

# Toward World Peace and Development:

A Dialogue on the Global System  
and China's Role

Yang Jiemian and  
Danilo Turk

*Editor's Note:* 2015 does not only mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, but it is also witnessing rapidly growing cooperation between China and many regions of the world, including the European Union. To explore related serious issues in an informal but in-depth manner, the China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies initiated a dialogue between Professor Yang Jiemian, President Emeritus of Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, and His Excellency Danilo Turk, former President of the Republic of Slovenia in June 2015. Their discussion was focused on the UN reforms and China's role, new Chinese initiatives of economic cooperation and their global implications, as well as future development of rule of law in China. We are very thankful to Professor Yang and Mr. Turk for their generous contribution of their valuable time and insights.

## Growing Role of the United Nations and China

**Yang:** The first question I would like to raise is about international system transformation and the role of big powers, like China, the United States, and the Europe Union, and then the emerging role of small and

medium-sized countries through their collective actions and grouping, forming regional or sub-regional organizations to amplify their voice.

**Turk:** The critical factor here is the need to strengthen the United Nations. The UN continues to be the main framework for international cooperation and development. This has to be said because very often we see things happen which weaken the system of the United Nations. But if we want to have a good future for the world, we have to make sure the UN is strengthened. This implies several very important and difficult tasks.

The first task relates to security. In the area of security, the UN has to play the role envisaged in the United Nations Charter. Often it is not like that. Often the practice of states and non-state actors goes the other way. So strengthening of the Security Council is a necessity. That strengthening primarily means improvement of cooperation among the permanent members of the Security Council (P5).

I have said on a number of public occasions that the UN needs something that I would call a global security compact, which is a global understanding, not a formal treaty or a binding agreement in the legal sense. This is essential for the success of the United Nations and essential for global peace and stability. Of course this is easier said than done. But we have seen in recent history this is doable, at the time when the P5 cooperated well, things were easier to solve.

International problems of peace are never easy to resolve, but it is much more likely that success will happen when there is agreement among the P5. Take the Iraq-Iran war 25 years ago as an example. That situation was settled largely due to the cooperation among the P5. And more recently, the relative success and progress in Afghanistan since 2001 have been largely due to cooperation and understanding among the P5 to the extent that the most important and most responsible powers of the world cooperate.

As one of the P5, China has been a very constructive player on the Security Council. I am saying this from my own experience. I represented Slovenia in the Security Council in 1998–1999. And we worked very well with the Chinese delegation. And China has been a constructive player and a really strong supporter of the UN. I am saying this because China has already become an incredibly important player. Of course it has always been a very important player, but in the last few years, the role and the

expectations relating to China have grown very considerably. Of course it is not new to say that the world is expecting China to shoulder a very important part of the responsibilities for global order, peace, security, development, and all the basic objectives of the international system. But what that mean exactly remains to be discussed. Expectations are always there, but that doesn't mean that national interests of others have been reduced or changed. So what does it mean to shoulder greater responsibilities, to play a more active role, and to do so in a way which would lead to a more harmonious international relations?

All countries have a stake in maintaining peace and supporting sustainable development globally, and they all play indispensable roles under the UN framework.

I approach these questions from a rather specific angle. I worked for the United Nations for a long time and we've always wondered what would be the right type and right quantity of Chinese approach to peacekeeping. China now is a great power, and has a very strong, well-organized, and high-quality military. But what is the appropriate number and profile of Chinese personnel in UN peacekeeping? Here we come to a basic problem which is difficult for everything we are discussing in the question of global system, i.e., the balance between the needs and contribution has to be very carefully worked out. It's not something that

comes very easily or automatically and the practical aspects have to be analyzed continuously. So that's an example which I think from the UN point of view has been very clear. So a global security understanding, or a global security compact has to be built gradually with regard to specific situations, such as in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and also Ukraine. This is going to be difficult, but this is the only way.

That brings us to the second aspect, which is the role of countries other than the core, other than the P5. Other countries have to do their part with the job. In the Security Council, they can be very helpful and constructive. Again I am talking on the basis of experience. Slovenia did not hesitate to make specific proposals, which were accepted by the Security Council. For example, when nuclear tests took place in Pakistan and then in India in 1998, we, together with some other countries like Costa Rica and Sweden,

proposed a resolution on nuclear testing that eventually created a framework within which the UN and the international community acted vis-à-vis Pakistan and India. Given this example of something that one would consider to be the domain of great powers, yet not only theirs, it is also something that should be of concern to others. So I think that other countries have an important role to play. They can also make important proposals.

