China in New Era: International Relations and Diplomacy

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Civilizational Wisdom
Community with Shared Future
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The International community has increasingly become a community with a shared future, with each having a stake in others, **President Xi Jinping, 2012**

**The Evolution**

The concepts adopted by China and its modern practices of international relations have strong roots in its history and evolution of civilization. It follows the wisdom of Confucius, as he was an advocate of states’ relations on the basis of “order, harmony, respect, ethics and fraternity”.

1. mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. mutual non-aggression
3. mutual non-interference in internal affairs
4. equality and cooperation
5. peaceful coexistence

These principles highlighted one important aspect: China never seeks hegemony; it just strives to have a fair economic and governance system.

President Jiang Zemin took the same line by rejecting alliance-building and arms race and promoting to work together for a better world.

President Hu Jintao echoed the same at the UN in 2005 by deliberating on the concept of a “harmonious world.” He took one step ahead by introducing the concept of humans with a shared destiny. He advocated it at domestic, regional and global forums. He highlighted the importance of the concept on the domestic front in 2007 at the 17th National Congress by referring to the mainland and Taiwan. The global relevance was discussed by him at the 18th National Congress.

President Xi Jinping took it one step ahead and applied it at the global level. He championed the slogan even at the first meeting as Secretary General of CPC with foreign delegates in 2012. He was of the view that the “International community has increasingly become a community with a shared future, with each having a stake in others.” Thus, the credit goes to President Xi that he took the concept at the global level. He persuaded the concept very diligently and in a gradual but practical manner. First, in 2013, he launched the Belt and Road Initiative, which kick-started the process of comprehensive openness and integration in the global economy.

**BRI was the first initiative to fulfill the dreams of China’s rejuvenation, a new era, and a community with a shared prosperity.**

The stated objectives of the BRI are:
1. To enhance policy coordination
2. To improve infrastructure connectivity
3. To reinforce trade and investment cooperation
4. To move forward with financial integration
5. To support people-to-people collaboration

These objectives revolve around the concept of linkages and connectivity with the goal of realizing mutual prosperity. Thus, China has adopted the slogan of win-win cooperation. The BRI is in line with the objective of integration in global order and shares its prosperity with others. It is also one of the prime objectives of international relations policy of China.

China defines international relations differently from the Western international theory and norms. Zhao Tingyang, 2006, highlighted that Chinese ontology of international relations is based on “relations” as against Western ontology, which is based on “things”. Thus, China believes and strives to transform enemies into friends by applying this principle. There are few experts from Western countries who consider that China is self-assuming the role of a friend, tagging the West as exploiters. They also tried to decode the terminology of friendship and came up with the concept of “co-constitution of Self with Other.”

Hence, China tries to build partnerships and avoids alliances. Further, there is a need of practicing a win-win cooperation. The concepts have been presented by President Xi in a very eloquent way:

1. The first concept asks to depart from the past mentality of alliances and work on building partnerships. Alliances need opponents if not enemies, which strive to create winners and losers. In the process it divides the world and people. We have already witnessed the phenomena during the Cold War.
2. The second concept is to engage in a win-win economic and development cooperation. It should avoid the practices which create losers and winners. The widespread inequality across the world is the outcome of this approach. He is equally attentive to the principles of security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of China but not at the cost of other countries. The purpose of all interventions and guidelines provided by President Xi is to promote the concept of shared prosperity. He has emphasized on it at multiple occasions and at different forums, including national, regional and global.

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5 [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/BRI.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/BRI.pdf)
6 BRI will be discussed in detail in Economic Relation chapter
9 Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, Diplomacy Through Shared Prosperity

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China is not only using this as terminology or rhetoric, it is taking practical actions to demonstrate its will to move on the path of shared prosperity. China has successfully avoided the alliance-building by working on partnership building.

From the dawn of the 21st century, China has built numerous partnerships in the shape of forums:

1. Bao Forum
2. Macau Forum
3. China- Africa Cooperation, 2000
7. China-CEEC “17+1 cooperation

China also adopted the policy of building partnerships with the existing regional and international forums like,

2. China-EU

The forums are built on the principles of non-conditionality, equality, mutual-benefit, and non-interference in internal affairs, which echoed the spirit of Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. However, the Western experts term it as an effort to present China as an alternative to the Washington Consensus, especially in those countries which are facing difficulties10.

China not only built the forum but also launched different types, programs, and funds to support member states of the forum. China-Africa Development Fund one such example, has been created to assist the African countries, which are in need of financial assistance and investment.

However, the biggest intervention on the diplomatic front is the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It was established just before the introduction of a new thinking in foreign policy of China by President Hu.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

It is one of the unique organizations created by China in collaboration with Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. It was created with the objective of “Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions” among member states. The

10 http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68280/1/Alden_China's%20regional%20forum%20diplomacy.pdf
organization was successful in achieving the prescribed objective, which gave confidence to member states. It led to expand membership of the organization. Today it has 8 members, 4 observer states and 6 dialogue partners. It has also built linkages with the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2005, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2005, the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2007, the Economic Cooperation Organization in 2007, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2011, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 2014, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in 2015 and African Union in 201811.

