

ICT4D & FUTURE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY



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THE ICT4SD AND WORLD ORDER ASSIGNMENT

Introduction

A foundational course like EST 230 – Information and Communication Technologies for Sustainable Development (ICT4SD), and increasingly project initiatives such as AI for Good (AI4Good), cannot operate in an ecological, economic, or political vacuum. True mastery of international development assistance requires a grounding in the realities of global power and the organization of the world order. Specifically, understanding the politics of the US dollar global infrastructure (USD), energy (oil and its alternatives), and technological competition is crucial to the unfolding of sustainable abundance and development.

To understand these dynamics, students in the ICT4D specialization of our BS in Technological Systems Management benefit from analyzing different perspectives. They were asked to compare and contrast two highly influential, yet philosophically opposed thinkers: Jeffrey Sachs, a university professor and institutionalist champion of global cooperation, and Peter Zeihan, a geopolitical analyst and structural determinist focused on demographic and geographic realities. Both are very popular keynote speakers and YouTube guests. Both are accomplished writers on geopolitical issues and tensions.

Biographies & Views

Jeffrey D. Sachs is a world-renowned American economist, academic, and public policy analyst. Born in 1954, he earned his BA, MA, and PhD from Harvard University, rising from a first-year student to a tenured full professor in 11 years.¹



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In 2002, he moved to the faculty of Columbia University, where he served as the Director of The Earth Institute.² He currently serves as the President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Early in his career, Sachs became famous for advising governments in Latin America (such as Bolivia), and later Eastern Europe (Poland), and the former Soviet Union. In the wake of the “Third World Debt Crisis,” these countries experienced severe hyperinflation and economic collapse. The oil crises of the 1970s drove many countries into excessive borrowing from the global Eurodollar markets. The subsequent interest rate hike by Paul Volcker’s Federal Reserve sent interest rates skyrocketing in the 1980s, making repayment difficult. Sachs aided macroeconomic stabilization in Latin America and the transitions from Communism to market economies with government cuts and austerity programs that came to be known as “shock therapy.”^{1 2} The most dramatic transition was the end of the USSR in 1991 as oil prices collapsed and debt repayments ended. Sachs absorbed many bitter lessons.

Over the past two decades, his focus shifted fundamentally toward poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Sachs became a Special Advisor to United Nations Secretaries-General Kofi Annan on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Ban Ki-moon on the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²

He was one of their primary architects and their most prominent global champion. His work spans from the early conceptual transition out of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to his leadership in tracking, financing, and modernizing the 17 SDG goals using digital and data-driven solutions.

We use Sachs's "ICT & SDGs Final Report: How Information and Communications Technology can Accelerate Action on the Sustainable Development Goals" book in our course.⁹ It was written with support from Swedish telecommunications company Ericsson and views broadband and ICT integration with the SDGs enabling solutions such as mobile money, digital health clinics, and localized energy grids as crucial tools to bypass traditional, slow "Business-as-Usual" steps. The goal is to use ICT to allow impoverished nations to leapfrog into sustainable economic and energy systems.

Sachs provides a crucial framework for sustainability, ICT4D, and AI4Good because he argues that global poverty and environmental degradation are solvable through deliberate institutional investment and targeted technology transfer.^{3 2} Sustainability, ICT4D, and AI initiatives are highly capital-intensive. They rely heavily on investments through the architecture of the global financial system, which is fundamentally underpinned by the USD (US dollar plus Eurodollars) but suffers from persistent shortages and capital flight. Sachs argues that the current international financial architecture fails the Global South. He argues that developing nations are trapped in structural disadvantages because they have been largely excluded from USD liquidity due to excessively high

interest rates compared to wealthy nations, preventing them from financing their own green transitions or digital infrastructure.⁴ He has advocated for reforming the IMF and World Bank to unlock concessionary capital that would be vital for any realistic execution of global ICT4SD and AI4Good initiatives.

Peter Zeihan is a contemporary American geopolitical strategist, author, and speaker. Born in 1973, Zeihan took a non-traditional academic route to global prominence, unlike career academics. He earned his master's degree from the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce at the University of Kentucky and has a post-graduate diploma in Asia Studies from the University of Otago in New Zealand. He spent over a decade (from 2000 to 2012) at Stratfor (Strategic Forecasting, Inc.), a premier private intelligence and geopolitical analysis firm in Austin, Texas. He eventually rose to the position of Vice President of Analysis before starting his own consultancy.⁵ Stratfor, which was started by George Frieden (Geopolitical Futures) and other professors from LSU, is now owned by the RANE Network.⁶

In 2012, he founded his own independent firm, Zeihan on Geopolitics, where he advises corporate executives, military leaders, and government organizations. He has authored several bestselling books, including *The Accidental Superpower* (2014) and *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning: Mapping the Collapse of Globalization* (2022), which accurately predicted major shifts in global supply chain disruptions and energy security that appeared after the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.^{5 7}

Zeihan offers a stark, cold, and highly pragmatic counterweight to institutional optimism. His structural determinism focuses on geography, demographics, and physical security, presenting hard truths that tech developers must consider.^{5 7} His core thesis is that the global free-trade order (the Bretton Woods system) was a historical anomaly guaranteed solely by the US Navy to fight the Cold War.⁵ As the US pulls back from policing global sea lanes, international trade will fragment.

For an ICT4D/AI curriculum, these are indispensable lessons. If global supply chains break down or transportation becomes threatened, the localized utilization of semiconductors, digital devices, fiber-optic cables, and green-energy hardware will stop or become prohibitively expensive for most nations.

Zeihan emphasizes that we still live in a world in which things must be physically moved from where they are produced to where they are consumed. He tracks how nations with rapidly aging populations face terminal economic contraction, and how localized geography dictates whether a country can survive an energy crisis.⁷

Populations economically provide consumption, investment, and labor. His perspective forces AI and sustainability students to confront demographic and physical limitations. You cannot implement an “AI solution” in a country that lacks a creative and energetic workforce needed to maintain a high-tech economy. It includes avid customers, investors, and intelligent know-how. Also, you cannot adequately develop without the naval capability

or protection to secure energy imports or commodity exports.

The Tension

For Sachs, a multipolar world is an opportunity to build a fairer global system. He points out that the rise of China, the expansion of the BRICS bloc, and the economic dynamism of East Asia mean that technological and financial capacity is no longer consolidated in the West.

Sachs believes that if nations move past the quest for dominance, this new multipolar landscape can leverage global cooperation to deploy AI, digital public infrastructure, and clean energy to address systemic issues such as climate change and poverty. He strongly advocates shifting international governance within the UN to a super-majority voting system, removing unilateral vetoes, and opening multilateral finance to the Global South.

Zeihan treats Sachs’s vision of peaceful multipolar cooperation as a dangerous fantasy. He asserts that without the US Navy policing the high seas, global trade lanes will fragment, and maritime piracy or state-sponsored resource hoarding will return. Zeihan warns that true deglobalization will lead to localized “de-industrialization, de-urbanization, and depopulation.”

He points out that countries with terrible demographics (like rapidly aging populations in China, Russia, and parts of Europe) and those structurally dependent on long-range imports for food and energy face systemic collapse. In Zeihan’s multipolar world, only a few geographically secure, demographically stable, resource-abundant nations (principally the United States, alongside localized and preferred partners) will maintain advanced industrial

capabilities. In contrast, the rest of the world faces severe resource scarcity.

Why This Matters for Sustainability, ICT4D, and AI4Good

This clash highlights the exact friction points students in international development must anticipate. If Sachs is right, the primary barrier to AI4Good and global sustainability is political will and institutional design. Developers should focus on global policy frameworks, open-source technology transfers, and lobbying multilateral banks to fund clean energy and digital infrastructure in the Global South.

If Zeihan is right, the primary barrier is physical vulnerability. An AI system or localized tech intervention is useless if the server farms lack electricity due to regional oil blockades or a lack of solar panels and windmills. ICT will not present sufficient solutions if the country cannot import the physical semiconductors and routing technologies required to maintain its data centers and wireless broadband networks. Advanced AI infrastructure requires specialized hardware such as GPUs manufactured via highly consolidated, multi-country supply chains (such as TSMC in Taiwan using ASML lithography from the Netherlands). These transactions are settled predominantly in USD. A country's access to "AI for Good" models is gated by its balance of payments and macroeconomic stability. AI and ICT4D are deeply anchored in the physical world and bound by energy and financial constraints. Sachs argues that advanced software architectures for health, education, and public administration must be treated as "Global Public Goods,"

because software can be replicated at nearly zero marginal cost.⁸ To make his tech-enhanced world a reality, he advocates for a radical shift in UN voting and multilateral funding (via the World Bank, IMF, and international private capital) to grant low-interest loans directly targeted at expanding digital hardware, 5G towers, and compute capabilities across the Global South.

Either Sachs's vision of global institutional redesign is achieved or developers must design "low-infrastructure, hyper-localized, and decoupled" systems that can survive the structural breakdown of global trade.

