

WEF Davos 2026: Day 2 Summary (January 21)

Geopolitical Dimensions

- **Trump pushes Greenland deal, drops tariff threat (but not the idea)**
 - Trump told reporters in Davos he had “formed the framework of a future deal” on Greenland after talks with Dutch NATO chief Mark Rutte, signalling he was backing off immediate tariffs on the EU and Denmark in favor of negotiations.^{1 2}
 - He explicitly ruled out using military force to obtain Greenland, a line that prompted “a collective sigh of relief in the room,” according to one participant quoted by Reuters.^{3 4}
 - Nonetheless, European officials and analysts warned that the broader message signaled a new era in which “middle powers must navigate their survival without relying on U.S. protection.”⁴
- **“Board of Peace” as quasi-UN rival raises pressure on allies**
 - Reuters reported that Trump’s new “Board of Peace,” presented around Davos as a vehicle for conflict resolution, is viewed by many governments as a de-facto rival to the United Nations.⁵
 - Officials from Arab, Latin American and European countries said privately they felt pressured to join to avoid angering Washington, suggesting alignment looked “less a voluntary decision and more an unavoidable conclusion.”⁵
 - When French President Emmanuel Macron declined to sign up, Trump threatened retaliatory tariffs on French wine and champagne, saying “I’ll impose 200 [percent] tariff on wines and champagnes, and he’ll join — but he doesn’t have to participate.”⁵
- **Trump’s Davos address: harsh rhetoric toward Europe, assurance on force**
 - In his special address at WEF, Trump declared the United States would seek “immediate negotiations to acquire Greenland, but won’t use force,” while castigating European leaders, saying their countries are “not even recognizable.”^{6 7 8 9}
 - The WEF live blog framed the speech as ranging “from Greenland to Minnesota and back again,” touching on trade, tariffs, regional security, migration, nuclear power and pandemics in a rambling style that dominated the day’s agenda.^{7 6}
 - CNN and other outlets described the remarks as “winding” and “antagonistic” toward traditional allies, arguing they did little to ease concern that the Western alliance is near “its breaking point.”^{2 10}
- **China defends its growth model and globalization narrative**
 - In Davos-linked coverage, Chinese officials emphasized that China wants to be not only “the world’s factory” but also “the world’s market,” positioning its growth model as a stabilizing anchor amid Western political turbulence.¹¹
 - Vice-Premier He Lifeng’s WEF special address, featured in an article updated through the week, invoked Xi Jinping’s line about “a community with a shared future for humanity” and urged

countries to “carry forward a spirit of dialogue, enhance openness and cooperation, and steer the giant ship of the world economy steadily forward on the vast blue ocean, breaking all winds and waves.”¹²

- The implicit contrast with U.S. Greenland ambitions and tariff threats underlined Beijing’s attempt to claim the mantle of predictable globalization at Davos.^{11 12}

- **WEF framing: multilateralism under strain, dialogue as “urgent necessity”**

- WEF’s own Davos live coverage stressed that “global cooperation is proving resilient even as multilateralism continues to face strong headwinds,” highlighting data from its Global Cooperation Barometer and a media briefing with Børge Brende and others.^{13 14}
- Brende argued that “dialogue and courage are vital for progress” and that new technologies, if governed well, “can be the new driver of growth for decades to come,” tying geopolitical fragmentation to the need for a shared tech agenda.¹⁴
- Another WEF piece on heads of state cited his line that “dialogue is not a luxury in times of uncertainty; it is an urgent necessity,” while Swiss President Guy Parmelin urged “society, science, economics and politics” to work “hand in hand” on “lasting solutions.”¹⁵

AI and Tech Dimensions

- **Meta’s new “Superintelligence Labs” surfaces first internal models**

- Meta CTO Andrew Bosworth told a press briefing on the Davos sidelines that Meta has formed a new AI unit, Meta Superintelligence Labs, which “has produced its initial noteworthy AI models internally this month,” describing the models as “very good.”¹⁶
- He suggested that **2026 and 2027** will be the years when “consumer AI trends firm up,” implying a near-term shakeout in products and platforms as the tech becomes embedded in everyday services.¹⁶
- The briefing, reported by Reuters from Davos, underscores how big-tech players are using the forum to reposition around an “AGI-adjacent” narrative without committing to specific commercialization timelines.¹⁶

- **Saudi Humain and national fund line up up to \$1.2B for AI data centers**

- Reuters reported that Saudi Arabia’s National Infrastructure Fund unit “Infra” and AI firm Humain announced a financing framework at an event in Davos that could total **up to \$1.2 billion** to expand AI and digital infrastructure in the kingdom.¹⁷
- The deal envisages as much as **250 megawatts** of AI data-center capacity for Humain’s customers and explores a joint investment platform to attract global and local institutional investors into Saudi AI infrastructure.¹⁷
- Framed in Davos communications as a regional play to close AI “infrastructure gaps,” this adds a concrete capital commitment to the broader talk about diffusion of AI capabilities beyond the U.S.-China axis.¹⁷

- **Gates Foundation-OpenAI partnership for African health systems**

- At Davos, the Gates Foundation and OpenAI announced **“Horizon1000,” a \$50 million**

partnership to help several African countries use AI to strengthen healthcare systems, starting with Rwanda.¹⁸

