are trapped into a zero-sum game. Whatever China is doing in the South American region, is interpreted as not being good for United States. That's a very unfortunate situation.

Michelle Rasmussen: Actually, we in the Schiller Institute have said that if the United States were to join with China to have even better economic development in Ibero-America; that would be a win-win policy. You spoke about the immigration challenge from Africa to Europe. It's the same thing from Ibero-America to the United States. People would much rather stay in their own countries if there were jobs, if there were economic development.

Prof. Li Xing: Yes.

Michelle Rasmussen: And if the United States would join with China, then instead of—

Prof. Li Xing: —building the wall! Instead of building the wall!

Michelle Rasmussen: Exactly, exactly.

Prof. Li Xing: Yeah, I agree with you.

Operation Ibn Sina

Michelle Rasmussen: Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the President of the Schiller Institute, has stated that one very important way to lessen the war danger between the United States, Russia and China would be for these countries to join forces to save the people of Afghanistan, where there is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world now, after the war, the drought, and the freezing of Afghanistan's central bank assets by the western countries. She has proposed what she calls Operation Ibn Sina, named after the great physician and philosopher from that region, to build a modern health system in Afghanistan to save the people from disease, and as a lever to stimulate economic development.

I know that when we spoke about Afghanistan before, you also referred to very important discussions now going on in Oslo, for the first time, between the Taliban and Western governments, including in the United States.

But what do you think about this idea of China and

the United States, and also Russia and other countries, joining hands to act to alleviate the terrible crisis for the people of Afghanistan?

Prof. Li Xing: It's a superb idea. This is one of the initiatives by the Schiller Institute. When I read your website, you have many development projects, and this one is a great idea. This is one of the areas I mentioned where the U.S. and China have a common interest. Unfortunately, what is happening today is the Ukraine crisis and the China-U.S. rivalry—so many battle fronts—puts Afghanistan more into the background.

Right now, the Taliban delegation is talking with the West in Oslo, and I really hope there will be a constructive result, because after the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, Afghanistan's Taliban government immediately went to China. And it was a Chinese interest. It was in China's fundamental interest to help Afghanistan, because if Afghanistan is safe and prosperous, then there will be no terror and terrorism coming from Afghanistan across the border. Many of the terrorists in Xinjiang actually based themselves in Afghanistan. So it is in China's national interest to help Afghanistan.

Right now, I don't know whether it is still in the U.S. interest to help Afghanistan. The U.S. might be tired of that region, because the U.S. lost two trillion dollars in the Afghanistan war, without any positive results. So, I do not know. I cannot tell what the U.S. politicians' feelings are, but the U.S. holds \$9.5 billion of Afghanistan assets. And I think that money has to be released to help in the country's rebuilding.

And particularly, the Schiller Institute's suggestion of a health care system is the priority. When people are in good health, then people can work, and earn money. When people have a job or have a family, normally, people do not move. According to refugee studies, people normally do not move just because of a shortage. People move because of a situation devastated by war, by climate change, by various crises. Otherwise, people are relatively stable and want to stay in their homeland.

Xinjiang

Michelle Rasmussen: You mentioned Xinjiang again now. Do you have something to say about Xinjiang for people in the West?



Federal Government of Germany/Jesco Denzel

Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: "If we can't pay Russia [for gas and oil], then Russia will not supply us. Then what should we do?"

Prof. Li Xing: I think that there are a lot of misunderstandings between the West and China, especially the misunderstanding from the Western side concerning Xinjiang. The other day, I saw a debate at Oxford University between an American former politician and a British former politician, about whether China is a friend or a foe. The American representative put forward the claim that in Xinjiang, we are experiencing what is called genocide. But later, at the end of his discussion, he admitted that there is no genocide, but he deliberately used genocide as a kind of provocation in order to receive attention from the world. The British representative asked if this view caused such a bad misunderstanding, misperception, then why not just give it up?

Do not use genocide. You can criticize China for human rights abuses. You can criticize China for its minority policies, etc. But to deliberately defame China is not a good way. I don't think it's a good way. We also have to be fair.

On the one side, you can criticize China's policy treating problems in the minorities and others. But you have to also condemn terrorist actions because there were a lot of terrorist bomb killings in that region, especially from 2012 to 2015, around that time, in the beginning of the 2010s.

I was in Xinjiang as a tourist in 2011, and I was advised to not pass by some streets, because there

could be some risks. You can see that it was a very tense situation because of a lot of bombings. People pointed out to me, here were some bombings, there were some bombings. You don't understand. So, the West should be fair and condemn these things, while at same time, also advising the Chinese government to develop a more constructive policy to resolve the problem, rather than using harsh policies. It has to be fair. This is the first point.