The SCO is also a unique organization as it has been established on the principle of “partnership” against the existing practice of alliances. The partnership principle highlights the importance of equity, diversity and unity and that every member must be heard in the decision-making. The partnership approach also provides space to member states as they do not have any binding commitment. They are free to take decisions at any other forum.

It is a regional organization which is host to four nuclear powers, i.e., China, Russia, India and Pakistan. It is home to 45 percent population of the world (China and India the only countries in the world with a population of more than one billion). It also has member countries with a higher percentage of youth, like Pakistan, which enables these countries to benefit from future opportunities. The region occupies 25.88 percent of the land mass. The economic size of the organization is also huge. It has been noted that it constitutes 21 percent of the world’s GDP. In 2018, the total volume of trade among member states was US$ 337 billion and China was a major trading partner. On the bilateral level, China is already deeply connected with all countries, e.g., Russia (US$ 106.65 billion) and India (US$ 95.87 billion) were major trading partners in 201812.

A few years ago, a proposal came from the Prime Minister of China to work on a Free Trade Agreement. It was envisioned that FTA would be a positive step to enhance trade linkages among the SCO members. It is a rational proposal due to:

1. Market size, 45 percent population
2. Economic giants, like China
3. Huge trade volume
4. Short distances

The only bottleneck is infrastructure where China and Russia are trying to fill the gap. China, through the BRI, has taken numerous initiatives to build road and rail networks. Russia, through Eurasia, is also trying to lay down the infrastructure to facilitate trade.

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11 SCO website
12 Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and COVID-19

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President Xi Jinping has recently launched two specific initiatives. First, he established a dedicated economic zone with the name of “China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Zone.” It has been envisioned that through the zone China will enhance relations in the fields of trade, investment, technology, tourism etc. President Xi Jinping has also proposed to establish a development bank at the SCO with the name of SCO Development Bank\textsuperscript{13}. It has been proposed by keeping in mind the requirements and needs of member states, especially the less developed countries. China has accelerated efforts to make the SCO an international organization with greater relevance. That’s why China, in collaboration with other member states, has put the SCO on expansion mode. Pakistan and India are the first countries which have been accepted as full member after the entrance of Uzbekistan.

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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Has 4 nuclear armed states as its key players</td>
<td>• While the SCO has successfully resolved the border disputes between China and Russia, the potential for future issues has not been completely diffused due to competition of interests in the CARs</td>
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<td>• Has a huge economic potential with average GDP growth rate of the region is recorded to be 7.85%\textsuperscript{1}</td>
<td>• While the SCO has expressed commitment towards consultative agenda setting and resolution of issues, the economic direction of SCO has been dominated by China whereas the security dimension has been dominated largely by Russia so far</td>
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<td>• Has vast untapped natural resources which have the potential to meet the growing energy needs of the region at a cheaper cost</td>
<td>• The entry of India and Pakistan into the SCO has the potential to slow down the overall pace of cooperation and regional integration due to their bilateral issues</td>
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<td>• It is a flexible organization which focuses on cooperation rather than bonding</td>
<td>• The SCO is viewed as a threat by the West as it largely views it as military alliance against NATO</td>
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<td>• It aims to achieve its goals of improving economic relations, enhancing trade integration, improving security situation within the SCO region and curbing the menace of arms and drug trafficking without interfering in the domestic affairs of the states</td>
<td>• As an organization it is chronically underfunded</td>
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<td>• It believes in respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity and settling issues through mutual consultations</td>
<td>• As a group it does not have much sway in Afghanistan</td>
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<td>• SCO is more facilitating in providing observer status to regional countries and bodies than other organizations</td>
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<td>• SCO also provides a platform for adversarial states such as Pakistan and India to conduct joint military exercises</td>
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<td>• It has successfully settled the territorial disputes between China and Russia</td>
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<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<td>• To make the SCO region an energy exporting hub</td>
<td>• 3 evils – terrorism, extremism and separatism</td>
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<td>• To fight developmental challenges of poverty, illiteracy, food security etc. by making use increased regional connectivity through BRI</td>
<td>• Domestic instabilities in SCO countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creation of SCO Free Trade Zones to tap into the huge potential of trade among SCO countries</td>
<td>• Instability in Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
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<td>• To set up an SCO Development Bank to help the SCO member states speed up their growth prospects</td>
<td>• Rivalry between India and Pakistan</td>
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<td>• To use common currency similar to EU</td>
<td>• Lack of infrastructure to enhance trade integration in the region</td>
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<td>• To break the dominance of dollar as prime reserve currency and help the SCO countries come out financial crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To set up SCO Culture and Tourism Corridors and give a boost to tourism industry</td>
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\textsuperscript{13} SCO website

\textsuperscript{14} Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Pakistan

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China has also offered generous support to the member states during COVID-19. A dedicated forum was held to discuss the opportunities and ways to enhance cooperation to combat the challenge of COVID-19 and give new impetus to economic development in member states.

