

VIEWS

Asit K. Biswas and Cecilia Tortajada

China can water down impact of floods

China has suffered from floods since time immemorial. In ancient China, when legend and history often intermingle, Da Yu, or Yu the Great, considered the founder of the Xia Dynasty (21st century-16th century BC), is said to have tamed the floods of the mighty Yellow River, saving people from untold miseries.

The Yellow River is the second-longest river in China — after the Yangtze River — and the sixth longest in the world, and prone to frequent, serious floods.

China has had more than its fair share of floods. Of the 10 worst floods in the world during the past 100 years, seven have been in China — five in the Yangtze River (1911, 1931, 1935, 1954, and 1998), and two in the Yellow River (1887 and 1938).

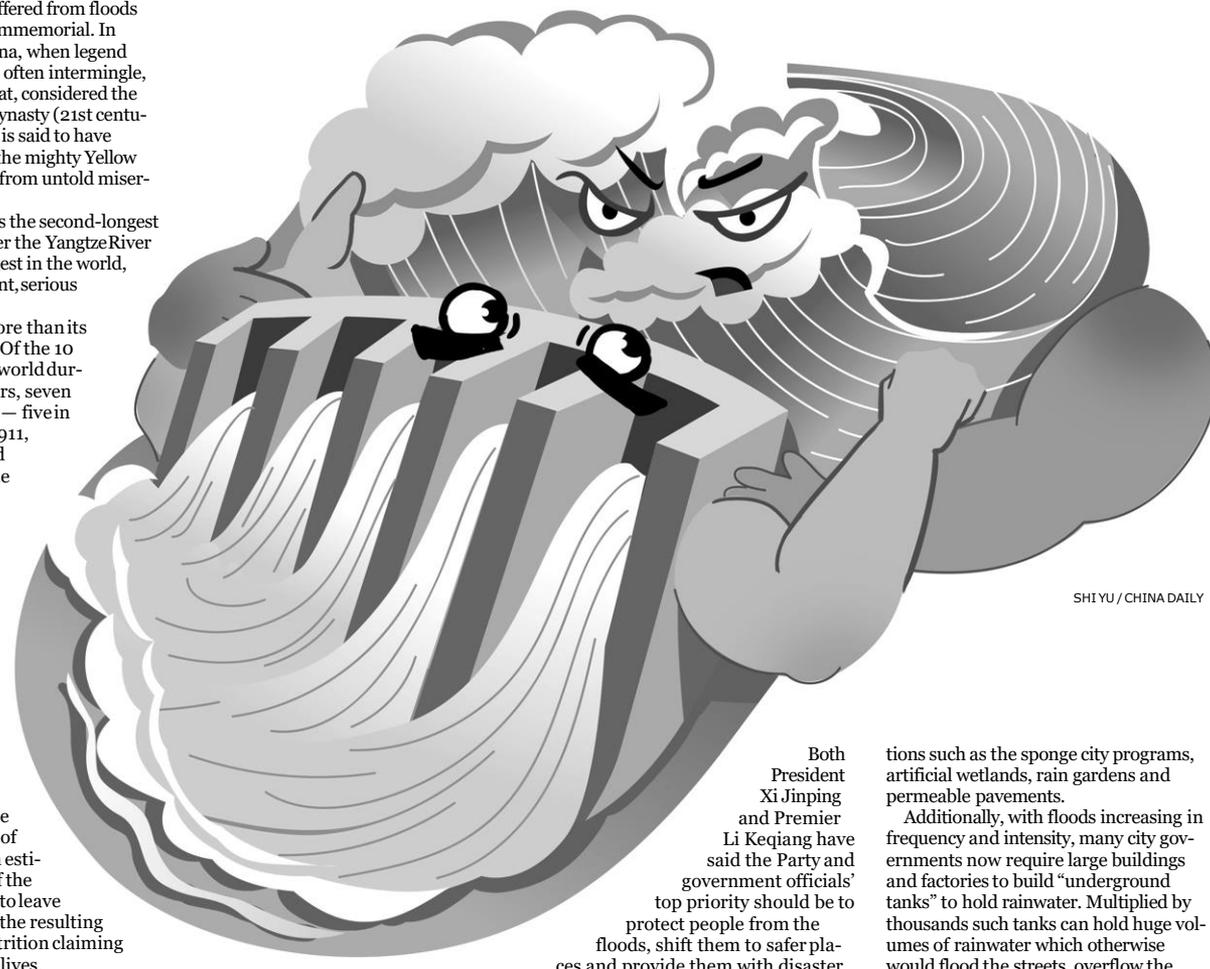
The world's worst flood was in the Yangtze and Huaihe rivers in 1931. After two years of serious droughts, extreme rainfall in the densely populated Yangtze River basin caused the 1931 flood. It affected an area equivalent to the size of England and half of Scotland, forcing an estimated 40 percent of the affected population to leave their homes — with the resulting diseases and malnutrition claiming more than 2 million lives.

