

Alarmism About China Distracts from Ongoing Western Imperialism

West projecting its own image onto China when labeling it imperialist

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According to many Western commentators—from the center-left to the far-right—China is the major threat to democracy, climate, peace and sovereignty in the 21st century. It is an issue where Donald Trump and Joe Biden are completely aligned. On the other side of the Atlantic too, Nigel Farage and Keir Starmer are closing ranks behind a sinophobic story-line.

[Supposedly “critical” voices](#) add that the Chinese behaviour “is not that different from the European imperialism of the 16th to 19th century.” And so the West projects its own image onto China. In reality, the alarmism surrounding China distracts from the ongoing Western imperialism that still holds the greatest power on the world stage.

Western powers remain dominant

It is true that China, a country of 1.4 billion inhabitants, has become the largest economy in the world. But there is a great deal of nuance to be added to that statement. For instance, foreign multinational corporations dominate [40%](#) of the Chinese domestic market and even capture [53%](#) of the added value within the Chinese export market. In the age of multinationals, GDP is clearly not a good parameter for measuring economic power.

[A study](#) looking at the profits of the 2,000 largest corporations in 2013 confirmed that U.S. multinationals continued to dominate 12 corporate sectors (reaping over 40% of total profits); Japan dominated one sector and China zero.

The same pattern holds for the total wealth of countries. In 2020, the Global North still [owned 71% of global assets](#) whilst China owned 17.9%, almost exactly the same as its share of the world population. In other words, Western power has not so much declined as it has globalized.

Exploiting the Global South

More important than the size of the economy is its structure. The most significant mechanisms for extracting rents from the Global South are illegal financial flows, profit repatriation by multinationals and unequal trade, totaling about [\\$3 trillion of stolen wealth every year](#).

By comparison: That is 20 times the annual development aid that rich countries “donate,” but in reality abuse, for [political influence at the UN](#) and for deals surrounding fishing rights and [deadly border controls](#). In all three financial flows, China is a victim not an exploiter.^[1]

If we look at foreign investments, China is equally irrelevant. In 2018, China suffered a net *loss* of [\\$63 billion](#) in foreign investment, meaning that China lost more to foreign investors than it gained from its own investments abroad. On all seven continents, the Global North as a whole remains [the largest foreign investor](#).

The military threat of the West

Western countries have an estimated [935 military bases](#) in other countries and colonies. China has eight, even if we include its bases in the South China Sea. Outside of its own region, China has only one military base—in Djibouti, where there are also American, French, Japanese, Italian and Saudi-Arabian military installations.

Yet the West is directly threatening China. The [United States](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) have 290 military bases encircling China and the U.S. is threatening with a nuclear “[first-strike capability](#).” The military budget of NATO is \$1.2 trillion, six times that of China. So who is actually threatening whom here?



U.S. military bases around China, and world. [Source: [inf.news](#)]

The West is the biggest claimant of debts

The Western press loves to repeat that China is “the largest bilateral creditor” to developing

countries. But that is an utterly meaningless statement. In 2020, according to World Bank data, China had \$171 billion in outstanding debts with [low and middle income countries](#), [Rich countries](#) and the [multilateral banks](#) where they have a majority stake (the IMF, World Bank, ADB and IADB) had a total combined debt claim that was almost ten times bigger—\$1,100 billion.

More importantly, the private sector—[which demands vastly higher interest rates](#)—was responsible for an even greater sum: \$2,825 billion in outstanding loans and bonds. The [ten largest private creditors](#) in the Global South are all banks and investment funds located in Western Europe and the United States. So who is really driving the debt crisis?

Debt imperialism

An oft-heard accusation against China is that it abuses its loans to confiscate harbors and other sovereign assets in low-income countries. Yet a [comprehensive investigation](#) by Johns Hopkins University of more than a thousand Chinese loan commitments between 2000 and 2019 found the accusation to be patently untrue. China never even went to a judge to demand payment, let alone confiscate sovereign assets.

