

**WEBINAR ON THE UKRAINIAN PLATFORM FOR CONTEMPORARY CHINA:  
“CHINA’S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AFTER 2022: OPPORTUNITIES AND  
CONSTRAINTS”.**

On December 20, 2022, the Ukrainian Platform on Contemporary China held an international roundtable discussion "China's Global Leadership after 2022: Opportunities and Obstacles". The event was organized by A. Krymsky Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Association of Sinologists, and the Helvetica Publishing House (information support).

The event was held to exchange expert opinions on **four questions**:

- What are the key messages Xi Jinping sent to the world at the 20th Party Congress regarding China's global ambitions?
- What values and opportunities can China bring to the world as a global leader?
- How has Russia's invasion of Ukraine affected China's economy and international relations after 10 months of war?
- Can the United States push China to take a more active stance on the war in Ukraine?

**The speakers:**

- Kerry Brown, Professor of Chinese Studies, Director of the Lau China Institute at King's College London;
- Scott Kennedy, Senior Advisor and Trustee for Chinese Business and Economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS);
- Dmytro Yefremov, Member of the Board of the Ukrainian Association of Sinologists, Associate Professor of International Relations, Kyiv Mohyla Academy;
- Liu Yawei, Director of the China Program at the Carter Center;
- Xu Qindo, political scientist, researcher of China's foreign policy at the Panguang Institute, Beijing;
- Oleksiy Coval, member of the board of the Ukrainian Association of Sinologists, international journalist.

The event was chaired by **Isabel Hilton**, founder of the China Dialogue platform.

**Liu Yawei** began the webinar by recalling the historical moments of the 1969 Soviet-Chinese conflict, when the Soviet government threatened to use nuclear weapons against China, and Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, which led to the development of US-China relations. The expert noted that the situation has now changed dramatically, as China has become closer to Russia and is confronting the collective West. Among the main messages from Xi Jinping's speech at the 20th Party Congress, the scientist noted that China is against the unipolar world and

hegemony, for the peaceful development of the world, and expressed hope that China will make every effort to improve its relations with the United States.

According to **Scott Kennedy**, China has an impact not only on its neighbors but also on the entire global world. Therefore, we need to study China to understand it better. Conversely, China should pay more attention to what is happening in the world. The American scholar shared his impressions of a recent trip to China, where he concluded that the CCP's policy has become unpredictable and difficult to predict for experts even within China. Among the main conclusions from Xi Jinping's speech, the scholar noted the immutability and consistency in policy and rhetoric, namely the promotion of the idea of a community of a single destiny for humanity, a multipolar world, and the desire to increase its influence on a global world that is changing and facing many challenges. Kennedy noted that the lack of active direct communication with Chinese counterparts, as it was before 2019, has significantly affected the level of American expertise on China. That is why, according to the scientist, the United States is discussing negative scenarios for the development of US-China relations, which means that they will stick to them. As for China's vision of the world order, the expert noted that Chinese officials have repeatedly emphasized the need to strengthen the role of the state and international organizations.

In his speech, **Xu Qindo** noted that the main conclusion from the 20th CPC National Congress is the immutability of the course towards development, economic modernization, globalization, and openness. The Chinese scholar emphasized that China is more interested than other countries in preserving the existing world order, as it has already received many bonuses from it, primarily from trade, and has great respect for all international organizations.

**Oleksiy Koval**, who personally attended and covered the 16th, 17th, and 18th CPC National Congresses from Beijing, noted that the 20th Congress was not marked by anything new in the Chinese leader's rhetoric. Ukrainian media followed the 20th CPC National Congress with great interest. Koval pointed out that Xi Jinping spoke in his speech about the global crisis, which is obviously partly caused by the war in Ukraine and which is a concern for China, as well as about the strength of the party and its desire to contribute to maintaining stability in the world. The expert emphasized that China, by voting against Ukraine at the UN, only spoils its reputation as a potential global leader and responsible country.

British Sinologist **Kerry Brown** drew attention to 4 important points in Xi Jinping's speech at the 20th National Congress of the CPC: focus on the welfare of the population; the need to increase the level of innovation and scientific development, which is important for competition with the United States; strengthening the efficiency of public administration; and rejuvenation of the nation. The scientist emphasized that China's domestic policy is subject to significant external influence. China is under pressure from a number of economic problems, but its strong political system provides varied advantages for resolving them.

