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Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor

Guests:

For the Motion: Kurt M. Campbell, Kishore Mahbubani
Against the Motion: Minxin Pei, Susan Thornton
Moderator: John Donovan

AUDIENCE RESULTS

Before the debate:	After the debate:
46% FOR	40% FOR
35% AGAINST	50% AGAINST
19% UNDECIDED	10% UNDECIDED

Start Time: (00:00:00)

John Donovan:

-- made it here today. I am John Donovan, your host and moderator for this Intelligence Squared debate, this digital, virtual debate, in that the arena is virtual, but I'm real, and our debaters are going to be real, and, for sure, the argument is going to be real. We are recording this debate on Thursday, May 21st, 2020. And we are releasing it, though, live to you right now. And our topic relates to this thing that we're all living through together: the coronavirus. And we know that a lot is being said about what's going to change forever, as a result of this, the areas where, when this is over, we will never quite go back to the way that things were before: that workplaces will be different, that retail shopping will change forever, the way college students study may never be the same again.

And then, there's the question we're going to be taking on, which is: who gets to be number one in the arena of great power competition?

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We Americans, or at least many of us, are accustomed to the notion of American primacy. We're the nation that, in a crisis, the rest of the world has to hear from, and turn to, and, often, needs to heed. But now there's an argument that the coronavirus crisis is opening the door for another nation to move up while the U.S. moves down. And that nation is China: ironically, the place where COVID-19 first started. China has been maneuvering for advantage during this crisis, very publicly sending help and aid around the world, and also trumpeting its claimed conquest of the virus as an example of the Chinese government's way of doing things being better; basically, usurping the role of the so-called indispensable nation that has long belonged to the United States. So, China has been gaining on the U.S. for years, economically. But is coronavirus a game-changer in this in a broader regard? Well, that's what we're going to be debating.

00:02:00

Here is our resolution: Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor. This debate, by the way, is being held in partnership with our friends at Foreign Affairs. So, a particular welcome to those who are joining us from Foreign Affairs.

I am online with four guests who will take on this resolution. I am here to juggle the squares on your screen. These two teams of two people who are ready to argue for and against that resolution are folks we're going to be meeting right now. So, first up to argue for the resolution, which, again, Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor: Kurt Campbell. Kurt, you are CEO of The Asia Group. You served as an official on East Asian Affairs at the State Department under President Obama. It's so great to have you with us. Thanks so much for joining us.

Kurt Campbell:

Thank you, John. It's a pleasure to be with you today.

John Donovan:

And can you tell us -- and I'm going to ask everybody this question. I'm in Washington, D.C. Where are you in the world?

Kurt Campbell:

I'm in Washington, D.C., as well.

00:02:59

John Donovan:

And, yet, we're so far away from each other --

Kurt Campbell:

Yes.

John Donovan:

-- but not through this. Also, your partner, I want to also introduce Kishore Mahbubani.

Kishore, you are a former president of the U.N. Security Council. And now, you're a distinguished fellow at the National University of Singapore. You have a new book out. It's called "Has China Won?" which makes it sound like you're very much on topic to this debate. It's a pleasure to have you here with us. So, thanks so much for joining us.

Kishore Mahbubani:

I'm delighted to be with you, even though it's 9:10 p.m. in Singapore [laughs].

John Donovan:

Yeah, so you -- I was -- that was going to be my question. So, you're joining us from Singapore. So, you are --

Kishore Mahbubani:

That's right.

John Donovan:

-- without question, our longest distant virtual debater, so far. It's great to have you with us. So, that's the team arguing for the resolution. Now let's meet the team arguing against the resolution.

First, please, let's say hello to Minxin Pei. Minxin, thanks for joining us. Welcome back to Intelligence Squared. You have debated with us before. You're back because you're such a good debater. You are Professor of Government at Claremont McKenna College and you're a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund.

00:04:02

As I've said, you've debated with us before. Welcome back. And where are you joining us from today?

Minxin Pei:

Claremont, California.

John Donovan:

Oh, very close to where your work is.

Minxin Pei:

It's very early in the morning.

John Donovan:

[laughs] Yeah, we have a lot of time zones going on in this recording. And, finally, I want to welcome to the debate, also arguing against the resolution, Susan Thornton. Susan, you served for nearly 30 years in the State Department, where you're now retired. And you are an official on East Asian Affairs. Again, so, this topic is just -- it's your specialty. You're now a senior fellow and visiting professor at Yale. And you've debated with us before, as well. And, as with Minxin, we have you back because you are so good at this. So, I want to thank you for joining us. Final question to you: where are you at in the world right now?

Susan Thornton:

Well, John, I am in Lisbon, Maine, on a farm. So, it's a pretty nice place --

John Donovan:

Ahh.

Susan Thornton:

-- to weather COVID-19.

John Donovan:

I know Lisbon, Maine. I used to live up in Maine.

Susan Thornton:

Oh.

00:05:00

John Donovan:

My first job in television, I lived in the town of Poland Spring, actually.

Susan Thornton:

Oh, yes, not far.

John Donovan:

I used to bathe in Poland Spring water because that's the water that everybody --

Susan Thornton:

It's the best.

John Donovan:

-- in town had.

Susan Thornton:

It's the best.

John Donovan:

Yep, absolutely.

Susan Thornton:

Yep.

John Donovan:

[laughs] It's literally true. All right. Those are our four debaters. Again, our resolution is Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor. As always, our debate's going to go in three rounds. And then, we count on you, our online audience, to decide the winner. And

you do that by voting. And here's how that works. You will be asked by me to cast two votes: one in just a few seconds, before you've heard the arguments; and then, another one after that, after you've heard all of the arguments from our debaters.

And we give victory to the team whose numbers change the most in an upward direction between the first and the second vote. Basically, whoever changes the most minds will be declared our winner. So, now, it's time to cast your first vote. Pay attention to the chat box for two reasons.

00:05:59

One is, we would love to have you -- and this is something that's been happening in our digital debates. We've had sort of a running second debate going on in the chat box by you, our listeners. So, pay attention to the chat box throughout.

But pay attention to it now, specifically, because you're going to see a link to vote. One of our producers should have just sent it. You click that link. Or, if you don't see the link, don't worry about it. You can also go to our website, that's IQ2US.org/vote, I-Q, the number two, US.org/vote. And when you click the link or get to that URL, you'll see three options. They are for the resolution, against the resolution, or undecided. The resolution will be spelled out there: Coronavirus Will Reshape the World in China's Favor.

I just want to be clear: for your vote to count, you'll have to select one of those options, obviously. To vote, you have to vote. So, remember, we're going to do this vote again after you've heard the debate and the side that sways the most minds is going to be declared our winner.

00:07:02

So, let's launch with Round One. Round One are our opening statements. Each debater speaks in turn to make the case for or against the resolution. Those statements will be four minutes each. One again, the resolution: Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor. First up to speak for the motion, Kurt Campbell. Kurt, the screen is all yours.

Kurt Campbell:

John, thank you very much, and it's a pleasure to be with all of you. And I'm thrilled to be able to do this with my friend, Kishore. Let me just begin with a point that John made. This is an incredibly challenging period and this proposition is challenging for Americans. And I just want to underscore here that I want you to set aside what your hopes are, and what your expectations are for the United States, and look at the situation factually, and make your assessment accordingly.

