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Chinese solutions signal new era

Nation's practical desire to see the creation of a global community of shared destiny is being increasingly welcomed

By JIA WENSHAN

The Western model, represented by the Washington Consensus and characterized by exclusionism and global dominance, has been endangering global governance since the global financial crisis.

On the international front, the United States has overruled, or has been trying to overrule, the United Nations.

The Afghan war and Iraq war, and most recently the Paris climate change agreement, come readily to mind as examples.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund still refuse to elect a non-Westerner as their chief.

Despite the shrinking global influence and leadership of Washington, US President Donald Trump has been making intensive efforts to dismantle the global liberal architecture and kill off globalization by adhering to his "America First" policy.

Adding to the US' retreat from global engagement are Brexit — Britain's decision to leave the European Union — and the rise of isolationism and economic nationalism in the Western world.

Against the face of such challenges, the world would have fallen back into anarchy had China not stepped in with its solutions.

Chinese solutions, or *zhongguo fang'an*, comprise a set of practical plans and measures for improving global governance guided by a new cosmopolitan vision and infused with a chain of time-tested humane values.

China has formulated these solutions based on its vast experience, learning and development, and engagement with broad constituencies at the local, national, regional and international levels over the past few decades, particularly during the past five years.

This alternative basket of solutions is both comprehensive and selective, conservative and progressive, idealistic and prag-

matic, and both revolutionary and reformist.

The Chinese solutions have been increasingly welcomed worldwide to deal with global challenges arising from the near collapse of the existing world order.

Against this geopolitical background, President Xi Jinping has begun using the Chinese solutions across the world.

The solutions, a creative mix of philosophies and thoughts such as Confucianism, Marxism and other Western theories, refer to an inclusive world dream and call on people across the world to create a global community of shared destiny.

Infused into this world dream is a new set of humane values, drawn from a diverse range of histories and cultures and universally relevant to communication/connectivity, commonality, cooperation, mutual understanding, mutual benefit and harmony, which Xi termed the "Silk Road spirit" at the Belt and Road Forum for Interna-

tional Cooperation in Beijing in May.

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative is committed to harnessing coordinated transnational synergy to create global connectivity, in order to facilitate global economic recovery and public projects such as transnational infrastructure as well as science and cultural industry parks.

While the New Development Bank aims to strengthen cooperation among BRICS member states, the vision and goals of that five-member grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) coalesce with those of the Belt and Road Initiative, whose projects are also being seeded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Moreover, trade between China and other countries involved in the initiative between 2014 and 2016 surpassed \$3 trillion. Involving more than 100 countries and reaching more than five billion people, the Belt and Road Initiative

is "a project of the century", as Xi said.

It is a possible global game changer, according to American political scientist Joseph Nye.

Since the essence of the initiative is universally relevant and beneficial to the world, even the theme of the G20 summits in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, last year and Hamburg, Germany, this year resonated with it.

With growing global support and participation, in particular after the BRICS Xiamen Declaration on Sept 4 which almost fully embraces the Chinese solutions, the Belt and Road Initiative along with the Chinese solutions more clearly signal the coming of a new era of global governance.

The author is an adjunct professor at the School of Journalism & Communication and a research fellow at the National Academy for Development & Strategy, Renmin University of China.

Worrying signs as more stay single

Imbalanced gender ratio and changing social expectations mean fewer Chinese people are choosing to get married

By MU GUANGZONG

The challenges and potential business opportunities that China's nearly 200 million "single population" has given rise to have been making headlines for some time now. The single population refers to the group of people who are not married despite reaching the legal marriageable age, and those that are divorced or widowed.

According to China's population and employment statistical yearbook 2015, the total single population aged above 20 — people who are unable to get married as well as those that choose to remain single — was about 140 million in 2014.

According to a survey in 2015, more than 58 million people in China live alone, while the number of young people (between 20 and 39) living alone is 20 million.

The rising single population has

something to do with the unbalanced gender ratio in China, especially among people of marriageable age.

China's population and employment statistical yearbook 2014 said that of the total single population, males accounted for 69.1 percent in the 35 to 39 age group, and the male-female gender ratio in the 20 to 24 age group was 130:100.

Besides, the shortage of marriageable age women has made it difficult for men to find a spouse, especially in poverty-stricken rural areas.

The number of marriageable age men in China will be 24 million more than marriageable age women in 2020. And given the huge social pressure single men face in rural areas, they could become the catalyst for many problems, such as sex crimes and trafficking of women, which in turn could undermine social stability and harmony.

The rising single population also

has something to do with the current social values. Thanks to the fast-paced economic development and changing cultural norms, it is possible for single men or women to lead a relatively comfortable life, not least because they do not consider marriage and family as necessary.

In other words, on the one hand, the rising number of single men in China's rural areas is a social problem; on the other, staying single has already become a global trend.

According to *Going Solo* by Eric Klinenberg, a professor of sociology at New York University, in 1950 only 22 percent of the total population in the United States was single while the percentage today is more than 50.

At present, 31 million people of marriageable age, or one-seventh of the total adult population of the US, live alone.

Being single is common in Western countries. In Stockholm,

Sweden, for example, the ratio of people living alone is as high as 60 percent.

In Japan, about 40 percent of the single people do not like the company of others.

And in France, 55.8 percent of children were born out of wedlock in 2012.

Even in contemporary China, many among the new generation do not consider marriage necessary.

Unlike men, China's single women are concentrated mainly in large cities, and a huge number of them are highly educated, have high incomes and enjoy high social status. Such women are single because of their high requirements from their would-be spouse, such as sharing work and being treated as equals.

But, since traditionally husbands are supposed to be "superior" to their wives in terms of education, income and social status, it is dif-

ficult for highly qualified and successful women to find a suitable spouse, not only because there are few such men but also because many Chinese men prefer to have a wife who is "not better than" them.

Moreover, some women voluntarily choose to be single, because they do not want marriage and family to prevent them from leading a life of their liking. The advantage of being single is being free and relaxed, and its disadvantage is not being able to enjoy a family life and share concerns.

Staying single may be gaining acceptance among some people in China, but it will have a negative impact on the birth rate and sustainable social development, and therefore should not be encouraged.

The author is a professor at the Population Research Institute of Peking University.