

Is Xi Jinping The Captain Planet, The World Has Been Waiting For?



Thanks to a post in our [Green Initiatives](#) wechat group earlier this month my attention was drawn - in a search for a positive narrative for humanity's future - to [Captain Planet](#), a US animation series, I didn't even know it existed. Since our daughter is recently into drawing comics I looked it up and want to share here some thoughts on globalism and nationalism in an era when our post WWII world order is clearly dissolving and a new one seem to be emerging. I will elaborate further down on the recent decisions of the US administration to pull out of several international organizations, most importantly UNESCO, and the significance of the upcoming 19<sup>th</sup> Chinese Party Congress; and I will analyze if Xi Jinping will be our 21<sup>st</sup> century super hero.

Captain Planet and the Planeteers was aired 1990-96 and is the brain child of media mogul Ted Turner and screenwriter [Nicholas Boxer](#) who is credited for 103 of 113 episodes. Apart from having a really cosmopolitan and global mindset its a great way to create environmental awareness and a collaborative mindset amongst 6-12 year olds. The narrative is somewhat in line with what we all know from Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter: a crew of heroes fighting a crew of villains.

The producers drew a clear line between good and evil as in most Western narratives. Lewis Chriswell explains this fundamental difference between Asian, in particular Japanese, and modern Western story telling brilliantly in his [video analysis of Hayao Miyazaki](#). He points out that Miyazaki's characters are more complex than their Western counterparts, never only portraying the good or the evil. They are more like we all are in reality: in a constant float between the best and the worst of our potential self. I have to concede though that the clear juxtaposition of good and evil makes perfectly sense, when we try to

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create understanding of the world as a complex ecosystem, which requires our aligned action. Screenwriter Nicolas Boxer deserves serious credit for daring in a world of postmodern pluralism to give out a singular message: *protect our home, planet Earth, by all means*.

The plot is straight forward. Gaia, the spirit of the planet, is awakened from a long sleep by Hoggish Greedly, who happens to be drilling for crude oil above her resting chamber. Realizing that the damage is extensive, Gaia sends five magic rings, four with the power to control an element of nature and one controlling the element of Heart, to five chosen youths across the globe: Kwame from Africa, Wheeler from North America, Linka from the Soviet Union (changed to Eastern Europe after the Soviet Union's dissolution), Gi from Asia, and Ma-Ti from South America.

In Greek mythology, Gaia is the personification of the Earth and one of the Greek primordial deities. Gaia is the ancestral mother of all life: the primal Mother Earth goddess. She is the immediate parent of Uranus, the sky, from whose sexual union she bore the Titans, themselves parents of many of the Olympian gods, and the Giants, and of Pontus, the sea, from whose union she bore the primordial sea gods. Her equivalent in the Roman pantheon was Terra.

Our five protagonists are dubbed the *Planeteers* and are tasked with helping defend the planet from environmental disasters and making efforts to educate humankind to keep others from happening. In the beginning of the episodes, Gaia uses her "Planet Vision" in the Crystal Chamber to discover where the most devastating destruction is occurring and sends the Planeteers to help solve the problem. The Planeteers use transportation, usually a flying machine called a Geo-Cruiser, based on solar power to avoid causing pollution themselves.

In situations that the Planeteers cannot resolve alone, they can combine their powers to summon Captain Planet, a super hero, who possesses all of their powers magnified, symbolizing the premise that the combined efforts of a team are stronger than its individual parts. Captain Planet's outfit represents the embodiment of environmental beauty and health: a grass-green McGyver mullet, crystal blue skin, earthy brown eyes, a fire-red chest, gloves, trunks, and boots, and a sun-yellow globe insignia.

Besides having classical superhero powers such as flight, super-strength, and invulnerability, he is able to rearrange his molecular structure to transform himself into the various powers and elements of nature. He is though very sensitive to pollutants, which can weaken him considerably. The Planeteers cannot use their rings while Captain Planet has been summoned.

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Once his work is done, Captain Planet restores the Planeteers' powers and reminds viewers of the message of the series with his catchphrase, "The power is yours!", which is said to mean that all have the power to end the destruction of the planet if we work together as one world rather than fighting each other as separate nations. Every episode is followed up with at least one "Planeteer Alert", often connected to the plot, where environmental-political and other social-political issues are discussed and how the viewer can contribute and be part of "the solution" rather than "the pollution".

For those amongst us who didn't know captain planet I post here the 23' [intro animation](#) which explains the characters and plot; and a 2' trailer on the [captain planet foundation](#) which seems to have gone very much into natural science education of youth and might lack the consumption awareness element which is recently discussed a lot as we come to realize that the industrial growth model drives us into a dead end.

### **The Dissolution of the Current World Order**

Captain Planet producer and owner of CCN and Cartoon Network [Ted Turner](#) is probably also known as an important American philanthropist. He donated in 1998 USD \$1 billion to support the United Nations, which created the [United Nations Foundation](#), a public charity, which original purpose was to build domestic support for United Nations causes and to make sure that the United States honors its commitments to the United Nations. Turner serves as Chairman of the United Nations Foundation board of directors.

Considering that the Trump administration has just declared that the [US will pull out of UNESCO](#), that it did pull out of the [UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#), and that a new congressional bill seeks to [leave the UN entirely](#), one might argue that the United Nations Foundation has failed in its mission. One definitely has to agree with [USA Today's](#) headline: *For 70 years America has led Europe and the free world. Not anymore.*

The [United Nations](#) were established after WWII, but it is not a secret that they have always been a vehicle for the US to maintain the status quo, i.e. what is called amongst international relations buffs [Pax Americana](#), a peace which serves the interests of the American economy and thus those who are on its top. The UN's main objective of global peacekeeping and security reveals that despite other secondary goals, it introduces law and order which keeps corporate America and its allies in power.

