



## JEAN-DAVID LEVITTE

Distinguished fellow, Brookings Institution and member of the International Advisory Board of the Atlantic Council of the United States; Former Senior Diplomatic Adviser and sherpa of President Nicolas Sarkozy

Since the Second World War, humankind has learned, for the first time in the Earth's history, that we have acquired the ability to destroy the planet. We have acquired it in two very different ways: nuclear weapons and global warming. An interesting starting point for our reflections would be to see how we have handled first the former, and then the latter problem.

For nuclear weapons, governments and diplomats negotiated the Non-Proliferation Treaty, according to which all the countries without nuclear weapons agreed not to acquire them, provided that the nuclear powers agreed to reduce their own stockpiles. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968, followed by agreements between the two superpowers of that time, the United States and the USSR, to curb and then reduce their stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Then, mechanisms were set up to ensure that proliferation would not occur. There have been failures, such as India and Pakistan, successes, sanctions, as in the case of Iraq, and hopes, with the recent agreement on Iran and the P5+1.

We have, then, a well-controlled process that has not been totally successful, but shows the role governments can play in a certain number of cases.

Climate change is a completely different matter. First of all, the words "climate change" and "environment" were not part of our vocabulary when the international institutions on which the world order is based, the UN and others, were set up, quite simply because we were unaware of the problem. That awareness has grown very gradually, very slowly, and it is still an ongoing process. The first Earth Summit took place in Stockholm in 1972. It created the United Nations Environment Programme, which focused primarily on addressing air and water pollution. Global warming was not yet on the agenda.

Scientists and, gradually, governments, did not become aware of greenhouse gas emissions' impact on the planet's future until the group of climate research scientists known as the IPCC was set up in 1988, progressively bringing about major scientific assessments. But I think the 1992 Rio Summit was actually the turning point.

The fight against global warming began with a line of reasoning that had a sound basis, but it did not work. It was said that, historically, the great industrial democracies accounted for all the greenhouse gas emissions, so it was their job to clean up the mess. Appendix 1 of the Kyoto Protocol listed the guilty countries, demanding them to implement ways to cut their emissions.

It did not work. Why? First, the United States pulled out of the process at a time when they were the main emitter. Second, the more the emerging countries, starting with China, moved forward on the road to development, the more greenhouse gases they emitted. The relationship between the United States and China has obviously become fundamental. So, in December 2009, we met in Copenhagen. It was the worst experience in my 42 years as a diplomat. Why? Because we had over 100 Heads of State under one roof with an unspeakable text, full of twists and parentheses. They were at their wits' end, incapable of solving the problem at the last minute.

Nevertheless, there were some bright spots. The first was the unanimous decision to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius at the most. The second was the creation of the Green Climate Fund, with the pledge to transfer, starting in 2020, 100 billion USD every year to the developing countries in order to help them cut their greenhouse gas emissions and adjust to the impact of global warming on their economies and societies.



Copenhagen laid the groundwork for COP 21 and Paris. With regard to Copenhagen, as the minister said, there is still a long way to go, but I am more optimistic for several reasons. First, the United States and China, today's biggest two emitters, have decided to jointly announce that this time they are intent on making an effort. They are going about it in different ways, but their combined efforts are the first reason to be optimistic.

The second, as Bruno just mentioned, is that, well beyond governments and scientists, there has been a groundswell of awareness about the threat of global warming, gradually prompting all the players in civil, economic and political life to start doing their part. As they come onboard, they take decisions. The recent decision of major banks and pension funds to disinvest in coal is just one instance among many others. Big cities are starting to take action, form alliances, etc. Companies and corporate research are enabling the cost of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, etc., to come down. This extraordinary trend is the second reason for optimism.

The third reason is that Paris will not be the end of the story. Paris will be a key step and it is utterly essential for us to make an appointment to see each other again, most likely in five years' time, to see where we stand. When we do, I think there will be more good news than bad. Why? As you said, in substance, when governments announce their targets, they take precautions. They impose goals on themselves, so they allow themselves a certain amount of leeway to make sure they can reach them. I think a country like China, for example, will probably do better than what it has announced. If we manage to meet again in five years, there should be some nice surprises if governments' technological strides are added to these targets.

Having said all that, there is still a very long way to go. First, scientists tell us we're still short of the two-degree target. We are at 2.7 degrees, so we must make more of an effort. Second, the 100-billion USD transfers to Southern countries have not started yet.

Something else bears pointing out. Satellites can verify. So, in any case, satellites will let us know which countries are complying and which are not. I doubt we need intrusive mechanisms to see what is happening in factories. By and large, satellites are sufficient to tell whether or not a country is meeting its targets.

On the other hand, as Bruno said, the price of carbon must be worked on. There is still work to be done on eliminating subsidies for all fossil fuels. In the end, we have a negotiating mechanism that is flawed because when you have 195 countries with not just diverging, but often opposing, interests, that must reach an agreement everybody is satisfied with, it is almost a mission impossible. I think that, in addition to these talks, which will remain limited to these 195 countries, every forum for discussion must be used. I will take the G20 in Antalya as an example. It is a very good thing that the G20, which includes not just the biggest economies but also the planet's leading polluters, debated behind closed doors. We saw that there was a real confrontation between, I would say, Europe, the United States and China on the one hand and, on the other, a country like Saudi Arabia, which can be understood, and a country like India, which must be understood. India is lagging 20 years behind China on the road to development. It is on the runway and needs to know that excessive constraints will not stand in the way of its development. I think there will be a way to get there.

I am cautiously, but wilfully, optimistic. I think COP 21 will be a limited success, but a decisive step on the way to solving the problem. We are the first generation aware of the fact that global warming poses an existential threat to our planet's future. We are also the last generation that can come up with a decisive solution to that existential threat. Thank you.