**Critique**

However, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization also faces criticism on multiple accounts. First, the West considers it as a rival organization to NATO. They consider it a security organization to protect the interests of China and Russia. They are also trying to draw a parallel between the SCO and NATO. But there are no parallels, as NATO was established as an alliance to fulfill the security aspirations and using military to secure the region. While the SCO was established as partnership to secure peace through dialogue and political means for sustainable development of the region. In the security domain, the SCO concentrates on three evils: extremism, terrorism and separatism. Since its inception, the organization is working on these areas and successfully implemented a few initiatives.

Second, criticism against the SCO is that it only serves the interests of China and Russia at the expense of other members. This is not true as the organization is based on the concept of “partnership” where every member is free to take a decision.

Third, member states could not divert the required resources to strengthen the organization. It is true, as in the past, the SCO lacked the resources but in the last two years China is working hard to bridge this gap.

Fourth, the inclusion of independent think tanks is still a concern. At the moment, only state-sponsored think tanks are part of the SCO.

**Diplomacy in the New Era**

*Community with a Shared Future*

The new-era diplomacy can be best understood by analyzing the contribution and lead of President Hu Jintao and President Xi Jinping. To understand diplomacy in the new world, it would be a requirement to have an understanding of the Chinese civilization, role of Confucius, Tao, Sun Zu and post-revolution era from 1949 onwards. In post revolution era, thoughts of Chairman Mao are most important.

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However, the focus of this book is New Era, thus, we will only delve on the contribution of President Hu (short description) and President Xi, in detail, by dividing them into two periods.

**First Period: President Hu Jintao**

President Hu Jintao took a major step by redefining the diplomacy of China. He used the term “constructive engagement” instead of just sticking to non-interference. By respecting sovereignty of every country, China started to focus on how to engage in a constructive manner. The new policy led the expansion of Chinese interaction with the rest of the world. It also sown the seeds of a comprehensive opening.

China used different tools, but the focus remained on a win-win engagement. The economic linkages expanded manifold and within years it became the second largest economy of the world. Chinese companies started to follow suit and expanded their operations across the world, such as China Mobile in Pakistan. Environmental engagement became one of the most prominent indicators of constructive engagement. A country which was usually criticized on environmental grounds started to take active part in global environmental governance.

President Hu also asked the world to reform the global system in a constructive manner and build on the principles of equity and fair play. However, he described the role of China as “active participation”\(^\text{16}\). In the light of his vision of active participation, China started to participate actively in different global platforms. We can observe this change from the examples of China’s participation in the UNFCCC climate change negotiations and its role in Bali in 2007, etc.

**President Xi Jinping’s Vision**

The real impetus in the new era diplomacy came after President Xi’s appearance as General Secretary of CPC. As Secretary General, he started to reform global strategies and policies of the country. He introduced the concept of “no more tolerance to foul mouthing or foul play” and actively secured sovereignty and interests of the country. The vision of a shared community is another area which has been prescribed by him as his goal to achieve for China\(^\text{17}\).

**The Vision**

President Xi is a keen student of Chinese Civilization, wisdom, and communism. He always seeks guidance from there and tries to follow it. It is widely believed that the concept of “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” has been drawn from the teachings of elders and communism. Hence, we infer that the concept of diplomacy in

\(^{16}\) Abstract from different speeches of President Hu Jintao at different forums  
\(^{17}\) Abstract from different speeches delivered and books on the Governance by President Xi

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the new era has also been inspired from the wisdom of elders and teachings of communism. The argument can be supported by one reference to Chairman Mao’s theory of “Three Worlds Diplomacy”. Chairman Mao was convinced that the first world exploits the third world and it’s the responsibility of the second tier to save the third world from first world’s exploitation. Now, if we analyze President Xi’s vision of the international system based on fairness and equality, it is exactly in line with the vision of Chairman Mao.

The first glimpses of President Xi Jinping’s vision came from the speech at the 18th Congress, 2012. He elaborated his idea and spelled out his intentions to change China’s international relations policy and practices. He was convinced that it was time to change the pattern of diplomacy to accommodate the changes of the post-reform era and aspirations of the future. Experts have highlighted that the shift in diplomacy is also due to China’s changing needs and policies. More precisely, China shifted its diplomacy from the concept of “serving development needs” to “serving China’s dream”. Hence, many scholars define it as the third era of diplomacy. As the first era of diplomacy under Chairman Mao was considered as “revolutionary diplomacy” and the reform-era diplomacy was tagged as “development diplomacy”.

In order to achieve the bigger goal, President Xi has introduced reforms not only in policy, practices but also in the institutional structure of diplomacy. The policy is strictly watched, and the top leadership of CPC plays a leading and decisive role. Party leadership continuously looks for ways to refine policy in the light of changing needs and dynamics. President Xi himself led the leadership. The centralized role is considered important to avoid an unnecessary tug of war among the institutions in different fields.