Thinks of WTO (World Trade Organization) for a second, the organization which blazes the trail for large industrial conglomerates like – in order of global revenue volume - [Nestle](#), [Pfizer](#), [Mars](#), [GlaxoSmithKline](#), [Kraftfoods](#), [Monsanto](#), etc. to establish level playfields on a global market and thus create a competitive advantage over local small scale businesses; or

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WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), the organization which helps the same large corporations to protect their intellectual property at the expense of social progress. If one understands the informal missions of WTO and WIPO, one easily understands that the UN in its general setup only serves as an extension of the (American) upper ten thousand under the good guy umbrella of the United Nations.



UNESCO though, is of a different caliber and has always been - at least in my marginal perception next to UNICEF - the best part of all UN activities. It shone as the light at the end of a tunnel of international lobbying, which absorbed the UN in the interests of war faring nations and profit greedy corporations. Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms. UNESCO is - mostly unknown to the general public - the successor organization of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, and as such the continuation of the world's first international organization, which had the maintenance of global peace as its mission.

The International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation was an advisory organization for the League of Nations which aimed to promote international exchange between scientists, researchers, teachers, artists and intellectuals. It was established in 1922 as a reaction to the atrocities of WWI, included 12 individuals, and counted such distinguished figures as Henri Bergson, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie and Robert A. Millikan among its members. We shall therefore understand that UNESCO has exactly the same function within the UN: it is an interdisciplinary advisory board which supports the UN in defining its activities, and it is probably the single most important entity within the UN.

The US confirms its disrespect for the idea of the United Nations by pulling out of UNESCO because of animosities over the Palestine Authority being granted full membership in 2011. It has repeatedly - 2013, 2017 - claimed that UNESCO management maintains an anti-Israel attitude, but reflects hereby its own anti-Palestine perspective. The idea of the UN, and UNESCO in particular, is to get leaders of all nations to sit at one table to discuss how conflicts can be prevented or resolved. By blackmailing the UNESCO management to



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withdraw 22% of its annual budget, i.e. the US contribution of roughly USD 80 million p.a. amounting to more than USD 600 million arrears since 2011, both the Obama and the Trump administrations showed that they are in the grip of decision makers who hide in second line and who put their own commercial and political interests over the mission and purpose of international organizations.

The [Washington Post](#) writes that *despite all the U.S.-UNESCO history, Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. membership is more drastic than the 2011 decision to withdraw U.S. funds. The UNESCO withdrawal stands out because it fits Trump's pattern of leaving international institutions. [...] But other countries also appear to be exiting from international organizations. In September, for example, Nigeria announced it was [pulling out of 90 international organizations](#). The U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO is unlikely to start a domino effect, but the culmination of multiple withdrawals may help create a tipping point for more retrenchment from the global order.*

In short, what we witness is the dissolution of the post WWII global order. Henry Kissinger saw the threat of such a development already back in 2014 when he wrote his magisterial international relations oeuvre [World Order](#) and said that *Westphalian principles are being challenged on all sides, sometimes in the name of world order itself*. He defined three major threats to the existing world order:

- Islam: Proliferation of a new religious world order and disintegration of the nation state through radical Islam.
- Supranational Organizations: Disintegration of the nation state through pooled sovereignty of international entities like the EU or probably at a later stage ASEAN.
- China: Proliferation of a new cultural world order and corrosion of the existing international world order through a shift in power and the subversion of international mechanisms and institutions through setting up a similarly designed shadow system.

Within only three years after the publication of Kissinger's masterly analysis, I see my then assumption being confirmed: Only China will emerge as a force to set up a new world order. Kissinger's focus on radical Islam and supranational organization was merely academic. We shall though not forget that the systemic disintegration in international and supranational organizations helps China tremendously in its push for global hegemony. Corruption affairs in the UN, in particular UNESCO, wide spread frustration over EU institutions, and the general fact, that all the established international organizations serve rather as employer for a new global aristocratic bureaucracy, than their defined purpose of transforming the world into a better place, have certainly contributed to their beginning dissolution. Meanwhile the EU is weakened considerably by Brexit, and more than before

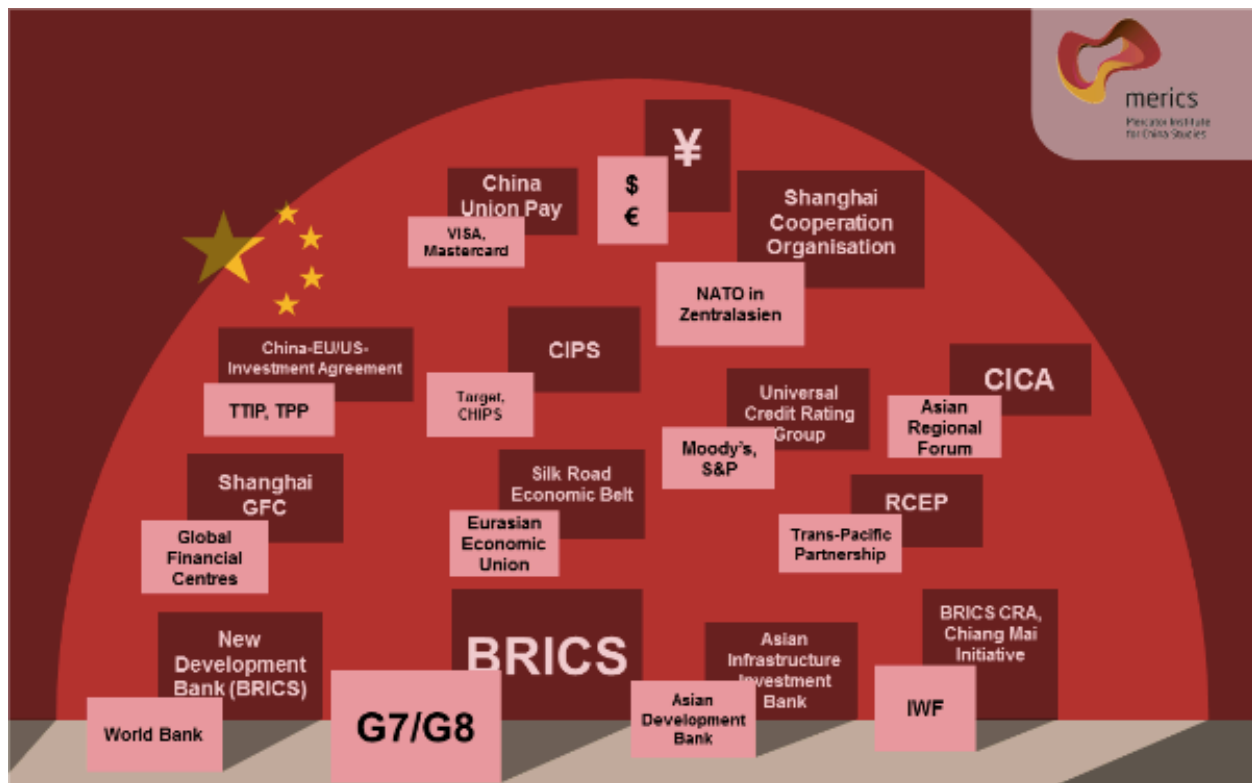
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focused on itself instead of how it could shape the world, or at least its region of intimate impact.