Floods are one of nature's most destructive forces. Globally, floods are responsible for nearly 40 percent of all losses due to natural disasters. Between 1995 and 2015, about 3,000 floods were reported from around the world, which affected nearly 2.3 billion people. And from 1980, floods have contributed to more than \$1 trillion in global economic losses.

China has been battling another serious flood, with 433 rivers flowing above the danger levels since early June and 33 having crossed historically high levels. Also, more than 33.85 million people have been affected in 27 provincial-level regions, and 141 people have either died or are missing.

Worryingly, since major floods are more severe in late July or early August, the worst may not be over yet.

The flood situation in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River is nearly as bad as the massive floods in 1998, with the water level in Jiangxi's Poyang Lake, the country's largest freshwater lake, rising to 22.6 meters, higher than in 1998, on Monday.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Both President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang have said the Party and government officials' top priority should be to protect people from the floods, shift them to safer places and provide them with disaster relief.

Floods cannot be prevented or completely controlled. But their impacts can be significantly mitigated, for which both infrastructure and soft solutions are essential. For example, the Three Gorges Dam has played an important role in mitigating floods in the Yangtze River. Between 2003, when the dam was completed, and 2019, it was used 53 times to control floods.

China has made great advancements in assessing risks, by studying the changes in flood-prone areas, and identifying ways to reduce those risks. Apart from making remarkable improvements in forecasting and monitoring floods, and strengthening its warning and communication system, China has also built extensive flood-control infrastructure along rivers and developed ways to drain out floodwaters from cities as soon as possible.

Gray infrastructure such as dams, dikes, rainwater drainage systems, floodwater retention tanks, canals, and flood-proof buildings have become necessary in cities, and in recent years, they have been complemented by green solu-

tions such as the sponge city programs, artificial wetlands, rain gardens and permeable pavements.

Additionally, with floods increasing in frequency and intensity, many city governments now require large buildings and factories to build "underground tanks" to hold rainwater. Multiplied by thousands such tanks can hold huge volumes of rainwater which otherwise would flood the streets, overflow the drains and flow into the sea.

A major problem China and the rest of the world face is how to determine the magnitude and duration of extreme floods that are likely to happen in the future because of climate change. Although meteorology and geophysics still don't have a clear answer to that, cities can strengthen their infrastructure and make other necessary provisions, including formulation of new and innovative policies on use of flood-prone land, to minimize the impact of floods on people and their livelihoods, and the economy.

Asit K. Biswas is a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Glasgow and chairman, Water Management International Pte Ltd., Singapore. And Cecilia Tortajada is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Water Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, and editor in chief of the International Journal of Water Resources Development. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Zhang Jingquan

Improving ties with Beijing in Tokyo's interest

Mutual understanding between China and Japan had improved due to their cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. But Japan has poured cold water on the improving relationship by challenging China's national interests. In its remarks against China for promulgating national security legislation in Hong Kong to plug the national security loopholes in the special administrative region, Japan said the move will shake international faith in the "one-country, two-systems" principle, which can only be described as baseless and prejudiced.

Before that, Japan, together with the other G7 economies — the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Canada — and the European Union, issued a statement on the situation in Hong Kong. Besides, the Ishigaki city council's approval of the change in the name of China's Diaoyu Islands, known as Senkaku Islands in Japan, from Tonoshiro to Tonoshiro Senkaku, against which China lodged a strong protest, poses a grave threat to China's territorial integrity.

As for Hong Kong, it is governed by the "one country, two systems" principle, so Japan's (and the G7's) statement is legally untenable, not least because it emphasizes "two systems" while neglecting "one country", which is the basis of "two systems". Since the consensus in the international community is that Hong Kong is part of China's internal affairs, Japan's remarks on Hong Kong is an interference in China's internal affairs, which is against international law, and harmful to bilateral relations.

Japan should realize that due to economic globalization, countries across the world are more interconnected and interdependent today than ever before, and all countries stand to gain through common development and lose by indulging in zero-sum games. In fact, global opinion is in favor of deepening mutual respect, cooperation and co-development instead of interfering in other countries' internal affairs.

In other words, to improve security cooperation in Northeast Asia, China and Japan should make more efforts to deepen their trade partnership and people-to-people exchanges, and promote multilateralism.

In the new era, China and Japan need to pursue peace and common prosperity through common development based on mutual respect. In the face of challenges, it is understandable that a country takes legal or other measures, or chooses to remain silent on certain issues, in order to safeguard its national interests and sovereignty.

However, the statements Japan has issued in the name of defending morality and justice is simply unacceptable. Japan's use of double standard will have a long-term negative effect on the international community and international relations.

In the new era of Sino-Japanese ties, Japan needs to rethink its military alliance with the United States.

Many Western countries still believe in "peace under the governance of the US", but the wider international community has for long been questioning the US-led global governance system.