Footnotes

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³ Kahn, M. E. (2015). A Review of The Age of Sustainable Development by Jeffrey Sachs. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 53(3), 654-666. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.53.3.654>

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⁶ Kullik, Jakob. "George Friedman: The Next 100 Years. A Forecast for the 21st Century. Anchor Books/Random House: New York 2010, 253 Seiten" *SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2024, pp. 244-246. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sirius-2024-2015>

⁷ Galjak, 2023.[5,7]

⁸ This study was commissioned by the Development Financing 2000 project within the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs <https://eba.se/app/uploads/2021/04/2001.2-Financing-and-Providing-Global-Public-Goods-Expectations-and-Prospect.pdf>

Prompt(s)
⁹ Sachs, J. D. (2015). ICT & SDGs Final Report: How Information and Communications Technology can Accelerate Action on the Sustainable Development Goals in our course.

GEOPOLITICS VS. GLOBALISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ZEIHAN AND SACHS ON THE FUTURE OF CHINA



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Abstract

This essay explores both the future of the global order created by the US and the role of China represented by the divergent points of views of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs. Zeihan gives a structurally pessimistic picture, that the US withdrawal will reveal the geographical and demographic vulnerabilities of China. On the other hand, Sachs supports the idea of multipolarity with a centralized UN, in which the rise of China will trigger the creation of collaboration between the nations. The discussion opposes the physical resource security perspective of Zeihan with the digital connectivity and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) perspective of Sachs. Finally, it points to a crucial decision a decline of de-globalization and anarchy or a shift towards reformed and multilateral co-leadership.

Introduction

The US-led global order is an expression of the security and market assurances that the United States provided after 1945, such as blue-water naval protection of sea routes, openness to the American markets, and a dollar-based financial system. Both Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs admit that this arrangement is in transition, but both of them specify how this process is occurring, how it is likely to proceed, and how they evaluate the effects of this process on China.

Zeihan takes a structural and pessimistic bottom position, claiming that globalization has been perpetuated by geography, demography, and the movement of energy, rather than goodwill toward the policy.¹ As the Cold War ended and the United States became less likely to make payments to ensure global security, the city's interest in policing the trade routes declined. According to his model, globalization will be reversed, with the American umbrella closing, leaving countries reliant on remote inputs and the lifelines of the sea, especially China, the most vulnerable.²

Sachs is providing a developmental and collaborative baseline: Western hegemony is abating to multipolarity as non-Western economies - primarily China - have become converged in production, technology, and income.³ The policy imperative, as advanced by Sachs, is to enhance multilateralism instead of accusing it. To him, containment of China is both unsustainable and unsafe; sustainable development, climate change, and financial globalization must be the US. and China's co-leaders in a reformed New UN-centric order. He argues that the United States ought to share leadership, increase the representation (such as by reforming the Security Council), and involve the Global South, in which China already plays a disproportionately large role in infrastructure and green manufacturing.

Different Perspectives towards China's Rise and Risk

Zeihan takes China as a child of Bretton Woods: the export-based growth was successful, since the US. might have turned the oceans safe, and Western demand was insatiable. Take down that scaffolding and a variety of Chinese infirmities all emerge simultaneously: (1) Energy insecurity - long interdiction-prone supply lines through the Persian Gulf and farther; (2) Aging workforce - decades of low birth rates have left the country with a shrinking workforce; (3) Strategic encirclements - neighboring maritime powers compatible or integrated with the US. Navy.⁴ His policy implication is clear in the sense that the US. withdrawal will cause stalling of the growth model of China and may plunge it into crisis for Sachs.

The rise of China is not a short-term gift of American goodwill but the result of saving, high investment, human capital, and industrial learning-which is currently most evident in EVs, batteries, solar, and telecom equipment. These strengths enable China to be a crucial ally in the green transition and in the pursuit of infrastructure by developing nations that are in dire straits. Any effort to stifle the emergence of China through tariffs or even technology bans is self-defeating and makes competition more difficult instead of working on common issues.⁵

Competing Futures for the Global Order

In the prediction of Zeihan, de-globalization is not a decision but a reaction of the US. For example, Zeihan's commentary on Tesla's Master Plan 3 noted that a deglobalizing world will make it hard to source the critical minerals for a clean-energy transition.⁶ disinterest, internal politics, and energy rebalancing. The shale revolution and food security in America allow selective retrenchment; it is not as easy to do the same to others. He anticipates regionalized and shorter supply chains, increased frequency of commodity shocks, and more localized production.

The victors will be those geographies whose waterways are internally based, those that are allied, those possessing energy, and those possessing consumers; those who will be defeated will be states that will have to import fuel, food, and vital minerals across disputed waters. There are three possible ways to achieve this, Sachs describes: (1) stronger multilateral cooperation: a UN 2.0 that looks at real economic weightings and broadens the peaceful burden-sharing; (2) bloc confrontation, which revisits the Cold War reasoning (the direction, which Sachs thinks the US. is heading); and (3) systemic anarchy in case escalation and climate failure are mutually reinforcing. He recommends the former course and maintains that it is possible, provided Washington does not resort to zero-sum thinking, and Beijing continues to direct industrial power towards the world's common good.

Claims Against Sustainable-Development Logic

Sachs provides a practical cross-check in his wide-ranging discussion about Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Goals of Sustainable Development (SDGs). His model views connectivity, information, and online environments as drivers of inclusive development and global problem-solving, which means that collaboration can continue even in the situation of the emergence of geopolitical tensions.⁷ In the event of digital infrastructure reducing the coordination costs of health, education, and clean energy, the forfeiture of welfare would arise as a result of deserting global cooperation. In this reasoning, the size of the green manufacturing in China cannot be considered as a threat to counter but as an ability that can be negotiated to a mutual advantage in the present. The analysis made by Zeihan takes another route: it doubts the ability to neutralize the physical presence of China. Digital optimization still forces tankers to find their way around geopolitical chokepoints; grain production still needs arable land and fertilizer, and demographic aging still reduces workforces.

Should the United States stop playing the role of underwriting maritime security, the reliance of China on seaborne inputs would become an Achilles heel that no digital platform can eradicate. Zeihan warns that bits never move barrels.

Policy Implications for China and for the US.

If Zeihan was correct, Chinese strategic interests would be focused on the following: naval strength, redundancy, and regional hedging: the building of blue-water navies, the diversification of energy sources, which would include LNG and pipelines sourced in Russia and Central Asia, and the shortening of supply chains to an Asian-oriented footprint.⁸ Domestic policy would be self-sufficiency-based and demographic triage-based (household support systems, automation to promote productivity). To Washington, the consequence is the maintenance of its comparative merits of energy and food security and North American manufacturing without overcommitment and deterrence on its major strategic interests.

However, when Sachs is correct, the priorities of Beijing would be co-leadership and reassurance: an enhanced emphasis on standards-setting, climate finance, and development lending that would associate Chinese industrial capabilities with international goals; the mitigation of escalatory risks around Taiwan by means of open red lines and the enlargement of crisis-management options; and the anchoring of South-South trade to debt-sustainability standards.⁹ To Washington, the advice would be to accept and manage multipolarity by intensifying the arsenal of the IMF and World Bank, restructuring UN organs, and putting guardrails, like export controls limited to precisely defined security issues and not blanket decoupling, and at the same time collaborating with China in climate and health projects.

Conclusion

The conflict between Zeihan and Sachs reflects the idea of differences in the understanding of the international system. A classical geopolitician, Zeihan places greater emphasis on the power-first principle and resource security, predicting growing instability as the United States retreats and international interdependence begins to crumble - a development that is especially relevant to China. Drawing on development economics and liberal international theory, Sachs predicts that China can be incorporated into cooperative relationships and global governance reforms in a way that benefits both sides. These two opposite views provide policymakers with a timely lesson: the future of either war or cooperation in the new multipolar world will be highly dependent on the manner in which the United States, China, and other key actors navigate the transition.



Footnotes

¹ Pennings, A.J. (2022, Oct 11). Zeihan's Global Prognostics and Sustainable Development, Part I. apennings.com <https://apennings.com/digital-geography/zeihans-global-prognostics-and-sustainable-development-part-i/>

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ICT4D & FUTURE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

BETWEEN COLLAPSE AND RECONSTRUCTION: TWO VISIONS OF THE GLOBAL ORDER



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Abstract

This essay compares the contrasting views of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs on the future of the U.S.-led global order. Zeihan argues that globalization is collapsing as countries turn inward and the United States (U.S.) retreats from its role as the global protector. In contrast, Sachs believes that the global order is evolving through cooperation, sustainable development, and shared responsibility. By examining their interpretations of recent crises and their implications for China and India, this essay argues that the global order is neither fully collapsing nor being entirely rebuilt. Instead, it is being reshaped through processes that reflect both decline and cooperation.

Introduction

The arguments of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs represent two contrasting interpretations of the global order. Zeihan focuses on its collapse, whereas Sachs emphasizes its reconstruction. These opposing perspectives raise important questions about what is occurring in today's global system and what will happen in the future. Is the U.S.-led global order truly collapsing, or is it evolving into a new system? The world order is not simply ending or beginning again; it is being reshaped in between. Although the U.S. may be losing some influence in trade and security, the system it established may persist in a more cooperative form.

After the Second World War, the U.S. started to build a new world from the ruins left behind. With its strong navy and powerful economy, the U.S. promised to keep the world's sea routes safe and created a network of trade and security that linked many countries together. Factories in Europe and Asia were rebuilt with American money and ships traveled safely under U.S. protection. The dollar became a symbol of trust and American movies, music, and education spread across the globe. During this period, the U.S. played a central role in shaping and stabilizing the global order. The global order the U.S. created settled so naturally into daily life that few people even noticed it.