The second important area of UN work is development, and sustainable development goals are the way to go. I have worked in the UN program for many years and in the 1990s, for example, the UN organized a whole series of conferences on various development issues. For example, there was a conference on population in Cairo, a conference on the role of women in Beijing, a conference on questions about urbanization in Istanbul, and so on.

There was a whole series of conferences to allow Secretary-General Kofi Annan to produce what was called the Millennium Development Goals, a short document of objectives to be achieved in 15 years. This was a good approach, because it allowed governments to compare their policies with UN objectives. And we have seen remarkable progress in the last 15 years. The progress was analyzed in the UN more recently. There were special groups and negotiations which took place to consider these things. And I remember very well the role of China in this context. China has taken these things very seriously. And China has probably contributed the largest part to the global success. The fact that China was able to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in the last 15 years is an enormous success of historic proportions. And obviously China has been a very strong supporter of the Millennium Development Goals.

I remember the discussions that Kofi Annan had with then President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng, and later with President Hu Jintao. I was then with Kofi Annan in Beijing for these discussions. We have seen the strong support that China has given to this strategic orientation of the UN.

Contributing the largest part to the global success in poverty reduction, China is expected to shoulder more responsibilities in promoting sustainable and more balanced global development.

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On this basis I believe the future work has to proceed between 2015 and 2030. The UN has produced the document of Sustainable Development Goals in which there are 16 goals and 70 targets. This is now going to be discussed in Addis Ababa at the conference on financing for development, so we would have to look at the needs of developing countries very seriously. When they are adopted in September, as it is planned, this will be the platform. And then in the subsequent period, in the time of implementation, there will be a need to innovate. We have to figure out better methods of progress analysis, better forms of advice from the United Nations to governments who need this advice, better cooperation of major actors in development assistance, and again China will be an extremely important player in that regard as well, because China has expanded its cooperation with the developing world enormously. So implementation will be a very important and very interesting period in the evolution of the United Nations.

**Yang:** Your arguments are very thought provoking. In terms of development, the MDGs have played a very important role but now we are turning our attention to the post-2015 development agenda. We should set up more goals and ask ourselves to make more contributions.

The chemistry in the cooperation between our institution (SIIS) and the Willy Brandt Foundation is development issues. Willy Brandt initiated the North-South Commission which released two reports on North-South relations. At that time, poverty alleviation was one of the most important goals. But four to five decades later, especially 15 years after the MDGs, we should do more. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation also cooperates with us. It is a private foundation and its work focuses on three areas: financing, health, and Africa. In the last area, China has demonstrated its role in combating Ebola. Now we have MERS in South Korea. It has happened before. But at that time when countries were largely isolated, if something happened, it happened [domestically]. But now it spreads very quickly.

Just now you talked about UN reforms. So, if we have come to a time to have the possibility of reforming the United Nations and other important international organizations, what should be reformed first and what are the priorities of the international community for a more peaceful and prosperous world?

**Turk:** I have been thinking about this question very often. There are answers which are sometimes offered as inevitable, for example, changing the composition of the Security Council. I don't think that this is a priority, because the Security Council will have to be reformed at some point, but it works pretty well now and one should not underestimate its current contribution and potential. The Security Council has an institutional and procedural potential which hasn't been fully used. So this procedural and institutional potential of the Security Council can be used more fully in the current setting. The priority has to be working out a plan of activities that would make full use of the Security Council. Of course this is not something that is going to happen very soon.

I was in Washington about a week ago. I went to Dumbarton Oaks, which is an estate in the area of Georgetown and has a place called the Music Room. In that Music Room in 1944, meetings were held to envisage the United Nations. All the arrangements were worked out there — all the basic things except veto in the Security Council. That was not agreed upon. Veto was agreed at Yalta in February 1945. I like to go to these historic places because they are very inspiring. And you will see the Music Room, which is a very large room, very beautiful with medieval setting, no windows, full concentration on the new system of the world. That was the ending of World War II, and sometimes this kind of huge crisis accelerates our thinking. Also, when you talk about Churchill, de Gaulle, and other great leaders, you know Europe shouldn't be too proud because Europe needed two world wars to come to good ideas. They didn't happen as a result of intellectual productivity of Europe. This happened because of huge tragedies in Europe. Tens of millions had to die before these people got together and worked out a system. There were other experiments before, but they were rather bad. One must be aware of the difficult history of the world. The system created in the Oaks works. It didn't collapse. It doesn't work perfectly but it is still working.