- The initiative aims to reach **1,000 primary healthcare clinics and their surrounding communities by 2028**, focusing on regions hit hard by aid cuts and acute health-worker shortages.¹⁸
- Bill Gates argued that “in nations facing significant shortages of healthcare workers and inadequate health system infrastructure, AI can revolutionize access to quality medical care,” positioning AI as one of the “most groundbreaking” technologies yet for development.¹⁸

- **Chip exports and guardrails: Amodei warns on shipping advanced AI chips**

- A U.S. House panel advanced a bill giving Congress more authority over AI chip export controls, and Reuters’ write-up noted that Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, speaking at Davos, said “it would be a big mistake to ship these chips” to certain destinations.¹⁹
- His comments reflect mounting industry support, at least rhetorically, for tighter governance over compute flows, as policymakers try to build a legal perimeter around frontier AI systems.¹⁹
- This dovetails with Davos-wide conversations about AI risk, dual-use capabilities and the need for export regimes that reflect AI’s strategic nature.^{14 19}

- **WEF line: tech as growth engine if governance keeps up**

- In WEF’s Day 2 Davos blog, President Børge Brende argued that “one of the reasons” the world is seeing stronger-than-feared growth is technology, and that “if we get it right, the new technologies can be the new driver of growth for decades to come.”¹⁴
- WEF’s framing couples this optimism with a warning that governance, standards and cross-border cooperation are needed so that AI and related technologies reduce, rather than widen, inequality and geopolitical tension.^{13 14}
- This narrative is echoed in its broader “A Spirit of Dialogue” theme, which explicitly links AI policy to multilateral problem-solving rather than pure competition.^{20 21 22}

Gossip and People

- **Trump dominates Davos mood — walkouts, eye-rolls and relief**

- Bloomberg’s Davos live blog summarized the day bluntly: “Donald Trump dominated the day at Davos,” noting that he made clear he had “no intention of backing down over Greenland” even while saying he “won’t use force.”⁶
- Jamie Dimon used his appearance to warn that a proposed U.S. cap on credit-card interest rates would be an “economic disaster,” injecting a domestic U.S. political fight into the Davos corridor chatter.⁶
- Christine Lagarde reportedly walked out of a private dinner during a provocative speech by Cantor Fitzgerald CEO Howard Lutnick, a detail widely recycled as shorthand for how abrasive some of the off-stage conversations felt this year.⁶

- **Visuals and optics: photos, slogans and “NO KING” snow art**

- WEF’s own “in pictures” piece showed “world leaders and top CEOs” arriving and mingling,

emphasizing the record number of heads of state and unicorn founders under the “A Spirit of Dialogue” banner.²³ ¹⁵

- Euronews coverage highlighted a giant “NO KING” message carved into the snow above Davos and anti-WEF and anti-Trump signs on buildings, timed to his arrival; protesters targeted his Greenland push and broader inequality themes.²⁴
- Supporters were also visible, including a man draped in a U.S. flag and another wearing a MAGA cap, underscoring the polarized street mood around the heavily policed resort.²⁴

- **Pre-Davos and around-Davos protests feed the narrative**

- Earlier in the week, AP footage showed hundreds marching on the steep road into Davos behind a banner reading “No Profit from War,” with Swiss Young Socialists accusing national politicians of “courting warmongers and their profiteers.”²⁵
- Another New York Post video from nearby Zurich showed protesters burning U.S. flags under banners like “Trump Not Welcome” and “Greenland is not for sale” in the run-up to his Davos speech.²⁶
- These visuals fed into a broader storyline of rising anger over inequality and climate in the shadows of the WEF, even as the formal agenda preached dialogue and cooperation.²⁵ ²⁶ ¹³

- **Celebrities and cultural figures on the sidelines**

- People.com’s celebrity photo roundup showed David Beckham “suited up” for an appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos to speak about social media’s impact on young people, with the picture dated Jan. 19 but heavily recirculated this week.²⁷
- Jon Batiste was photographed performing in Davos on Jan. 19 as part of the WEF cultural program, contributing to the usual fusion of policy, business and soft-power performances.²³ ²⁷
- While most celebrity-style coverage clustered around 19–20 January, it fed social chatter during Trump’s visit, reinforcing Davos’ image as equal parts policy summit and high-status social gathering.²⁷ ²³

- **Inside-media ecosystem: panels and “Davos hubs”**

- Bloomberg shows like “Open Interest,” “The China Show” and “Balance of Power” built their 21 January editions around Davos, with segments on Trump’s Greenland push, China’s defense of its growth model, and interviews with Wall Street figures like Ken Griffin on the impact of Trump’s policies.²⁸ ²⁹ ¹¹
- Parallel side-events such as the We Don’t Have Time “Davos Hub” streamed panels on climate, adding an activist and think-tank layer to the official WEF program.³⁰
- These broadcasts function as real-time meta-commentary, shaping the informal narrative of who “won the day” in Davos as much as the official WEF sessions themselves.²⁸ ³⁰ ¹¹

Word count (approx.): 1,055

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