The US-Led Global Order and the Erosion of Globalization

For many years, the U.S.-led system seemed strong and unbreakable. However, over time, small cracks began to appear. As U.S. manufacturing moved overseas in search of lower labor costs, production became increasingly dependent on global supply chains. Factories and companies spread across different countries, making the world economy both more connected and more fragile. This fragility became more visible during the 2008 financial crisis, which weakened the trust that had held markets together. Later, trade conflicts and energy problems showed how much countries depended on each other for goods and resources.

When COVID-19 hit, borders closed, factories stopped, and supply chains broke down, revealing how deeply nations depended on one another. These developments suggest that what once appeared to be a stable global system has begun to show its limitations. Peter Zeihan describes this as the end of globalization, a period in which cooperation began to turn into self-protection.¹ The world that once moved together now seems to move in separate directions.

Contrasting Visions: Zeihan's Collapse and Sachs's Reconstruction

Peter Zeihan describes the world after globalization as a map losing its lines.² As the U.S. steps back from its role as the world's protector, regions begin to turn inward, forming smaller and more fragile systems of trade and security. He argues that America can afford to withdraw because it possesses rare advantages such as secure geography, abundant energy, and a resilient demographic base.³ As people grow older, fewer workers are available, and energy becomes harder to secure, the gap between countries grows wider. Without the U.S. Navy guarding global sea routes, nations must now protect their own interests, often competing instead of cooperating. Zeihan believes that this is not simply a political change but a structural one where the world is moving from one large system to many smaller ones. It is a chain reaction in which deglobalization leads to regionalization, and regionalization brings new risks such as supply shortages and security gaps. In his maps, the smooth lines of connection fade, leaving behind rough borders and uncertain spaces.

Jeffrey Sachs offers a very different view. Zeihan thinks that countries are turning inward, whereas Sachs believes they are trying to connect beyond their borders. He also thinks that the future of the global order depends on multilateralism, shared responsibility, and sustainable development rather than military dominance.⁴

In his view, the U.S. should no longer try to control the world through power but lead by example through diplomacy, innovation, and the provision of global public goods such as health, education, and climate action.⁵ Sachs often points to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as evidence that cooperation is still possible even in a divided world.⁶ He recognizes the crises but insists that they can be solved through dialogue and collective effort.⁷ According to Sachs, the story of globalization does not end; it simply takes a new form shaped by cooperation rather than control.

The differing interpretations of Zeihan and Sachs become especially clear in their analyses of recent crises. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine showed how different their ideas were. Zeihan interprets these events as evidence that globalization was already falling apart. He believes that countries were turning inward and trying to survive on their own. On the other hand, Sachs views these crises as reasons for stronger cooperation.⁸ He emphasizes that no country could solve global problems alone and that dialogue and collective action remain essential. While Zeihan's analysis aligns with visible instability in global politics, Sachs's perspective underscores the possibility of reform and adaptation. Taken together, their arguments suggest that the global order may be simultaneously experiencing elements of breakdown and reconstruction.

China and India in a Reshaped Global Order

In Zeihan's world, China becomes the clearest example of how globalization begins to break apart. He describes the country as powerful on the surface but fragile underneath.⁹ Its population is aging faster than any major economy in history, and its birth rate continues to fall. China also depends heavily on imported food, fuel, and raw materials, most of which must travel across seas that are no longer guaranteed safe by the U.S. Navy. As the world turns toward regional trade, China faces growing limits on technology access and export markets. Zeihan warns that these pressures could trap China in a difficult cycle. In his maps, China looks like a vast island, yet slowly being cut off from the rest of the world. The end of globalization is not just an economic shift but a story in which China becomes the biggest loser of the new age.

Jeffrey Sachs looks at China through a very different perspective. Whereas Zeihan emphasizes isolation, Sachs highlights connection.¹⁰ He believes that China can become a central pillar of a multipolar world, helping to balance global power through cooperation rather than confrontation.¹¹ In his view, the rivalry between the U.S. and China does not have to define the century. Instead, it can evolve into a partnership built on shared interests in trade, technology, and climate action.¹² Sachs often points to China's participation in international institutions and its role in development projects across Asia and Africa as signs that cooperation is still possible. If cooperation between the U.S. and China can be institutionalized, Sachs believes it would stabilize the global economy and make multilateral progress more realistic.

India also stands between Zeihan's idea of decline and Sachs's belief in cooperation, showing signs of both struggle and hope. Zeihan describes India as a nation with deep structural limits, but also with one major advantage which is having a young and growing population.¹³

In his analysis, demographics may allow India to succeed where China falters. Sachs, however, sees India not only as a beneficiary of demographic growth but as an emerging leader in a multipolar world.¹⁴ He believes that India's democracy and its active participation in international partnerships give it a unique chance to build bridges between developed and developing nations. In their different ways, both scholars point to India as a symbol of transition. Zeihan's India survives because of its people while Sachs's India rises because of its cooperation. Together, their stories suggest that the next chapter of the global order may be written not in Washington or Beijing, but in New Delhi.

Shifting Production and the Fragility of Global Order

As the global order shifts, the map of production itself begins to move. In Peter Zeihan's "Know Your World" lecture, he shows how factories and trade routes are slowly redrawn.¹⁵ Factories that used to be in China are now moving to countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and Mexico. Cargo ships that once sailed from Shanghai now leave from new ports in Southeast Asia, tracing unfamiliar lines across the oceans. Zeihan sees this change as proof that the world is breaking into smaller and more self-focused groups. He refers to this approach as the China-plus-one strategy, in which U.S. and multinational manufacturers build new supply chains outside China to reduce risk. Sachs, however, reads the same movement differently.¹⁶ To him, it represents a new kind of interdependence, one that connects regions through cooperation rather than isolation. In his view, production networks are not disappearing but reorganizing into more balanced forms. The global map, once fixed and predictable, now appears dynamic and constantly changing as nations try to rebuild connections in a divided world.

The difference between Zeihan and Sachs becomes even clearer when looking at world conflicts. The war in Ukraine and the tension over Taiwan show that world peace is highly fragile. Zeihan sees these events as signs that the global order is falling apart. He believes countries are starting to act on their own again, focusing on rivalry instead of cooperation.¹⁷ He warns that without a strong power to keep balance, small conflicts could spread quickly across different regions. Sachs, however, views these same events in a more hopeful way. He argues that these events highlight the importance of communication and diplomacy. In his view, peace cannot be built through weapons but through dialogue, trust, and shared goals. Between their views, the world seems both unstable and strong, full of danger but still trying to rebuild connection.

Conclusion

A comparison of Zeihan and Sachs suggests that the global order is being rewritten. The world is no longer led by one power but shaped by many working together. China stands at the center of these changes, facing both problems and new opportunities. India is trying to find balance, using its people and partnerships to grow in a changing world. Although the U.S. once led the global system, recent political shifts, especially under Donald Trump's "America First" approach, have challenged the ideals of globalization. Trade protectionism, tariffs, and growing nationalism have encouraged countries to focus more on their own economic security rather than global cooperation. The global order is no longer defined by a single nation, but by increasing competition, regional partnerships, and a growing focus on national interests.

Footnotes

¹ Peter Zeihan, *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning: Mapping the Collapse of Globalization* (New York: Harper Business, 2022).

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⁴ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The Ages of Globalization: Geography, Technology, and Institutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

⁵ Jeffrey D. Sachs, "The Path to a Multipolar World," Project Syndicate, April 2023.

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⁹ The Prof G Pod - Scott Galloway. "China's Collapse, America's Rise, and What Comes Next - with Peter Zeihan | Prof G Conversations." YouTube video, June 6, 2025, 21:50, <https://youtu.be/UltVl2Qlf6A>.

¹⁰ Glenn Diesen, "Jeffrey Sachs: Chinese Statecraft & a New World Order," YouTube video, May 2, 2025, 10:45, <https://youtu.be/qcTLAX8hF7I>

¹¹ Sachs, *The Ages of Globalization*.

¹² Sachs, "The Path to a Multipolar World."

¹³ Zeihan, *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning*, 312–320.

¹⁴ Sachs, *The Ages of Globalization*.

¹⁵ Peter Zeihan, "Know Your World," lecture, University of Chicago, 2023.

¹⁶ Sachs, *The Ages of Globalization*.

¹⁷ Zeihan, *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning*, 340–355.

WORLD ORDER AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AT A CROSSROADS: ICT, SUSTAINABILITY, AND THE SACHS V. ZEIHAN DEBATE

Abstract

The paper compares conflicting versions of the modern global order that is presented by Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs with special reference to the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in sustainable development. The structural pessimism of Zeihan focuses on the demographic decline, geographical limitations and the loss of the U.S. supported globalization, whereas the reformism of Sachs focuses on the multilateral institutions, cooperation and convergence of multiple poles. Using the two frameworks to China, the paper analyzes the extent to which China can counteract structural vulnerability using technological capacity and institutional reform.