Compare that with reality: one French billionaire who single-handedly [controls 16 harbors in West Africa](#) and 12 African countries that are still using a [French-controlled currency](#). Can the real imperialists please stand up?

Multiple studies have shown that Chinese loans are often used as an alternative to the [IMF](#) and [World Bank](#). These Western-dominated banks do actually make [harsh demands](#) when they lend out money, mostly surrounding budget cuts in health care, education and social welfare.

In many cases the Chinese loans actually help low and middle-income countries evade Western pressure. [Chinese finance and trade](#), for example, was crucial for the Pink Tide in Latin America, when several left and anti-imperialist governments made major strides in the [eradication of poverty](#). That is the real story behind the so-called “debt-trap diplomacy.”

Western coups and electoral interference

There is also a perception that China, contrary to the West, does not make any demands on human rights and democracy when it comes to diplomatic and financial support. That is partially true, because China has an official policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The silver lining, of course, is that China also does not bomb or overthrow other governments to bring “freedom and democracy.”

Since the end of the Second World War the United States has attempted to overthrow 71 foreign governments and has interfered in [81 foreign elections](#), the latter already before the turn of the millenium. And such practices have [certainly not ended](#). CIA agents [brag about them openly](#).

The list of foreign electoral interventions between 1946 and 2000 comes from a [comprehensive study](#) by Dov Levin. The [list of \(attempted\) coups](#) since WW2 comes from William Blum based on his book *Killing Hope*. To that list I added [Turkey](#) (1980), [Burkina Faso](#) (1987) [Azerbaijan](#) (1993), [Palestine](#) (2006-7), [Bolivia](#) (2008), [Ecuador](#) (2010), [Paraguay](#) (2012), [Brazil](#) (2016), [Nicaragua](#) (2018), [Bolivia](#) (2019) and [Venezuela](#) (ongoing).



Source: sundial.csun.edu

Conversely, against China there are only five “accusations”—often with [very little evidence](#)—of foreign electoral interference and China has not overthrown any government, with the exception of Tibet. When it comes to respecting the sovereignty of other countries, China is clearly doing a better job.

The United States is the biggest threat to democracy

Furthermore, the idea that the West values human rights and democracy simply does not align with the facts. The United States has military ties to [74%](#) of all dictators around the world. And mind you: That is based on the categorization of Freedom House, a notoriously pro-American think tank that is almost completely funded by the U.S. government.

Even the closest allies of the United States—with a mutual defense agreement, such as NATO—have been responsible for a disproportionate decline in democracy over the last ten years, according to [an analysis by The New York Times](#).

It is no wonder that a [global survey](#) last year found that the United States is perceived as the biggest threat to democracy.