This is the greatest upheaval in global politics since World War II.

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And after World War II, we saw a reordering of global politics. And I think we want to propose

that we will see the same thing during these circumstances, as well. Much of what's going to occur is because of China's performance. But an important ingredient in what's going to transpire is what's happening in the United States. What do we expect from a great power, a leading nation, during this period, a period of pandemic? There are three things that we would expect from any country that wants to lead the global situation. The first, number one, we expect a country to provide domestic capacity and demonstrate competence in terms of dealing with a pandemic or the situation. And I think no one would argue that the United States has been able to do anything of the kind. It's been a tragedy to see the incompetence with which the United States has dealt with this issue.

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And we see lacking in leadership, in public health capacity, and a whole host of circumstances that underscore the lack of American capacity to deal with this challenge. Number two, we would expect that the leading nation would be able to provide international support in terms of PPE and equipment, to be able to deal with the challenges. We've seen, again, nothing of the sort from the United States. We've been sending teams around to try to find excess equipment and bring it back to the United States, outbidding allies. What we see, in contrast, is China, even though, as John indicated, this is where the virus originated. But since that time, they have been reaching out, providing equipment, providing support to a variety of countries around the world.

And third, in addition to demonstrating capacity domestically and providing support to the nations of the world, we would expect the leading nation to convene groups of countries to share best practices, to figure out how to tackle the problem in terms of vaccine development and the like.

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One of the things that we've seen missing over the course of the last several weeks is the United States. The WHO held its meetings over the last two days. And I want to quote from Carl Bildt, at the WHO conference, the Swedish prime minister, former prime minister. He observed the meetings of the WHO over a period of two days, and says, "The U.S. has left behind any ambition of global leadership and any function as a global inspiration. This is tragic, but true." So, I want to just suggest to you that this is a difficult thing for Americans to comprehend and understand, but we have been completely lacking in our ability to deal with the situation and China has surged into the vacuum.

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John Donvan:

Thank you, Kurt Campbell. And, again, you're asking people to vote, "Yes," on the resolution. Now, our next debater will be speaking against the resolution. Minxin Pei, the screen is yours.

Minxin Pei:

Well, good morning. Thank you. What Kurt said is that the U.S. has scored its own goals, but it does not mean that China is scoring the goals into the U.S. net. First, let's just remember what

Churchill said about the U.S.: "America will always do the right thing after exhausting all the options." So, I have complete faith in the U.S. system in correcting the problems it, right now, faces. After all, we're going to have an election in November. And, most likely, that will provide a turning point. Now, let me turn back to China.

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Whether China can take advantage of this opportunity depends on whether China has the resources. So, even where we look at a short-term, China does not seem -- China does not have the resources to so-called do the surge into this vacuum left by the current U.S. stumbles. It's too early for China to declare victory. The virus keeps popping up in China, even after it has been rather quickly contained. And in the short-term, China faces enormous economic difficulties. The economy is still not at the full capacity. Foreign trade is virtually paralyzed. And China's -- this economic shock has left 70 million people in China unemployed. So, I just simply don't see, in the short-term, whether China has the capacity to invest in the so-called global opportunities to increase its economic influence.

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Then, when you look at the medium-term, you also need to ask this question: does China have the capacity and the resources? My answer is no. Let's remember that China is still a very, relatively poor country. Its middle income, per capita income, is one-fifth of that of the U.S. It's -- the size of the Chinese economy is still two-thirds of the U.S., despite 40 years of rapid economic growth. Forty percent of the Chinese people still live in the countryside. And when you look at China's economic trajectory, you cannot be very optimistic, either, because China's chief -- the main driver of China's economic growth are all losing steam. It's losing the cost of cheap labor. It is now facing the backlash against China, in terms of its trade practices.

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And not just from the U.S., but from other trading partners. And it needs to invest enormously in its domestic capabilities to upgrade its technology. So, I -- when you look at sort of China's economic trajectory, you could not project China's future on the basis of its past performance. And, finally, let's look at China's domestic problems. China faces enormous challenges of domestic unrest, especially in Xinjiang, in Tibet, and also in Hong Kong. What keeps Chinese leaders up at night is not this -- not that it's grand vision for the -- for a new world order will not happen, but, rather, the fight at home. So, I urge you to vote for the proposition, and that China will not take advantage of this opportunity and become the number one in any time in the future.

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John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Minxin Pei. And that resolution, again: Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor. We just heard Minxin argue against the resolution. Our next speaker, Kishore Mahbubani, will be arguing for it. Coming in from Singapore, Kishore, the screen is yours.

Kishore Mahbubani:

Thank you. It's such a pleasure to be with all of you. And I would like to put across three points, which I think will also reinforce some of the points that my partner, Kurt, has made. The first key point is that the reshaping of the world order in favor of China, which is happening now, will be seen by future historians as a perfectly natural development. From their longer perspective, they will know it, as the British historian, Angus Maddison, has done so, that the two largest economies of the world, from the year one to the year 1820, were always those of China and India.

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So, the severe underperformance of these societies, and the rest of Asia, in the 19th and 20th centuries, was abnormal. Indeed, it was abnormal for China and India to have vested 5 percent of the world's GDP in 1950. So, we were returning to the normal world when China develops a number two or number one economy in the world. And size generates influence. And here my response to pay mention, if you look at past performance -- look at the past performance of the past 2,000 years, it will give you a clue of what -- where China is going. And of course, as Kurt said, the incompetence of the Trump administration across several dimensions has also enabled Chinese influence in the world to grow.

The second key point is that the shape and the nature of the world order -- the key words here are world order -- will be determined by the perceptions of the world, especially the 6 billion people who live outside the U.S. and China.

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Now for several decades, most of these 6 billion people were happy to live in the 1945 rules-based order, which was generously gifted by the West, by America, to the world. And for several decades, the U.S. was a wise manager of this order. Allowing other countries, including China, to grow and thrive. But now, there's no doubt whatsoever that the Trump administration has turned away from this 1945 rules-based order, walking away from important organizations, like the World Trade Organization and the World Health Organization. But the 6 billion people in the world who have benefited from this world order, gifted by the West, want to retain it. And so does China.

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So, to put it simply, there has been a divergence of views within the Trump administration and the rest of the world. And there has been a convergence of views within China and the world. And that's how the World Order is being reshaped in favor of China.

My third point in the eyes of the 6 billion people who are watching COVID-19, there is no doubt that after the initial missteps in Wuhan, China's overall management of the COVID-19 crisis has been far more competent than that of the U.S. And one statistic illustrates this, in terms of fatalities per million people, the number in the U.S. is about 280. In China, it's less than five.

Since there is skepticism of China's statistics, let me say that all the East Asian numbers are the same. Japan: six, South Korea: five, Singapore: four, Vietnam: zero.

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And equally importantly, the world is shocked that the Trump administration has decided to walk away from the World Health Organization at a time when the world has never needed it more. So, I think as Kurt said, Carl Bildt, a right-wing politician from Sweden said, the U.S. is clearly walking away from the world. China is walking towards the world, being very generous. So, it's perfectly natural that the World Order is being reshaped in China's favor. So, please vote yes in favor of the motion.