Introduction

The global order that has been led by the U.S. after the Second World War has been organized in terms of security, trade, and international cooperation. It is an order based on American military strength, open sea routes, and multilateral agencies that made it possible to enjoy a period of greater globalization than ever before.¹ But here is where controversy arises today whether this system is sustainable. The two major voices of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs, are quite different in their interpretation. The geopolitical strategist Zeihan focuses on geography, population and the vulnerability of supply networks, foreseeing the erosion of globalization as the U.S. support dwindles. Economist Sachs emphasizes institutions and



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collaboration in finding solutions, and the advocating potential of a less exclusionary multipolar world. In this paper, their opinions are compared and applied to the situation of China, the country whose future is tied tightly to the future of the global order.

Zeihan's Perspective: The End of Globalization

Peter Zeihan believes that the world order that was led by the U.S. is not an everlasting one but a byproduct of the Cold War. The U.S., ensured global shipping routes to secure allies against the Soviet Union, allowed trade imbalances, and insured global energy security.² This made the world a place of specialization, free exporting and open integration in global markets. Soviet menace and the growing energy self-sufficiency of the U.S., means that Washington has fewer reasons to defend global supply chains.³ Demographic decline throughout Europe and East Asia also highlights how declining populations and workforce age suppress consumption and labor supply.⁴ This is the very basis of global growth in question. Geography, to Zeihan, supports this course. Not many nations have the same mix of navigable rivers, arable land and safe borders as America does. There are others, especially those led by exports such as China, which rely on U.S. guarantees of market and resource access.

Globalization is disintegrating in the framework of Zeihan. Supply chains will shrink, maritime trade shall be riskier and numerous nations shall not survive without U.S. protection. The U.S. itself, with its cocoon of geography and material resources, will be in a more stable position, and countries whose economies are linked to weak trade relations will be destabilized.

Sachs's Perspective: Reforming and Expanding Cooperation

Jeffrey Sachs is optimistic about the U.S.-led order. He admits to the hegemony of the American power but puts the system that emerged after 1945 in less militarist terms by focusing on the institutional project rather than a military alliance. Sachs focuses on how the United Nations, the World Bank and development structures of the world have developed mechanisms of common development.⁵ Although he understands the strains in the U.S.China relations and geopolitical antagonism, Sachs believes that such problems require more sophisticated collaborations and not disintegration.

To Sachs, the issues of the 21st century that define the world such as climate change, pandemics, inequality and sustainable development cannot be resolved unilaterally. He views the U.S. globally change as being central but says that leadership should not be hegemony but partnership. Such emerging economies as China, India and others need to be incorporated into international institutions in a manner that shows increasing economic weight. Sachs criticizes zero-sum conceptions of great power competition but immediately imagines a multipolar order, in which co-operation and co-operation on green technology, infrastructure, and development will lessen conflict and make the world less vulnerable to external shocks.⁶ In the case of Zeihan, the idea of inevitability and decline is emphasized, whereas in the case of Sachs, the reform is emphasized.

To him, the actual danger is neither geography nor demography but the inability of political leaders to work together.

Implications for China

China provides a case in point. In the view of Zeihan, not only are the weaknesses of China clear. It is experiencing a rapid aging of its population and is facing a declining workforce that emerges as a challenge to long term growth. Its geography is less generous. The arable land is minimal, there is a water crisis, and a high dependence on foreign food and energy sources make it dependent on long transportation chains. The U.S. naval power guards these routes—the South China Sea and the Strait of Hormuz. In case America backs off, China becomes highly insecure. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is partly meant to mitigate this weakness through establishing land-based channels and diversifying trade partners, yet Zeihan is sceptical that this could counteract maritime reliance. To him, the export-led strategy of growth in China might not be sustainable in the post-globalization world.

However, Sachs views China another way. He views it as an actor that is indispensable to tackle issues of a global nature. The magnitude of China in terms of manufacturing, renewable energy, and infrastructure development makes it a partner towards attaining global climate and development objectives. Sachs believes that isolating China will be self-defeating, rather it is necessary to cooperate with institutions such as the UN, G20 and climate accords.⁷ He cites the example of China manufacturing solar panels, electric cars, and green infrastructure as an example of how it can be part of global common goods.⁸

In the case of Sachs the question is not whether China can survive the end of globalization but whether it can be involved positively in a reformed order.

China and the Provision of Global Public Goods

In addition to the issues of geopolitical rivalry, Sachs builds the more optimistic argument about China as a supplier of world common goods, especially the sphere of sustainable development. He claims that the size and industrial potential of China give it the power to take a leading role in the rapid energy transition on Earth. As an example that the economic ascent of China does not necessarily have to be disruptive, Sachs often cites the fact that the country is leading the way in the production of solar panels, electric vehicles, and green infrastructure.⁹

Under this, the technological production of China means that the world will pay lower prices in renewable energy and even more access to developing nations who would not be able to afford clean technologies. Sachs points to the need to incorporate the capacity of China into collaborative global systems, and not to isolate it with the help of strategic containment, as this would enhance the resilience of the world. This view supports his larger case that the leadership in the modern global order must be practiced not through hegemonic dominance but by institutional collaboration especially with the further spread of economic power beyond the US.¹⁰

Conclusion

The visions of the global order proposed by Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs are absolutely different. Zeihan foresees its disintegration and its disengagement of the U.S. reveals the weaknesses of such nations as China. Sachs maintains that institutions can be reformed in order to maintain collaboration and solve common problems.

These differences are extreme in the case of China: Zeihan predicts its decline and insecurity, and Sachs predicts a potential partner in the development of a sustainable global system.

The opposing differences elucidates a greater fact. The global order in the future will be formed not only by the structural forces but also by the decisions. Geography and demography establish the limits, where policy, institutions and diplomacy can either prohibit or deteriorate them. The question of whether China will be weak or partnering may rest upon whether the world takes the pessimist Zeihan or the cooperative Sachs route of renewal.

Footnotes

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[v=unDS_IBHxwQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unDS_IBHxwQ)

⁴ Glasp. “Don’t Be Surprised by China’s Collapse || Peter Zeihan.” Published Sept 19, 2023. Timestamp 06:40. Zeihan discusses aging populations, shrinking labor forces, and the resulting constraints on economic growth, particularly in East Asia.

<https://glasp.co/youtube/mqA5NODRnQI>

⁵ Columbia University. “Jeffrey Sachs: The Path to Sustainable Development.” YouTube video, 1:06:50. Published Feb 25, 2014. Timestamp 09:30. Sachs outlines the role of multilateral institutions in addressing global development and sustainability challenges.

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[v=0eX8D19htho](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eX8D19htho)

⁶ KrasnoUNC. “Who Rules the New Global Order? with Professor Jeffrey Sachs.” YouTube video, 1:34:34. Published April 25, 2025. Timestamp 18:40. Sachs critiques zero-sum geopolitics and outlines a cooperative multipolar global order.

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⁷ CGTN America. “China-U.S. competition and collaboration | Jeffrey Sachs.” YouTube video, 21:09. Published Sept 28, 2024. Timestamp 05:20. Sachs discusses why cooperation between China and the U.S. is essential for global sustainability and economic stability.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jca0SEnqdbU)

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⁹ China Chat. “Jeffrey Sachs on China’s Global Role.” YouTube video, 04:25. Published Mar 31, 2025. Timestamp 00:47. Interview segment highlighting China’s leadership in renewable energy and technological contributions.

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¹⁰ Leaders Talk. (2025, October 26). “Exclusive Interview: Jeffrey Sachs on China’s Global Role: Growth, Balance, and Cooperation.” YouTube video, 23:21. Published Oct 27, 2025. Timestamp 12:00. Sachs expands on why leadership should be based on institutional collaboration rather than hegemonic dominance.

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GLOBAL FUTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE WORLD: PETER ZEIHAN AND JEFFREY SACHS

Abstract

This essay compares perspectives of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs on the global order. Peter Zeihan approaches the global order problem through a geopolitical view by emphasizing the structure of geography and demography. Also, he argues that globalization is structurally unsustainable, as it relies on the U.S. In contrast, Jeffrey Sachs argues that global order is the opportunity for transformation, highlighting the cooperation through institutional adaptation and technological innovation beyond the U.S. dominance. The case of China, from Peter Zeihna and Jeffrey Sachs, this paper examines how demographic decline connects to economic and geopolitical structure. Moreover, how the global order affects sustainable development in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Global order refers to the arrangement of power, rules, and norms governing international relations established through institutions and balance of power. The starting point for the current global order is the international system led by the United States after World War II.¹ The United States stabilized the global economy by protecting maritime trade routes, turning the US dollar into a reserve currency, and designing international organizations. This system made global trade, economic recovery, and prosperity based on globalization. However, in the 21st century, new challenges such as geopolitical balance shift, climate crisis, technology transition, and competition between the U.S



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and China are testing the sustainability of this order.

Shared Diagnosis: The Crisis of the US-Led Global Order

Peter Zeihan, who is an American geopolitical strategist, author, and speaker, and Jeffrey Sachs, who is a world-renowned American economist and leading expert on sustainable development, both recognize that the current global order has heavily depended on U.S. power, and both acknowledge that this system is facing a crisis. However, Zeihan emphasizes the geopolitical, geographical, and demographic structures. Sachs highlights cooperation and institutional adaptation.