### A New Emerging World Order

China has built over the last two decades a shadow system of international institutions which navigates in the caveats of the existing US backed system. It engages with neglected African nations in the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#), which will most likely at some point substitute the New York based United Nations. It provides loans and investment through the Beijing headquartered [Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank](#) already in a larger volume than its US backed counterpart, the [Asian Development Bank](#), and might take over the functions of an ailing Washington D.C. headquartered [World Bank](#).

Considering that the United Nations and all its associated organizations have grown into a complex bureaucratic swamp, which costs roughly USD 6 billion, but has little impact, which preaches in the [17 United Nations Sustainability Goals](#) the reduction of poverty and wealth redistribution, but provides its own employees the world's best and most secure working conditions, one wishes actually for a clean slate and the transition to a new and better system of international governance. But can China provide that?



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## Globalism vs. Nationalism

The 68<sup>th</sup> Chinese National Holiday has just passed and the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress is coming up this week. This seems to be a good timing to think about the meaning of nationalism and globalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as humanity marches straight into the [6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction event](#) by being unable to transform itself into one crew operating one Spaceship Earth. TED chief curator [Chris Anderson and historian Yuval Harari](#) discussed in February 2017 why a national organization structure cannot deal with problems of global dimension, in particular environmental pollution, degradation of natural resources and the increasing automation of labor markets and therefore growing income disparities. We might add this point to Kissinger's list of threats to the existing world order, indeed the world itself: a system based on national interests is not capable to deal with global challenges which put our survival as species at risk.








While the Republican Heritage Foundation has recently released its annual report on [US Military Strength](#) pushing the resources of an ailing global power to its limits by demanding more investment in national defense, while the homeland security department is flooded with money since 9/11 in a fake propaganda against Islamist fundamentalism, which only fuels false fear and the American manufacturing and oil industry, China, too, continues to increase its military and domestic security spending according to economists Damien Ma and William Adams:

*In 2011, China allocated 624 billion yuan (\$100 billion) for domestic public security, a 14% increase from the previous year and over 6% of total public spending, higher than healthcare spending. By contrast, China's reported defense budget in the same year was 601 billion yuan (less than \$100 billion). Of the \$100 billion public security budget, about 70% went to domestic police and the paramilitary force, the People's Armed Police (PAP), while the courts*

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*and judicial functions received a much smaller fraction. On matters of law and order, there isn't much competition—order wins by a wide margin, at least in terms of resource allocation.*

In short and without having the time to research the numbers in detail, both behemoths, which account by far for the world's largest economies, world's largest tax revenues, world's largest public expenditures, world's largest national defense and domestic security budgets, allot more than 10% of their annual budgets on war and citizen oppression, when they should actually and most urgently allot their resources on mitigating climate change by investing in education and research & development of science and technology that makes a turn around possible. Infamous blogger Tim Urban would say, wait, but why?

Rank ↕	Country ↕	Revenues ↕	Expenditures ↕	Surplus (or deficit) ↕	Surplus percentage ↕	Year ↕
1	 United States	5,038,561	5,899,212	-860,651	-14.6%	2016 est. <sup>[2]</sup>
2	 China	3,719,870	4,063,400	-343,500	-8.5%	2016 est. <sup>[3] [4]</sup>
3	 Japan	1,696,000	1,931,000	-235,000	-12.2%	2016 est. <sup>[1]</sup>
4	 Germany	1,507,000	1,484,000	23,000	1.5%	2016 est. <sup>[1]</sup>
5	 France	1,288,000	1,369,000	-81,000	-5.9%	2016 est. <sup>[1]</sup>

## Collective Unconscious and Elitarianism

The CCP's value propaganda has lately been a lot on my mind, because related billboards decorate Shanghai's streets, walls, public school grounds and even construction sites. They cause quite ambivalent feelings, because for one I admire the Xi administration for putting common values again at the center of politics; something blatantly missing in pluralistic and postmodern Western democracies, which could learn an important lesson in these transformational times from Chinese governance. But on the other hand I am worried about its nationalistic and exclusive undertone when we have to deal with challenges of global dimension. Will there be any change in how we run this planet under a [Pax Sinica](#), or will we just swap the color code from Yankee blue to Maoist red?