Second, is that genocide not only defames China, it's also contrary, it's opposite to the facts. Twenty years ago, 30 years ago, Xinjiang's Uighur population was about five million or eight million. But after 30 years, I think it's about 11-13 million. I do not know exactly, but there has been a growth of population. How can you claim genocide, when the local population is increasing? Do you understand my point? So, this is not a good attitude. It is not a very good way to discuss with China and it makes China much more resistant in talking with you, when China fears that it is being defamed.

When some Western sources, in particular one German scholar, use a lot of data from a Turkish scholar, who is connected to the "minority resistance" from Xinjiang, then the credibility, reliability of the source is in question. You understand my point. So, the Xinjiang issue is rather complicated, but the West and China should have a dialogue, rather than use in this specific discourse rhetoric to frame China in a way that China is the bad guy. It should be condemned. I think this is not constructive.

The SWIFT System

Michelle Rasmussen: Going back to the war danger, what do you think the impact on China and on the world economy would be, were the U.S. to force Russia out of the SWIFT international payment system, or similar draconian measures?

Prof. Li Xing: Let me tell you that Olaf Scholz, the current German Chancellor, already expressed it very well, saying that if Russia were sanctioned and pushed out of the SWIFT payment system, then Europe could not pay Russia for its gas and oil. "If we can't pay Russia, then Russia will not supply us. Then what should we do?"

I read in the news today that the U.S. said, "We could supply most of Russia's oil and gas." Then Europe

began to ponder: “Well then, this war has become your war, you know—a very egoistical interest, because you actually want to replace Russia’s gas and oil supply. That’s why you want to instigate the war.”

So, I think it’s the U.S. that has to be very cautious in its sanctions, because the only sanctions possibilities for the United States today against major powers are financial, it’s payment—it’s the U.S. dollar. That’s the intermediate currency, the SWIFT system.

And when China sees this, that only strengthened China’s determination to develop what we call electronic currency. China is using a lot of energy today investing in electronic currency. This electronic currency is a real currency. It’s just electronic. It’s being implemented in some big cities in test trials.

Then, back to the SWIFT system, [if a country were thrown out] it would be rather impossible or would rather create a lot of problems in the international payment system, then the whole system will more or less collapse, because most countries watch this, and they will try to think about how they should react in the future if the U.S. uses the same system of sanctions against them. I just mentioned China, but also many other countries as well. They have to find an alternative.

One other alternative is to use currencies other than the U.S. dollar as much as possible. I just read in the news today that the Chinese yuan has surpassed the Japanese yen as the fourth international [reserve] currency. And the situation will accelerate in that direction. So, I think that the U.S. should think twice.

On China-Russia relations, I definitely think that China will help Russia in case the U.S. really implements a sanction of pushing Russia out of the SWIFT payment system. China definitely will help Russia, because both face the same pressure, the same struggle, the same robbery from the U.S.

So, it is very bad. It is extremely bad strategy from the U.S. side to fight, simultaneously, on two fronts with two superpowers. This is what Henry Kissinger had said many times during the entire Cold War period. The U.S. was able to keep relatively stable relations between U.S. and China and between U.S. and the Soviet Union, keeping the Russia and China fighting against each other. But now it’s the opposite situation. The U.S. is fighting with two big powers simultaneously. I don’t know what is in the mind of the U.S. politicians. I really think that the U.S. needs to redesign its strategic foreign policy.

The Schiller Institute

Michelle Rasmussen: Yeah. We’ve been speaking mostly about the U.S., but the British really are an instigator in this: the British Old Empire policy of trying to drive a wedge between the United States, Russia and China. That also has a lot to do with the current situation. We spoke before about that the Schiller Institute is trying to get the United States’ population to understand that the whole basis for the existence of the United States was the fight against the British Empire, and against this divide and conquer strategy, and, rather, to cooperate with Russia and China.

In conclusion, this conversation has been very wonderful. Do you have any parting words for our audience? We have many people in Europe and in the United States. Do you have any parting words of advice as to how we should look at China and what needs to be different about our policy?

Prof. Li Xing: No, I think that I want my last words, actually, to be invested in talking about the Schiller Institute. I think that some of your programs, some of your projects, and some of your applications are really interesting. The Schiller Institute has a lot of ideas. For example, you just mentioned your campaign for an Afghanistan health care system, but not only in Afghanistan. You promote these ideas for Africa, in developing countries. I really think that the Schiller Institute should continue to promote some of the ideas—a health care system in every country, especially now, considering the pandemic. The rich countries, including China, are able to produce vaccines, but not the developing countries. The U.S. has more vaccine doses stored up than necessary [for itself]. But Africa still has only a very low percentage of people [who have been vaccinated].

And we claim the Omicron variant of the coronavirus came from Africa. That’s an irony. That’s an irony, because it’s definite that one day, another variation will come from Latin America, or from some other part of the world.

So, it’s rather important for the West, and for China, to think about some of the positive suggestions by your Institute. I’m glad that you invited me for this interview, and I expect to have more cooperation with you. Thank you very much.

Michelle Rasmussen: Thank you so much, Li Xing.