Peter Zeihan: Geopolitics, Demography, and Structural Decline

Zeihan argues that the U.S. no longer needs to play a role in securing global trade routes because many countries are increasingly self-sufficient in food, energy, and technology.² Also, the U.S. has not only weakened its motivation to maintain leadership in the global order, but also weakened its willingness to maintain a posture to protect the maritime trade routes that needed to support globalization.³ In addition, Zeihan argues that the vision of a sustainable energy economy faces challenges due to resource constraints. Tesla's sustainable energy goals are connected to supply chain weakness, which could severely hinder access to resources if the U.S.

withdraws from maritime security.⁴ In this situation, the importance is that the geographical location and population of the country determine the fate of the country in the world order. He explains that population decline and unfavorable geography cause the decline of the country. In particular, he notes that China faces demographic collapse that directly affects economic sustainability. This crisis is the result of interaction between late industrialization and long-term one child policy, and high-cost of supporting children.⁵ As a result, Peter's conclusion is that China will gradually experience structural collapse because of population decline and vulnerability to economic structures.

Jeffrey Sachs: Multilateral Cooperation and Institutional Transformation

On the other hand, Sachs argues that the U.S.-centered world order is unsustainable because U.S. dominate world, but it is a chance for creating a new improved global system.⁶ He emphasizes the strong role of multilateral institutions such as the UN and World Bank and the cooperation between the local community and the world is an essential solution to solve the global order. In addition, he highlights the importance of sustainable development, and technological innovation including climate change, inequality, and technological challenges. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a universal framework adopted to promote all people's peace and prosperity by 2030 from the United Nations – and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) – expanding access to solve inequality in education, healthcare, and economic opportunity through technology – are referred to as a major point.⁷ Sachs views China as a crucial partner whose manufacturing capacity, renewable energy, and infrastructure initiatives.⁸ China can contribute to a cooperative and sustainable global system.

Conclusion

Zeihan and Sachs offer contrasting perspectives, but it is also complementary to the U.S. led global order. Zeihan focuses on the structural vulnerabilities and the result of U.S. withdrawal from global order. On the other hand, Sachs focuses on the potential for cooperation, SDGs, and creating new systems. Under these two perspectives, China is the best example to show both its vulnerabilities and its potential as a partner in global governance, emphasizing the importance of strategic adaptation in changing the international system.

Footnotes

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⁶ CGTN Europe. "Jeffrey Sachs: Why U.S. Is the Biggest Obstacle to Global Peace." YouTube video, 21:17. Published August 8, 2025. Timestamp: 03:53. Context: Jeffrey Sachs argues that the U.S. dominates the world currently and obstructs cooperative approaches to peace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKQZNP2QqfQ>

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FROM HEGEMONY TO HARMONY: CHINA AND THE REORGANIZATION OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Abstract

This essay explores the diverging predictions for the post-American global order through the lenses of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs. Zeihan predicts a collapse of globalization driven by demographic decline and the withdrawal of U.S. security guarantees, specifically highlighting China's vulnerability. Conversely, Sachs envisions a transition to a multipolar world anchored in sustainable development and technological cooperation. By analyzing these competing frameworks of geopolitical determinism versus ethical globalism, the author argues that the future depends on China's ability to pivot from export dependence to sustainable innovation. The essay concludes that a synthesis of realism and idealism is necessary for global stability in the 21st century.

Introduction

Since the end of World War II, the United States has served as the architect and guarantor of the liberal world order. This system of trade routes, financial institutions, and security guarantees created an unprecedented era of global interdependence. Yet today, this American-led structure faces growing resistance and fatigue. As emerging powers such as China and India assert influence, scholars like Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs offer competing visions of what comes next. Zeihan foresees the collapse of globalization and the reassertion of geography, while Sachs envisions a cooperative, multipolar world driven by sustainability and shared development.



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This essay argues that the outcome of this transition, whether it results in collapse or reorganization, will depend on whether nations, particularly China, can balance strategic self-interest with global cooperation.

Zeihan's Geopolitical Determinism

Peter Zeihan emphasizes that the post-1945 global order was not a natural consequence of peace but a deliberate U.S. security project.¹ Through its naval dominance, America guaranteed the safety of global trade in exchange for political loyalty against the Soviet Union. In his Keynote Address at SpeakInc, Zeihan notes that these arrangements allowed unprecedented flows of goods, energy, and finance across oceans. However, when the Cold War ended, the U.S. no longer had a strategic incentive to underwrite this costly system. The world continued to rely on American protection, but Americans grew weary of maintaining it.² Zeihan contends that globalization is collapsing not because of changing ideologies but because the logistical and financial infrastructures that sustained it are no longer upheld by the United States.³

In “The End of the World Is Just the Beginning”, Zeihan presents a demographic analysis that reinforces his pessimistic outlook.⁴ He argues that aging populations in Europe, Japan, and China will trigger a deflationary spiral in which fewer workers lead to lower consumption and declining productivity.

According to Zeihan, demographic decline is destiny. Without young labor and consumption, the global industrial machine will slow and fragment into regional economies. His projections place China at the forefront of this contraction, describing it as “the fifth-fastest-aging society in human history.”⁵ Essentially, this suggests that the stability of the postwar era was the exception, not the rule. It was a temporary period of easy growth that is now coming to an end. United Nations data support this projection, estimating China’s working-age population will shrink by nearly 100 million by 2050.⁶

Zeihan views China not as the next superpower but as the most vulnerable component of globalization. He argues that China’s growth model was dependent on the U.S.-backed order, specifically its reliance on cheap energy flows, export access, and open sea lanes.⁷ When the U.S.-backed global systems of trade and security begin to erode, Zeihan predicts that China will face an internal implosion driven by energy insecurity and demographic decline. He argues that China’s economic rise was largely dependent on American-led logistics and maritime protection rather than purely domestic innovation.⁸ Although some analysts contend that Zeihan underestimates Beijing’s internal capacity for reform and technological progress, his framework underscores how vulnerable China’s growth model remains in an era of deglobalization.

Sachs’s Ethical Globalism

Zeihan’s realism has a cold clarity. He argues that systems collapse because geography and demography dictate limits. Yet his model offers only a limited path forward, emphasizing local partnerships and regional resilience rather than global cooperation.

His deterministic worldview risks becoming self-fulfilling by denying the possibility of adaptation. Building on Zeihan’s pessimism, Jeffrey Sachs offers a counterpoint. He suggests that humanity can transcend physical constraints through ethics, technology, and cooperation. Sachs argues that the postwar American order is giving way not to chaos but to pluralism. In his discussions on Western hegemony, he asserts that “the West is not declining” but rather that “the rest is catching up.”⁹ For Sachs, the rise of China and the Global South marks a long-overdue correction toward multipolarity. Unlike Zeihan’s fatalism, Sachs views this transition as an opportunity for global cooperation, particularly through institutions like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He frames the end of Western dominance not as a threat but as a moral and developmental transition.¹⁰

Sachs emphasizes dialogue and diplomacy, warning that U.S. military escalation risks creating the very war it seeks to prevent. Instead, he urges a shift from confrontation to mutual security frameworks. Sachs describes China as a “necessary pillar of stability,” capable of leading in technology, green infrastructure, and global poverty alleviation. His argument transforms China from Zeihan’s symbol of fragility into a cornerstone of cooperative globalization.¹¹

Moral Responsibility and the Redefinition of Power

Unlike Zeihan, Sachs ties geopolitics to moral responsibility. He argues that Western hegemony has too often confused dominance with leadership. True leadership, he contends, requires cooperation and mutual respect.¹² The rise of BRICS, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and global digital partnerships represent, for Sachs, early stages of this ethical realignment. Multipolarity, in this sense, is not just about balance of power but balance of responsibility.

Zeihan and Sachs interpret the same phenomenon, the weakening of US hegemony, through opposite lenses. Zeihan sees geography and demography as unchangeable constraints, while Sachs believes technology and diplomacy can reconfigure them. Zeihan trusts maps; Sachs trusts minds. Zeihan predicts collapse; Sachs anticipates cooperation. Their divergence captures the broader tension between realism and idealism that defines the modern global discourse.

Sachs redefines geopolitics through sustainability.¹³ Power in the 21st century, he argues, lies not in military might but in technological innovation and environmental stewardship. Digital inclusion and renewable energy investments play a crucial role in reducing inequality and advancing sustainable development. Sachs's focus on carbon neutrality and equitable growth reframes global competition as a collective survival challenge. This is an area where China's investments in green technology could prove decisive.

Energy, Sustainability, and the Future of Power

Both thinkers recognize energy as the foundation of power. Zeihan argues that North America's energy independence will isolate it from global disruptions, while Asia, particularly China, remains energy-insecure.¹⁴ Sachs, on the other hand, envisions a green transition through international investment and shared innovation. He suggests that a global renewable system is feasible with limited economic sacrifice.¹⁵ For Sachs, sustainability is the new oil. It is a resource that multiplies rather than depletes through cooperation.