On the implementation side, there is decentralization to a greater extent, but the institutional role and arrangement is interesting. For example, for economic and trade relations the Ministry of Commerce, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance and People’s Bank of China are playing a good role. For cultural diplomacy, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and the Information Office of State Council are striving to play their role. Military diplomacy also involves a strong role of the PLA. Thus, President Xi has devised the policy and implementation framework in such a way that “the best actor leads the play”.

**Implementation**

President Xi Jinping started his journey as President with the launch of Belt and Road Initiative. He was convinced that without sharing prosperity there is no rationale in claiming the status of a responsible state. In this way, China would not be different from other major powers of the world. It will also not be good for the sustainability of

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economic growth and development of China. More importantly, China will never be able to secure the vision of a shared future. Thus, he launched the BRI.

By launching the BRI, he offered the world to be part of China’s fortune. He urged his government and the business community to actively devise tools to achieve the goal of BRI, and Community with Shared Prosperity. The BRI started to grow and now 136 states and many international organizations have become part of it. The importance of BRI can be judged from the actions taken by China during the COVID-19. First, China made sure the investment under the BRI must continue. Second, China also helped BRI countries to combat the challenge of COVID-19. China provided the protective instruments and shared its experience. Now China is providing vaccine to poor countries across the world.

China became more vocal about its sovereignty and asked the world for a fair treatment. Assertiveness emerged from the actions of China. First, China put it foot down on the issue of its claim of East and South China Sea. China told the world that it was China’s legitimate right to get hold of East and South China Sea in the light of historical facts. China has actively pursued its rights and deployed the required instruments of security. In 2013, China declared an air identification zone in East China Sea. Japan and Taiwan (which is also part of China) also claim the airspace of the zone but China is firm on its claims. Other major areas of interest for China are Paracel, Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal.

The USA is trying to undermine China’s effort in the East and South of China by engaging regional players. It is leading the drive against China in East and South China Sea. In 2018, the USA launched Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOPs) to protect the economic, security and political interests of the USA. It has built alliances with regional countries and urged them to go against the claims of China. However, the regional countries are avoiding to toe the USA’s line. The USA is also pushing international bodies (which are dominated by western countries) to act against the interests of China, but China has refused to accept any pressure. Rejection of the decision of Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague is one example. The USA has also created a group of countries (Japan, India, Thailand, Australia) to counter China in the region, which are actively pursuing the USA policy.

Despite all these actions and policies China is firm on its stance and not ready to move an inch from its claims. China has made it clear that South China Sea is a matter of China’s sovereignty and China will not compromise on it.

Second, an important example is the issue of Taiwan. China never recognized it as a country. It considers Taiwan part of the mainland, like Hong Kong and Macau. China has asked the world to avoid direct contact with Taiwan. In recent times, the USA with the help of allies like Japan, India, Australia and some EU countries started to differ from China. They are working to exploit the situation in their interest and pressurize


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China. However, their efforts did not have any effect on China, and it is committed to its stated policy that Taiwan is part of China. It has declared that any attempt to separate Taiwan from China would be an act of war and will be repelled with full force. China has increased patrolling in the area. Third, China also did not give any heed to the Western propaganda about Hong Kong. China maintains that Hong Kong is its internal matter, and no one will be allowed to interfere in the internal matters of China.

These examples indicate that China will no more tolerate external interference and comprise on its legitimate rights. It is part of China’s policy of “no more tolerance to foul mouthing or foul play”. Mr. Wang, foreign minister and state councilor, put in words by saying, “We never pick a fight or bully others. But we have principles and guts. We will push back any deliberate insult, resolutely defend our national honor and dignity, and we will refute all groundless slander with facts”.21

However, China feels that peaceful coexistence must be a principle of global interaction and order. For that purpose, the world will have to change the existing systems of interaction and refine it according to the needs and requirement of the world, and China is no exception. China needs it on an urgent basis as the country is facing multiple malicious campaigns and barriers to a peaceful rise of China.

These circumstances compelled China to look for new means at the global level to defy the impact of these campaigns and ensure its sovereignty. Thus, China started to reshape its engagement at the diplomatic front. The first thing was to refine its stance on the role of global institutes and the required reforms. China, under the leadership of President Xi, is a staunch supporter of the global system. He has mentioned many times the central and leading role of the UN and other global institutes. In his speech at the UN at the 75th anniversary of UN he re-emphasized the importance of the UN and its central role. He also urged for meaningful reforms and equal respect for every country, irrespective of their economic status.

President Xi suggested four major interventions for the UN. First, the UN must stand firm on the issue of justice. No one should be allowed to exploit the system in its favor. Everyone should be treated equally and given equal respect, irrespective of their development status. Second, the UN must uphold the rule of law. No one should bully others and institutions must be prime in decision-making and implementation. Third, cooperation must be promoted by the UN and it should play a leading role. It is key to sustain the global order and solve major problems of the world. However, cooperation must be based on equality and no one should be preferred over the other. Fourth, the UN must promote real actions and come out of the mode of talks only. It should also speed up work and take real actions to combat problems like climate change, pandemics, poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation, etc.