John Donvan:

Thank you very much, Kishore. And our final statement will be an argument against that resolution. And it comes from Susan Thornton. Susan, the screen is yours.

Susan Thornton:

Thank you, John. I think it's interesting that Kurt has argued basically that coronavirus will negatively impact the U.S. position in the world order. And Kishore basically argued that the world order is changing in China's favor regardless of the coronavirus.

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But our proposition is about whether coronavirus is going to reshape the World Order in China's favor. So, the question is whether this pandemic will translate to increases in China's relative influence, in its economic growth, its stability, security, and most importantly its attractiveness or its soft power. And in my view, the impacts of the coronavirus are going to be a net negative for China in these areas. It's true that in some cases, there could be opportunities for Chinese gains. And in some cases, maybe even filling a vacuum that the U.S. has left. But again, I think China is unlikely to be able to capitalize on these opportunities, and we've already seen evidence of that. So, my partner, Minxin, has already talked eloquently about the impact of the virus on China's economic growth and political stability, and the issue of China's credibility in this coronavirus pandemic.

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These are obviously areas where the virus is presenting major challenges to China's domestic situation, and to its ability to continue its rapid rise in the international system. But I am going to focus my argument on China's external relations, and how it is seen by other countries in the context of this pandemic. If we look at the issue of rising or falling influence and reputation, it's pretty clear that China has taken multiple reputational hits at the hands of the coronavirus. First, China is generally regarded as the source of the virus, which is obvious liability when people around the world are suffering devastation from it. Secondly, it's widely perceived that China delayed informing about the outbreak and has not been fully transparent, which makes the situation for other countries worse than it needed to be. This may not be completely fair, but China's objections and denials are not gaining traction among others in the world.

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Third, the narrative in many countries, is that China tried to corner the market on COVID-related medical supplies once the dire nature of the outbreak became clear in Wuhan. And this is the impression left by urgent worldwide purchases by China of PPE in late January and early February. Minxin spoke about the impact on China's domestic economy. But the pandemic has highlighted bottlenecks in globalization and international supply chains that countries around the world are now looking to remedy. Japan is looking to re-shore production from China, as are U.S. and European chemical manufacturers and many others. So, this will lead to disinvestment from China at a time of grave economic volatility. The pandemic has also been damaging to China's signature Belt and Road Initiative, as multiple recipient countries are looking workouts amid distress in their financial pictures.

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China's COVID-19 diplomacy has not gone over well. From mass diplomacy where deliveries were accompanied by demands for written letters of appreciation, to wolf warrior diplomacy spreading misinformation, to maltreatment of foreigners in China during the COVID pandemic lockdown. Numerous countries, in the rush to acquire PPE at the height of the crisis, received faulty or counterfeit medical items from China. And Chinese officialdom has gone on the attack against countries just because they support an inquiry into the sources of the outbreak, which is a very reasonable and necessary undertaking. One prominent Chinese media critic called Australia, the country of Australia, "gum on the bottom of China's shoe." This has not gone over well. So, these are just a few instances of missteps, and as Minxin said, own goals that China has seen in recent months.

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But they point to larger problems that are not going away in security, lack of transparency, and other problems in capacity to lead. So, I think it's clear China will not make gains from this, and you should vote against the proposition.

John Donvan:

Thank you very much, Susan Thornton. And that concludes our first round, our formal opening statements. And now, we move onto our second round. And our second round is where we have much more of a freewheeling conversation, and the debaters can address one another directly, and take questions also from me. And we have some questions from you in our audience that we will also bring into the conversation. Our resolution is Coronavirus Will Reshape the world order in China's Favor.

We've heard Kurt Campbell and Kishore Mahbubani make their case in favor of the resolution by describing the moment we're in as one of those great reordering moments in the way that World War II reshaped the world order and brought -- led to American primacy. They're arguing two things, that this virus and its reaction will both bring down America's leadership role and bring up China's to fill the vacuum.

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They point out, number one, what the United States has been doing wrong, a very broad failure on global leadership, bad example of competence, not being able to supply the world with what the world needs, not stepping in to convene leadership groups to figure out solutions, to put together coalitions of problem solvers. They also say that in the larger sense, it needs to be recognized that China's return to primacy is, to some degree, the arc of history returning to its natural course, that China has been a longstanding global cultural influence. The last 200 years have been more of an anomaly and that it's a natural thing for China to be reasserting its position in the world and, of course, with -- and, of course, with where it stood over the last couple of thousand years.

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They finally say that the decision, the determinant of whether America leads the world is not to America up to America alone, but they're actually 6 billion people in the world who need to see America as the leader of the world. And that that's not happening, particularly as they say, that the Trump administration has made it somewhat clear that it's not interested in that role with an America first policy. And they cite, as a specific example, walking away from the World Health Organization funding requirement in the middle of a pandemic as an example.

The team arguing against the resolution mentioning Minxin Pei and Suzanne Thornton, they say, yes, the United States has not done very well at the outset, but that the United States can course correct that that's doable, that the United States has done that before. They also argue that China just doesn't have the capacity or the resources to fill in this gap, that it has its own domestic problems at home. Its economy is not what it was even a few years ago.

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The coronavirus has wounded that economy even further. It has not actually defeated the virus, that it keeps coming back. Their cheap labor advantage has been eroding for some time. That the country domestically is facing a political backlash for the way that it hit this. And then, in terms of its soft power influence around the world, it's taken several reputational hits. Again, for China to lead, it needs others to follow and China is not inspiring in that regard. Such things as shipping out bad equipment, bad treatment of foreigners, that the attractiveness of China and the attractiveness of the United States has long been part of its soft power, that China doesn't compensate for that with the way that it conducts its business, both domestically and globally.

All right, so there's a lot to talk to in that. But I want to go first to this issue that Susan Thornton brought up near the end of China's soft power being -- actually being -- its behavior is really represent a series of liabilities in that regard.

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That you can't look at China and see an exemplary model that the rest of the world would be

inspired by. And Kurt Campbell, that that was so much a part of what was involved with American primacy as well. What's your response to that?

Kurt Campbell:

I would just say, John, that I think we have, tendency when we look at China currently on the global stage, to focus too much on its soft power and not enough on its power. China is perceived by most countries in the world as a surging power. It's a young power in the sense of its newfound role. Rising powers in their early stages are often untamed, sometimes brutal in their public diplomacy, and China is no exception. And so, I would simply, the key here is looking at the responses of most countries on the international scene. Very few countries take on China directly.

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Most seek to get along and work with China, and almost every country in the world if you ask them privately, what country has led the way during the pandemic, they would, of course, offer some of the concerns that Susan has laid out. But they would also compare it very unfavorably in the sense of how the United States has responded. So, I would simply say that China is demonstrating power on the global stage and too often we believe that the most important component in that power is soft power. But China is exhibiting something else, John, which is hard power, and it's very effective in the current context.

John Donovan:

Minxin, can you respond to that point?

Minxin Pei:

Yeah, well, there are two cases that show, A, China actually misuses its power to its own disadvantage and wastes resources. And that is the case of the Belt and Road. If you look at this very ambitious --

John Donovan:

If you -- if you -- and if you could explain what the Belt and Road initiative is in one sentence?

