

SUMMARY of the Article “How US can learn from China,” by Azhar Azam, Tribune, July 8th, 2024

Azhar Azam’s article critically examines the United States’ stance towards China, highlighting that for over a decade, the US has viewed China as an economic threat rather than a potential teacher. The article references former President Barack Obama’s 2011 State of the Union address, where he pointed out China’s advanced infrastructure compared to the US’s deteriorating one. The US’s approach of seeing China as a competitor has led to underinvestment in its own infrastructure while blaming China for its domestic shortcomings. Despite recent legislative efforts like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal and the Inflation Reduction Act, America’s infrastructure funding remains inadequate, potentially widening to \$3.7 trillion over ten years. The article suggests that rather than scapegoating China, the US should reconsider its policies, which have seen trillions spent on military campaigns instead of domestic improvements. In contrast, China’s focus on a multipolar world and infrastructure development has positioned it as a socio-economically effective model. The US’s interventionist foreign policy and quest for global dominance have hindered its development, leaving it with minimal high-speed rail compared to China’s extensive network. Furthermore, China’s advancements in research, development, and renewable energy underscore its scientific prowess and commitment to combating climate change. The article praises China’s green energy investments and suggests that the US could benefit from adopting similar strategies. However, the US’s geopolitical rivalry and protectionist policies have obstructed potential cooperation with China. Azam concludes that the US should learn from China’s high-quality growth, green technology, and peaceful international approach, shifting its focus from ideological conflicts to the well-being of its people and promoting global cooperation.



Easy/Short SUMMARY:

The article discusses how the US views China as a competitor instead of a potential teacher. Despite China's advanced infrastructure, the US blames it for its own failing systems. The US spends heavily on military actions rather than domestic improvements, whereas China invests in infrastructure and green technology. The US could learn from China's focus on peaceful growth and cooperation to improve its own development and the well-being of its people.

SOLUTIONS to The Problem:

Redirect Military Spending to Domestic Infrastructure

Reallocate funds from military campaigns to building and repairing domestic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and airports.

Promote High-Speed Rail Development

Invest in developing a comprehensive high-speed rail network across the US to enhance transportation efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

Enhance Research and Development

Increase funding for research and development in science and technology to compete globally and boost domestic innovation.

Strengthen International Cooperation

Foster international cooperation with China in areas like trade, technology, and environmental protection to mutually benefit from each other's strengths.

Focus on Renewable Energy

Invest in renewable energy sources like wind and solar to reduce carbon



emissions and promote sustainable growth, following China's example.

Reform Foreign Policy

Shift from an interventionist foreign policy to one that prioritizes peace and cooperation, reducing unnecessary expenditures on military actions.

Implement Green Technology Initiatives

Encourage the development and adoption of green technologies through subsidies and incentives, aiming to lead in the global energy transition.

Establish Educational Exchange Programs

Create educational exchange programs with China to learn from their advancements in STEM education and research.

Develop Bipartisan Support for Infrastructure

Ensure continuous bipartisan support for infrastructure bills to secure long-term funding and avoid expiration of critical programs.

Advocate for Non-Interventionist Policies

Promote non-interventionist policies that respect other nations' sovereignty, fostering a more balanced and peaceful global environment.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:

- The US has labeled China a threat for over a decade, viewing its rise as a 'Sputnik moment'.
- Former President Obama noted in 2011 that China was building faster trains and newer airports while US infrastructure received a 'D' grade.
- China has spent ten times more than the US on infrastructure by percentage of GDP.



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- US infrastructure investment may widen to \$3.7 trillion over ten years.
- China has built 45,000 kilometers of high-speed rail, whereas the US has just 375 miles of track for operations over 100 miles per hour.
- China installed almost 350 GW of new renewable capacity in 2023, more than half the world total.
- China's target is 1,200 GW of wind and solar capacity by 2030, with 1,130 GW already reached by April 2023.
- China's clean energy investments contribute to 40% of its GDP growth.

MCQs from the Article:

1. What did former US President Obama highlight in his 2011 State of the Union address?

- A. The US's superiority in infrastructure
- B. China's advanced infrastructure and the US's failing grade**
- C. The US's military achievements
- D. China's economic decline

2. How much more has China spent on infrastructure compared to the US by percentage of GDP?

- A. Twice as much
- B. Ten times as much**
- C. Five times as much
- D. Equal amounts

3. What is the projected widening of US infrastructure investment over ten years?

- A. \$1 trillion
- B. \$2.5 trillion
- C. \$3.7 trillion**
- D. \$4 trillion



4. How many kilometers of high-speed rail has China built compared to the US?

- A. 45,000 kilometers in China vs. 375 miles in the US
- B. 30,000 kilometers in China vs. 1,000 miles in the US
- C. 50,000 kilometers in China vs. 500 miles in the US
- D. 25,000 kilometers in China vs. 200 miles in the US

5. What was China's renewable energy installation in 2023?

- A. 100 GW
- B. 200 GW
- C. 350 GW
- D. 500 GW

VOCABULARY:

1. **Labeled** (□□□□ □□□□□□): Classified or designated.
2. **Sputnik moment** (□□□□ □□□□□□): A significant event that changes perceptions or actions.
3. **Scapegoat** (□□□□ □□ □□□□□□): A person or thing carrying the blame for others.
4. **Overstretched** (□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□ □□): Extended beyond the usual or acceptable limits.
5. **Multipolar** (□□□□ □□□□): Involving multiple centers of power or influence.
6. **Hegemony** (□□□□□□□□): Leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group.
7. **Extroverted** (□□□ □□ □□□□): Outgoing and sociable.
8. **Interventionist** (□□□□ □□□□□□): Favoring intervention, especially by a government in its domestic economy or by one country in the affairs of another.
9. **Supremacy** (□□□□□□): The state of being supreme, or having the most power.
10. **Rivalry** (□□□□□□□□): Competition for the same objective or for superiority in the same field.
11. **Fixation** (□□□□□): An obsessive interest in or feeling about someone or something.
12. **STEM** (□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□): Refers to science,



technology, engineering, and mathematics.