He reiterated the same sentiments at another UN conference about biodiversity. President Xi Jinping, in his address at the summit on biodiversity, highlighted the

21 https://thegeopolitics.com/a-new-era-for-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/
importance of the slogan, “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth” for COP-15. He advocated for urgent actions, which must be devised by keeping nature at heart and looking for harmony between humans and nature. He emphasized that beautiful nature is essential for a beautiful life. Biodiversity must be a priority in national and global planning and execution of plans. He put forwarded four proposals to achieve the goal of eco-civilization and a beautiful world.

First, the world need to adhere to eco-civilization as it will provide the basis for sustainable basis. He was of the view that industrial civilization, no doubt, created huge wealth but it also had an impact on biodiversity and created problems of environmental degradation and climate change. Second, he asked to stick to multilateralism as it will provide a footing to fight challenges. There is a need to cooperate as problems are huge and no country can fight them alone; more specifically, no country has the resources to fight them alone. The Convention on Biodiversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement provide us ground to collaborate for combating challenges unitedly. He reiterated the importance of the UN and its centrality for future.

Third, green development should be promoted. We need to work on it, especially in post-COVID-19 era. He said that “our solutions are in nature”. We have to balance development in such a manner that nature and development move hand in hand. Fourth, he reiterated that there is a need to take strong actions. The world should move from talks to actions, but the principle of differentiated responsibility must be applied. As every country has different resources and capabilities, so the responsibility should be assigned according to these indicators. He also highlighted the actions being taken by China, especially in the field of forestation and efforts to transform the economy. He also ensured the world that China will take all necessary actions to combat the challenges of environment, biodiversity and climate change in a holistic manner.

This is not the first instance; President Xi is working on it for many years. He has already reformed and speeded up the efforts of China for reforms in the global system. President Xi had taken a bold step and moved one step forward from President Hu’s policy of active participation. He has infused the spirit of “leading active role” in global governance and reforms of the system. He urged foreign policy officials to take an active role in reforming the global system, at the “Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs,” held in Beijing, 2018. Although the official statement came in 2018 but the process was started earlier.

China is now working to sustain and strengthen the global system. In times of uncertainty China is trying to provide certainty to the global system, which was required. President Xi has shown his commitment at multiple forums, including the United Nations, World Economic Forum, etc. China is proving its commitment by actions. For example, despite all negative campaigns, China is championing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Another example is organization of Biodiversity Conference in times of COVID-19. There are many examples.
Soft or cultural diplomacy is another feather in the cap of the New Era. China has its own history of culture. Confucius and Tao are stalwarts among others. Confucius’ teachings and wisdom have influenced the whole world. Both described respect for the other’s culture an important element for state-to-state relations22. The Yellow emperor also played a leading role in defining the historical contribution of Chinese’s culture. He is considered father of many inventions, including Chinese calendar, arts and football etc.23. Chinese cuisine also has its own takers and it is one of the most popular cuisines of the world. History tells us that China has always tried to build on their contribution to the global society. Thus, cultural diplomacy has always been part of China’s diplomacy.

However, modern-day cultural diplomacy started with the writings of Wang Hunning24. He urged the leadership to deploy it with more energy and vigor. He partly disagrees with Nye’s theory of soft power, which focuses on creating “influence”. He termed it as a source of peaceful coexistence. On the political leadership, President Hu Jintao reemphasized the importance of soft culture diplomacy and its inclusion in the national policy framework. President Xi completely overhauled the concept and made it the key area by saying, “culture is nation and country’s spirit”.

President Xi Jinping has reformed the cultural system and emphasized on the inclusion of socialist core values and promotion of the cultural industry. He wants to present China as a responsible, reliable soft power through culture. He also respects other cultures and wants to work in a diverse cultural environment. Last year, during his speech at the UN, he specifically called for respect for diversity and cultures of all countries. Further, he urged the world leadership to be fair in treating other cultures and nations.

Simultaneously, China is taking practical steps to assist the states. China has identified a wide range of areas of soft power. The leading areas are education, art, media and cuisine, etc. These areas have been identified due to their role in conveying the message in a sustainable way.

Education is one of the most interesting and less discussed subject of China’s soft diplomacy. In recent years, China has shown enormous development on this front. It

22 Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, Understanding China for Future Cooperation
is investing about 1 trillion yuan (US$164 billion) annually on education. This is in line with the policy of President Xi to focus on education for quality human capital and better generations. China is also on a fast track to become one of the leading countries for education for international students. According to China’s Ministry of Education, 1004 higher education institutes were hosting international students in 2018. Around 492,185 students were studying in China. China is also offering scholarships. Around 63,041 students received scholarships while 429,144 (87.1 percent) were self-funded\(^\text{25}\). Statistics show a marvelous story of development of China’s standing in the education sector.

