

Davos – China's Contributions and Responsibilities

By XU YANZHUO

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping attended the World Economic Forum from January 17 to 20 in Davos, Switzerland. This marks the first time a Chinese President has been present at the annual meeting of this forum, notably under the context of a growing worldwide anti-globalization trend. President Xi's participation in this meeting of global political, economic and academic grandees was also of considerable significance as regards global governance reform and its further development. The five main items on the agenda included strengthening and promoting the global cooperation mechanism; laying down a positive direction and increasing common consensus; boosting the global economy; reforming market capitalism; and responding to the fourth industrial revolution.

As the world's second largest economy, China shared its wisdom under the background of complicated global issues, and proactively shouldered its international responsibility, in line with the "responsive and responsible leadership" concept, also the forum's theme.

Opportunities and Challenges Facing China in Global Governance Reform

Last year was a year of remarkable events, from Europe to the Middle East and from East Asia to Latin America. It raised hot debates and doubts as to the development of globalization and process of regionalization. The approach of tackling global problems through the international framework mechanism has changed, largely due to public opinion that overwhelmingly prioritizes national interests and leans towards nationalism. The emergence of populist leaders and right-wing parties has engendered disregard for international consensus and shared identity, bringing instead an emphasis on conflicts and confrontations. Under such a background, China was presented with both opportunities and challenges in deciding to take part in this forum with top leaders, so placing itself at center stage in proactively engaging in the development of globalization, and proposing to the world its global governance reform initiative.

On the one hand, then President-Elect Donald

Trump had expressed his willingness to curtail the U.S.'s global responsibilities. This was evidenced in his policy of withdrawal from the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement), advocating "America First," and criticizing the current international trade system by requiring the U.S.'s allies to share more security expenses. Whether or not his comments are intended as eye-catching political rhetoric or to introduce "the art of negotiation" with a view to greater gains, they reveal the U.S.'s declining global governance. They also embody worldwide dissatisfaction – in both developed and developing countries – with the current international order and system.

Not only, as some commenters argue, does this imply that, as the U.S. retreats, China is expected to fill the void and lead global governance. More important, it also shows that the current mechanism is incapable of solving today's growing global problems, and that the citizens of neither developed nor developing countries believe they will benefit from deeper integration.

Therefore, President Xi's trip to Davos signifies much more than a bid for global leadership; it raises the perplexing question, "How is it possible in such a complex environment to strengthen confidence in integration and improve international coordination to achieve a broader and fairer international order?"

The answer to this question lies in China's call for "democratization of international relations," whose core value is to oppose hegemonism and unilateralism, to call on all countries to solve international issues through peaceful negotiation, and to deal jointly with international affairs. In this case, it could be said that "democratization of international relations" is what is needed at this time as the key to and premise of sustainable peace, mutual development and progress for all human beings.

Promoting Global Governance Reform

In a world where globalization is waning, President Xi's attendance at the Davos meeting is clearly a bid to promote global economic growth through cooperation, coordination, and shared international identity, which in turn implies a move towards global governance reform.

If we compare the process of globalization in 2016 to a super-computer, we can see that its hardware re-

mains. International society is still a complicated and multi-connected machine, wherein great powers are creators and shapers of international rules and norms. The computer's software, however, is no longer compatible. Brexit weakened EU integration, and regional tensions and economic declines led to stagnation of the current multilateral trade mechanism. If we separate the hardware from the software, then simply calling globalization into question and concluding that the world is developing towards one of self-interest is problematic. The software may be changing, but the hardware is not, that is to say, global issues are not receding due to anti-globalization activities.

As long as these problems exist, international cooperation and global governance will endure. Xi's trip to Switzerland is hence not part of the anti-global trend, but rather a responsible effort towards further development of global governance.

China is a promoter of global governance reform. President Xi's attendance at the Davos forum confirms China's identity and role in global governance reform. Traditional geopolitics emphasizes the inevitable conflicts between emerging and established powers, wherein emerging powers are regarded as causing instability. Xi's trip changed this assumption. In contrast to U.S. President Donald Trump's vague foreign policy and aggressive stance on foreign affairs, China's involvement in global governance has made Beijing part of the status quo and a supporter of the current international order.

The Davos forum has long served as a platform for world leaders to discuss global issues. Since President Bill Clinton initially attended the forum 17 years ago, the U.S. has been its leader and its European counterparts the major players. On this occasion, however, China, formerly considered as revisionist and a challenger of the globalization process and world order, chooses to maintain the current development towards multilateralism in response to escalating serious global problems. This contrasts sharply with the U.S.'s regionalist – even isolationist approach.

The reason behind China's choice is clearly not that the country has benefited most from globalization, as certain commenters suggest. On the contrary, although China has benefited from the current international system, it has also experienced much negative impact as regards national interests. Integration with international society has also dealt negative impacts. What China appreciated most was the stability of the international order rather than the system as a whole.

Consequently, China's stand and role in global governance are consistent, that is, that of supporting the

order's stability and the globalization trend, but at the same proposing reasonable solutions that make it fairer and more balanced.

China's Voice in Davos

China was represented at Davos by a top level delegation that delivered China's proposals on global governance reform. The U.S., as the leader of global governance, has always emphasized its dominance and leadership of the international order. Its core value is that of maintaining the U.S.'s benign hegemony and supporting alliances, democratic states, and free market economies throughout the world. Yet it has provided no effective proposals on how to ensure fairness, justice, and inclusiveness in the international order, how to balance regional and global interests, or how to strengthen the global market mechanism.

China has raised its own solution that transcends the traditional contradiction between central and marginalized states; it advocates peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures. Different political systems, social structures, governance, and economic situations coexist in the international system. Therefore, while acknowledging their conflicts and contradictions, each country should also respect one another and seek cooperation.

Economically, despite encroaching global trade protectionism, China insists on an open economy and an international supply chain. Based on the current cooperation pattern, it promotes multi-level and all-round cooperation in broader fields, encourages neglected states to participate in international markets, and advocates an increase in the supply of public goods and maintaining stability and fairness in the global market.

Shouldering the Responsibility of Global Governance Reform

China's participation in global governance reform has provided the world with an alternative approach and also created tangible initiatives and plans, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and BRICS Development Bank, through which to formulate and adjust global financial governance rules and widen sources of funding. It moreover promotes regional economic zones through the Belt and Road Initiative, so improving the interconnection between China and countries along the Belt and Road and between the countries themselves. It may thus alleviate the current imbalanced and unfair trade system and provide opportunities to developing countries.

China will shoulder the responsibility of global governance reform through both financial support and trade zone building. The country will thus ensure that more people enjoy the fruits of integration by creating greater inclusive mutual benefits and a more reasonable and coordinated international system. ■

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