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The template of our time.

The New York Times ran [an extraordinary opinion piece](#) the other day—extraordinary for what it reveals of orthodox Western thinking—America’s in particular. Let us consider what Jacob Dreyer, a writer in Beijing, had to say last Friday under the headline, “Xi Thinks China Can Slow Climate Change. What If He’s Right?”

Dreyer seems to possess a sophisticated intellect, as he poses a very good question. He is a student of architecture and a senior editor at *Lifestyle Magazine*, 品味生活 in the original, and his work appears in a variety of American and British publications. Here is part of his report in *The Times* on the Chinese president’s ambitions for the People’s Republic as it addresses the climate crisis:

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In recent years, the transition away from fossil fuels has become Mr. Xi’s mantra and the common thread in China’s industrial policies. It’s yielding results: China is now the world’s leading manufacturer of climate-friendly technologies, such as solar panels, batteries, and electric vehicles. Last year the energy transition was China’s single biggest driver of overall investment and economic growth, making it the first large economy to achieve that.

For a little perspective, we must pause to note that during the Trump presidency the U.S. imposed tariffs of 14.25 percent on imports of made-in-China solar

panels, and, in 2022, President Biden extended these duties into 2025. At the end of February, the Biden White House announced that it plans to block altogether imports of Chinese electric-powered cars and trucks because the computer systems in them are a threat to America's national security.

Here is Dreyer as he considers the implications of China's advances in the clean-energy sectors of its economy:

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This raises an important question for the United States and all of humanity: Is Mr. Xi right? Is a state-directed system like China's better positioned to solve a generational crisis like climate change, or is a decentralized market approach—*i.e.*, the American way—the answer?

How this plays out could have serious implications for American power and influence.

There are two things it is difficult to miss in Dreyer's report.

One, the U.S. is profoundly, pitifully insecure as emergent non-Western powers such as China address challenges—economic, political, diplomatic—that are common to humanity. The climate crisis is but one of these. Global disorder is another.

Two, those who purport to lead America take no interest in the contributions non-Western nations can make to the advancement of the human cause. They are utterly blind, this is to say, to the countless advantages that will come as those of

different historical, cultural, social, and political traditions apply themselves to the many challenges that know no borders in the 21st century.

China's advances toward a post-fossil economy are a clear case in point. As Jacob Dreyer suggests, the pace of the People's Republic's progress in this sphere derives in part from the centralization of its state and its economy—which, in turn, reflects political and cultural traditions that extend back millennia. And Dreyer is right again to argue that Beijing's most fundamental challenge runs well beyond the manufacture of superior solar panels and electric cars: It is to insist that ours is an era of multipolarity wherein different approaches to humanity's problems are to be respected and applied, when they work, without reference to ideology—and certainly not to the preferences of hegemonic powers.

How salutary it will be when the U.S. leadership recognizes this as the core reality of our new century. It is a long way from doing so—I do not intend to imply otherwise—but with the turning of history's wheel it will eventually be forced to do so. In the meantime, we are in for long years of resistance during which the U.S. leadership will insist that the solutions to all of humanity's challenges must be Western solutions. Fair enough, the vision of other Western powers appears to be less limited in this regard, at least on rare occasions, but, as is universally known, America's allies in the West rarely fail to follow the U.S. lead even when it is against their better judgments and interests.

Non-Western advances, Western resistance: This is the template of our time. And American tariffs on solar panels or import barriers blocking sales of "EVs" are but one example of the broader phenomenon.

A year ago last month [Beijing sponsored an historically significant rapprochement](#) between the Saudi kingdom and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The potential of this accord as a component of a broader reduction of tensions in West Asia was plain from the first. But so was the West's indifference—opposition, indeed—to any such development.

The same is true of China's subsequent proposal of an evenhanded framework within which an enduring settlement of the Ukraine crisis could be achieved. Beijing made clear at the time that its intent was [to assume a role in global diplomacy](#)—and then the West made it just as clear this was entirely unwelcome. Indeed, by the time China made public its 12–point framework, the West had already disrupted talks in Istanbul, where Moscow and Kiev were close to an agreement that would have ended the Ukraine war a matter of weeks after it had begun.

There is the more pressing case of Israel–Palestine, the siege of Gaza, and Hamas. The last won widely recognized elections across Palestine in 2006. As various commentators noted at the time, including John Whitbeck, the distinguished international attorney, this was [a chance to “de-demonize” Hamas](#) and advance Palestinian democracy. Hamas, it was then and subsequently observed, is at bottom a politically flexible organization open to seizing opportunities.

But no. The U.S., Israel, and the hopelessly corrupt Palestine Liberation Organization instead subverted Hamas's democratic mandate on the West Bank of the Jordan, while the Western powers, resorting to another of their resistance tactics, labeled Hamas a “terrorist organization,” so precluding any negotiation toward a comprehensive settlement of the Israel–Palestine question.

Since the events of last 7 October, the U.S. has repeatedly vetoed United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Last Thursday it was the only nation, of 15 in the U.N.S.C., to stand against another resolution—this one proposing to recognize Palestine as a full member of the U.N.

There is a catalogue of cases that fit the template I describe. Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, North Korea, Taiwan, Syria: We should understand these as of a piece with the case Jacob Dreyer notes. They are all instances wherein we find the West, always with the U.S. in the lead, resisting progress of one or another kind—political, economic, diplomatic—with the sole intent of defending a hegemonic position—one that is ultimately indefensible—at more or less any cost.

Let us find solace in the long-term perspective: Even in the medium term, the West has no chance of prevailing as our century leaves behind the binary that has defined relations between the West and non-West over the last half-millennium.

“One cannot but notice how bad-tempered Americans and Europeans generally have become,” Alistair Crooke said in a lecture delivered at an annual conference held in St. Petersburg last week. “Calm, reasoned discussion of issues is gone; shouting, emotivism, and ‘othering’ is commonplace. These are dark omens for the future.”

Crooke, a former Foreign Office diplomat and the founder of the Conflicts Forum in Beirut, puts this sour, even desperate mood down to what he calls “eschatological dogmatism.” We are nihilistic inmates, he means to say, in the prison of our own West-centric, exclusionary, Self-and-Other ideology. At the

altar of technology and efficiency we have built “a mechanical ‘operating system’” and sacrificed what makes a civilization human—its morality, its connections to nature, its rationality (but not the irrationality of hyper-rationality).

But Crooke named his exceptional lecture, which is can be read [here](#) courtesy of the Strategic Culture Foundation, with a question. “Is a peaceful accommodation between BRICS and the West possible?” he asks. And in pursuit of his answer he looks back—all the way to the Romans and the ancient Egyptians—and within. “Europe has the elements of multi-culturalism within,” he states at the outset. He then explores the extensive connections between the time of Nero, the 1st century. C.E., and the culture of the Egyptians across the Mediterranean. So was formed “the bridge between the material world, and the immaterial”—between the West and non–West, a I would put it.

“This is the world we in the West have lost,” Cooke says, “the ancient world’s diversity and metaphysical excitement.” But he concludes where he began, urging the West to rediscover the world it lost and sounding altogether as if he thinks this is where a promising future for the West, if it has one, will lie. “We do have common sources that reach far back,” Crooke writes. And how very fine to be reminded so knowledgably that, beyond the West’s insecurities and selfishness, the world to which many of us aspire is one humanity has known before.

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