

# VIEWS

Liu Dongchao

## Institutions reform vital for modernization

According to the reform plan of China's State Council institutions submitted to the first session of the 14th National People's Congress for deliberation on Tuesday, China plans to deepen reforms in different sectors including restructuring its Ministry of Science and Technology, setting up a national financial regulatory administration, and establishing a national data bureau.

These moves, aimed at improving governance capabilities, can help inspire the Chinese people to make technological breakthroughs, and better ensure financial security and data regulation.

The State Council institutions reform plan is in line with the plan of the reform of the Party and State institutions which was approved at the Second Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee.

The reform of the Party and State institutions is the first major systemic transformation on the way to achieving the "second centenary goal" of developing "China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful" by the middle of this century. It is also a guarantee for institutional stability and progress for the next five years and beyond.

First, the reform of the State institutions is necessary to implement the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the CPC, which made clear the designs and arrangements for the reform. The report of the 20th CPC National Congress says that we must resolutely uphold the authority of the CPC Central Committee and its centralized and unified leadership, and make the Party the backbone of the people.

The 20th Party Congress report also

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calls, among other things, for deepening the reform of the financial system, building a modern central bank system, and improving the system of unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee.

The next five years will be critical for the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country. And since more than four months have already passed since the 20th Party Congress, the institutional reforms should be quickly and efficiently implemented, in order to lay a solid foundation for socialist modernization construction.

Second, the reform of the Party and State institutions is necessary for the improvement of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, which is a scientific system developed by the Party and the people. Given the fast-changing times and increasing uncertainties, this system needs to be continuously adjusted and optimized so as to better meet the complex and arduous requirements.

The most important aspect of this reform is the implementation of the principle of "strengthening the centralized and unified leadership of the Party", because the CPC leadership is key to socialism with Chinese characteristics and the greatest advantage of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Another important principle of the

reform is to "coordinate the central organizations of the Party, the National People's Congress, the State Council, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and to coordinate the central and local governments". In essence, it is aimed at arranging the institutions on a "national chessboard", which reflects systemic thinking and manifests the key features of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.

Third, the Party and State institutions' reform is a necessary step toward promoting the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. This is evident from the fact that the 2018 reform of the Party and State institutions helped improve China's governance system.

However, China faces some problems on the road to the reforms, such as the lack of a unified management system for scientific and technological work, inadequate financial risk prevention capability, and slow pace of high-quality development. Formalism and bureaucracy, too, are obstructing the reform.

To promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity and solve the reform-related problems, implementing institutional reform is necessary. The goal is to achieve "more scientific leadership of the Party in socialist modernization construction in institutional settings, more optimized functional allocation, more perfect system and mechanism, and more efficient operation and management".

Fourth, the reform of the Party and State institutions is aimed at addressing the complex domestic and international and other problems facing China. The world is undergoing unprecedented changes and faces continued regional tur-

moil and conflict, which are increasing economic and sociopolitical uncertainties.

The rise of anti-globalization sentiments, unilateralism and protectionism is becoming more and more apparent. For instance, the negative impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has entered the second year, are seemingly growing, while the West is continuing to strengthen its containment policy against China. In fact, the West's encirclement of China could potentially escalate into a major conflict.

As China faces increasing uncertainty and unfavorable factors, it should be prepared to withstand major challenges, for which strong institutions and outstanding institutional advantages are needed.

As the 20th Party Congress report says, the problem of imbalanced and insufficient development remains prominent, and there are still many bottlenecks in promoting high-quality development. Solving these problems requires not only top-level design but also strengthened organizational leadership, and an institutional set-up.

The formation of new Party and State institutions in 2023 is expected to enhance the Party's governance capacity and leadership level, mobilize the initiative and creativity of all sectors of society, effectively handle domestic and foreign issues, elevate the cause of the Party and the country to a new level, and facilitate the smooth development of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

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Mario Cavolo

## China's diplomacy seeks peace, development

It is difficult for many to comprehend the rather complex juxtaposition of China and the United States in today's world.

What we do know is: China wants development and peace. Just as Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang reiterated on Tuesday at a press conference that Sino-US ties are vital for the whole world, adding that decoupling doesn't serve interests of either country.

Therefore it's time for some countries to abandon their Cold War mindset.

Unfortunately, many Western voices continue to project China as "a threat" to the world while continuing to interfere in other countries' internal affairs and launching or triggering wars. China, on the other hand, has not started any war or attacked any country in the past half a century.

China's firm anti-war stance is once again proved in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. China's message to other governments has always been to help end the conflict through diplomacy. Just as Qin reiterated on Tuesday, China always chooses peace and dialogue.

It is for this reason that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's remark on Sunday that there would be "consequences" if China supplied weapons to Russia to strengthen the latter's position in the conflict was uncalled for, even though he said he was fairly optimistic that Beijing would refrain from doing so.

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And Qin Gang reiterated that China doesn't send arms to any country in the conflict.

What many Western political leaders and people fail to understand is that China's safe, stable domestic environment — as any expat living in China like me can testify — is a reflection of the values at the core of its policies, which are also embodied in the Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative, because they are common values of humanity.

While China proposed the GDI, it was focused on supplying global public goods to help achieve the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, reverse the damage done by the COVID-19 pandemic and facilitate global economic recovery.

As the international community came to realize during the three years of the pandemic, stable and smooth-running industry and supply chains are essential to ensuring sustainable global development, and it is to stabilize the global supply and industry chains that China held the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2017, following it up with the second forum in 2019, and will hold the third forum later this year. The forum is also aimed at promoting global cooperation and helping reform global governance.

