Exploring the International Community Based on 100 Years of Change

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Abstract: As history keeps moving forward, it’s increasingly clear that the East is rising while the West is declining against the whole political landscape. In the 21st century, the rise of China has gradually shifted the focus of human civilization to East Asia. In this context, China has become the main driving force of globalization. The current international competition has entered a stage where developed countries and emerging powers are competing for transformation and reform. This thesis aims to analyze the current world pattern from political, economic and ethical perspectives. The pivot of global economic development is shifting, while the global political pattern is also quietly undergoing great transformations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of global development in modern times, it has been an established practice that major historical changes take place on a centennial basis. For example, World War I nearly 100 years ago caused a dramatic change in the political landscape of Europe. The United States began to gradually enter the world stage following the Russian Revolution, leading to the "League of Nations" and forming a significant landscape of changes unprecedented in the past century[1].

The "Vienna System" that reorganized the European royal order, the real independence of the United States after the Second American-British War, and the globalization of the British colonial system 200 years ago were regarded as the core elements of the "Unprecedented Changes of the Century".

At present, the discussion of the "Great Change" in China is more focused on the "structural elements" of world politics, but ignores the changes and developments of the "elements in the process". Based on this, this thesis will discuss the "Great Change of the Century" from the political, economic and ethical dimensions[2][3].

2. POLITICAL DIMENSION

First, systemic changes. The past century has witnessed dramatic changes in global powers, with the world's governance system and global order becoming increasingly urgent. The two industrial revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries laid the foundation for the capitalist world system and formed the international structure dominated by the West. Although the Second World War did not destroy the global pattern of "strong West and weak East", the right to control was also transferred and handed over within the Western European countries. The changes in the world order today still reflect the rapid spread of the capitalist system around the world, which can be characterized by the traditional dominance of the Western powers in the world political and economic spheres, as reflected in the high level of the global division of labor among the Western European powers represented by Europe and the United States, who hold the major voice in the important global management system. Over the past century, the further development of economic globalization has actually ushered in a historical opportunity for some late-comers that are good at using their own advantages to flourish. Besides, the emerging economies represented by China have achieved mass rising, while the developed Western countries are faced with weak development, giving rise to an unprecedented change in the contrast of global powers[4].

Second, the ideological awakening. With the awakening of the majority of developing countries, the social influence and soft power of developed countries in global institutions have been weakened accordingly, while the desire of developing countries to join the global cause has been greatly enhanced. Against this historical background, the global governance system should have welcomed the trend of democratic reforms, but the awakening of many developing countries has made it more difficult for vested interests, especially the United States, to realize their national strategic intentions in the current global governance system. As a result, the "first mover advantage" has been diminished, thus weakening their enthusiasm to support the existing governance regime. For example, the Trump administration has pointed out that the U.S. government is gaining less and less benefits from the existing global governance framework, thus violating its commitments and undermining the social order, which has caused climbing deficit to global governance.

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Taking the reform of the complaints mechanism in WTO as an instance, the U.S. was a strong supporter for the establishment of the WTO arbitration body. However, in recent years, due to the higher chance of losing cases than that of the developing world, the U.S. has become dissatisfied with the WTO and hindered the reform of its complaint mechanism, accusing the WTO of having special provisions to protect the interests of developing countries. As a result, the plan to reform the multilateral trading system represented by the WTO has suffered serious setbacks, and the multilateral arbitration system has almost halted. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the United States is not counting the "stock benefits" gained from the global governance system, but only the "incremental benefits" of other countries.

Thirdly, volatile Sino-US relations After the end of the Cold War, the world began to be divided into two polars, leading to two confrontational ideologies of capitalism and socialism. After the disintegration of the bipolar pattern, the world entered into a pattern of "one super powerful force with several sub-powerful forces". Meanwhile, China and the United States formed a situation of cooperation and competition. In 1979, thanks to the reform and opening up in China, the cooperation between the two sides was on the rise, so was the relationship. At the same time, the two countries also experienced difficulties and crises, which had a certain impact on the relationship, but the bilateral relationship did not deteriorate or regress. After the "1989" storm and the visit of Lee Teng-hui to the U.S., China and the U.S. have overcome the crisis and moved forward again. In the new era of the 21st century, their relationship rebuilt in the 1990s has hit bottom again due to the acute the sensitive Taiwan issue which became the biggest obstacle to China's reunification. With the continuous development of China's economy and technology, China's has won stronger national strength and more prominent position in the international arena. The U.S. has been promoting the "China threat theory" with a sense of crisis, thus the trade friction between them is escalating. In fact, this trade war is affecting the destiny of the whole world. In the end, the relationship between major powers also affects the choices of small and medium-sized countries in the world, therefore more and more countries start to adopt "hedging strategies" instead of relying on one major power, which makes the international situation more complicated and volatile.

3. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

First of all, globalization has formed the main force of world economic cooperation, and the basic force of globalization of economic cooperation is the development of productivity, which is more reflected in the change of science and technology. With China's rapid development of information technology and transportation in terms of economic and social aspects, the global village is moving towards the path of globalization. With the continuous development of society, business operations have become more and more international, which has led to the establishment and development of multinational companies. Besides, the modernization of enterprise management has also led to the formation and growth of global enterprises, promoting the globalization of capitalism and enterprises, in the end promoting the wave of economic globalization. The development of market-based economies in more and more countries today is a direct cause of economic internationalization as well as the liberalization of various trade and capital markets.

However, the development of economic globalization over the past hundred years has also brought certain disadvantages, such as economic and trade imbalances, which can lead to the inequitable distribution of social supplies and other problems. Among the developed countries, the US government is the largest contributor to foreign trade deficit, while Germany is the largest foreign trade surplus country. The U.S.-German trade imbalance shows the potential trade contradictions and conflicts among developed countries. The trade imbalance between developed countries and developing countries is also emerging. In recent years, the trade in developing countries has been growing rapidly. Due to the rapid increase of China's foreign trade, the statistical analysis shows that there are also a lot of international trade imbalance issues between China and the United States. Although the country's exports have increased at a high rate, resulting in a large trade surplus, even the trend of its high rate of increase has not abated by 2006. Nevertheless, the trade surplus of developing countries is not worth mentioning compared to the trade deficit of developed countries.

Second, the scientific and technological revolution has exerted a profound impact on people's lives. New technology revolution and industrial revolution will bring new opportunities to promote a new generation of information technology, biotechnology, new energy and other scientific innovations. However, while people are still searching for convenient ways to solve human needs, the "irreplaceable human beings" are gradually being replaced, thus the number of unemployed people has become a cause of instability affecting economic and social development, which will lead to a structural imbalance in the supply of social production factors. What's more, in some cases, structural unemployment will arise due to the lack of adaptability of the talent training structure and the lack of foresight in the education system, as well as the inability of workers to match the development needs of information technology, digital and intelligent human resources.

However, the digitalization of technological transformation, while providing people with fast and convenient access, may also bring some negative effects, especially the great gap between the developed and developing countries in terms of electronic levels. The majority of developing countries are confronting a serious challenge. For example, the emergence of the "digital divide" actually is a "new type of control" over developing countries. Based on the irrational global political and economic order, some developed countries continue to rely on their huge economic capacity and take advantage of the restrictions on technological development, which makes it difficult for some developing countries to gain access to the technological platform to realize the
"latecomer advantage". In addition, developing countries are always in an unequal and dependent position in terms of foreign trade. As the economic growth slows down, the income gap between countries is significantly widened, which also has a lot of negative effects on the global economic development. The inequality of income distribution is closely related to violence.

As the income gap widens, people with a lower income tend to feel deprived of their benefits when compared to the reference group, which will generate resentment and dissatisfaction towards society, leading to proliferating social problems and conflicts.

With the great progress of science and technology, information technology in particular, the Internet and social media platforms are closely related to development and we are entering into the information society. However, when various hot economic and social events and political hotspots occur, they become the focus of public discussion in the community due to the dissemination on social platform. The populists, who are latent in the grassroots of the community, are more likely to be motivated with the help of Internet, and thus become the logical starting point of public opinion wars. Internet politics is a double-edged sword, as the surging tide of public opinion on the Internet has generated great public pressure on the government, so the participation of cyberspace in politics has created a new way for people to express their opinions and participate in politics. But on the other hand, it has led to the growth of populism[6]. When online public opinion becomes a key factor in governmental decision making, online populism may also be involved to influence policy making.

Finally, demographic changes are taking place globally. It’s a widely-known fact that labor force is the core element of national economic development, and many economic theories also show that there is a close relationship between population and economy. Demographic structure has become a key variable affecting the transformation and upgrading of the world economy and society, so it is important to study the characteristics of demographic structure and foresee the process of its change for the development of the global economy and society. However, the law of development doesn’t mean the larger the population, the faster the economic growth. Demographic transition also has a profound impact on economic development.

With the aging of some countries, the demographic dividend is disappearing and the aging society is intensifying, so the society is carrying a certain burden. The decline of surplus labor force inevitably causes the increase of labor production cost. As the economic and social development demands more and more workers, the decrease of labor supply and demand also inevitably leads to higher labor returns as well as increasing labor production cost on the basis of the principle of supply and demand. The aging population will cause a drastic change in the overall supply in the market, and in some cases, the economy will become depressed and sluggish.