Some of the priorities are already imposed on us. One of them is climate change. We should have confidence in the Paris Conference at the

The key to UN reforms does not lie in expanding the Security Council, but in maximizing its potential in mustering up global efforts to tackle the most pressing global issues.

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end of the year which will be significant for various reasons. First of all, climate change is a big problem. And I have been to China many times last year. When I was there I traveled around, not only in Beijing; I went to Xiamen and we looked at the map of air pollution. The climate is changing rather badly and we have to do something. It's a big priority. And if there is progress, if we come to a legal framework which is sufficiently robust and predictable, it can give policymaking and business a framework based on national definition of objectives under which countries have to make their own pledges. The EU has pledged to reduce its greenhouse emissions by 40 percent by 2030. The European Union is not imposing that standard on anybody else. But we would like to see a system that allows every major player in the world to come to a very serious definition of its objectives and what it can do in the next 15 years. If we succeed on this, we are going to achieve a major political victory. This is not only about climate change, it is about the international system, because now we have this big challenge, and if we are able to deal with it, then we can do other things as well. We can perhaps move in the security field more courageously. And we can perhaps do more ambitious things in the field of development. So when you are asking about priorities, I would say that some priorities are imposing themselves without our work. Others we'll have to define.

## **New Chinese Initiatives and New Momentum for EU-China Cooperation**

**Yang:** China's relations with the European Union have gained new momentum in recent years. Both sides are making concerted efforts to foster a China-EU partnership for peace, growth, reform, and civilization. For China, after years of deliberation and consultation at the top level, it has proposed a number of strategically significant initiatives to bring both sides closer. Two of the most notable and highest-profile strategies are the "Belt and Road" initiative and the so-called "16 + 1" initiative. The "Belt and Road" initiative aims at linking Asia, Africa, and Europe in terms of policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, and trade facilitation, while the "16 + 1" initiative is designed specifically for Central and Eastern Europe with a view to elevating China's economic, political, trade, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges with the region to a higher level. How do you view current and future China-EU relations? And since you are from

Slovenia, an important member of the region, how do you evaluate the two initiatives within the broader picture of China-EU cooperation, and what kind of results or benefits are you expecting?

**Turk:** Some Europeans think and talk about how different China is from Europe, they do not immediately see how interdependent we are and the extent to which in fact we have the same goals. The last China-EU summit was a success and brought new energy into our bilateral ties. I think we are on a good path. The European Union has been exposed to some difficulties in the recent period. Not only was there an election for a new leadership in the EU, there was also a new Commission and a new President of the European Council — all of which have been affecting us. But the other thing is that Europe is now confronted with a series of problems in its neighborhood — Libya, Syria, and Ukraine. One has to understand the political pressure that has been created, the time consumed by crises in political decision-making and also the feeling of uncertainty. That has been probably one of the factors affecting the whole approach to cooperation with China. Of course we have strategic partnership, but we could do more to invigorate this partnership.

I see the “Belt and Road” strategy as a very promising one. I want to make one analogy here. The European Union started with a document called the “Schuman Declaration,” which was essentially about creating a joint management of coal and steel in Europe. These were two strategic commodities at that time, because Europe, after World War II, needed reconstruction. And it needed a different system of management of these two strategic commodities. This looked like an

Apart from economic gains for all, the “Belt and Road” initiative has the potential to bring different regions together, politically and culturally.

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economic framework for technical cooperation and management. But in fact, the results were highly political and very beneficial. And the big paradox of history is that Europe which has striven for centuries to find a way of unifying itself or becoming closer with all kinds of experiments in that regard, either political or religious, found nothing to work in Europe. But this time it worked. The economic and practical approach worked better than everything else. Sometimes political objectives are best achieved



through seemingly economic and technical measures. So I believe that the “Belt and Road” policy has a big future. If investment in specific projects is done well and these projects produce desired benefits, the initiative will have enormous political effects.

The Marshall Plan is another example of investment and political results through which one can imagine how much this “Belt and Road” project can bring to Central Asia, how much it could contribute to long-term peace in Afghanistan, how much it could do to bring Iran into a constructive arrangement in Central Asia and the wider Middle East. So this can have a huge political effect if it is followed properly.