The [Chinese National Day](#) is observed annually on October 1<sup>st</sup> to commemorate the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. On the contrary to other National Days that I know of, e.g. Germany's October 3<sup>rd</sup> or the United States' July 4<sup>th</sup> the Chinese government allots a full vacation week, the so called Golden Week, to its citizens. It is a good indicator for the importance of the Chinese National Day in the rhythm of a calendar year considering that the most important traditional holiday, the Chinese Spring Festival, which is usually celebrated in observance of the lunar calendar between late January and late February, being in significance comparable to Western Christmas and New Year combined, deserves the same number of days off.

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Governance is essentially about the management of people; and it seems as if only the Chinese have read and understood what management guru Peter F. Drucker said: *To be sure, the fundamental task of management remains the same: to make people capable of joint performance through common goals, common values, the right structures, and the training and development they need to perform and to respond to change.* What Drucker wrote about business management is equally if not more true of society management.

Ian Johnson did in [The Souls of China](#) a brilliant job describing how Xi Jinping changed domestic policies since 2013 from a focus on economic progress only to a definition of common national values beyond capitalism, how he managed to revive Chinese tradition, culture and religion in search of means to fend off the forces of individualism and materialism; forces which have been unleashed onto the global marketplace, but in the West - rampantly destroying societies – still wait for containment. One can only pay kudos to such an ingenious and timely political strategy and its execution, even though we have to acknowledge that China's past helps a lot to shape its future as Howard French explained in [Everything Under the Heavens](#). Xi Jinping has put China on a solid track to make its people capable of joint performance through common goals and common values by developing the China Dream | 中国梦 narrative which is tied into the mythological foundations of the civilization-state.

Johnson explains that the traditional combination of religious and political power in Chinese society helps Xi Jinping to regain control of a society which undergoes the same transformation which has unraveled Western economies in the process of the industrial revolution. *A local temple could be like the cathedral and city hall of a medieval European town rolled in one. In the words of the historian Prasenjit Duara, religion was society's "nexus of power." But religion was more than a method for running China; it was the political system's lifeblood. The emperor was the "Son of Heaven," who presided over elaborate rituals that underscored his semi-divine nature. Officials duplicated many of his rites at the local level, especially by praying at temples to the local City God. From the fourteenth century onward, the government mandated that every district of the empire have its own City God temple [effectively a town hall to venerate the emperor].*

Xi Jinping has reestablished this traditional governance system in only five years' time and thus managed to do the impossible: turn a country which is officially atheist, into a non-secular theocracy with himself as Son of Heaven. Again, Johnson, who described the 18<sup>th</sup> party congress in such a manner: *The party launches its most important public display of power: a ten-day ritual called the Two Meetings. One of them is a session of a consultative conference where Communist Party leaders confer with entrepreneurs, movie stars, religious figures, and academics. It is meant to show that people "from all walks of life" are part of the sacred mission of ruling China. The other gathering is the annual session of the National*



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*People's Congress, a ritualized version of a parliament. The congress has deputies, but they are unelected. It passes bills, but the decisions are drafted elsewhere. It promulgates laws, but their enforcement is arbitrary. Like the bright halls or bronze vessels of ancient times, it is a statement of intent—of plans that will only slowly become clear.*

The weakness of Xi's value propaganda and its imminent threat is equally evident as its strength and its opportunities. The top-down organization of Confucian societies allows the government to launch policies and change both mindset and behavior, thought and action in almost all layers of society at a pace Western style bottom-up organized democracies can only dream of. In as such China has already taken over command of spaceship Earth. Those who think differently, like the The Heritage Foundation and its Republican supporters, have lost touch with reality.

So, where is Xi's weakness? Capable and strong leadership requires system awareness or as psychologist [Daniel Goleman](#) writes: *For leaders to get results they need all three kinds of focus. Inner focus attunes us to our intuitions, guiding values, and better decisions. Outer focus smooths our connections to the people in our lives. And other focus lets us navigate in the larger world. A leader tuned out of his internal world will be rudderless; one blind to the world of others will be clueless; those indifferent to the larger systems within which they operate will be blindsided. Your focus is your reality.*



It has been widely discussed and I confirm here that Donald Trump is only equipped with a sharp inner focus, which helped him to amass a fortune. He knows what he wants, but he does not care about the world of others and is completely indifferent to larger systems which go beyond America and his own business interests. Infants and toddlers naturally have a sharp inner focus, but if an adult has not acquired outer and other focus, we must diagnose him a psychological retard who must be cured from his regressive state of mind. Such a leader is not apt to guide the world in such a critical period of transition.



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Xi Jinping is a different caliber. Any political leader navigating Chinese society and in particular the one Party system must have sharp outer focus. Contrary to Western politicians it is for a Chinese not enough to manipulate ignorant and often desperate proletariat to be elected into top government positions; Xi Jinping had to deal in the very first place with the smartest and shrewdest power-driven minds of a 1.3 billion population, which sit at the top of the 70 million members communist party institutions. While it was enough for Trump to run a campaign - in classic Roman *panem et circenses* style - that convinced mostly so called white trash – the left behind class of a globalized and tech savvy labor market - to vote for him, while he was ousted by his own Republican party fellows, Xi had to obtain endorsement from a decisive part of China's most powerful politicians and business leaders.

Xi is without question a much more formidable national leader, and one could now start to discuss, if such an analysis induces that China as a nation and economy is stronger than the US, and if the one party system is the better form of governance. But I am not going down this track. I want to draw your attention to the third focus which is required by 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders: the other focus, which lets us navigate the larger world. Ian Johnson writes in *The Souls of China* that *China's official identity is a multiethnic state where all peoples, beliefs, and traditions are equally respected. The problem with this story is that Han Chinese run the country and it is their values, their dreams, and their traditions that define the national vision—not China's fifty-five other ethnic groups.* Now, the same is true for a nation which has forged a dream for itself but ignores the rest of the world.



Above picture floated into our living room as unrequested screensaver on our Xiaomi telly during this year's Chinese National Holiday.