00:30:06

Minxin Pei:

Okay, the Belt and Road Initiative is this nominally a trillion-dollar infrastructure project, which China somehow will finance. But when you look at the record of this record, of this project, it's littered with failures, with very problematic investments. And China is likely to waste most of it. So, I agree with Kurt that China has a lot of power, but I don't agree with the notion that China is using its power wisely and effectively and productively.

A second is that where China does flaunt its power, it tends to antagonize people. And here I want to use the example of South China Sea, which China Sea has such reefs and build artificial islands and then bullying the neighboring countries. The result is that these countries are likely to be American friends, America's friends, rather than China's friends.

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So, when you look at the record of China's use of its newly acquired power, it's also scoring its own goals.

John Donovan:

Kishore, do you want to jump in on that?

Kishore Mahbubani:

Well, I -- what key point I want to make, if you don't mind, is someone who lives outside the United States. One of the biggest gifts the United States has given to the rest of the world is it's educated the elites of the world very well. The graduates of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, everywhere. And so you are you're dealing with a very sophisticated audience today. And it's interesting that President Trump referred to The Lancet as one of his sources in his letter. And let me just tell you what the editor of The Lancet said about the way the United States and the West handled the COVID-19 crisis. And he says that the reason why it's been very critical of the U.K. government, the U.S. administration, is that Lancet came up with five people at the end of January, repeat, end of January.

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These five people described a new virus, they showed the virus were deadly, that it was related to SARS, that it was killing people, the number of deaths was rising. Patients were being admitted to ICUs, they required ventilation. There was person-to-person transmission. All the warnings, every one of them were given in the last week of January and what, do you know about Richard Horton said? "Europe and the U.S. did nothing in February, did nothing in March."

That's magnificent incompetence, and I can tell you it has shocked the world because they are saying, how is it China, which has been mentioned, has just sixth -- with one sixth the per capita income of the United States could at the end of the day objectively manage the crisis so well.

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And how could the U.S. and Europe manage it so badly? So, this in the eyes of the 6 billion and [unintelligible] 6 billion, this has been a real shifting in their perceptions. And that's something -

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John Donovan:

Let me -- let me take your point, Kishore, to Susan Thornton then. And we heard the same also from your opponent, Kurt Campbell, that we're talking about, you know, this is a zero-sum game, U.S. up, China down, vice versa. So, you've made the case that China can't go up so aggressively because of its liabilities. But your opponents are arguing that this is a seesaw thing. And regardless of what China's doing, the U.S. is creating a power vacuum by abdicating its leadership role in a variety of ways, some of which Kishore just pointed out, WHO, et cetera,

walking -- just what they've described as a totally incompetent failure of leadership in this moment is incredibly damaging.

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So, part of this equation -- I know the Minxin said it's correctable, but Susan, your opponents are saying the damage is lasting and enduring and deep, the behavior of the Trump administration.

Susan Thornton:

Well, I'd like to make a couple of points John, thanks. First, I was talking to a Korean former official the other day who was bristling at the complements Korea was getting for having done a magnificent job with handling COVID. And he said, "Look, we don't really know who's doing a great job on handling COVID. It could be that the Swedish answer is the right answer in the long term and we won't know for a long time." So, I think it's important to state here that, yes, the U.S. looks like it's fumbled early on. And yes, it looks like the Chinese have handled it. But it's an open question as to where this is all going.

Secondly, I think, look, we're here to talk about whether or not this coronavirus is going to advantage China. And in order for this Corona virus to advantage China, it's going to be able to need to convert U.S. fumbles and stumbles into something positive for itself on the global stage.

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And I would argue that they've absolutely failed to do that. It's quite surprising, actually, because China is generally fairly opportunistic and is able to take advantage of weaknesses on the part of other countries. But because of this nature of this coronavirus, the way it's unfolded, the ham-handedness with which they've approached it as a competition with the U.S., instead of trying to approach it as a sort of humanitarian event that would open the field for some kind of advantage to be gained by China. They haven't approached it that way.

I think it's shameful that both the U.S. and China have approached this coronavirus pandemic, which is such a catastrophe for the world, as a zero-sum competition, as you just mentioned. It's absolutely not a zero-sum competition; it's obvious that we should be cooperating and the fact that China can't step up and take advantage of the U.S. attitude in this crisis and show that it's ready for cooperation and reaching out to other countries and doing a better job with its diplomacy, I think just points to the fact that it's really -- it's power maybe has been rising over the last several decades.

00:36:17

But in this moment, where they could convert U.S. failures to something dramatic, they are unable to do it, and they're going in the opposite direction.

Kurt Campbell:

John, I have to push back at this. I have to push back at this. The best case study is what just happened at the WHO. Susan's saying somehow China's not trying to address the challenge

directly. President Xi Jinping, again, can be a very tough leader, was the leader that spoke out, promising \$2 billion to the world, to Africa, to Latin America, to other developing nations. In contrast, President Trump did not speak. No one from the United States did. Instead, suggesting that we were going to withhold further funding to the organization unless their whole scale changes, which the overriding group of nations that're represented in the WHO rejected.

00:37:13

And so, I do think China is responsible for this crisis, as Minxin and Susan underscore, but they've agreed to do at least some sort of internal review of how this took place. I'd like to see something like that in the United States. Do you think the Trump Administration is going to allow a serious review of the mishandling of this crisis during its first two months, along the lines that Kishore has laid out? Of course not. We've fumbled this from the start, and we are rejecting any sense that we want to play a leadership role during this crisis that is engulfing the world.

John Donovan:

Minxin, do you want to respond to that?

Minxin Pei:

Yeah, well, Kurt has made a very persuasive case that the U.S. has really dropped the ball during this crisis, but Kurt has not really made a persuasive case that China is taking over.

00:38:10

Just let's look at the \$2 billion offer. It's what --

John Donovan:

Minxin, can I -- can I stop you for a second? Do you find the case -- just so I know what your baseline is, do you find Kurt's case that the U.S. has really dropped the ball solid and credible? And I know you're saying --

Minxin Pei:

Oh, absolutely, I agree with -- but I simply do not believe that Kurt has made any progress in convincing me that China is taking advantage of the U.S. stumble, and China has the resources, the capacity to create a new world order afterwards. Let's just look at the \$2 billion that offer China has made. It's not \$2 billion a year; it's \$1 billion per year. And China has not really made it very explicit that the \$2 billion would be going to WHO. It's a very general commitment to fighting COVID.

00:39:08

So, if you -- and then it's really -- even when you look at WHO's budget, WHO has about an \$8, \$9 billion. So, even when China contributes \$1 billion a year and that actually appears to be the case, China is still a minority contributor and contributes to roughly one eighth or one ninth of WHO's budget. So, it's way too early to say that China is very effectively filling the vacuum

created by the U.S.

John Donovan:

Kishore, so you have your opponent's conceding that the U.S. hasn't done very well on this, but insisting two things --

Kishore Mahbubani:

So we have won half the debate already.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

Well, no. No, it's --

[laughter]

It's kind of a two-part argument. And I think we all agreed to that, that there's -- it's one down, the other up. Those -- both of those conditions need to be met.

00:40:04

So, they're arguing that you're right. So, they concede that the U.S. hasn't done well, but the other vital part of this is, can China step in and fill the vacuum? They're arguing that it's not, that it can't.