Conclusion

China embodies the debate between Zeihan and Sachs. To Zeihan, it is a demographic time bomb; to Sachs, it is a development engine. The truth may lie between. China's growing investments in AI, solar energy, and infrastructure across Africa and Latin America suggests that its future influence will depend on whether it can shift from export dependence to innovation-driven sustainability.¹⁶ As Sachs notes, China's success or failure will determine whether the world moves toward fragmentation or integration.¹⁷

Despite their ideological differences, both Zeihan and Sachs acknowledge that sustainability and resilience define future power. Zeihan calls for regional self-sufficiency; Sachs calls for global solidarity. Together, they suggest that adaptability, not dominance, will shape the next world order. The challenge lies in harmonizing realism with idealism: combining Zeihan's geopolitical caution with Sachs's moral optimism.

Footnotes

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¹⁰ Glenn Diesen. "Jeffrey Sachs: End of the Western-Centric World & Rise of BRICS." YouTube video, 28:22. Published July 16, 2025. Timestamp: 04:34.

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NAVIGATING THE MULTIPOLAR TRANSITION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PETER ZEIHAN AND JEFFREY SACHS ON CHINA'S GEOPOLITICAL FUTURE



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Abstract

The two main world powers are vying for supremacy in the future global order. The world's superpower and reigning hegemon is the US. The US has been the anchor country for world peace and stability for decades. However, due to changes in demographics and strategy, a new global order is forming. In this paper, we will analyse Peter Zeihan's argument for a fragmented future and his analysis of the effects of US retrenchment on China and contrasts this with Jeffrey Sachs's position of promoting a global development order via a multipolar approach around the BRI and sustainable development, and the means by which China may adapt to the global structural risks.

There are three critical themes: First, the emergence of a multipolar world as the new global order will require nations to cooperate for economic growth and development. Building the Global Green Economy requires cooperation amongst all nations.

Second, the Belt and Road Initiative and a global sustainable development order through the BRI creates opportunity for China. Lastly, nations must invest in their people's future through education and social support.

Introduction

The United States has a long legacy of organizing the global order across international institutions, armed alliances, and economic networks.

However, the global order is shifting, and countries like China are becoming increasingly central to the global order. This shift has sparked differing analyses by Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs regarding the future of the U.S.-led global order and China's place in that order.

The decline of the U.S. Leadership

Peter Zeihan, a geopolitical strategist, argues that the U.S. led global order is in decay due to demographic changes, technological changes, and because of America's strategic retrenchment.¹ Notably, he invokes that the U.S. has always been the security guarantee of the world, particularly through management of global maritime trade routes and safeguarding global supply chains.² In conjunction with this point, Zeihan argues that America's retreat from global leadership will leave countries like China highly susceptible to structural and logistical vulnerabilities.³

The economy of China largely depends upon international trade and energy imports through the South China Sea and Straits of Malacca, while the aging population and shrinking workforce further contribute to its vulnerabilities from supply chain incidents.⁴ Energy dependence remains another key factor with instability along international energy corridors from the Middle East and African regions bearing grave political and economic ramifications.⁵ Upon understanding China's geography with respect to the Silk Road and BRI corridors,

we get to understand the potential logistical and geopolitical risks associated with the very foundation of its infrastructure.⁶

Limits of the BRI

While the BRI is projected to increase trade and connectivity around Asia, Africa, and Europe, it also constrains China with interruptions and strategic pushbacks.⁷ Just such geographic and infrastructural vulnerabilities dampen the importance of secure energy, trade, and economic routes.⁸

China's Opportunity in a Multipolar World

In a different vein, Jeffrey Sachs emphasizes the possibility of China assuming a stabilizing role in a multipolar world based on cooperation, sustainable development, and global problem solving. Hence, China's working in BRI provides opportunities for regional economic connectivity, infrastructure development, and enhanced energy security.⁹ China's outreaches in renewables and technology also enable it in addressing global challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity.¹⁰

Strategic Geography and Resources

Through the exploration of maps that depict Asia, energy routes, the Silk Road, and BRI corridors as the calculations of real material by China and not as figures that float in the air, the strategic considerations of China can be easily discerned. Along these routes are oil, gas, and minerals of which China will draw the necessary raw materials for not only sustaining its growth but also giving it that high ground in world politics. The demographic and geographical vices of China are exposed by Zeihan while Sachs is like a pathway door that

China may use for regional connectivity and taking advantage of collaborations in the global market.¹¹

Risks vs. Opportunities

In that case, the impacts of China are not the same in every situation. Structural risks that arise from a fragmented world order can be turned by China into chances of lead roles through energy, trade, and infrastructural activities if they are played correctly.¹² It is easier and more evident to understand and acknowledge the practical as well as the strategic challenges that China is facing by blending the geographic and infrastructure data. At the same time, one also recognizes the absolute necessity of dealing with the vulnerabilities as well as holding on tightly to the opportunities.

Conclusion

The role that China plays in the international system is solely reliant on their capacity to mitigate the risks and at the same time realize the leadership opportunities that come from the regional and the global level.¹³ A deep and detailed research into the continent of Asia, Silk Road corridors, the BRI, and global energy routes is equivalent to a prism that shows the choices of China's strategy, economic power, and the consequences arising from the U.S. disengagement. Thus, serving as an opening to grasp the changing twenty first century global order in all its facts.

Footnotes

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BETWEEN REALISM AND IDEALISM: UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL ORDER THROUGH ZEIHAN AND SACHS

Abstract

The essay compares Peter Zeihan's and Jeffrey Sachs' perspectives on the decline of the US-led global order. Zeihan interprets this transformation through a geopolitical and structural lens, arguing that it is an inevitable consequence that the world should accept. In contrast, Sachs approaches this collapse through a moral and institutional lens. He emphasizes that this moment should be regarded as a turning point to reshape global order through cooperation, eventually aiming for sustainable development. By examining the two different views, the essay argues that Zeihan's realism and Sachs' idealism are not opposing positions but are in complementary relationships.

Introduction

Before comparing Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs' perspectives on the global world order, the author first wanted to understand what general ideas they hold about it. The author realized that Zeihan views the global world order from a geopolitical perspective and believes its collapse is an inevitable reality that the world must simply accept.¹ In contrast, Sachs emphasizes the importance of turning this collapse into an opportunity to reshape a new global order.² It became clear to me that Zeihan takes a pessimistic stance toward the present world system, whereas Sachs approaches this collapse in an optimistic manner. As they view the global world order through completely different lenses, their opposite attitudes made the author want to explore more deeply how each of them interprets the decline of the US-led order and what would be a better perspective.



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how each of them interprets the decline of the US-led order and what would be a better perspective.

Peter Zeihan: Structural Collapse of the US.-Led Global Order

First, for Peter Zeihan, he interprets the global world order through a strictly geopolitical and structural lens, arguing that its collapse is a result of geography, demography, and supply chain dependency.^{3 4} He asserts that globalization has been maintained because of the U.S.'s commitment to patrolling sea lanes and protecting international security. However, as the United States withdraws from its geopolitical protection, the interconnected trade networks are breaking apart.

Another important factor Zeihan focuses on is the aging population in China, Japan, and Europe. As labor forces are shrinking, this reduces global demand. Demographic problems accelerate the breakdown of international trade, investment, and production. Due to the end of globalization, each country is forced to regionalize production and prioritize self-sufficiency. Zeihan describes this as a shift from a single interconnected world to a sum of isolated regional blocs. For him, these inevitable structural pressures and decline make the collapse of the global world order unavoidable. It is not a failure that can be reversed, but a natural transformation of the global system, which implies the end of this system.⁵

In Zeihan's view, the main reason why America is withdrawing from its global commitments is that the country became self-sufficient in food, energy and many resources.⁶ The United States now has considerably less reason to rely on world trade compared to the past. In addition, Zeihan sees the US-led global order as an artificial system that was purposefully created for restraining the Soviet Union in the Cold War rather than an arrangement that would permanently last. For Zeihan, the U.S. is concluding that globalization no longer requires its protection, indicating the end of US-led order. This leads to multiple crises most countries will go through as they have to survive by themselves, whereas the United States will remain secure and self-sufficient. Its geography, natural resources, and relatively young population will allow America to sustain success even without global trade. He views the collapse of the US-led order as a liberation for the U.S., which will benefit America.

According to Zeihan, the collapse of the US-led global order will hit China the hardest because China's rise has been dependent on the U.S. guaranteed system of global trade.⁷ China's economy is run by an export based system and the country significantly relies on imports in its energy. He views China as a nation that cannot survive without globalization.⁸ Also, in the demographic area, due to the aging population, the working age population decreases. This weakens the country's production and consumption, which can lead to problems in China's growth. He believes China cannot function well when the US-led global order comes to an end.

Jeffrey Sachs: Reforming the Global Order through Cooperation and Institutions

In contrast to Zeihan's perspective on global world order, Jeffrey Sachs, a leading scholar in sustainable development, views the world order through a moral and institutional lens. In his view, global order is a moral system built on trust and cooperation among nations. Although it aims to ensure the global well-being and sustainable future, wealthy countries are now less likely to pursue ethical leadership and common good. They are more focused on self-interest, prioritizing profit over justice and sustainability.