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Winston Churchill once said that *the further we look into the past the better we can understand the future*. The Chinese past defines everybody who is not part of the cultural hemisphere of the Middle Kingdom as barbarian. The barbarians were seen as the far extreme opposite of the emperor or Son of Heaven | 天子, who was divinely appointed and emanated universal and well-defined principles of order. His spheres of influence were clearly classified according to physical proximity and as such exposure to his culture, into court officials, officials at vassal courts, tributary courts and their respective subjects, and finally barbarians, who were not yet under his heavenly mandate.

Later dynasties, in particular the Ming who moved the capital in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century to Beijing and had there the Temple of Heaven | 天坛 erected, continued to apply this essentially social and strongly hierarchical structure of the emperor and his court being the center of the known world, culturally superior to any other form of human life. Only if one tries to understand this more than two millennia long self-perception of the Chinese elite, one can phantom the emotional dimension of the what the British kicked off in 1839 with the Opium Wars and what is known by the Chinese as Century of Humiliation | 百年国耻.

I guess we can summarize a few answers to the questions raised earlier at this point:

1. Wait, but why do US and Chinese governments invest about 10% of their public expenditure on security measures?

The American elite is captivated in a prolongation of its obsolete 20<sup>th</sup> century world dominance, the related economic model of industrial growth and its profit focus which can only be sustained by creating a world of scarcity and poverty. The Chinese elite is enthralled in a 150-year long pursuit to regain cultural and political world hegemony and therefore spends insane amounts, in particular in terms of purchasing power, on domestic security and national defense, and has adopted the US economic system as means to meet that end.

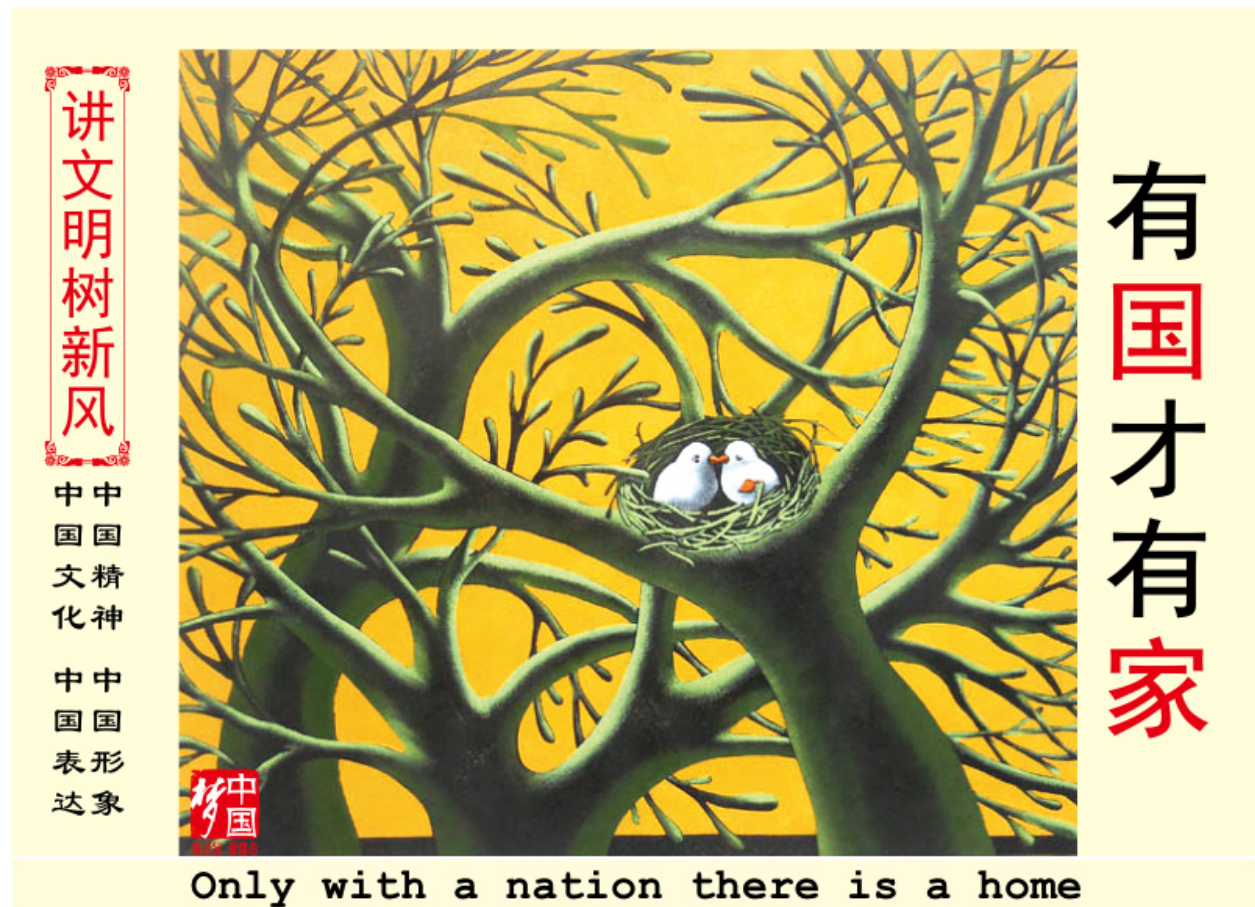
2. Can China provide a better system of international governance than the US? Will there be any change in how we run this planet under a Pax Sinica, or will we just swap the color code from Yankee blue to Maoist red? Where is Xi Jinping's weakness?