Kishore Mahbubani:

Yeah. Very -- it's a very good question. And I would say the answer is not a black and white. And it very well --

John Donovan:

Well, be careful because to win the debate, you need to --

[laughter]

Kishore Mahbubani:

No, no, no, I think our audience is very sophisticated.

John Donovan:

They are.

Kishore Mahbubani:

And I think they can get what -- they can muster complexity. And I would say the narrative that you get on what China is doing with the rest of the world, certainly if you read the Anglo-Saxon media, you get a very negative narrative. Just to give a concrete example, and Pei mentioned -- reflected it in his statements. He says the Belt and Road Initiative is a complete waste of money, trillions of dollars are going away.

00:41:01

That is also, by the way, sadlier an insult to the intelligence of hundreds countries, over 100 countries out of 193 countries in the world have signed up to join the Belt and Road Initiative. And why do they sign up to join the Belt and Road Initiative? Because they get railways, roads, ports. That's what the people need. And then the people's lives are being improved. So, if you look at the data in terms of the density of Chinese connectivity with the rest of the world -- and let's look at data. I think over a 137 countries now do more trade with China than they do with the United States, much more. And China is the world's number one trading power. China is the number one country engaging the most number of people in terms of projects and so on, so forth.

00:42:00

And at the same time, the -- if you if you talk to the Chinese and you listen to what they say, they are understanding of what's going on in the rest of the world. They are able to understand the sympathies of the people. It's a very important point. You know, when the United States attacked WHO under the leadership of an African -- now, when I serve for 10 years as Singapore's ambassador to the U.N. dealing with over 50 African ambassadors, there's a very deep sense of solidarity among them, no matter where they come from. And when they feel an African is being attacked unfairly, even though by all accounts, he's doing overall a good job in managing the World Health Organization, I would say that you really have lost a lot of friends in Africa. So, this is reality.

[talking simultaneously]

John Donovan:

That point goes to Kishore is saying the United States is failing on the soft power side of things very, very deeply.

00:43:06

Susan Thornton:

Well, I think, look, I like to make two points. I think the U.S. has certainly not, in its diplomacy, shown itself to be very astute in dealing with this crisis. And it hasn't actually been very astute in its diplomacy in the last couple of years, I would say. This America first mentality does not translate into soft power around the world and you can -- I think our audience is sophisticated enough to understand that. But what I think Minxin and I are saying is, A, the U.S. -- I mean, we're talking about the impact of the coronavirus. So, we're not -- the Belt and Road Initiative was announced in 2013. Yes, a lot of countries have signed up. There have been projects. China has increased its integration. The question is what's the impact of the coronavirus on the Belt and Road project? And I think what we see is that the impact of the coronavirus, as Minxin has pointed out with the Chinese economy, is going to be deleterious to that project because China will have less money; these countries will be in in straightened circumstances.

00:44:06

The issue with global trade, the impact of the coronavirus on global trade. Yes, a lot of countries have been increasing their trade with China over the last several decades. But the impact of the coronavirus is going to be to -- it's going to be to diminish that trade. So, I think the proposition isn't about whether or not China's power is rising relatively in the global system over the last several decades, because I think that that is clear. And I think that that is a reality that the U.S. has not -- has failed to deal with adequately. But the question is about the coronavirus affecting and whether China can convert the coronavirus into some accelerated impact and for its rising power in the globe, and I think it's the opposite.

John Donvan:

Susan, and everyone else, let me ask you this question. You know, China was -- handled the initial stages of the virus very, very badly.

00:44:59

They tried to suppress information, famously punished physicians who were trying -- who were whistleblowers, one of whom passed away and became a hero. And that was a very, very big public relations disaster for China. Nevertheless, at some point, China turned the corner and imposed a regime of social distancing that whether we believe everything that we're hearing out of China or not, certainly led to a more successful containment and return to economic normalcy than we've been able to experience here. Does that experience make China an exemplar? Including the fact that they were only able to do that because they have such extreme ability to control its public socially, something that could never happen here. But does that send the message as the Chinese government able to say our way of running countries has its virtues and that that would become a model to certain countries that perhaps are leaning towards a more authoritarian bent these days anyway?

00:46:01

I'd like to take that to Kishore and then to Minxin.

Kishore Mahbubani:

Yeah. Well, let me -- let me emphasize one key point. The United States believes, and maybe for good reason, that it is a shining city on the hill. It's a model for countries. If other countries copy America, it's good for America, good for the world. And that's a very good thing to have. But the Chinese don't have this kind of universalizing mission. The Chinese don't say that our civilization is the civilization that you should emulate. They say the Chinese civilization is good for the Chinese people, and you can have your own systems, and you can try, and you can work together. And for the rest of the world, it's actually easier to deal with a China that is not exporting its model to the rest of the world. They say, "We will do what we have to do. You do what you have to do, and let's work together for mutual benefit." And, you know, the number -- if you look at it -- let me just give you a very simple example.

00:47:03

When was the last time Washington, D.C., hosted a summit meeting where all African heads of state turned up? I can't think of it. China -- no, no, not all -- not often enough. But when China hosted it, they all turned up, and they all signed agreements, and they got things done. And, you know, if you listen -- you know, Susan, you mentioned -- it's very sad the incidents in Guangzhou that happened. But, no, you have things like that happening everywhere. You can have a black African-American jogger shot in a city. You can have people suffering these things. But if you look at the African continent as a whole and its perceptions of China -- and I will tell you, since you emphasized, has COVID-19 changed anything? I would say yes, because the Africans know that they are in deep trouble.

00:48:02

There are very few people now assisting them in real terms. China is sending planeloads. That makes a difference. That's COVID-19 result.

John Donovan:

Minxin, what I heard in Kishore's answer is that -- I heard Kishore -- I heard Kishore saying China doesn't actually aspire to be an exemplar. It aspires to have influence, but not by offering itself as a -- as a model of behavior. So, I'm not sure if that undermines the point of my question that their ability to have such extreme social control, enough to have done massive amounts of social distancing and, frankly, lock down and -- if not lock up, you know, taught the lesson to potentially authoritarian regimes around the world. But maybe China's got some things figured out.

Minxin Pei:

Well, I think -- just want to pick up on what Kishore has just said. Those countries in Africa may want -- like to have PPEs from China, but I'm sure they're not inviting the Communist Party over to become their -- to run their governments, because there's a limit to what China's appeal can be.

00:49:14

China's sort of late-stage success in containing the coronavirus in China adopts some message that we should consider about adopting as well, because they turned out to be quite effective. But then, China's success comes in a package. That is, if -- you really cannot pick the outcome China has produced without picking its system as well. So, if you want to sort of have the kind of effective response to China, even after initial stumbling, you have to have the surveillance state; you have to have the Communist Party watching everything you do; you have to have your internet censored. I don't think many people in the world would like to live under a system as I described.

00:50:06

John Donovan:

I want to go to some questions. And we have a question submitted to us by fans of Intelligence Squared. This one comes from Herat, Afghanistan, Matin Hakimyar [spelled phonetically].