This results in deepening inequality between developed and developing countries. As the wealthy countries neglect to preserve moral duties, global institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization that are established to coordinate cooperation and maintain order can not function well. As the countries are uncooperative, the number of institutions shrinks, leading to the collapse of cooperative mechanisms and mutual trust. Sachs argues that the most serious result from this collapse is the environmental crisis such as climate change and resource insufficiency. Instead of viewing the breakdown as an end of the system, he emphasized it to be regarded as a turning point that can be reversed through cooperation and pursuing sustainable development.^{9 10}

Sachs also views the US-led global order as an unsustainable and unbalanced system. As the system is overly dependent on America, the global order reflects power concentration on one country. He argues that although this dominance once provided stability, it now contributes to inequality and limited global participation in decision-making among nations. As a result, the US-led global order is gradually collapsing under its own imbalance. For Sachs, this decline should be considered as an opportunity to transform it into a cooperation-based order. He expects other nations to discuss with each other in what ways they can advance to make a better world that is more connected and sustainable. In this process, the United States should take the role of a moral leader rather than a ruler, supporting equality, institutional reform, and sustainable development. ¹¹

In this cooperation-based order, Sachs believes that India will be important for this transformation.¹² For the change in the unbalanced US-led order, it requires broader participation from developing countries. Among them, India can be the country that connects the gap between the developed and developing worlds well because it has democratic institutions and strong commitment to sustainable development. By having shared decision-making among nations and involving them to take responsibility for the world order, India can greatly contribute to this transition to be successful in making a balanced and sustainable world order.

Structural Inevitability vs. Moral Transformation: A Comparative Reflection

After exploring both Zeihan's and Sachs's perspectives, I realized that Zeihan is realistic, while Sachs remains idealistic about this world order.

For Zeihan, as he views the world as a system driven by power and structural inevitabilities, the collapse of the US-led global order is a natural consequence that cannot be avoided. As the collapse is caused by factors that are beyond human control, it should simply be accepted. Zeihan's perspective feels realistic, even fatalistic. In contrast, Sachs believes that this collapse can be reversed through collective cooperation. For him, as global order is related to shared responsibility and morality, this collapse can be transformed through human effort. It is an idealistic perspective because it is realistically difficult for the nations to prioritize global responsibility over their own self-interest.

Conclusion

Before analyzing the two perspectives, I initially thought there must be a better one of the two. However, through this comparison, I know that the two perspectives are in a complementary relationship. Zeihan's realism reminds us of the inevitable challenges the world faces, while Sachs's idealism makes us think about the importance of cooperation. A balanced view that combines realism and idealism makes us recognize the world's constraints but also the methods to overcome them. It allows us to genuinely understand the global order.

Footnotes

¹ Peter Zeihan. Peter Zeihan | Geopolitical Strategist | Keynote Speaker | SpeakInc. YouTube video, 21:18. Published Jun 6, 2025. Timestamp: 07:24. Context: Peter Zeihan argues that the global order is related to geography and demography problems.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXjEBHw_IBs

² Jeffrey Sachs. Professor Jeffrey Sachs: A New Age of Sustainable Development - Australia, Asia and The World. YouTube video, 1:23:28. Published November 1, 2018. Timestamp: 45:17. Context: Jeffrey Sachs discusses what we should do to have sustainable development.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Au3fZKjahn0>

³ Peter Zeihan. The End of the World Is Just the Beginning, with Geopolitical Strategist, Peter Zeihan. YouTube video, 1:13:07. Published June 10, 2024. Timestamp: 07:55. Context: For Zeihan, to have a better end, we need to connect it with economic geography and demography.

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⁴ Peter Zeihan. A Peek Past the End of the World. YouTube video, 1:05:25. Published April 25, 2023. Timestamp:12:01. Context: Zeihan attributes the end of the world to demographic problems.

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⁵ Peter Zeihan. Peter Zeihan: What Coming Is Worse Than 1929 – US Is Falling Apart, Trump Tariffs & China Collapse. YouTube video, 29:51. Published July 25, 2025. Timestamp: 02:56. Context: Zeihan emphasizes the upcoming situations to be worse than the situations that happened after the end of the US-led order.

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⁶ Peter Zeihan. EO Nashville – Peter Zeihan, March 5, 2024. YouTube video, 1:12:45. Published March 5, 2024. Timestamp: 10:43. Context: Zeihan embraces the opportunities in a changing world for the next 20 years.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SytmNoG5Fy0>

⁷ Daniel Sanderson and Cameron Cowan. Peter Zeihan’s Analysis: Unraveling China’s Global Role and the Path to Resilience. Article. Published July 20, 2023. Context: This article analyzes Zeihan’s geopolitical arguments regarding China’s dependence on global trade.

<https://www.planksip.org/peter-zeihans-analysis-unraveling-chinas-global-role-and-the-path-to-resilience/>

⁸ Peter Zeihan. China’s Fall, America’s Rise, and the End of the World Order. YouTube video, 1:07:30. Published June 23, 2025. Timestamp: 50:40. Context: Zeihan focuses on how demography and geography will affect the future balance of world powers. In this process, it deals with the question of why China’s economy is doomed to recession.

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⁹ Jeffrey Sachs. ICT & SDGs Final Report: How Information and Communications Technology Can Accelerate Action on the Sustainable Development Goals. New York: Earth Institute, Columbia University, 2016. Context: This final report examines how ICT can serve as institutional and policy tools to achieve SDGs.

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¹⁰ Jeffrey Sachs. The Age of Sustainable Development. YouTube video, 57:30. Published February 6, 2015. Timestamp: 14:39. Context: Sachs emphasizes the age of sustainable development is both a way of understanding the world and a method for solving global problems.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EadvEChBNUA>

¹¹ Jeffrey Sachs, Who Rules the New Global Order? with Professor Jeffrey Sachs. YouTube video, 1:34:34. Published Apr 24, 2023. Timestamp: 1:22:11. Context: Sachs discusses who would be the one that rules the new global order by paying attention to Trump’s tariffs and the role of China.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-kv71VTcYE>

Footnotes

¹² Jeffrey Sachs. India's Decade of Development. Published Apr 15, 2001. Context: Sachs focuses on India, where he expects its economic growth. <https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/s7e5767fw57fbgngjz9na4de529a62>

CHINA AND THE COMPETING FUTURES OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Abstract

The stability of the U.S.-led global order is increasingly uncertain as demographic shifts, geopolitical tensions, and economic restructuring reshape international relations. This essay compares the perspectives of Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs to examine how contrasting assumptions about power and development influence expectations for China's future. Zeihan views globalization as a temporary American security project now vulnerable to demographic decline and fragmentation, while Sachs interprets current shifts as part of a long-term transition toward multipolar growth and institutional cooperation. By analyzing China within these competing frameworks, this paper argues that China's trajectory offers important insight into the broader transformation of the global order.

Introduction

The stability of the global order is increasingly being questioned. Since the end of World War II, globalization has expanded rapidly through open trade, maritime connectivity, and growing economic interdependence. For decades, this system appeared durable and self-sustaining. Yet demographic aging, rising geopolitical tensions, and instability in global supply chains now raise uncertainty about its future. These developments have sparked debate over whether the current order is beginning to fragment or simply undergoing transformation.



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Within this debate, Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs offer contrasting interpretations of these changes. While both address the shifting foundations of the international system, they differ in how they understand its trajectory and China's place within it. By comparing their perspectives, this essay examines how different assumptions about global change shape expectations for the future of the world order.

Peter Zeihan: The US.-Built Maritime Order as a Temporary Strategic System

Peter Zeihan interprets the modern world as a product of geography and American power. After 1945, the United States created what he calls “the Order,” a maritime and financial system secured by U.S. naval dominance and open markets for its allies. This system allowed unprecedented globalization by guaranteeing safe sea lanes and protecting global trade routes.¹ Zeihan argues that this arrangement was never meant to be permanent but was a strategic wartime choice now losing its purpose as the U.S. withdraws from its global policing role. Zeihan emphasizes that the sheer scale of global trade— involving the protection of tens of thousands of vessels daily—requires a massive naval commitment that the United States is increasingly unwilling to sustain as its strategic priorities shift toward domestic energy independence and isolationism.²

The result, he claims, will be a fragmented world of regional economies competing for energy, labor, and security.

Central to Zeihan's hypothesis is demography. He argues that aging populations will redefine the balance of power more than technology. Across the industrialized world, shrinking workforces and rising dependency ratios are becoming structural realities rather than temporary fluctuations. As working-age populations contract, economic dynamism slows and long-term growth becomes harder to sustain. However, the United States retains a comparatively stronger demographic profile, while Europe, China, and Russia face steep population decline.³ He argues this demographic divergence ensures that the U.S. remains structurally resilient even as globalization recedes. Geography further reinforces this imbalance. Because the U.S. controls blue-water naval capacity, it can protect its own trade routes. China, by contrast, depends on maritime supply chains and remains strategically vulnerable if those routes are disrupted. In Zeihan's model, Chinese economic growth was possible only under the U.S.-enforced global order; once that protection fades, China's export-driven model collapses.

Ultimately, Zeihan treats the U.S.-led order not as an ethical project but as a temporary strategic structure built for a specific historical moment. As demographic decline spreads and American maritime protection becomes more selective, he expects the global system to reorganize around geography rather than ideology.

