

Davos 2025: The Last Stand of the Liberal Globalists

by Harley Schlanger

Jan. 23—Though it is likely a coincidence that the opening of this year’s World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting took place on the day of U.S. President Donald Trump’s inauguration, it is no coincidence that Trump’s return to the White House has been the leading topic in Davos. This was acknowledged by WEF founder Klaus Schwab in his introduction of Trump on January 23, when he said that Trump’s return, and his policies, “have been at the focus of our discussions this week.”

Indeed, the usual convivial atmosphere of a comfortable club of wealthy corporate oligarchs, accompanied by the think tankers, politicians, and media figures they finance, gathering in the snow-covered majesty of the Swiss Alps, was disrupted by reports of the furious pace of the first days of Trump’s Presidency. The normally self-confident, high-flying jet-set corporate elites took on the appearance of an anxiety-ridden countergang, unsure of how to proceed!

The *Washington Post’s* columnist Ishaan Tharoor captured this mood shift in a piece titled “Trump’s Return and the Final ‘Rupture’ of Liberalism,” identifying the re-emergence of Trump as the cause of “the awkwardness of the moment.”

This uncertainty was conveyed in the pre-summit briefing given by Schwab’s successor as the president of the WEF, Borge Brende. “We are in the middle of two orders,” he said, during a pre-summit briefing with reporters last week. The “post-Cold War” era, in which the WEF had a dominant presence in a world shaped by liberal triumphalism and globalization, is over, Brende stated, “and now it’s an unruly time,



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Donald Trump addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos via satellite link from the United States.

because we don’t know what the new order will be.”

An ‘Uncertain’ Economic Future

Coherent with the pessimism of Brende were comments from WEF’s vice chair, Philipp Hildebrand, who said their analysts conclude that they expect “more uncertainty and volatility” ahead. He warned that Europe is “uncompetitive” in the face of “transformational forces shaping the economy, and a fragmented geopolitical landscape.” The biggest concern, Hildebrand continued, is that inflation is not over, that it is stubborn and will require “permanent tightness”—i.e., high interest rates—to combat. He pointed to “political paralysis” in Europe, where the “traditional drivers,” France and Germany, “are not driving at the moment.”



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Børge Brende, WEF President and CEO.

This situation has been exacerbated by the election of Donald Trump, who has been quite open in his criticism of Europe. In preparation for his return, the *New York Times* reports that the European Commission (EC) set up an unofficial “Trump task force,” to work on possible responses to changes in U.S. trade and foreign policy. The EC is planning to meet on February 3 outside Brussels, to discuss a coordinated response to the anticipated changes. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will be among those attending, the first time for participation by the UK in an EC meeting since Brexit. At the top of the agenda will be how to counter the direction voiced by the U.S. President throughout his campaign, and repeated since his inauguration: an end to the war in Ukraine; addressing “unfair trade policies” of Europe, with threats of across-the-board tariffs; and his attack on the EU’s “Green New Deal.”

The latter has been at the top of the concerns of EU bureaucrats, given that one of Trump’s first actions was to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords, as he had done during his first term in 2017. In her address at Davos, EC President Ursula von der Leyen, who has been at the forefront of the effort to “Trump-proof Europe,” said they will “stay the course.... The Paris Agreement continues to be the best hope for all humanity.” She was backed by UN climate chief Simon Stiell, who said, “The world is undergoing an energy transition that is unstoppable.”

This “unstoppable transition” is based on an anti-scientific jihad against CO₂ and the shift to wind and solar energy, which, when combined with the shut-down of nuclear energy, sanctions against Russian oil and gas, and the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipelines, have had a devastating effect on Germany. High electricity prices are part of the reason Germany is undergoing a radical deindustrialization. Further, the Green regulations are stifling investment, and many traditional German companies are laying off workers and moving their production facilities to China and the U.S. Farmers have hit the streets in their tractors across Europe against the Green restrictions. Stiell added that



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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

the EU must guard against “crisis fatigue” when it comes to climate!