Xi Jinping has a clear inner and outer focus, which makes him contrary to Donald Trump a strong national leader, but he most likely lacks the required other focus to understand the global dimension of environmental and social challenges ahead, which demand a concerted

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effort of all of mankind and thus an integral, inclusive and pragmatic leadership. With a continuation of the same economic growth model he will only change the color code of the world hegemon, but won't be able to give future generations hope. There is though a chance that Xi himself initiates in the tradition of Chinese pragmatism a transition from nationalist to globalist leadership; if only for pure power based calculations; and I give him my full endorsement following the thoughts of management philosopher Peter Drucker who once said:

*One hears a great deal today about "the end of hierarchy." This is blatant nonsense. In any institution there has to be a final authority, that is, a "boss" – someone who can make the final decisions and who can expect them to be obeyed. In a situation of common peril – and every institution is likely to encounter it sooner or later – survival depends on clear command. If the ship goes down, the captain does not call a meeting, the captain gives an order. And if the ship is to be saved, everyone must obey the order, must know exactly where to go and what to do, and do it without "participation" or argument. "Hierarchy" and the unquestioning acceptance of it by everyone in the organization, is the only hope in a crisis.*





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## 有地球才有家 | One World One Home

If Xi Jinping is our Captain Planet, then I would have a few recommendations for his second term during the next five years.

1. Convert all military forces into planeters to clean up the debris already created and prevent future degradation of natural resources. Allocate national defense and homeland security spending to environmental protection. If Captain Xi takes the lead, I am pretty sure that quite a few nations will follow en suite.
2. Convert all nationalist propaganda which decorates Chinese streets, schools, cinemas and public spaces into globalist propaganda. Change slogans from Happy National Day – Wishing the Motherland a Future of Unlimited Bliss to Happy World Day – Wishing our Planet a Future of Unlimited Bliss.
3. Transform the China Dream | 中国梦 into a World Dream 世界梦 and make clear to everybody that we have only one world, which is all our home.
4. Transition from an industrial growth system to an integral growth system, which creates abundance instead of scarcity.
5. Initiate a landslide transformation from an industrial education model to an integral education model, setting Chinese students free from the competitive drudgery of excessively acquiring cognitive skills and making space and time for the playful acquisition of collaborative social skills.



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## The Urgency for Transition and Captain Xi's Responsibility

Now, some readers – if they have made it so far – might think I am nuts; but be assured I am all sober and my recommendations to Captain Xi do only reflect the facts of a world in peril. Pax Americana created after WWII abundance for much of the Western world, but at the expense of the developing world and the environment. Pax Sinica is set to develop abundance for the sinocentric world at the expense of the Western world and the environment, but at a much larger and thus threatening scale considering the increase in consumption per capita and roughly one billion more human beings being added to this planet each decade, in particular in Asia and Africa, China's second continent.

Damien Ma and William Adams captured this resource driven perspective well in the title of their 2013 book [In Line Behind a Billion People: How Scarcity Will Define China's Ascent in the Next Decade](#). What they describe is a China which is at the center of an economic system which circulates around commodity and utility streams geared towards profit maximization; a system which in the words of yet another economist, F. E. Schumacher, does not operate as if people or other forms of life mattered. The world will thus continue to spin driven by the same profit driven economic system which the US has globalized; only the decision makers at the very top have changed.



[Sinica](#) hosts Kaiser Guo and Jeremy Goldkorn had in September [FT journalist Lucy Hornby](#) and [Greenpeace East Asia Senior Climate & Energy Policy Officer Li Shuo](#) as guests to

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discuss China's environmental headaches and their impact on the world with a focus on distant water fishing and soil pollution. The crucial question in summarizing this podcast episode is this: **Why has distant water fishing declared a strategic industry by the Chinese government, although it is not an obvious choice like industrial robotics, artificial intelligence or space exploration?** I will try to explain here why.

[Lucy Hornby](#) tracks down the global squid fishing industry, which has its global center, where, you guess, in China, yes, in a Zhejiang coastal city called Zhoushan, not far from Ningbo. And she does so because squid is the latest and one of the last resources in the oceans to be exploited by humans after many maritime populations like mackerel or hake have collapsed in the past few decades, and many more are doomed to follow, because of the Chinese elite's craving for political pole position and the world's hunger for fish.

Zhoushan and Qingdao are the two largest Chinese and global fishing industry locations; Zhoushan accounting for 70% of the current global squid caught and Qingdao being home to the world's largest seafood processing industry. Once rich waters of the Chinese coast have been emptied in the 90s and Chinese fishermen have to sail ever further if they don't want to return empty handed, creating a vicious cycle of having to haul back increasing amounts of fish to pay for the increasing costs of long journeys to distant waters. What strikes me though as most important in Hornby's account is the clear connection of all three industry sectors and the impact of a short sighted, profit focused, commodity based economic system on the entire value chain of a national economy, which shapes the 21<sup>st</sup> century like no other.

Although the act of fishing extracts natural resources from water bodies, it is considered part of the primary sector, i.e. agriculture. The impact of the primary sector on the secondary and tertiary sector is far from obvious, in particular for Western observers, who are used to less than two percent of the labor force being active in agriculture. Despite China still employing about 40% of its labor force in the primary sector, Hornby's account shows incisively that our economic systems depend entirely on natural resources and cannot be sustained without them.

The excessive extraction of natural resources from oceans has led according to Greenpeace to critical conditions in more than 90% of commercially exploited fish stock. Despite this obvious depletion of natural maritime resources, the commodity based economic system which China has adopted in the 1980s, forces the central and provincial governments to subsidize the fishing industry in order to sustain employment in related secondary and tertiary sector industries; instead of slowing down, the exploitation is stepped up in the name of national stability, i.e. greed for power and profit.