Chinese cuisine is another element of China’s soft diplomacy. The cuisine has its own history and is popular among masses since centuries. Chinese cuisine kept on evolving and absorbing local ingredients and names. For example, chop suey in the USA evolved to American chop suey and in India the cuisine has evolved into chindian, which has its own market. China has renewed its efforts and started to introduce many local or community-based cuisines in addition to the existing ones.

Art, culture and language are other instruments, which China has deployed. President Xi is urging literary and art people to be torchbearers. He is asking them to present the country in its true form and secure respect for the Chinese culture. He is not only verbally asking but has also introduced many reforms and enhanced spending on culture. He is also focused on the film industry through investment and more freedom and now the industry is growing. China’s cinema is huge, which it is using as an instrument of cooperation with film industries of other countries. Owning to the size of cinema, other countries want to benefit from this huge market. The market size has also forced the foreign industry to change their perception of China and tell a true story and culture of China. In addition to that, China is also busy in co-producing with the foreign industry by adhering to the Chinese principles. The principles articulated by President Xi, are the best instruments to know other countries by adhering to the principle of respect\(^\text{26}\).

The role of language has been identified long ago and China established an official language department in 1987. However, President Xi has revolutionized the focus on the language education. He is focusing on language because it is a basic and best instrument to present China in a comprehensible way. China is promoting language through the Confucius Institutes and established 548 Confucius institutes till 2018 and 1193 Confucius classrooms\(^\text{27}\).


The opponents are opposing the new diplomacy by tagging it with different concepts and are opposing China’s diplomatic efforts and contributions. Although China is building its image as a soft power and trying to share its prosperity, but it is still facing a stern opposition. The analysis highlighted that there are two areas which concern the West or the developed world: 1) Why China is changing and 2) Can the world have an alternative to the West? Zhiqun Zhu highlighted the same for the Diplomat magazine in these words, “China is transiting from conservative, passive, and low-key to assertive, proactive, and high-profile”. He elaborated that China has become more active in pursuing its objectives and does not hesitate to reply. He is also the point of view that it does not happen overnight rather it evolved slowly and steadily from 2010 onward.

The Western stance can be understood by decoding two terminologies coined by the West and India;

1. Debt diplomacy
2. Wolf warrior diplomacy

**Debt Trap Diplomacy**

Despite massive investment, China is facing criticism from the opponents. They consider the investment under the BRI is a debt trap. They invented a new terminology, “Debt Diplomacy” to malign the BRI. It was done to undermine the investment of China and put stumbling blocks in the way of Chinese investment. The term of debt-trap diplomacy was first coined by an Indian to criticize Chinese investment. The term was immediately picked by the Guardian and New York Time. It spread among western think tanks and media outlets. It was also used by policy circles and intelligence agencies. It attracted a huge audience on the internet and became one of the most searched items. Although it was happening much before the launch of New Year policy but it got impetus after the terminology was adopted. It was reported in November 2018, in 0.52 second there were 199000 clicks to search debt trap diplomacy. Deborah Brautigam pointed out that the paranoia was created by using the fear and spreading negativity against China.

The opponents marked Sri Lanka as entry point and a wide-ranging campaign was run to malign Chinese investment and damage the image of China. The port of Hambantota was used for running the propaganda drive.

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28 [https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/](https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/)
30 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337816614_A_critical_look_at_Chinese_%27debt-trap_diplomacy%27_the_rise_of_a_meme](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337816614_A_critical_look_at_Chinese_%27debt-trap_diplomacy%27_the_rise_of_a_meme)
In reality, the debt crisis in Sri Lanka was due to two prominent reasons, 1) borrowing from western institutions, especially from private institutes and 2) sudden change in the interest rate of the US dollar due to easing the program. These created problems for Sri Lanka and the cost of borrowing increased. Sri Lanka was in dire need of financial resources. In these circumstances, Sri Lanka had to convince the Chinese firm to accept the lease of Hambantota against the amount of US$ 1.1 billion. Sri Lanka used this money to repay other loans. The most important thing to note here is that, it was not debt to asset swap, rather it was done to manage the urgent needs of Sri Lanka on the request of Sri Lanka31.

It was not new for China. The first the campaign was launched in Africa. China was criticized for its investment and the opponents of China tried their best to prove Chinese investment as a debt trap. The campaign was run without considering the needs of African countries. African countries were in need of huge investment in infrastructure, to build the industrial base and modernize agriculture. China was trying to fill this gap.

Western countries, especially the USA, also devised other instruments to cut the journey of China’s rise. Secretary, Rex Tillerson termed the relationship as predatory financing. John Bolton accused China of using bribes, weak agreements and using debt as instrument of diplomatic influence32. He was of the point view that these investments and BRI are only designed to assist China’s rise to become a global power.33. Hillary Clinton tried to coin the term “new colonialism”. Barack Obama also used his speech to cautiously bring the employment issue34.

The Western thinks tanks, policy makers and media are also trying to convince Pakistan that CPEC is part of a debt trap diplomacy. However, they are not able to present any solid evidence of data35.