Gender imbalance also contributes to huge negative impacts on enterprises. Many labor economists have pointed out that a reasonable gender distribution in the workforce will increase the effectiveness of the opposite sex, thus stimulating the motivation of the workers. In addition, the labor relations between the opposite sex will be closer than those between the same sex, thus increasing the overall labor efficiency of the workers. [5]

4. ETHICAL DIMENSION

First, from individual ethics to collective ethics. Modern scientific and technological practice has developed into a group activity closely related to the industrialized society, thus it is difficult to regulate the legality of the activities of individuals in the group by the ethical norms for individual behavior. However, there is no doubt that collective ethics is the inevitable product of the division of labor arising from the development of modern technology.

Group ethics means that the development of science and technology has made the activities of individuals both highly autonomous and highly interrelated, thus requiring the establishment of a new group ethics. The development of science has created a highly integrated world, which has helped us to develop a new social ethic with a cosmopolitan outlook.

This new collective ethical system has two main aspects: one is the scientific, rational and orderly use of the public properties (social environment, natural resources, intellectual property, etc.) to remedy what is called the "disaster of public pastures"; the other is to pay full attention to the cumulative bad results produced by individual "insignificant" poor behaviors (e.g., exhaust emissions from private cars), and to require all people to mind their words and acts from the perspective of the whole human society and nature. The new collective ethics will also place more and more emphasis on the sense of collective management based on the general awareness of people, so that society as a whole can achieve sustainable development.

Second, from ethics of belief to the ethics of responsibility. The ethics of belief is similar to the ethics of culture and religion, which is in a subjective form. On the contrary, the ethics of responsibility has a certain standard and is the presentation of objective factors, such as carbon emissions such as emissions from private cars, cutting down trees and burning coal. But from the point of view of responsibility, we should reduce carbon emissions, reduce the harm to the environment, and consider the impact on society as a whole while enjoying ourselves. Therefore, in the rapidly changing modern society driven by technology, the sense of responsibility often needs to be integrated into people’s daily life to replace the traditional ethical beliefs that neither reflect on the preconditions nor consider the applicability. In other words, the ethics of responsibility not only focuses on the legitimacy of ethical norms in terms of the responsibility of the subject, but also further delineates the sequence of the responsibility of the subject at each level in a specific situation according to rational exercise of the subject's responsibility.

Third, from ethics of distance to ethics of proximity. With the growth of population and the development of science and technology, people's interaction has become increasingly closer. During the World War 100 years ago, the ethics of people in countries free from wars were not
so focused on war, lacking a concept of respect for life. Now, in the 21st century, people are concerned about disputes and even wars between countries through the Internet. As we can see, the progress of science and technology has led to an essential change in the mode of interaction of social agents. As a result, the most direct connection based on the ethics of proximity between social agents has been extended in two dimensions: time and space. Therefore, from the technical level, the rights of future generations and the social mission of modern human beings begin to be important issues for the development of modern technology and future society. In the spatial level, in order to solve global issues, human beings are constantly exploring the integration of values and concepts in the construction of world civilization, trying to establish a universal ethic, but are faced with the phenomenon of cultural colonization.

However, we are increasingly conscious that we hold obligations not only to ourselves, but also to the flora and fauna as well as the natural environment. The new expansion of ethical relationships over time has also produced a revolution in understanding, including human sustainability, the rights of animals, and the value of the environment. Though these opinions are debatable, they are inevitable outcomes of the further expansion of human capacity in the new technological age[7].

5. CONCLUSION

The concept of "the world is in the midst of a century of unprecedented changes" has generated great reactions both at home and abroad. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has prompted a clearer perception of the unprecedented change of the century among people. Specifically, the pivot of global economic development is shifting from both sides of the Atlantic to both sides of the Pacific. At the same time, the global political landscape is also quietly undergoing great changes: the traditional dominant G7 pattern is exerting a greater and more extensive influence. The process of internationalization is also undergoing a dramatic shift: with the withdrawal of some developed countries and their exit from the European Union, the trend of counter-globalization has also started to emerge frequently[8-10].

Unprecedented changes emphasize the scale of transformation. The arrival of a new wave of technological revolution has also given rise to many new industries and new ethics, which is also unprecedented in a long time. In particular, the world has been transformed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic whose impact on global development is now so great that it is likely to affect the process of internationalization and shifts in the international political and economic landscape. At a time when the world is suffering from a major change unprecedented in a century, opportunities and challenges coexist. Thus, it is crucial to face them with a calm attitude, turn crises into opportunities, and take the initiative to cooperate so as to create a harmonious international environment.

REFERENCES