And economic cooperation with China under the Belt and Road Initiative framework has made it possible for Africa to make remarkable achievements, indicating the values of peace and stability, said Dennis Munene, executive director of the China Africa Center at Nairobi-based Africa Policy Institute. Munene's message speaks to the much broader values of Chinese civilization, and the deeply held values of its people and government.

Yet the Western media seldom mention such facts or tell their readers and viewers how committed China is to promoting peace and development. Instead, quite a few Western countries are obsessed with the military industrial complex because it earns fat revenues for the government — and that's why many Western politicians and profiteers trigger wars and conflicts even if they mean sacrificing lives and resources.

Many military and political experts say that war hawks and profiteers engineered the Russia-Ukraine conflict and are not leaving any stone unturned to keep it alive in total disregard for the human and material costs.

In stark contrast to the Western powers, China has matched the core objectives of the GDI and GSI with its core objectives of peace and development. China proposed the GDI in April last year. And more than 100 countries and regional organizations have supported the two initiatives.

China wants to set global examples for development and peace in the 21st century now that it has risen to the level of a "world superpower" in peace. The world has seen enough provocations, violence and war. And to see development, prosperity and peace, it needs to learn from China's development philosophy and development programs.

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Michaela Boehme and Jürgen Ritter

## Sino-German agri-cooperation for mutual benefit

Agrifood systems worldwide are facing enormous challenges. And after steadily declining for a decade, world hunger is on the rise again, affecting nearly 10 percent of people globally.

At the same time, prices of farm inputs and food products are rising, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity among the world's most vulnerable populations. As a result, creating a world free of hunger as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations appears to be an ever-more distant prospect.

There is no single reason behind the current challenges. Rather, we are facing multiple, interconnected crises — from climate change to loss of biodiversity and healthy soil, global pandemics, and wars and conflicts in many parts of the world.

In light of these challenges, the German Commission on the Future of Agriculture has developed pathways for a sustainable transformation of the country's agricultural sector. The proposed solutions range from creating more environmentally friendly livestock production systems to the promotion of organic agriculture, and the reduction of fertilizers and pesticides. Efforts at the level of the European Union, such as the EU's Green Deal or its Farm-to-Fork strategy, also aim to make food systems healthy and environmentally friendly, while ensuring productivity and fair returns to farmers.

In China, agricultural production has benefited from the fast rollout of modern agricultural machinery, digital tools, and innovations in biotechnology, thereby helping the country to raise agricultural productivity and grain output levels. With an annual output of more than 650 million tons, China has basically been self-sufficient in the production of staple grains for many years — achievement that has helped ease pressure on food supplies globally.

Yet neither Germany nor China is immune to the crises facing our food systems today. In fact, there are many shared challenges that risk undermining agricultural production in both countries in the medium term. For example, extreme weather events linked to climate change are becoming more frequent and severe. Regions in China and Germany were hit by major droughts in 2022. Protecting biodiversity and soil health is another issue of common concern. China's "zero-growth" action plan regulating the excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides is a step in the right direction, but more needs to be done.

In Germany, where fertilizer use is substantially lower than in China, farmers are now experimenting with new technologies to further improve efficacy and



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reduce environmental impacts.

Moreover, both countries are exploring the use of digital tools to tackle rural challenges such as a declining farming population and rural development. As two major agricultural powers, Germany and China have the joint responsibility to drive the transformation toward a more sustainable, climate-friendly, and fair food system that can ensure food security for all while at the same time protecting our common global goods.

A constructive exchange and dialogue across national borders is indispensable to address the challenges we are facing, as parliamentary state secretary of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ophelia Nick, reiterated at the 8th Sino-German Agricultural Week, held from

Nov 21-25, 2022, in Beijing.

How do we best organize these exchanges? The Sino-German Agricultural Centre (DCZ), established in 2015 as a joint initiative of the agricultural ministries of both countries, plays a key role in facilitating necessary cooperation.

Designed to be a central contact and information platform, its multi-stakeholder approach has helped bring together actors from politics, science, and business from both countries to address common challenges and support the sustainable development of the agriculture and food industry.

Over the past few years, agricultural cooperation via the platform of the DCZ has addressed a wide range of issues. In 2019, a Sino-German cooperation project on agriculture and climate change was launched. Within the framework of the project, experts from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, as well as German researchers were invited to study tours in each other's country.

Furthermore, a set of best practices and policy recommendations on how to reduce emissions from agriculture and mitigate the effects of climate change were developed. German and Chinese agri-food stakeholders have also partnered in the field of agricultural digitali-

zation, with a smart agriculture working group set up in 2020 and the successful launch of a smart agriculture website, presenting insights from Germany's "Digital Experimental Fields".

Other cooperation activities have included in-depth professional exchanges on environmentally friendly management practices of animal manure, plant breeding and digital villages.

However, more can be done. Balancing food production goals with the need to protect our global public goods, including our ecosystems and climate, is one of the biggest challenges facing both Germany and China in the near future. Addressing this challenge will require a wide range of responses, from innovation in digital agriculture to the repositioning of subsidies, the promotion of regenerative farming practices, and the creation of a fair and stable trade environment.

By drawing on their respective experiences, Germany and China can and should develop solutions for jointly overcoming the multiple crises and contribute to building a fair, healthy and sustainable food system for all.

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