In a nutshell, the Chinese Go Global policy or Diplomacy in New Era met with abstract media reports and not the reality of scientific evidence.

**Wolf Warrior Diplomacy**


35 [https://gprjournal.com/admin/Author/31rviloI2ALJouq9hkR/9qpsz1wgru.pdf](https://gprjournal.com/admin/Author/31rviloI2ALJouq9hkR/9qpsz1wgru.pdf)
Another favorite terminology to undermine China is “wolf warrior diplomacy”\(^{36}\). The Western media and experts do not miss any instance to criticize it.

An analysis published by The Brookings Institute also tried to toe the line. The authors tried to make a point that Chinese diplomats are using twitter to spread their version of facts. The analysis criticized the approach and specially targeted Chinese diplomat Lijian Zhao\(^{37}\). The Bloomberg report also followed suit and tried to undermine China’s stance. The report used the event of Australian soldiers’ criticism of abusing the Afghan people. China’s foreign spokesperson highlighted the event of misuse of power and humiliation inflicted on the Afghan people at the hands of Australian soldiers\(^{38}\). It is astonishing to note that the analysis gave less importance to the humans, but criticism of China was prominent. It is surprising to note as the West always portrays itself as “the ultimate defender or superhero of human rights”.

Second, many countries are looking at China as an alternative to the West. There are multiple reasons of this belief but the most prominent are: 1) non-interference in domestic affairs, 2) no Washington Consensus, and 3) respect of sovereignty. China has demonstrated his will through concrete steps taken through the BRI or other bilateral cooperation. It is helping China to build the image of a partner, not an investor. China also does not ask countries to toe its policy at international forums. China does not send NGOs or institutes to teach reforms or tell the benefits of Chinese system. Hence, countries are more comfortable in dealing with China.

\textbf{The Question to Ask?}

The two points give one legitimate question, why is the West against China? The reason is simple; the West is caught up in a superiority complex and they are not ready to accept anyone else. Thus, they assume that they can say anything about anyone, but no one should be allowed to question the West. It is clear from the analysis of Bloomberg, Brookings Institute and others. Moreover, we can also find evidence from the speeches of Western leaders like Mike Pompeo, etc.

Furthermore, the West thinks that if anyone questions the West; he is a conspiracy theorist or fake news spreader or promoting the agenda of non-democratic forces. It is convenient for them to blame rather than engage in a dialogue.

Stephen Nagy and Hanh Nguyen introduced new dimension to this discourse by saying, “Cowboy Diplomacy Meets Wolf Warrior Diplomacy”. Although the paper focused on criticizing China, but the terminology of “cowboy” is interesting\(^{39}\). I infer

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^{36}\) \url{https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/BG3504.pdf}
  \item \(^{37}\) \url{https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomats-use-and-abuse-twitter/}
  \item \(^{38}\) \url{https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2020-12-04/welcome-to-wolf-warrior-diplomacy}
  \item \(^{39}\) \url{https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stephen_Nagy/publication/345125515_Cowboy_Diplomacy}
\end{itemize}
that when the West will be going for the cowboy it will be met with the wolf-warrior style of diplomacy”. It also seems to be a confession that the West applies tools of cowboy style where they want to get the desired results. Maybe calling China’s diplomacy wolf warrior diplomacy in reality is a tactics of cowboy diplomacy.

**Community with a Shared Future**

The international relations of China can be comprehended by understanding the Chinese Civilization, wisdom of the elders: Confucius, Tao, Sun Zu and practitioners like the Yellow Emperor and Chairman Mao. President Xi’s efforts in the modern era help to summarize it as, 1) it is the outcome of socialism with Chinese characteristics, 2) it is the interpretation of Chinese values, 3) it is the application of Chinese version of a harmonious world and 4) it is meant to achieve a community with a shared future.

Thus, the theory of “relations” has been put forward as a guiding instrument. The notion of relations highlight that we are one, so we need to act with care. The actions of one should not be harmful or disadvantageous for the other. It has been decided by China that it needs to act and not deliver lectures only, as the President said at the UN, *there must be a cure, not just a therapy.*

The cure, which China has proposed, is community with a shared future. Hence, China is working on it since long. The first glimpse came from the adaptation of Go Global policy. The policy has strong roots in the vision of Chairman Mao’s Three Worlds. He was of the opinion that the first world is exploiting the third world, which is turning the world into a home of problems. He was of the view that China must act and try to protect the third world from the first world.

China in the New Era is again pursuing the same objectives with a certain refinement and new vigor. President Xi has introduced the concept of “community with a shared future” and made it the principle of international relations of China.

He did not wait for the world and made it the responsibility of China to play its role. He launched the Belt and Road Initiative to share Chinese prosperity with the rest of the world. The BRI has been designed by applying principles of win-win cooperation and community with a shared future. As the guiding principle of all investments is that it must be “productive investments” and non-productive investments or loans must be avoided. Thus, the loans and investments under the BRI will help to break the web of debt trap by generating revenues and lead to prosperity at a larger scale.