In this view, countries that are secure in food production, energy resources, and internal transportation networks such as the United States will adapt more easily to fragmentation. By contrast, trade-dependent industrial economies that rely on long maritime supply chains face structural contraction. For Zeihan, this is not simply a political shift but a return to geographic constraints. The future of the global order will be shaped less by universal international cooperation and more by which states can sustain themselves through internal resilience or by securing exclusive, geography-based partnerships once universal security guarantees fade.

Peter Zeihan on Demographic Decline and Industrial Overextension in China

Peter Zeihan applies his theory of geography and demography most directly to China, presenting it as the country least prepared for the post-globalization era. He argues that China is approaching a severe demographic turning point and suggests that within roughly a decade it will face serious labor shortages.⁴ Decades of the one-child policy have produced a shrinking workforce at the very moment when China's economic model still depends on large-scale industrial production. He also emphasizes that modern capitalism relies on strong consumption supported by a large working-age population, and that when consumption weakens, trade itself begins to contract.⁵ From this perspective, China's rapid aging does not merely slow growth; it weakens both the labor base and the consumer foundation that sustain an export-driven system.

At the same time, Zeihan insists that China's economic rise was built within a global trading system secured by U.S. naval power. China has invested approximately \$35 trillion in industrial plant and equipment, creating fixed industrial capacity that cannot easily adjust if global demand weakens.⁶ He further notes that China produces only a limited share of the key inputs it requires and must import critical materials to sustain its production base.⁷ If the global system becomes less stable, the tension becomes clear: an aging society with declining labor supply is tied to an industrial structure designed for continuous expansion in a world of open trade. In Zeihan's framework, this mismatch between demography and global integration makes China structurally vulnerable in a fragmenting order.

Jeffrey Sachs: Rebalancing the Global Order through Cooperation

Jeffrey Sachs offers a fundamentally different interpretation of the global order, one grounded in cooperation rather than competition. While Peter Zeihan views globalization as an American-created structure destined to collapse, Sachs understands shifts in global power as part of a long historical process. He explains that European dominance emerged alongside the scientific revolution and maritime expansion in the eighteenth century, when technological transformation enabled Europe to colonize and dominate large parts of Asia.⁸ By 1900, European powers appeared to control the world order almost completely, creating the illusion that Western supremacy would last indefinitely.⁹ Yet Sachs emphasizes that this dominance was historically contingent, not permanent.

From a long-term perspective, today's shifts represent a rebalancing of global power rather than systemic collapse.

A central feature of Sachs's argument is his rejection of zero-sum thinking. He challenges the view that global politics and economics operate as a Darwinian struggle for survival, explaining that such thinking derives from Malthusian assumptions about scarcity and competition.¹⁰ Instead, he maintains that modern economic prosperity is based primarily on knowledge, technological advancement, and skilled labor rather than on limited physical resources.¹¹ In this framework, growth results from rising productivity rather than from redistributing fixed wealth. The success of one country therefore does not automatically come at the expense of another. From this perspective, the rise of countries like China should be understood not as a threat, but as part of a broader catching-up process that gradually corrects historical imbalances rooted in centuries of European dominance and North Atlantic hegemony.

Sachs further argues that the defining risks of the twenty-first century, such as nuclear escalation, cyber warfare, and other uncontrolled global crises cannot be managed through rivalry.¹² These dangers are transnational by nature, meaning they affect all states regardless of power or geography. In his view, treating global politics as a contest for dominance only increases instability in a nuclear and digitally interconnected world. Instead of building new trade barriers or dividing the world into hostile blocs, he emphasizes the need for deeper regional integration within a cooperative multilateral framework. For Sachs, the global order is not collapsing due to unavoidable structural forces.

Rather, its direction depends on political choice. The future of the international system will be shaped by whether major powers prioritize fragmentation and competition, or long-term institutional coordination and shared governance.

Jeffrey Sachs on Multipolar Growth and Shared Development in China

Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs present sharply contrasting views on China's future within the global order. Sachs views China not as a destabilizing force but as an indispensable participant in a long-term rebalancing of global power. He argues that European dominance, which emerged through scientific and military breakthroughs in the eighteenth century, was historically contingent rather than permanent.¹³ What appears today as China's "rise" is, in his interpretation, better understood as a structural correction of an earlier imbalance in which the North Atlantic world held imbalanced influence. In other words, China is not overturning a natural order, but returning to a level of economic and technological prominence that it held for much of earlier history. China's development, therefore, does not signify systemic breakdown but reflects the diffusion of productive capacity and technological capability across regions, as more societies gain access to innovation, education, and industrial empowerment.

Sachs further contends that modern prosperity is rooted in knowledge, technological advancement, and institutional capacity rather than in competition over fixed resources.¹⁴ If growth is driven by productivity gains, then the advancement of one country does not inherently require the decline of another.

From this view, China's expansion in renewable energy, electric vehicles, and advanced technologies illustrates how emerging economies can contribute to global innovation rather than destabilize it. The real challenge lies not in China's growth itself but in whether major powers can adjust to a multipolar system through cooperation instead of confrontation. The future of the global order will depend less on preventing China's rise than on integrating it into shared governance structures capable of managing interdependence responsibly.

Conclusion

Peter Zeihan and Jeffrey Sachs offer two distinct frameworks for interpreting the future of the global order and China's place within it. Zeihan emphasizes structural forces such as geography, demography, and energy dependence, arguing that globalization was a temporary strategic arrangement sustained by American power and that its weakening will lead to fragmentation and regional competition. In his view, China's aging population and reliance on external supply chains reveal vulnerabilities that may become more severe in a less stable international environment. Sachs, by contrast, interprets current shifts as part of a long-term historical rebalancing rather than systemic decline. He rejects zero-sum assumptions and emphasizes productivity, technological progress, and institutional cooperation as foundations of continued growth. Where Zeihan sees constraint and contraction, Sachs sees adaptation and coordinated adjustment. Their disagreement ultimately reflects different assumptions about whether the international system is shaped primarily by structural limits or by political and institutional choice.

Whether the coming decades move toward fragmentation or renewed coordination remains uncertain. Yet the debate itself highlights that large-scale development and global problem-solving do not occur independently of geopolitical conditions. They depend on the stability and structure of the international order within which states operate. Efforts aimed at sustainable progress in areas such as energy systems, digital infrastructure, and economic integration are shaped by that broader environment. Understanding the transformation of the U.S.-led order clarifies the foundations of global development. Sustainable progress rests not on innovation alone, but on the stable conditions that enable innovation to occur. In this sense, the future of the global order may not be a simple choice between fragmentation or cooperation, but a complex 'hybrid' reality where regional self-sufficiency and global institutional ties must coexist.

Footnotes

¹ Tugboat Institute. (2024, March 19). A Peek Past the End of the World – Peter Zeihan [Video]. YouTube. Timestamp: 15:50. Context: Zeihan explains how the United States enforced maritime security after World War II. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCV8UYYew8>

² Peter Zeihan. (2026, January 15). World ON THE BRINK: Shadow Fleet Wars, Greenland Claims, Unrest in Iran, Ukraine War [Video]. YouTube. Timestamp: 36:01. Context: Zeihan discusses the scale of maritime enforcement required to secure global trade routes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg1hSqAohHw>

³ Ibid., Timestamp: 31:01. Context: Zeihan analyzes demographic divergence between the United States and major powers such as Europe, China, and Russia.

⁴ Robinson Erhardt. (2025, June 23). Peter Zeihan: China's Fall, America's Rise, and the End of the World Order [Video]. YouTube. Timestamp: 6:35. Context: Zeihan discusses China's demographic decline and labor shortages. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ktF9iU_cvQ

⁵ Ibid., Timestamp: 18:02. Context: Zeihan argues that modern capitalism depends on strong domestic consumption supported by a large working-age population.

⁶ Tugboat Institute. (2024, March 19). A Peek Past the End of the World – Peter Zeihan [Video]. YouTube. Timestamp: 16:47. Context: Zeihan discusses China's massive fixed industrial investment and reliance on U.S.-led maritime routes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCV8UYYew8>

⁷ Robinson Erhardt. (2025, June 23). Peter Zeihan: China's Fall, America's Rise, and the End of the World Order [Video]. YouTube. Timestamp: 43:30. Context: Zeihan explains China's dependence on imported industrial inputs. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ktF9iU_cvQ

⁸ HORIZONS Discussion. (2025, December 22). The Asia-Pacific Century Explained | Jeffrey Sachs [Video]. YouTube. Timestamp: 13:53. Context: Sachs explains how European dominance was historically contingent and grew from the scientific revolution. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68MX32fXfsM>

⁹ Ibid., Timestamp: 19:23. Context: Sachs describes the perception of permanent Western supremacy by 1900.

¹⁰ Ibid., Timestamp: 26:15. Context: Sachs critiques zero-sum interpretations of politics as rooted in Malthusian assumptions.

¹¹ Ibid., Timestamp: 27:50. Context: Sachs argues that modern growth is driven by knowledge and innovation rather than fixed resources.

¹² Ibid., Timestamp: 34:20. Context: Sachs emphasizes that modern global risks require cooperative governance rather than rivalry.

¹³ Ibid., Timestamp: 13:53. Context: Sachs explains that European dominance was historically contingent.

¹⁴ Ibid., Timestamp: 27:50. Context: Sachs argues that long-term prosperity depends on knowledge and innovation rather than zero-sum competition over physical resources.