**Xu Qindo** explained that China is strengthening its ties with Russia in response to the aggressive policy of the United States in imposing anti-Chinese sanctions, as well as due to strategic security and energy interests. At the same time, China has always supported the preservation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and has repeatedly expressed concern about

Russia's invasion. The expert emphasized that China is against the war and has good relations with Ukraine, and after German Chancellor Scholz's visit to China, it publicly warned Russia against the use of nuclear weapons.

In response to the second question of the webinar on changes in China's foreign policy under the influence of Russia's war against Ukraine, **Scott Kennedy** shared his observations that most Chinese business circles consider support for Russia to be reckless and against China's economic interests. Kennedy suggested that the declaration on a new level of Russia-China partnership of February 4, 2022, was adopted by China's top leadership without consulting Chinese scholars who study Russia. The impact of the war in Ukraine on China's economy is negligible, as long as leading Chinese companies refrain from taking steps to circumvent Western sanctions imposed on Russia. The scientist noted that in the international business environment, China's position on the war in Ukraine is being discussed as another risk for investment, along with the zero-tolerance policy on COVID and a possible war with Taiwan.

According to **Liu Yawei**, China should be more active than just expressing concern over the Ukrainian issue, as the sovereignty of an independent country has been violated. For China, economic modernization is a priority, so foreign policy should take this factor into account.

**Dmytro Yefremov** pointed out that China has proposed new initiatives to the world, namely the Global Security Initiative and the Global Development Initiative, which are still frameworks and do not have any substantive content. Regarding the war in Ukraine, China's call for peace talks, which is based on the need to take into account the security interests of Russia, does not bring the desired result. The scholar believes that China will continue to demonstrate a lateral approach to international relations.

**Kerry Brown** agreed that the Russian-Ukrainian war is affecting China's economy in one way or another, but the problems with COVID and the global crisis are of greater concern to the government. Kerry expressed confidence that international business will continue to operate in China, although it is no longer in a privileged position. The expert called China's behavior towards Ukraine helpless. For China, it was a chance to act as a constructive and strong global leader in resolving the conflict, but nothing substantial was done.

**Xu Qindo** reminded that China did not recognize Crimea and the occupied east of Ukraine as Russian territory. The analyst is confident that China's behavior regarding the war in Ukraine does not pose a risk to foreign investment in China. Xu Qindo agreed that China should be more proactive in resolving the situation in Ukraine and maintaining stability in the EU.

**Dmytro Yefremov** emphasized that China puts its political interests above the values of humanity, applies selective truth and relativizes its own assessments depending on the situation. The expert cited examples when Chinese officials expressed direct condolences over the human tragedies in Indonesia and Turkey, but the military actions in Ukraine were presented by China as a humanitarian crisis.

**Kerry Brown** believes that China will act proactively to resolve the Ukrainian crisis only if there are serious threats to its economy. The scholar suggested that the more influential China's

position is on the global stage, the less autonomy it will have in making decisions, the less room it will have for political maneuvering.

**Scott Kennedy** named two conditions under which China's mediation role could be constructive: a series of direct meetings between high-ranking officials of China and Ukraine, including the leaders of the two countries, and the conclusion of economic agreements aimed at liberalizing Ukraine's trade with East Asian countries. The American expert is confident that the United States can influence China's position on the war by making efforts to improve current US-China relations, which will synchronize interests on the situation in Ukraine, or vice versa, by increasing pressure on China to change its behavior.

**Xu Qindo** noted that China's position on Ukraine may change not to improve US-China relations, but for its own benefit.

**Dmytro Yefremov** emphasized that China sees Russia, not Ukraine, as the victim of this conflict, and the United States is presented as the main culprit of the crisis. Revision of this approach is complicated by the fact that China considers equidistance from the parties to the conflict and non-interference in the internal affairs of third countries as elements of an exemplary model of behavior in the international arena that other countries should follow. Oleksiy Koval added that Ukraine has a plan to resolve the situation, which was announced by President Zelenskyy at the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia. All world leaders, including Xi Jinping, were informed of this 10-point plan. Each country can play a constructive role by joining in its implementation.