World Bank studies in 2019 validated this notion by analyzing the potential benefits of the BRI, which would be enormous and multidimensional. The studies highlighted that the benefits will be for everyone, whether they are members of the BRI or not. The studies summarizes the benefits as; 1) travel time will be reduced by 12 percent in BRI

_Cowboy-Diplomacy-Meets-Wolf-Warrior-Diplomacy-All-Politics-are-Local.pdf_
and 3 percent in Non-BRI countries, 2) trade will increase by 2.7-9.7 percent, in BRI and 1.7-6.2 percent, non-BRI countries, 3) real income will be enhanced by 1.2-3.4 percent and 0.7-2.9 percent, in BRI and Non-BRI economies, respectively. It has also been calculated that one percent increase in global GDP due to BRI will add US$ 930 billion in the prices of base year of 2014.

The BRI will also help bring down poverty. It is estimated that the 7.6 million extreme poor (US$1.90 per day) and 32 million moderately poor (US$3.20 per day) will break the poverty trap. It is pertinent to mention here that these projections were made on the infrastructure investments during the first five years. If we include all future investments, especially in the field of industry and agriculture, the impact would be huge. It will definitely help the world, especially the least developed countries to pursue the dream of development.

This is only one example, China has also launched many initiatives, including the Shanghai Import Expo, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China-Africa Development Fund, Silk Route Fund, etc. These institutes have been established with the purpose to contribute to the development agenda of the world.

Thus, we can infer that these actions will enhance the prosperity of the world and pave the way toward the “community with a shared future”.

**Conclusion**

The discussion above shows that China under the leadership of President Xi has adopted a smart, aggressive and wise policy of international relations. China is not in a mood to tolerate any unjust act or policy of the West. It is a great transformation from a passive and low-profile country to being active and high profile. China has come out of the submissive attitude and is ready to talk the offenders in their own language. We observed that China is now ready to face any situation with more confidence. This has shocked the West as they are not used to so such a situation. For more than two centuries they are in the driving seat. But now the situation is changing, at least for China.

However, China is moving with care and wisdom. It does not want to disturb the world order or peace. Thus, China is trying to play its true role at the global level by adopting a refined policy of international relations. It wants to show that China as a nation is a responsible nation and believes in sharing. The core message of all policies and actions is that China believes that the world is a “community with a shared future”. Hence, the world will have to act in a coherent and cooperative way to secure the interests of the community.

Unfortunately, it seems that world’s major powers are not receptive to the China’s message. They are showing resistance to the peaceful rise of China and do not seem
in a mood to give fair treatment to China. They are trying to oppose every action of China and undermining the initiatives with different terminologies, like wolf warrior diplomacy, etc. It has been observed that the basic element of conflict is that the West is not ready to accept that any country can succeed by adhering to its own model of development and governance.

Thus, it is expected that China will face more opposition in the coming days and years. It would be a test for the wisdom of China that how it tackles the challenges.

However, the fundamental message of humanity is still its guiding principle. As President Xi has mentioned again and again that China believes in “community with a shared future” and will do everything to preserve it.

**Suggestions**

The analysis above shows that China has adopted a wise policy to avoid conflicts but is also trying to present its point of view in a meaningful way. Despite opposition, China is heading in the right direction. However, there are few areas where China needs to improve. Hence, we have tried to chalk out a few suggestions for consideration.

1. **Tools of Diplomacy:** China heavily relies on State instruments, which sometime does not produce the desired results. The major factors of this shortcoming are 1) limited space for the state to play 2) responsibility dilemma, 3) easy to defy by opponents by tagging it to government statement. Hence, China will have to modify the instruments of diplomacy. The suggestion would be to engage the academia, think tanks and non-governmental bodies. The academia from universities can play a leading role due to their position as teachers and thinkers. The think tanks can bring in independent voices and can also present solutions. The independency of think tanks would be an additional benefit to strengthen the point of view. For example, China is a great advocate of equity, development and environmental solutions. These are all the subjects which fascinate the think tanks and NGOs.

2. **International Forums:** Presently, China does not have many avenues to present its case in its true sense. Thus, it is suggested that China should create its own forums like the World Economic Forum. One suggestion on this front is to create a World Prosperity Forum. It is one of the relevant subjects, as President Xi promotes the concept at home and abroad. Other suggestions can be to create forums on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Eco-civilization, etc. China should also create some awards with global relevance and recognition in the fields of art, culture drama, literature, science, academia etc.

3. **Avoid Western Mistakes:** China continues to pursue the dream of “community with a shared future” by promoting diversity as a key factor of engagement. It is a good sign, but China should also try to avoid the mistakes
of the West like emphasizing on *our system, our values, our economy, etc.* The reason to highlight this point is that because such thinking leads to arrogance which is disastrous for any nation. The West is paying the price of such behavior. It is also against the slogan of “community with a shared future” which has been promoted by President Xi.