Matin asks, "What's the future of interests like Japan, South Korea, and Australia that are now under the U.S. security umbrella in a post-COVID-19 era when the great power competition escalates? Will they be forced to choose sides among the U.S. and China? And if so, which side would they choose? And, Susan, I'd like to take that question -- we can all take a crack at that question, but I'd like to take it first to you. These traditional allies, traditional for the last 70 years, of the United States, are they going to be forced to make a choice post COVID-19? Again, I recognize that we're talking about trends that have been in place for some time.

00:51:05

But we are talking about COVID-19 as being a catalyst for this process. So, post COVID-19, will these traditional allies be put in the position of having to choose between China and the United States?

Susan Thornton:

Well, I think if you're talking about that kind of a choice, you're assuming that this so-called great power competition is going to lead us into some kind of global bipolar rivalry, which I, frankly, don't see happening. I don't think that's the direction that the transition of the international system is going to go in. I see a fragmentation of the system, an evolution, and a rise of multiple different regional centers and other countries coming up to take leadership roles and actually not having a clear leader of the international system, which I'm quite worried about. But let's say there is this bipolar rivalry that you paint here. I don't think countries will choose.

00:52:01

And I don't think they'll have to choose. I think they will find ways around choosing, and they won't want to choose. And one of the things that happens in this kind of situation is that actually the targets of the rivalry end up getting more agency and have more choices and can sort of work things to their own advantage in some situations. And I think that that is going to be what happens, if there's a case of this bipolar rivalry, which, again, I don't -- I don't see that that's going to be the evolution that we're going to be going in.

John Donvan:

So, you're saying it could potentially be a false choice. I want to take that to Kurt Campbell. Again, if we're talking about this change -- what you're saying is this clearly changing dynamic, will it be -- will it affect alliances and choices that our allies have to make?

Kurt Campbell:

I think many of these countries have tried, John, to strike a balance for decades. They want close economic relations with China, and they want allied relations with the United States.

00:53:00

I think one of the challenges for the United States has been many of the leaders in the United States see the competition with China in Cold War terms and that countries will be with us or on the other side. I think China probably has a more nuanced view and seeks to influence with a

variety of countries and doesn't want, at least at this juncture, to put countries in a situation where they have to choose between one or the other. I think the United States -- I agree with Susan that that's something to aspire to, but we see some leaders in the United States trying to say look, you got to choose between Beijing and Washington. In that set of circumstances, many countries will say, no, I refuse to choose, or will try to blur the options, so to speak.

I do want to say, back on the point that you raised about power, I think what is not well understood, the measurements of power in the past have been military capabilities, nuclear weapons, and the like.

00:54:02

I think this particular juncture is about doing what it takes domestically to solve the problem. And as you underscored, the steps that China took at the outset were terrible. But since then, they've demonstrated the capacity to deal with the challenge that we just have not on able to do in the United States. And that has left an impression globally.

John Donovan:

Well, what impression globally has it left?

Kurt Campbell:

The impression globally is, yes, the steps were brutal, but China had the capacity to do what was necessary to defeat the pandemic. And the United States is -- we still have months to go before we are able to make any kind of judgment one way or the other.

John Donovan:

And if we concede that that's correct, that China left that impression, what impact does that impression have on the issue that we're discussing of reshaping the world order?

Kurt Campbell:

I think what Kishore indicates, privately, many countries are shocked at the lack of capacity that the United States has demonstrated.

00:55:05

And many countries, privately, are trying to do what they can to make sure that they have a strong relationship with China and do what they cannot to alienate President Trump. But overall, most countries seek to have a strong, predictable, harmonious relationship with China where they're able to take full advantage of economic and commercial ties.

John Donovan:

So, Minxin, you have made the argument that China doesn't have the capacity to step into the vacuum while conceding there might be a little bit of a vacuum of American leadership right now, but that there can be a course correction. Well, what is that course correction? How does the U.S. reverse the impression that it's left on the world? Your opponents are saying that it's been incompetent, that it's been disinterested in leading. At this point, how does -- how does the

U.S. course-correct?

Minxin Pei:

Well, the U.S. usually corrects course by replacing the team.

00:56:03

So, we have a chance in November to have a very different administration. And I can bet a Democratic administration will be a lot more competent than the current administration. And the world will look at the U.S. very, very differently. All it takes will be a leadership change in the U.S. So that's -- the other is that even today, the U.S. has checks and balances. So, we have enormous criticisms of the current administration's incompetence. We have a Democratic-controlled House. Even within the current political setup, there are possibilities for change. So, I think it's really way too early to write off the U.S. Since Kurt referred to World War II at his opening remark, let's not forget that the U.S. did not really do that well at the first two years of World War II. But it quickly turned around.

00:57:03

And I guess this is really a very solid historical record for us to rely on to make predictions about the future.

John Donovan:

So, Kishore, one answer that we just heard from Minxin is that the U.S. can fix all of this with an electoral shift to change come November. That's a -- that would be -- that would represent a very, very sharp turning point. Do you think that that's plausible, that things could turn around quickly in this trend that we're talking about?

Kishore Mahbubani:

Well, I hope -- I hope Minxin is right. I hope that Biden wins. I'm not supposed to say that. And I hope things get better. But I think -- I want to make a very fundamental point here, that the reason why, in many ways, the U.S. has done so badly in managing COVID-19 is due in part to bad leadership, in part is due to some structural failures in the U.S. system.

00:58:08

I talk about it in my book, "Has China Won?" by the way. The U.S. is the only major developed country where the average income of the bottom 50 -- five, zero -- percent has gone down over a 30-year period. And there are many structural challenges in American society that you cannot just fix through a change of administration. And, you know, the one critical thing here is that in a crisis like this, you need strong institutions of government, strong federal institutions. And as you know, since the days of Ronald Reagan, where he said, "Government is not the solution, government is the problem," there has been an erosion, sadly, of the capabilities of some key institutions. And you saw that with the FAA and Boeing. You saw that with the FDA in COVID-19.

00:59:02

You see that with the CDC sadly. CDC was the most highly respected organization in the world. So, the rest of the world is -- yes, some of it you can possibly say is due to the Trump administration, but there are also other structural challenges that America has to deal with. And I don't think you can change it overnight. And I want to just say that another important point, just to -- just to, in a sense, balance the picture. I participated in something called the launching of the Edelman Trust Barometer a few weeks ago. And the country where you have the highest respect for government in the world today, country in the Edelman Trust Barometer, is China, because the Chinese people perceive that they're dealing with a competent administration that they have. So, the level of competence overall, sadly -- and I say, "sadly" -- in the U.S. is perceived to have gone down, and China is perceived to have gone up. And that's also shaping the rest of the world's perception. And I think that is another factor that we should take into consideration.

01:00:03

John Donovan:

Okay. I want to go to another question. This comes from Lucas Niewenhuis, who is associate editor of the U.S.-based China blog, SupChina. "Half of all of the vaccines for the virus that causes COVID-19 that have gone to clinical trial were discovered by Chinese companies. According to NPR, China's leader, Xi Jinping, has said that if China develops a vaccine, it would be a 'global public good.' What do you think Xi means by that more precisely? And how do you think that would play out geopolitically if the U.S. was in the position to depend on China for yet another critical medical resource?" I'll take that to you, Kurt.

Kurt Campbell:

Look, John, it's a good question, but I think actually there's a different issue here. I think what the Chinese -- what the president is indicating, President Xi Jinping, is that if China discovers this, that they're going to take steps in global institutions to ensure that the world is vaccinated.