The pandemic has exposed a different US — which disregards human life and human rights, politicizes science and technology, shirks its global responsibilities, and resorts to double standard. Which has given China and Japan the opportunity to improve their relationship and redefine the global role of the US.

As the pandemic has also transformed several specific functional issues into strategic issues, China and Japan should focus on specific functional issues, and take measures to establish effective bilateral mechanisms in healthcare, marine management and financial cooperation, and coordinate their policies to boost common development and regional prosperity, especially because the existing bilateral mechanisms are more politically symbolic than effective.

The pandemic has prompted both countries to attach more importance to regional cooperation. So the Chinese and Japanese governments as well as their public sectors should deepen cooperation in different fields in the new era.

International relations faces new challenges, in particular, because the US is no longer willing to fulfill its global responsibilities and provide public goods, and instead it seems desperate to challenge the traditional global security order, in order to maintain its global hegemony by exploiting its military alliances with other countries.

In other words, to improve security cooperation in Northeast Asia, China and Japan should make more efforts to deepen their trade partnership and people-to-people exchanges, and promote multilateralism.

The author is a professor at and deputy director of the School of Northeast Asian Studies and Institute of International Studies, Shandong University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Zhang Haiyuan

Efforts needed to boost foreign trade amid outbreak

Foreign trade is facing unprecedented challenges due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, ever-increasing international economic and trade frictions, and rising global recession risks. In the first half of this year, China's foreign trade shrunk 3.2 percent year-on-year to 14.24 trillion yuan (\$2.03 trillion) — although in June, China's exports rose 0.5 percent and imports 2.7 percent year-on-year in US dollar terms.

This along with the gloomy global economic outlook means China's foreign trade faces severe challenges in the rest of the year.

The World Bank has forecast the global economy will shrink by 5.2 percent this year and the World Trade Organization has said global merchandise trade will decline between 13 and 32 percent, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The continuous spread of the novel coronavirus around the world has caused a decline in global demand. On the domestic front, enterprises engaged in foreign trade, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, face serious difficulties, among other things, due to cancellation of orders and a drastic fall in new orders. In particular, the processing industry, whose upstream and downstream industries are located abroad, faces serious problems both on the supply and demand side.

The pandemic-induced decline in consumption, investments, production and trade has disrupted global industrial and supply chains. Also, travel and trade restrictions across the world have undermined the movement of people and

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goods, affecting global trade. As for domestic enterprises, especially those in the automobile and electronics industries, they are facing a shortage of some raw materials, key equipment and components because of the disruption in the global production and supply chains.

These factors have increased the pressure on enterprises. And the fact that many foreign companies have either deferred or canceled their orders because of the pandemic has increased the default risks. In addition, Chinese foreign trade enterprises are also facing the problem of stock disposal and meeting the cost of human resources.

The good news is that China has largely contained the outbreak at home and taken measures to further deepen reform and expand opening up in a bid

to improve the business environment for all enterprises.

First, China has increased support for enterprises by easing the export tax refund policy, and injected new vitality into financial institutions by enhancing foreign trade credit and loan supply. According to incomplete statistics, 24 provinces and regions in China have issued 45 documents aimed at stabilizing foreign trade since the epidemic broke out. On June 9, the executive meeting of the State Council, China's Cabinet, which was presided by Premier Li Keqiang, announced measures to help foreign trade enterprises cope with the negative impacts of the epidemic.

Second, China has been exploring new patterns and models of foreign trade. It has established 46 cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zones to help the foreign trade industry overcome its problems. Thanks to expanding globalization and the rapid development of information and communications technology in recent years, cross-border e-commerce has become a main channel for traditional foreign trade enterprises to realize structural transformation and upgrading.

And third, China has greatly improved government public services, by helping boost coordination and cooperation between foreign trade enterprises and major domestic e-commerce platforms, in order to boost the sale of imported goods in the domestic market.

In the medium and long term, China's strong industrial base; complete industrial, supply and value chains; and modern infrastructure will help foreign trade

enterprises to expand their businesses. China has also accelerated the construction of pilot free trade zones and pledged to give the FTZs more autonomy so they can deepen reforms and become new centers of institutional reform, which in turn will facilitate institutional reform nationwide.

With the transformation and upgrading of the foreign trade industry, the innovation capacity and international competitive edge of the enterprises involved in this sector will gradually increase.

Besides, the new foreign trade channels such as cross-border e-commerce will help the enterprises overcome the negative impacts of the pandemic on foreign trade.

China remains committed to further opening up its economy to the outside world and deepening cooperation with other economies. It will also take measures to better protect foreign investment, shorten the foreign investment negative list and further improve the business environment. And by streamlining the administration and delegating more power to lower level governments, China will adjust government functions, and reduce tax and fees with the aim of increasing enterprises' development capacity and minimizing their risks.

The author is a researcher at the Foreign Trade Research Institution, Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.