

China Advocates Promoting Global Governance with the “True Multilateralism”

LOU Chunhao, Deputy Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Currently, the world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, and uncertainties and instability in the international situation are on the rise. The global development process has suffered a severe shock, with the human development index falling for the first time in 30 years. Global issues such as climate change, public health and terrorism etc require the joint efforts of the international community and should be addressed through multilateralism rather than unilateralism. In recent years, Chinese President Xi Jinping has put forward the historic initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind, systematically expounding China's views on development, security, civilization, ecology, international order and global governance, contributing Chinese wisdom, solutions and strength to improving global governance. China advocates the "true multilateralism" and stresses the need to uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law and the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. China initiates the Belt and Road Initiative, signing cooperation documents with 172 countries and international organizations, making it the largest global public good that China has even provided. China firmly upholds the multilateralism, free trade and an open world economy, and opposes unilateralism and trade protectionism, contributes to the stability of global industry chain and supply chain. China solemnly declares the goal of carbon peak, carbon neutrality and new measures for China's nationally determined contribution, and demonstrates our responsibility to protect our planet. China actively participates in the peaceful settlement of regional hotspot issues and promotes common and cooperative security. China takes an active part in global anti-epidemic cooperation, and has become the world's largest supplier of COVID-19 vaccines. Most of the vaccines that developing countries have received so far come from China. However, the United States regards China as a strategic competitor and adopts whole-of-government and all-dimensional strategic repression against China, which has seriously affected the trust and cooperation between the world's two largest economies and shaken the cooperative foundation of multilateralism and global governance.

The US has promoted the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" and strengthened its strategic containment of China. The concept of "Indo-Pacific" is a popular term in international politics recently. Many countries have put forward their own version of "Indo-Pacific" strategy, initiative or outlook. China is not opposed to the concept of the Indo-Pacific itself, but is opposed to the U.S. engaging in bloc confrontation and geopolitical game under the pretext of the Indo-Pacific. China is more concerned that other countries may be drawn into the path of the US Indo-Pacific strategy, intentionally or unintentionally. Since the Trump administration launched the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the US has been trying to build a U.S.-led "small circle" by establishing Quad and AUKUS, intervening in maritime disputes in West Pacific, and promoting the "blue dot network", etc. The US is pursuing a "new cold war" with China along ideological lines. China firmly opposes any form of "new cold war" and believes that all countries have the right to pursue development paths suited to their national conditions. China believes that diversity is the foundation of multilateralism. However, the United States is drawing ideological lines and trying

to escalate the conflict between China and the United States into one between China and the West. Although the United States has repeatedly claimed “free and open” “rule-based order”, but in essence, the United States is choosing cooperation with “like-minded” partners who accept the American ideology and values. The U.S. prefers American-led rules rather than the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Essentially, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy is a zero-sum game. The U.S. is also constraining China in the name of “rules”. The U.S. not only puts pressure on China at the military and security level, but also tries to use its verbal advantage to practice double standards and infringe upon China’s legitimate rights and interests in the name of “rules”. In addition, through the Blue Dot Network, Transparency Initiative, alternative plans to the Belt and Road Initiative, the coming Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, etc, the U.S. is beefing up geo-economic competition against China.

What the US has done is not only bad for the global governance initiative advocated by China, but also bad for the development of other countries. First, the United States forced many countries to “take sides”, trying to take its own values as a precondition for providing assistance, and even coerced other countries to choose sides between China and the United States, which not only infringed on the sovereignty of the countries, but also restricted the scope of economic and trade cooperation between them and China. Second, the US pursues “America First” in its foreign policy, aiming at competing with China rather than helping the development of other countries. Coupled with its domestic political and financial constraints, the US is likely to pay lip service but not deliver. In the past few years, the US has taken America First, pursued unilateralism, withdrawn from groups and reneged on treaties. All of these have seriously undermined multilateralism and global governance. Third, as the most developed country in the world, the United States has failed to fulfill its responsibility and obligation to lead global governance and even engaged in ideological confrontation, which is not conducive to building consensus for cooperation in the international community. In South Asia, for example, the United States created a mess and chaos after twenty-years’ Afghanistan war and hasty withdrawal, hyped the misleading “debt trap” in Sri Lanka, disrupted the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, strengthened regional security presence through the Bay of Bengal Security Initiative, forced Nepal to sign the Millennium Challenge Corporation-Nepal Compact, provided support to India during China-India border standoff, etc.. All these are not conducive to regional peace and stability, undermining the true multilateralism.

Multilateralism is the only solution to the global governance deficit. However, there are also deviations in the understanding of multilateralism. China opposes hypocritical multilateralism that draws lines along ideological lines and advocates genuine multilateralism. As a responsible major country, China has always been a builder of multilateral mechanisms, advocate of multilateralism and promoter of multilateral cooperation. We hope that the international community will work together to practice “true multilateralism” and effectively address the deficit in global governance.