01:01:07

And I think he said in his speech, as long as there are pockets of the pandemic somewhere, they threaten all of us anywhere. And so, I think they're taking a globalist view with respect to how to think about treatment. I think, in contrast, President Trump and his team have taken a very narrow set of steps, vaccines only for Americans, and not thinking about the global set of responsibilities. That's perfectly fine if you don't aspire to global leadership. But you cannot have it both ways. You cannot say, we're only going to take care of our country, and expect others in the world to respect and admire you.

John Donovan:

I'm glad you took that crack at the answer, but I -- I'm also still quite drawn to the essence of the question. If China has the vaccine, the one that's going to work -- I know it's hypothetical, but it's an interesting one -- where does that put the U.S. if the U.S. needs to rely on China to stop this thing?

01:02:12

Kurt Campbell:

I don't believe that the Trump administration would be in a situation where they would accept that. I think they would continue to work to try to develop an American vaccine more generally. And I think a tragedy here is that there was always an expectation, despite tensions between the United States and China, that we would be able to cooperate on issues that were of remarkable importance, like a pandemic. And if you compare that to the past, in the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union worked together to deal with pandemics in the 1980s, during the height of the Cold War. I do not think President Trump and his team would be prepared to accept any solutions coming from China.

01:03:01

John Donovan:

Would the other side like to respond to that? And if not, I have another question to go to. Go, Susan, go ahead, please.

Susan Thornton:

Yeah, I think this question about a vaccine is a crucial one because there's no way that we're going to roll out a vaccine -- no matter who comes up with the winning vaccine first -- to the global population, without a joint effort between the United States and China. It's just not going to happen. I mean, these are the two countries with the most capacity and resources on the planet, and they would certainly have to work together in order to get this vaccine rolled out. And what you see now, unfortunately, on both parts -- and which is the reason why I'm arguing that both countries are losing from the coronavirus -- is that they're fighting over who's going to have the vaccine, who's going to come up with it first. It's a competition, rather than a point for cooperation, and that just diminishes the global leadership on both sides.

Kurt Campbell:

But Susan, if you look at what took place at the WHO, the Chinese detailed specific plans about how they wanted to work with international organizations to distribute and to deal with the vaccine once it's developed.

01:04:08

The United States was not present, rejected the premise, and President Trump and his team has basically said, "We're going to take care of Americans." So, the challenge here is, you cannot have it both ways. You can't say, "We're the global leader," and then, don't spend any time trying to develop a plan that, at least, China tried to do -- imperfectly, I would acknowledge -- but tried to do in the WHO, as part of an effort to address anxieties globally that the coronavirus has spurred.

Susan Thornton:

Yeah, I'm not trying to defend the Trump administration's approach to the international

collaboration on this. I'm just saying, you know, I've been privy to Chinese rhetoric, and plans, and pronouncements for many, many, many years, and a lot of times, things don't work out quite as they have been set out in international meetings. And I think this is a problem for China's global leadership going forward, and it's a point that -- it's one of the reasons why a lot of countries just fail to trust China's words.

01:05:08

Kurt Campbell:

Look, I think we can all agree that there are elements of China's rise that are troubling, that is going to cause other countries to rally around. But the proposition here is what's going to happen in the vacuum, at least, in the immediate term. And we're proposing -- Kishore and I -- that China is surging into that vacuum, and I think that's just undeniable in this set of circumstances.

[talking simultaneously]

John Donovan:

-- Minxin, and then, I'll come to you, Kishore.

Minxin Pei:

Okay, because I think China is surging into the vacuum with rhetoric. So, it's a rhetorical surging. We should not just listen to what China says; we should see what China does. And based on what Susan said, is that China's past actions really do not -- have not really matched its very lofty rhetoric.

01:06:01

John Donovan:

Kishore?

Kishore Mahbubani:

Can I just add, you know, can I just add, to reinforce what Kurt said -- you know, you -- if you read the articles being published in Nature, in The Lancet, they actually describe very well what the Chinese scientists are doing and how they're collaborating with the rest of the world. So, if you want to just focus on COVID-19, and especially, as Kurt said, what happened recently at the World Health assembly in Geneva, the perception of all the countries was very clearly that China was stepping up and saying, "Can we work together?" That's the message that China sent to WHO. And as you know, the Trump administration -- until the last minute, he wasn't even sure whether they would vote in favor of the resolution sponsored by 120 countries. And then, at the end of the day, said, "Oh, we will not share our patents with everybody," when President Xi has said, "This is a global public good." So, all these important moves do affect the perceptions of the 6 billion people.

01:07:05

And I think it's important to emphasize that what's happened in COVID-19 has fundamentally

changed perceptions of the U.S. Trump administration and of China. And of course, more positively for China.

John Donovan:

All right. Thank you, Kishore, and I want to let you know that you got the last word in the second round of our debate. We are wrapping up the second round on our conversation, and we are now going to move on to round three.

Round three is made up of closing statements by all four debaters in turn. They will be brief; they will be two minutes each. I want to remind you, immediately after they conclude their arguing, we're going to ask you to go vote a second time. I'll talk you through that when that happens but stand by for that. But first, let's move on to our third round.

To make his closing statement in support of the resolution, "Coronavirus will reshape the world order in China's favor," here, once again, is Kurt Campbell. Kurt, the screen is yours.

01:08:00

Kurt Campbell:

Thank you, John. In the narrowest of senses, it is undeniable that China has surged into the vacuum that the United States has left when the pandemic has come across the globe. What we have seen is a Chinese leadership that, at the outset, made terrible mistakes, but has sought to remedy them as best as they are able to do, by providing global goods, by trying to lead in international organizations. And this has contrasted dramatically with the lack of leadership and engagement from the Trump administration. Now, I'd argue that it's not too late, fundamentally, for the United States. I do believe the United States can rebound. But in this first round after the coronavirus has swept the planet, it is undeniable that China has taken advantage of the situation, has moved forward, and everyone sees that the United States has been missing in action.

01:09:03

John Donovan:

Thanks very much, Kurt. And I want to remind people what the resolution is, as you hear these closing arguments: Coronavirus Will Reshape the World Order in China's Favor. Here to argue against the resolution one more time, Susan Thornton.

Susan Thornton:

Thanks, John. What I would say is that China's power has clearly been increasing in the international system for decades. The resolution before us is the question of whether or not China can take advantage of the coronavirus to convert even more power in the international system. And my argument would be that China has shown that it is unable to make that conversion, and in fact, the coronavirus is diminishing China's power and influence in the international system. I think we've seen a number of, as Kurt mentioned, dramatic mistakes on the part of the Chinese government. And even following those initial mistakes, the Chinese official positions and narratives and outreach have been very ham-handed, and very much an own goal against their own self-interest.

01:10:09

And this is because of lack of transparency, a high level of insecurity on the part of the Chinese government, its brittle domestic politics, and its difficulty in confronting the very certain economic crisis that it's about to undergo. China is very dependent on the outside world's economy for its continued growth and its continued development and modernization, and we're seeing now that that source of growth is being severely hit by the coronavirus, and I think China's soft power, as I mentioned, around the world has taken a severe hit from the various controversies that it has stirred up with its comments surrounding other countries' performance in handling the coronavirus. There's just a distinct lack of empathy coming from the Chinese government, especially when we consider the source of the virus was in China to begin with, and China should be able to try to be more -- convert this kind of humanitarian outreach into positive points for itself in the international system, but has been unable to do so.