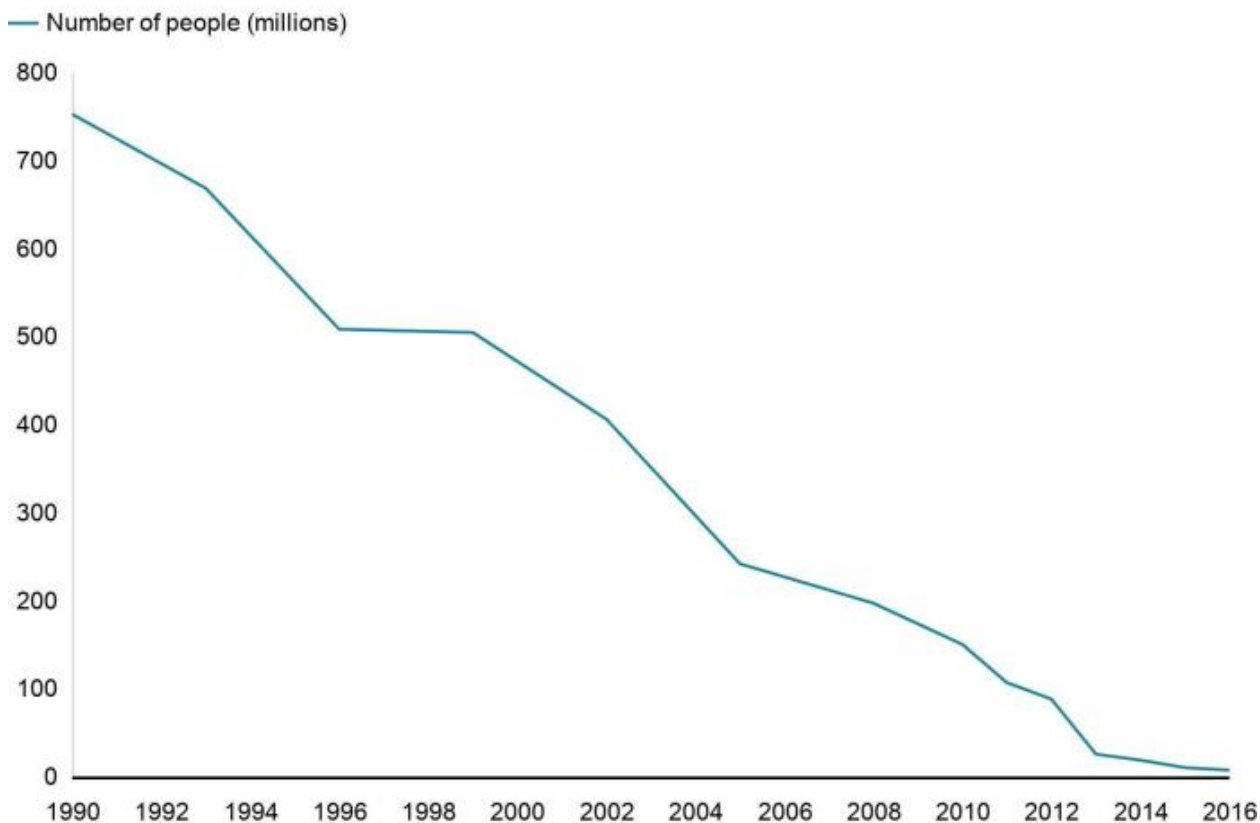
The Chinese people do not want Western meddling

Various [academic studies](#)—from Western universities such as [Harvard](#)—have shown that the Chinese government enjoys overwhelming support among the Chinese people, more than 95 percent. That is vastly superior to all Western countries and not actually that surprising.

The Chinese government has lifted [620 million people](#) out of poverty since 1981—based on an “[ethical poverty line](#)” of 7.40 dollars a day—whilst the number of people in poverty elsewhere has [increased by 1.3 billion](#).

How extreme poverty fell in China

Living on less than \$1.90 a day



Source: World Bank

BBC

Source: bbc.com

The zero-Covid strategy of China—so often dismissed as an authoritarian show of force in the West—also [enjoys enormous support](#). China has the [lowest covid death rate](#) in the world. Even in [absolute](#) terms, China has one-seventh the number of deaths than [Belgium](#), a country of little more than 11 million people.

Because of its targeted and proactive policies only [a little more than one in five Chinese people](#) have endured a lockdown. And this was often for a limited amount of time. The longest lockdown of a major city was in Wuhan, where the pandemic began, and lasted for two months.

Living standards in China have [continued to climb](#), even during the pandemic. That is why China is one of the few countries with a [mortality deficit](#) during the pandemic. A major achievement that is also combined with large-scale exports of vaccines to low and middle-income countries, leaving Western Covid aid [completely in the dust](#).

If you follow the news about China, you might get the idea the the population needs to be saved by the West. But that is complete nonsense. Poll after poll shows that the majority of Chinese people [view the West as a threat](#).

Sanctions are insincere, brutal and counterproductive

Of course, none of this means that China does not abuse human rights, especially against a number of minorities. But the Western condemnation of a (cultural) genocide in Xinjiang—a

severe accusation that is [questioned by experts](#)—has absolutely nothing to do with the otherwise very real oppression of the Uyghurs.