There will be a need for a lot of creative thinking in China and in every country that this project will involve. I have been to some Central Asian countries several times and I can see greater opportunities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. If you think about water management in these areas, there are huge needs. The question is: Is China going to be involved heavily in this sort of projects? If so, with what kind of partnership and ambition in the countries concerned? Is there any space for partnership with the EU? I don’t know if these things have been fully shaped.

For a country like Slovenia, the whole question looks very different. We are not going to play a big role. We are a small country. But we have certain specific means which can be looked at in the context of the “Belt and Road.” One of them is how are we going to develop our ports. The northern Adriatic is an important part of the Mediterranean which is relevant to the “Belt and Road” strategy. I know that China is now placing the main emphasis on the railways in Athens, Greece, and one of the main lines will be going through Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia, to Hungary. The railway from Belgrade and Budapest is very important. This could be part of the early harvest of the whole strategy. But we also have to see beyond that to the future of the Mediterranean ports. The ports of the North Sea are quite congested, so there is the need to develop Mediterranean ports. We are interested in this. And then there are some companies involved in this sort of work already and we have to see how much further we can go.

I can see clearly two types of questions. The first is how the supply chains are going to be developed in the future. How does one really envisage the evolution of the supply chains? What is produced where? Europe has de-industrialized and China has been industrializing very dramatically. There is a need to establish new balances. And the second aspect is about

small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in the high technology industry. Slovenia has a number of younger and small companies already working with their partners in China. They have to be given an opportunity. In this kind of big strategic development projects, it is easy to overlook small and medium-sized companies. These companies are very important, at least for European countries. And there have to be ways of securing relative financial support. I don't think our banks are currently doing very well in this regard. It will be very important in the long run to give space to and offer financial support to small and medium-sized companies in Europe and China. The European Union could be a valuable partner in that regard, because the EU is on the other side of this system that is going to be created. But my opinion would be that this is a very promising strategy, one that has to be vigorously pursued and wisely invested in.

In September of last year, a think tank meeting on "16 + 1" at Lake Bled was hosted. We are committed to this idea. We see this as a part of a larger picture. Here again, we see distinct political advantages, we must be careful to design the right kind of practical projects. This is a necessity and I hope this will be done. But we should not overlook the political effects, which can be highly beneficial because this group consists not only of countries from the EU but also non-EU countries.

There is a strong political need in Europe to forge a closer link between EU members and non-EU members, for example, the Budapest-Belgrade railway. This is of course something with considerable positive effect, not only economic but also political, because Serbia shouldn't feel it is being left out of the European Union. This project would actually create a stronger link. So we believe there is something that is absolutely worth pursuing with effort. It's not easy to define concrete projects which will produce immediate results. One has to be well aware of the difficulties. And when the day of their success comes, their political dividends will be very large.

**Yang:** When we think of these big issues like the international system, world order, China-Europe relations, we should not only talk about the

The "16 + 1" initiative does not only help promote China-EU relations, but it also enhances European integration.

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principles and targets, which are relatively easier. But it is equally important to have a specifically phased, time-by-time, and concrete action plan. If our goal is over there, the second important question is how to reach there.

China used to be a regional power, but after the financial crisis in 2008, China was pushed into the limelight of the world arena. And we have ever greater responsibilities. So, we should not only propose where the world ought to be going, but also work on how we can get there. For instance, the reform and promotion of the role of the United Nations. In addition to sustainable development, we have economic and social development issues as well. China is working with the other BRICS countries to start the BRICS New Development Bank, whose headquarters happen to be in Shanghai. We are going to start the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund. So now we are moving up from the concrete economic transactions to more monetary and financial designing and operationalization. The global response has shown that the world is even more multipolarized. For example, the United States is not happy that China has taken the initiative on these financial institutions. But as we Chinese say, "Those who go with the times shall thrive, and those who go against them shall perish." So we want to be on the right side of history. China and Europe have a lot in common in this regard. But we also need to work together at the global level. So we hope that the United Nations can play a bigger role.

China-Europe relations are witnessing relatively better performance in the past couple of years. This shows that both sides understand that we should start from our overlapping interests. We worked on economic cooperation, on inter-connectivity, on cultural and people-to-people exchanges, amongst other areas. These are the fundamental starting points we should work from. We usually say that good ideas originate from Europe. I agree with you that Mr. Schuman and another Frenchman, Jean Monnet, these two great men invented what is now the European Union. Now seventy years later, we need more Schumans and Monnets. Unfortunately, nowadays, election-driven governments are much more shortsighted than those leaders during or right after the Second World War, like Winston Churchill, de Gaulle, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. This means think tanks should produce more forward-looking ideas.