## Is Xi Jinping The Captain Planet, The World Has Been Waiting For?

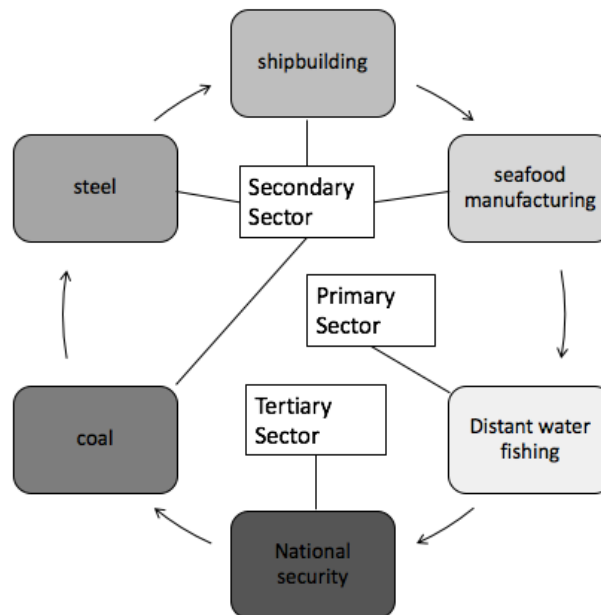
China goes even so far as to declare distant water fishing a strategic industry, because it deems itself as new global hegemon entitled to exploit the entire planet's international waters. Conflicts over the Diaoyu (Chinese for fishing) Islands, which erupted with Japan in 2012 and have been only the start of unavoidable conflicts with a nation that has to fuel its insatiable economic system on a scale that mankind has never seen before.

These take aways clarify why it is Captain Xi's responsibility to initiate within this five-year legislation period a transition towards a new economic model which is not based on profit and scarcity, but on value and abundance; an economic model which I call in association with Ken Wilber's integral metatheory, the integral model, because

1. it does not exclude, but includes all spheres of the global ecosystem;
2. it takes externalities into account and it thus based on deep system awareness;
3. it perceives the diversity of human resources as the most important natural resources to manage a turnaround and focuses on these rather than on commodities;
4. and it includes externalities into market prices.

### Facts

- 1/5 of world's fish caught by Chinese fleets
- 50% of Chinese seafood produce is exported
- 1/3 of all distant water fishing is Chinese
- China has 10x more fishing vessels than US
- Chinese fishing industry subsidies have surged 2006 to 2011 from CNY 260 mio to CNY 2.8 bln.
- Beijing subsidizes shipbuilding industry and shipping fuel



### Solutions

- Reduce or stop aquamarine life consumption
- Stop purchase of made in china seafood
- Cut fishing industry, shipbuilding and diesel subsidies
- Transition from commodity based economy to resource based economy

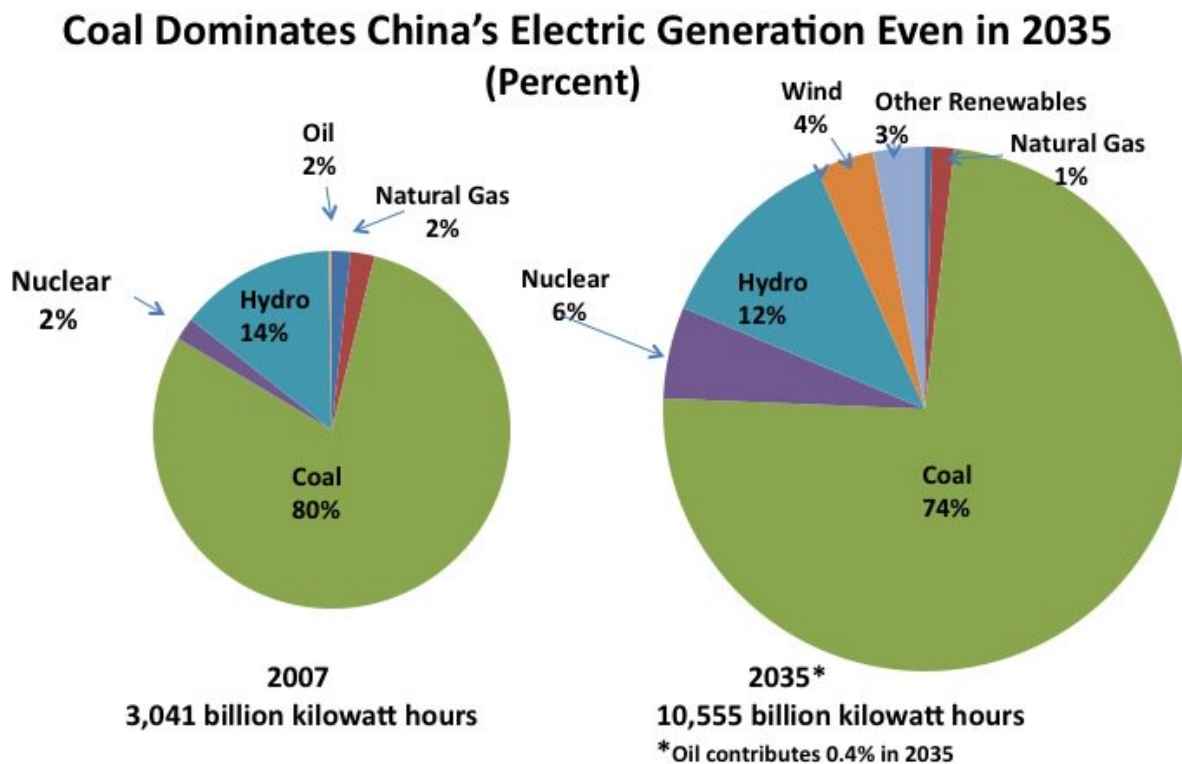
## Energy Security and Peace

Hornby's [FT article](#) does also allow conclusions further down the value chain. Provincial and municipal subsidies for large scale infrastructure projects like Zhoushan's multibillion CNY fishing harbor, national subsidies to the shipbuilding and steel industry, and the imminent threat to [lay off literally millions of workers in the coal mining industry](#), do

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reveal that the Chinese economy is – like all industrial growth systems - sick to the marrow and grows only at the expense of the global ecosystem. Never before though did a national economy reach scope and scale of China's and never before was a single economy of this size connected to a global market of mindless consumers. That's why 21<sup>st</sup> century dynamics are reason to worry; and that's why both top down as well as bottom up transformation is required urgently.