In Yemen a [physical genocide](#) has been unfolding since 2015—fully perpetrated with Western arms—already with [259,000 murdered children](#) under the age of five, primarily starved by a humanitarian blockade and systematic bombardments against civilian targets. That is a genocide that could stop tomorrow, if only there were enough political will in Europe and the United States. The West’s supposed “concern” for human rights is a complete farce.



Source: melgurlov.com

Nearly all countries that do not receive military support, training or weapons from the United States [are sanctioned](#). It is a brutal method that has already killed an estimated [100,000 people](#) in Venezuela. Yet sanctions are also counterproductive, because the anger of the population logically turns against a clear external enemy.

According to a [comprehensive study](#) of 115 sanction regimes, “external pressure is more likely to enhance the nationalist legitimacy of rulers than to undermine it.” Sanctions are clearly not humanitarian interventions. They are better understood as a collective punishment (a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention) against any country that refuses to submit to Western hegemony.

Colonization of the atmosphere

Just as important as the economic colonization of the Global South, is the colonization of the atmosphere. Because of the enormous greenhouse gas emissions emanating from the Global North, low and middle-income countries have very little space to improve their living

standards. A [recent study](#) in *Nature* confirmed that the Global North was responsible for 92% of the climate catastrophe that is engulfing the planet.

The study uses a simple method: Every country has a right to the same amount of emissions in proportion to its average population size since 1850. If you go over your fair share, you have a climate debt. Based on a 1.5 degrees carbon budget—in line with the Paris accords—China will [likely never exceed its fair share](#). Most Western countries, on the other hand, exceeded their fair share decades ago.

In 2018 the IPCC of the UN determined that a maximum of 580 Gton of CO2 could be emitted to stand a decent chance (50%) of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming. The Indian scientists Jayaraman and Kanitkar subsequently [calculated](#) when the Global North should achieve zero emissions to stay within their fair share of that remaining budget, discarding for the moment all previous emissions.

Based on these calculations Jayaraman and Kanitkar came up with the year 2025 for the United States, 2031 for Japan and 2033 for the European Union. These power blocs—to this day—have much higher per capita emissions than the rest of the world. Regardless, they have all set their [carbon neutrality](#) targets at 2050.

The historic climate debt preceding 2018 can subsequently be paid off through climate finance for the Global South. Based on a \$135 carbon price—the minimum for achieving 1.5 degrees of warming, [according to the IPCC](#)—the rich G7 countries have a climate debt of \$114 trillion, provided they fulfill the ambitious targets of the Indian scientists.

[Oxfam research](#) shows that G7 countries provided only \$17.5 billion in climate support in 2017-18. At that rate, we will have paid off our debts by the year 6500, when the planet is long cooked. So who is really responsible for the climate catastrophe?

Western imperialism is still the issue

Compared to the Global North, China remains a relatively poor country. Its [per capita GDP](#) lies between that of Botswana, Suriname, the Dominican Republic and Thailand. This makes the constant Western finger-pointing at China, seemingly for every problem in the world, all the more perverse.

The facts show: Even in an absolute sense, the West still has the most financial, economic and military power. The West supports most dictatorships, overthrows most governments and interferes in the most foreign elections. The West is complicit in genocide, colonizes the atmosphere and punishes any country that refuses to bow to its dictates.

The International People's Assembly has issued a [comprehensive plan](#) to challenge this global medical, financial and food apartheid. Join them. And do not let the alarmism surrounding China distract you. The fight for a just world begins at home and nowhere else.

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Notes

1. The nuance is that China (like other middle-income countries) can mitigate some of their losses to the West through unequal trade with low-income countries. However, [studies that take this into account](#) show that China continues to suffer net losses due to the structure of international trade. In other words, whatever China gains from unequal trade with Africa and South Asia is essentially siphoned off to the Global north, and then some.

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