13. **Climate change** (كيفية التغير المناخي): Long-term alteration of temperature and typical weather patterns in a place.
14. **Carbon emissions** (انبعاثات الكربون): Release of carbon into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming.
15. **Renewable capacity** (القدرة المتجددة): The ability to produce energy from renewable sources.
16. **Peer-reviewed** (مراجعة الأقران): Evaluated by others working in the same field.
17. **Non-intervention** (عدم التدخل): The principle of not interfering in the affairs of others.
18. **Protectionist** (حماية): Shielding a country's domestic industries from foreign competition.
19. **Tariffs** (الرسوم): Taxes on imports or exports.
20. **Ideology-driven** (موجهة بالأيديولوجيا): Guided by a system of ideas or ideals.

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How US can learn from China

BY Azhar Azam

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For more than a decade, the US has labeled China as a threat to America's economic power and global influence, viewing its rise as a 'Sputnik moment'. "China is building faster trains and newer airports. Meanwhile, when our own engineers graded our nation's infrastructure, they gave us a 'D'," complained former US President Barack Obama in his 2011 State of the Union address. This approach of seeing its potential "greatest teacher" as a "greatest competitor" and a challenge and treating Beijing as a scapegoat for Washington's failures at home can't be an excuse as America's infrastructure remains dangerously overstretched in comparison with that of China, which is estimated to have spent ten times more than the US by percentage of GDP, and continues to receive poor grades.

Resultantly, America's infrastructure investment could widen from \$3 trillion over 10 years to \$3.7 trillion. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal and Inflation Reduction Act in 2021 and 2022 respectively pledged billions in new funding. Both bills will expire in 2026, leaving the US Congress to decide how to fund these programmes.

Rather than implicating Beijing, Washington should review its policy that has been squandering trillions of dollars of American taxpayers' money on its overseas military campaigns and fanning the war flames. These funds could have otherwise been utilised to build roads, airports and other infrastructure in the country.



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While China kept on advocating a multipolar world order for a more balanced and peaceful planet and strengthening its “infrastructure industrial complex”, the US pursued to preserve its hegemony through wars under influence of its military-industrial complex, a concept President Dwight Eisenhower warned against in his farewell address. It’s now portraying China as a threat to secure a higher defense budget.

These divergent approaches urged authors to describe Chinese development path as a “winning model”, socio-economically effective and geopolitically peaceful, leaving even staunchest of China’s critics awestruck by its roads, railways and bridges, against America’s “extroverted” capitalist and aggressive one, dramatically pushing infrastructure investment in China and leading to a systematic decline in the US.

During and after the Cold War, the US through covert and overt military operations has been deeply focused in channeling funds to change or topple governments, it deemed were incompatible to its political system, under an interventionist foreign policy that asserts not only to defend but also to promote liberal international order and export democracy.

This quest for world hegemony impinged on the US development and its competitiveness. For instance, America is estimated to have just 375 miles of railway track for operations at more than 100 miles per hour. In contrast, China has built 45,000 kilometers of high-speed rail network. Washington has initiated some high-speed rail projects; it is yet to open high-speed rail line.

As the US kept pouring money in wars and conflicts to reassert its supremacy in the world, Beijing was on the way to surpass America in research and development or had already overtaken Washington in the number of researchers, bachelor’s degrees awarded and scientific journals publications and research output.

China is now considered as a scientific superpower, spearheading the world in terms of contributions to prestigious international peer-reviewed journals, assessed on the parameters of the quality of study, novelty and potential impact and Chinese universities expecting to produce nearly twice as many STEM PhD graduates as the US by 2025.

The threat posed by climate change demands an urgent action to reduce carbon emissions, prevent environmental degradation and accelerate energy transition. China is commanding this transition with almost 350 GW of new renewable capacity installed in 2023, more than half of the world total. Beijing’s target was to achieve wind and solar installed capacity of 1,200GWs by 2030; it had already



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reached 1,130 GWs by April.

Applauding China's "remarkable surge" in clean energy investment, UNIDO 2024 report noted that Beijing was taking a leading role in green industrialisation with such investments contributing to an impressive 40% of GDP growth, offering valuable insights for other countries to craft their industrial policy.

This strategic shift toward a more sustainable and innovative growth model is unsettling the US, which has sought to build a "wall of opposition" to China over industrial overcapacity and is defending tariffs on Chinese EVs, solar energy products and semiconductors that aim to slow China's high-quality development but will also decelerate pace of global energy transition.

By over-emphasising differences, the US over the last decade or so shut several areas of cooperation where Beijing and Washington would have jointly contributed to each other's and global development. Washington's fixation on geopolitical rivalry with Beijing is preventing it from seizing the opportunities presented by world's second largest economy. The EU protectionist move to levy duties on Chinese EVs too is motivated by geopolitics rather than evidence and will hurt the bloc's own interest in green transition, costing European consumers billions of euros.

China's focus on high-quality growth, capacity to churn out green technology in large volumes, approach to build a world of lasting peace and shared prosperity and willingness to share benefits of its development with developing countries in addition to the policy of non-intervention, peacemaking efforts such as the Iran-Saudi Arabia deal and non-imposition of its governance model are some of the important instances the US can draw lessons from.

But in order to truly learn from China, it's crucial for the US to dissuade itself from ideology-driven threat inflation which has repeatedly blundered the country in costly quagmires; promote international cooperation on trade and technology; and zero in on the well-being of its people.

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