## China's Future Path Toward Rule of Law

**Yang:** The last question is about the rule of law and corruption. As for the rule of law, in China we have two terms. One is “rule of law” and the other is “rule by law.” They are pronounced in the same way in Chinese but are represented by different characters. At the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, China only had two laws — one was the marriage law and the other was criminal law. But now thanks to the past 35 years of hard work, we have established, more or less, a system of laws so that we can have rule by law. But beyond that, we should work toward rule of law. Then people have debates on what is meant by rule of law. I think the guiding principles, the governance ideas, the institutions, and implementing conscientiousness should be the main elements of rule of law. We must improve ourselves and the United Nations should also play a bigger role.

As for anti-corruption, the problem is always there. Like treating illness and sickness, they are always there, but that does not mean we should not fight against them. That's why we need doctors, hospitals, medicines — Western medicines, Chinese medicines, or whatever medicine — to tackle the problems. Compared with the situation three years ago, China's determination and achievements in fighting against corruption are quite obvious. Its sweeping anti-corruption drive has attracted global attention. And the Chinese government has pledged to address its root causes through the rule of law. Since Your Excellency was a law professor, how do you see the relationship between corruption and the rule of law?

**Turk:** It's not a simple question, because every country has the problem in the realization of the idea of rule of law at home. Everywhere you go, you will find very sensitive questions relating to the rule of law. In my country, Slovenia, we talked a lot recently about the need to fight corruption. I know this is a very big theme in China as well. In Slovenia, the discussion about the fight against corruption did not exist some ten years ago. We believed at that time we didn't have corruption or that corruption was not going to be a problem. But if you go to Slovenia today, you will see people are talking a lot about corruption and they think this is a serious problem for the country. How does one address this problem through the instrument of rule of law? What kind of institutions have to be put in place? What is the kind of role for the judiciary that has to be established? What kind of jurisprudence has

to be developed in order to make sure that the rule of law functions and the levels of corruption are reduced?

Beyond the simplistic approach of establishing an independent judiciary, China is to achieve the rule of law through lasting development, conscience building and better governance.

Some people say that corruption is always there and you cannot eliminate corruption one hundred percent. I heard that there is a saying in one of the Asian cultures along the lines of "Fish cannot live in absolutely pure water." How does one translate this wisdom into a system of rule of law? Because you may wisely accept there will always be something. This is a very fundamental question about the rule of law. And there are no immediate solutions. There is nothing you can extract from international treaties. The definition of corruption in the international convention on corruption is very broad. This broad definition makes it very difficult for national legislators to figure

out how to legislate actions against corruption in terms of substantive norms, how to define corruption, and the kind of activities that can be listed as corruption and therefore not allowed. How to develop institutions which will be dealing with corruption? Not everything will go to the court, but some must go to the court of law. This is a fundamental question about the rule of law and also development. Again we shall have to discuss this at the level of the United Nations and also at the national level. Sometimes the issue of rule of law is approached in a rather simplistic way. There exists a basic idea of the independence of the judiciary. Those criteria of the independence of the judiciary are the litmus test for the understanding of whether the level of rule of law is adequate or not in a country.

Many years ago, I worked in a UN body called the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. It was an expert body of the Human Rights Commission and one of the items we discussed was independence of the judiciary. We were focusing on very fundamental things at that time which was thirty years ago. For example, how do we ensure that judges are safe and that they are not subject to threats. Because in some countries, if you are a judge, you may be in a dangerous situation. There are very well-organized and very strong

criminal organizations. So we were focusing on the things that are related mainly to the safety of judges. Judges have to be safe and protected vis-à-vis the executive branch of the government. Judges have to be safe physically from threats of criminal organizations and other non-state actors. So it was a very limited definition of independence of justice and a very limited definition of the rule of law. But now with development, we see that these things are much more complex. Even in countries where you don't have a problem of interference by the executive branch in the judiciary, you may not necessarily have an adequate level of rule of law. The World Bank has published a study some two years ago, explaining that the quality of legislation is not adequate in many countries. The process of parliament creates laws which are not of sufficiently high-quality to support economic development. Very few lawyers would accept the role of international institutions to discuss the quality of law within a country. It's a sovereignty issue. It's not the business of a foreign country or an international institution. But again, this cannot be ignored. If the law does not provide a sufficient level of safety for investors or sufficient safety in terms of financial transactions, then there will be a problem.