China's energy policy should give us particular reason to worry, because it is one which sets its own and thus the global economy on track for the next 20 to 50 years and thus entails Beijing's most far sighted measures. China's current reliance on coal, accounting for 2/3 of its national energy generation and its initiated shift to nuclear energy, which the central government labels as renewable (!), clearly indicate that there is no intention to collaborate with ROW in terms of energy security. A focus on nuclear energy reflects in any nation a deeply centralized and nationalist governance attitude, since it is based on the very premise of being independent from others, while a focus on solar energy reflects the visualization of a transnational future, where the sun, as our original source of energy is harvested and distributed globally.



Source: Energy Information Administration, International Energy Outlook 2010

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The [World Nuclear Association](#) writes in its September 2017 report that in *China*, now with 38 operating reactors on the mainland, the country is well into the growth phase of its nuclear power program. There were eight new grid connections in 2015, and five in 2016. Over 20 more reactors are under construction, including the world's first Westinghouse AP1000 units, and a demonstration high-temperature gas-cooled reactor plant. Many more units are planned, including two largely indigenous designs – the Hualong One and CAP1400. China aims to have more nuclear capacity than any country except the USA and France by 2020 and to lead nuclear power generation globally by 2030. A past, a fading and an emerging empire on nuke steroids; confirming what Karl Popper wrote after WWII in *Utiopia and Violence*: The spirit of Hitlerism won its greatest victory over us when, after its defeat, we used the weapons which the threat of Nazism had induced us to develop.

A quick look into the history books tells us that a joint energy security is one if not the central pillar for regional peace. One might today look critical upon the European Union for having stalled its development due to bureaucratic futilism, but we shall not forget that it is the result of a concerted effort to avoid the recurrence of destruction WWII brought upon Europe. The EU was erected on the basis of the [1951 Treaty of Paris](#), which entailed the [European Coal and Steel Community \(ECSC\)](#). French post WWII foreign minister Robert Schuman proposed a union of energy and heavy industry commodity supply as a central measure to guarantee regional peace.



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If there were only one measure I could recommend to Captain Xi, it would be forging a regional energy security treaty with Japan and Korea in a first step and in a second the successive transformation of the [One Belt One Road \(OBOR\) project](#) into a distributed energy generation and energy consumption network. China's abundant solar resources in Tibet, Xinjiang and Dongbei are combined with the Chinese manufacturing power the key to trigger a breakthrough in a change of energy supply from fossil fuel based economies to renewables. A breakthrough, which can only work if energy supply is conceived supranational or even global. Captain Xi would thereby guarantee a peaceful future for the Eurasian and African continents and could find his way into the history books of future generations as the leader who saved the world. He would most likely share the 2030 Peace Nobel Prize with Elon Musk who has a similar project in mind for the Americas.

### There Are Many Flames, But Only One Light

[Theodore Roosevelt](#) once said that man must protect himself in *new and wild communities where there is violence; and until other means of securing his safety are devised, it is both foolish and wicked to persuade him to surrender his arms while the men who are dangerous to the community retain theirs.*" Kissinger writes that for Roosevelt, *if a nation was unable or unwilling to act to defend its own interests, it could not expect others to respect them and therefore his favorite proverb* Roosevelt's favorite proverb was "*Speak softly, but carry a big stick.*"

Quite frequently, I feel that Xi Jinping is like Roosevelt a realist; and what else should he be considering that China is in terms of socio-economic development where the US was about a century ago? But we have to hope that Xi considers a Great Leap Forward in Chinese international relations management. To be sure, it is a lot to be asked from him, because no other leader ever had to transform himself and his subjects within only a few decades to such an extent. If he can take though such a leap of faith he would become a Chinese [Woodrow Wilson](#), who served as US president during WWI. He exemplified according to Kissinger idealism in international relations and it was him who initiated the League of Nations, the predecessor to the United Nations. Wilson was much ahead of his time, but Xi would be just in time to focus all human effort on the solution of the most pressing challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century humanity.

Is Xi Jinping, after all, the Captain Planet, the world has been waiting for? I wouldn't know for sure, but even if I would, I wouldn't put all my money on a single political leader, but ask what I could do myself. In an era of consumer empowerment, it is my daily purchase and consumption decision that makes a small, but significant difference. Xi might be Captain Planet, but we are all: Planeteers, who don't eat fish.

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**Further Reading and Watching:**

- Ted Conversation on [Nationalism vs. Globalism](#)
- [World Order](#) by Henry Kissinger
- [MERICS report](#) on shadow structure of international organizations set up by China
- [China - Evolution's New Leading Edge?](#) by Knut Wimberger
- [What does XJP mean for the World?](#) by Knut Wimberger
- [Focus – The Hidden Driver of Excellence](#) by Daniel Goleman
- United Nations System: [organizational overview](#)
- [The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao](#) by Ian Johnson
- [Value Propaganda](#) by Knut Wimberger
- [Everything Under the Heavens: How China's Past Helps Shape Its Future](#) by Howard French
- [Hong Kong: Polis Between 2 Empires](#) by Knut Wimberger
- [In Line Behind a Billion People: How Scarcity Will Define China's Ascent in the Next Decade](#) by Damien Ma and William Adams
- [China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants are Building a New Empire in Africa](#) by Howard French
- [China's Asian Dream: Empire Building Along the Silk Road](#) by Tom Miller
- [China's Asia Dream](#) by Knut Wimberger
- [A bigger catch: China's fishing fleet hunts new ocean targets](#) by Lucy Hornby
- [5 Problems with China's Distant Water Fishing Industry](#) by Li Shuo
- [Greenpeace Briefing](#) on Distant Water Fishing
- [Saving the Oceans](#) short documentary on ARTE program [Mapping the World](#)
- World Nuclear Power Association on [Nuclear Power in China](#)