Commitment to War

Another aspect of the delusion in Europe is the intent to continue the war against Russia, with Ukraine as the club wielded. On Day two, Davos hosted President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, whose pep talk was a thinly-disguised cover for another one of his panhandling extravaganzas. While stating that he hoped Trump would continue the Biden-Blinken policy of NATO support for a war to “weaken Russia,” he warned that Europe must be prepared to wage it without the U.S. Europe

must be aware, he said, that it is “not a top security priority for the U.S. under Trump.” He taunted the U.S. President, asking, “Will Trump even notice Europe? Does he see NATO as necessary? And will he respect EU institutions?”

He then pivoted to an attack on Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia. Who are Putin’s allies? he asked. North Korea and Iran—and allied against whom? “Against you, against all of us. Against Europe, against America.”

Seemingly oblivious to the economic crisis under discussion, and to the political price that ruling parties across Europe are paying for their commitment to war, and austerity to finance it, Zelensky insisted on increased spending for defense, to pay for a united European security and defense policy. Without a glimpse of recognition of the irony explicit in this appeal, this demand echoed a major theme of Trump’s talk to the attendees two days later, when he repeated his insistence that cash-strapped NATO members allocate 5% of their GDP to defense spending.

This was reinforced by NATO General Secretary Mark Rutte, who said that failure to increase spending will mean “a much, much higher price than what we are contemplating at this moment in terms of ramping up our spending and ramping up our industrial production.” He continued, “It will not be billions extra; it will be trillions extra.

“We have to change the trajectory of the war,” he

said, adding that the West “cannot allow in the 21st Century that one country invades another country and tries to colonize it. We are beyond those days....”

Such talk is music to the ears of the corporate sponsors of Davos. At last year’s conference, Zelensky addressed a private session of the financial cartels at the heart of the “military-industrial-financial complex,” at the invitation of J.P. Morgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon. Among those present were officials of BlackRock, Blackstone, and Bridgewater Associates. It is not yet known if a similar gathering occurred this year.

In his short address beamed into the conference, President Trump hailed his “Revolution of Common Sense,” which included his call for an end to wars and the Green New Deal, which he singled out as the major causes of the deficits, growing debt, and inflation afflicting the Eurozone. The U.S., under his leadership, is poised to restore its position as a “manufacturing superpower.” In his attack on the Biden administration for its “inept” policies, the implication was clear, that the same applies to those meeting in Davos.

Curtain Call for ‘Davos Man’?

The globalist paradigm, dominant in the West increasingly since the plug was pulled on the post-war Bretton Woods system in 1971, is today being rejected by much of the world, as leaders in the Global South are looking to China and Russia for aid in developing their nations. The momentum toward this new strategic and development architecture which is emerging, led by the BRICS alliance, has been hailed by Russian President Putin as an “inevitable tectonic shift” in international relations.

It is based on an anti-colonial rejection of the purpose of Davos, which was launched by Schwab in 1971, on the eve of the Nixon administration’s break with Bretton Woods, to build a consensus for “globalization” among leaders of corporate cartels. This prominently included an attack on the idea of national sovereignty as an outmoded idea, and a commitment instead to the emergence of a New World Order under governance of the corporate cartels. As economist Lyndon LaRouche warned after Nixon’s action, the intent of those who manipulated Nixon was the establishment of a global order of bureaucratic fascism, modeled on the policies of Hitler’s Minister of Economics, Hjalmar Schacht, in the 1930s.

The coordination of this new order was in the hands of those who were identified by the late Samuel P. Huntington in his coining of the term “Davos Man.” Huntington, otherwise known for his geopolitical theory of the “Clash of Civilizations”—which is an updated version of the vision of Thomas Hobbes that the world is a battleground of “each against all,” and has conveniently served as a justification for today’s failing neo-colonial order—wrote in 2004 of “Davos Man” as one with “little need for national loyalty, view[ing] national boundaries as obstacles that thankfully are vanishing, and see[ing] national governments as residues from the past whose only useful function is to facilitate the elite’s global operations.”

The world of “Davos Man” is threatened by the collapse of the dystopian architecture of the neoliberal order, the emergence of a New Paradigm led by the BRICS and the Global South, and by the imperfect but compelling opposition of the new President of the United States.

The time has arrived, after 54 years, to pull the plug on this order, and create a new architecture based on cooperation for mutual benefit among sovereign nation states.



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