

The Big Winners from Trump's Davos Speech

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The President Trump who delivered his speech at the World Economic Forum on Friday sounded very different from candidate Trump, Zack Beauchamp notes for Vox. Chalk that up as a decisive win for Team Trump's "conventional" members.

"Much of the speech was Trump taking (dubious) credit for strong economic performance in the United States in the past year or so. Another large chunk was discussing his cuts to regulation and taxes, something the crowd at Davos could definitely get behind," Beauchamp argues.

"But when he got to the points of contention between him and the audience—his America First approach to globalization and foreign policy—he sounded remarkably subdued. Instead of attacking 'the false song of globalism,' as he had on the campaign trail, he sold himself as a kind of moderate globalist."

"His criticism of free trade was cast not in the crude terms he's used in the past—'we can't continue to allow China to rape our country'—but as a sort of tinkering at the edges designed to make free trade work for everyone. 'We support free trade,' he said, 'but it needs to be fair and it needs to be reciprocal because in the end, unfair trade undermines us all.'"

"With Steve Bannon out of the administration and marginalized, the highest-level policy advisers in the Trump administration generally do not share the president's instinctive hostility toward the global order—and today, it showed."

- **What the Davos crowd can learn from Trump.** President Trump may have left Davos, but his rise has underscored something important: Global elites like those gathered at the World Economic Forum this week need to get real about how to fix the world, suggests Richard Haass in TIME.

"The U.N. will, at best, play the most limited of roles given the revival of great power rivalry and the emergence of dangerous regional states and subnational entities like ISIS. No matter how frequently the phrase international community is mentioned, the reality is that there is little. There is, as well, a need to shift the balance of authority within the E.U. away from Brussels toward member countries so as to give governments greater control over their borders, tighten enforcement of trade pacts, increase spending on defense and do

more to meet the existing North Korean nuclear threat and the potential one from Iran.”

Why the Mueller Reports Feel a Lot Like 1973: Zelizer

Reports that President Trump ordered the firing of special counsel Robert Mueller in June have echoes of President Richard Nixon’s so-called Saturday Night Massacre, when Nixon ordered that Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox be fired, **suggests Julian Zelizer for *The Atlantic***. That controversy set off alarm bells about the dangers of excessive executive authority. And those alarm bells should be ringing again.

“The result of Watergate was not just the resignation of Nixon, but a whole series of reforms meant to strengthen Congress and rein in the presidency,” Zelizer writes. “But over the following decades many of those reforms fell by the wayside, and both parties rebuilt the authority of the executive branch. The horror of 9/11 was an especially important moment when the presidency underwent a vast expansion of power that greatly weakened the ability of Congress to constrain the White House.”

“Today, we are back to a similar place as in October 1973. This is why the new Nixonian story about Trump and Mueller is so unsettling. While it is true that this time the massacre did not happen, it is too easy to see how it could have gone a different way.

“For all the anger about Trump himself, what Americans have really been awakened to is just how powerful we have allowed the presidency to become at the expense of Congress. When Trump tweeted out one of his provocative statements about North Korea, he dramatized how easy it would be for a reckless president to drag us into a nuclear war... And the reports that Trump has already tried to fire the person whom his own Justice Department appointed to investigate possible collusion in the 2016 election and the obstruction of justice are a reminder that the existing president still possesses many of the powers that were so troubling back in 1973. In some ways, the presidency is even more awesome in its strength.”

Why Tech Is Making Great Power Conflict More Likely

A shifting geopolitical landscape and the “proliferation of new technologies are eroding the extraordinary military dominance that America and its allies have enjoyed,” **The Economist notes in its leader**. The result? A growing chance that the great powers could stumble into war.

“China and Russia have harnessed military technologies invented by America, such as long-range precision-strike and electromagnetic-spectrum warfare, to raise the cost of intervention against them dramatically. Both have used asymmetric-warfare strategies to

create ‘anti-access/area denial’ networks. China aims to push American naval forces far out into the Pacific where they can no longer safely project power into the East and South China Seas. Russia wants the world to know that, from the Arctic to the Black Sea, it can call on greater firepower than its foes—and that it will not hesitate to do so,” *The Economist* says.

“If America allows China and Russia to establish regional hegemonies, either consciously or because its politics are too dysfunctional to muster a response, it will have given them a green light to pursue their interests by brute force. When that was last tried, the result was the first world war.”

Time to Face the Truth About America’s Poor: Deaton

President Trump **took his “America First” message to Davos with his speech on Friday.** And at least as far as helping the poor goes, it might be time to put Americans first more often, **suggests Angus Deaton in *The New York Times*.** Because the reality is that for millions of Americans, the poverty they are experiencing is just as severe as it is in some developing nations.

“When we compare absolute poverty in the United States with absolute poverty in India, or other poor countries, we should be using \$4 in the United States and \$1.90 in India.

“Once we do this, there are 5.3 million Americans who are absolutely poor by global standards. This is a small number compared with the one for India, for example, but it is more than in Sierra Leone (3.2 million) or Nepal (2.5 million), about the same as in Senegal (5.3 million) and only one-third less than in Angola (7.4 million). Pakistan (12.7 million) has twice as many poor people as the United States, and Ethiopia about four times as many,” Deaton writes.

“For years, in determining this spending, the needs of poor Americans (or poor Europeans) have received little priority relative to the needs of Africans or Asians. As an economist concerned with global poverty, I have long accepted this practical and ethical framework. In my own giving, I have prioritized the faraway poor over the poor at home.

But “[there] are millions of Americans whose suffering, through material poverty and poor health, is as bad or worse than that of the people in Africa or in Asia.”

The World’s “Freest” Country Is...

Switzerland is the world’s “freest” country, according to a new study that scores nations and territories on a range of indicators of personal and economic freedom, from freedom of movement and religion to security and safety, to labor and business regulations.

The annual **Human Freedom Index**, co-produced by Canada’s Fraser Institute, the Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in Berlin, and the Cato

Institute in Washington, DC, gave Switzerland the highest score of all countries or territories, including the maximum score for indicators including freedom of association and movement. Rounding out the top five were Hong Kong, New Zealand, Ireland and Australia.

The United States ranked 17th overall, scoring top marks for freedom of association and movement, but performing relatively poorly on size of government.