01:11:16

John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Susan Thornton, who was arguing, again, for you to vote "no" on the resolution. Our next speaker up, Kishore Mahbubani, will be arguing to get you to vote "yes" on the resolution. Kishore? One more time, the screen is yours.

Kishore Mahbubani:

Thank you. Let me conclude on a personal note. You know, when I look back at my life, I realize that, in retrospect, I may have been very fortunate in having grown up in a very poor family, in a very poor society. Singapore's per capita income, as a child, was \$500, the same as Ghana. I was put in a special feeding program when I was 6 years old because technically, undernourished. We had no flush toilet. We had gang fights; we had racial riots. So, I experienced all the third-world experience at first-hand.

01:12:05

And having experienced it, I can tell you that the main aspiration of most developing countries today is just to have enough peace and stability so they can focus on their development, and not your political contests. And an Indonesian minister told me the reason why he welcomes visits from Chinese ministers is that they come with concrete proposals to improve railways, roads, ports. He says American officials don't turn up, and when they turn up, they come empty-handed. So, if you want to make a difference in lives of people, China is making difference in lives of people. And the second story is despite -- by some strange cultural quirk, because I'm a Hindu Sindhi, I have connection to over 1 billion people in India. My name, "Mahbub," comes from Persian origins. I have connection to nine Indic states in southeast Asia. I'm familiar with the Buddhism of China, Japan, South Korea.

01:13:05

And I can tell you, with this cultural connectivity, I can say with some confidence that when the

Asians look at China, yes, they have lots of concerns about the rise of Chinese power, but there's also a very deep and genuine respect for Chinese civilization that is over 4,000 years old. So, when they see this resurgence of this Chinese civilization, they say, "Aha. This is a new reality. We have to live with it." So, the respect for China clearly has gone up, and that's why I say, please vote yes.

John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Kishore. And our last speaker -- the last slot in closing statements goes to Minxin Pei, who will be arguing to get you to vote no on the resolution: Coronavirus will reshape the world order in China's favor.

Minxin Pei:

Okay, since we are looking into this foggy future, we should not just listen to what people like us say, or the audience.

01:14:08

You should look at what's -- my money is doing. In my case, if I want to check on how China's doing, I check on what Chinese business people -- Chinese wealthy people are doing with their money. So here, I want to share a personal story with you. Last year, October -- last October, I was in Hong Kong. And it just happened, a friend was having dinner with me, and he brought along his immigration consultant. And this is a person who was doing a fantastic business helping Chinese -- wealthy Chinese people leave China, to get green cards, to get -- have foreign passports. So, just out of pure curiosity, I asked him, "What is the hardest country Chinese -- wealthy Chinese are trying to get into?"

01:15:05

And his answer shocked me. He said, "Bulgaria." I said, "Why Bulgaria?" He said, "Well, Bulgaria, you only need 100,000 to \$200,000 to investment. You don't have to live there, and then, you'll get E.U. green card -- E.U. residency." So -- and that got me thinking. And I think, if you want to look at China's future and think about how you're going to vote, the fact that China's wealthiest people's smart money is moving to Bulgaria, that is grounds alone to vote no on the proposition.

John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Minxin. And that concludes round three of our debate, and it also concludes the argumentation. That part is over. I want to thank Kurt, and Kishore, and Minxin, and Susan for such a great debate, for being interesting and informative and incredibly civil.

01:16:00

It's fantastic to have you with us. I'm -- from your point of view, was it a good exchange? Kurt, did you --

Kishore Mahbubani:

Oh, yeah.

John Donovan:
Did you learn and listen?

Kishore Mahbubani:
Yeah.

Kurt Campbell:
I thought our counterparts made very strong arguments.

[laughter]

And I must say, I found some of my own arguments painful. But I -- but also --

John Donovan:
No, no.

Susan Thornton:
And here. Same here.

[laughter]

Kurt Campbell:
-- I was swayed by -- I thought Kishore was sensational, to be honest.

Susan Thornton:
Yeah, I agree.

Kurt Campbell:
I really did.

John Donovan:
Yeah.

Susan Thornton:
I agree.

John Donovan:
All right, thank you. And Kishore, I want to thank you for coming --

Kishore Mahbubani:
Well, you all are wonderful, really [laughs].

Susan Thornton:
The most important --

Kishore Mahbubani:
You're very civil.

Susan Thornton:
And the most important thing is all of these points that came out, I mean, I would have wanted to make some of the points that Kurt and Kishore made --

Kurt Campbell:
Yeah.

Susan Thornton:
-- so, I'm glad you did. So, thank you for that.

[laughter]

Kurt Campbell:
Yeah.

John Donvan:
I know I also want to thank our partners at Foreign Affairs. But now, I want to thank you, our audience, for taking the next step in this. We need you to help choose our winners. I want to have you, again, go vote for the second time. Here's how it works. You go to -- look in our chat box right now.

01:17:00

If you can see the link that's been sent to you by our producers, you click on that link, and it'll let you vote yes or no -- for or against or undecided on the resolution. And for is yes, against is no, undecided is clearly, undecided. If you don't get that link, you can go to our website, IQ2US.org/vote. That's IQ, the number two, US/vote. We're going to keep that vote open until midnight tonight. So, I am not announcing the winner right here, but if you can't wait to find out who won, 12:01 midnight, you can go to our online site, IQ2US.org, and you'll find out who the winner is. Or, subscribe to our mailing list, and we'll announce the winner to you by email again.

But one more time, I want to thank all four of you. I want to release you now from sitting inside the square on the screen, but it's been a pleasure to have you, Kurt, Kishore, Minxin, and Susan. Thank you so much for joining us, and goodbye to all of you.

Minxin Pei:
Thank you.

Susan Thornton:
Thanks, John.

Kishore Mahbubani:
Thank you.

Kurt Campbell:
Thank you, John.

Kishore Mahbubani:
Bye.

Susan Thornton:
Bye.

Kurt Campbell:
Thanks, you guys.

01:18:01

John Donovan:

And I want to thank you, our live audience, as always. It's great to have you part of this process, this new experiment for us, which I feel -- after that debate -- is really, really going well. And I want to mention that it's your support that keeps us going. I've made this comment many times, that we are not just a debate program and series; we're actually a philanthropy. We put these debates out to the world for free, and they get picked up and used in all sorts of contexts, particularly educational. We know that they're being used in colleges, and high school classrooms, and even elementary school classrooms. People are learning all over. So, we would like your support, if you enjoyed this new debate format, to help us continue to keep it going, and to help us continue innovating and keep serving as a home for real debate, even in challenging times. So, if you want to support us, you can donate at IQ2US.org/support, or look in the chat box right now for a direct link to support us. We hope to see you again soon.

01:19:00

You can see all of our upcoming debates on our website, or by subscribing to our mailing list. Until next time, I'm John Donovan. Thanks so much for joining us, and we'll see you at our next debate.

This is a rough transcript. Please excuse any errors.