



24 July 2020

‘CICIR’S ASSESSMENT OF CHINA’S MAJOR COUNTRY DIPLOMACY’

by JAYADEVA RANADE

‘SUMMARY’

The Chinese Institutes of Contemporary International Research (CICIR), a think-tank of China’s Ministry of State Security, published its analysis of ‘Chinese Major Country Diplomacy’ in May this year. The 9-page report authored by Chen Xiangyang, Director of the Research Group at CICIR, was divided into 6 sections titled: (i) Relations with Major Countries; (ii) Neighbour Countries; (iii) Global Governance; (iv) Protect Sovereignty against Foreign Intervention; (v) National Day Celebrations; and (vi) A New Era.

2. The analysis observed that despite facing many challenges since 2019, “Chinese diplomacy has gained more space from the “strategic gambling” with the US and other major countries”. It expressed confidence that as China’s diplomacy had overcome the difficulties in 2019, it “will overcome all difficulties”.

3. Interestingly, the report did not enumerate the various negative developments that have occurred in China-US relations except in general terms, though it was critical of the US. Hinting at long-term tension in the relationship, the CICIR report observed that “pragmatism” and “prudence” would be best for dealing with the “enduring challenges from the US.”

4. There was specific mention of India – though not of the tensions that have built up since early May this year – with the report stating that “India’s unilateral move to change the legal status of Kashmir could deal a lethal blow to India-Pakistan relations”. It also said “China accused New Delhi of undermining its own and Pakistani territorial sovereignty and national interests”.

5. A detailed report is appended.

(The author is a former Additional Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India and is presently President of the Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.)



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2. Discussing 'Relations with Major Countries', the report noted that despite being confronted by trade frictions with the US in 2019, which was also the 40th anniversary of establishment of China-US relations, China held 13 rounds of negotiations between 2018 and October 2019 to try and settle differences and achieved positive progress in agricultural products and Intellectual Property Protection. The report observed that in Sino-US relations, head-of-state diplomacy plays a leading role and Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump have strengthened consultations and negotiations through phone calls. It stopped short of listing the developments in the US-China trade war after June 2019. It observed, however, that the US had since June 2019 "discouraged and banned bilateral normal people-to-people exchanges" and China had to protect the "lawful rights and interests of Chinese enterprises and people". It had also "warned the US that it is not a zero sum game now". The report said that "hundreds of US experts in academic, diplomatic, military and business circles have declared they want better Sino-US relations" and that "US scientific institutions and think-tanks have also called on the Trump Administration to stop bashing foreign scientists and researchers and deterring international scientific cooperation".

3. This section of the report stated that China has deepened strategic collaboration with Russia, and pointed to the June 2019 joint statement on strengthening global strategic stability as "one indication that bilateral relations are at an unprecedentedly high level". The third point under 'Relations with Major Countries' noted China's stronger cooperation with "newly rising countries". It said Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi had "agreed measures should be taken to resolve the border dispute" and that during Brazilian President Bolsonaro's visit in October 2019 they decided to expand Belt and Road cooperation. At the 11th BRICS Summit the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa confirmed they would strengthen cooperation in hi-tech trade.

4. It mentioned that China-Europe ties "inspires global confidence" and that during Xi Jinping's visits to Italy and France "consensus on global governance, Iran nuclear issue, trade,

Belt and Road cooperation have been reached". On differences between China and Europe regarding Hongkong and Xinjiang, China had "urged some European countries to take prudent actions about China's territorial integrity since Hongkong and Xinjiang are crucial areas in China". Noting that China-Japan relations are warming up, it called for more efforts and discussion on China-Japan-ROK economic cooperation, the RCEP and the BRI.

5. Discussing China's relations with its neighbours, the Report asserted that "Northeast Asian stability matters greatly for China" and that "a new dawn is coming" thanks to China's proposals on denuclearization and the peace mechanism. Noting that Kim Jong Un had visited China four times, it said during Xi Jinping's visit to Pyongyang in June 2019 he had assured that China "would play a constructive role in long-term peace and stability on the peninsula". At the same time it noted China's efforts to promote trilateral cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea and that it had hosted a trilateral summit in Chengdu in December 2019. Describing the South China Sea as a "sea of peace, friendship and cooperation", it said "China urged Hanoi to back away from its legal threat to pursue international arbitration". Asserting that "regional rules are crucial" it said "China and ASEAN have agreed on a single draft negotiating text for the South China Sea code of conduct. The US' excessive involvement is unwelcome". It observed too that China's navy had "expelled" a US destroyer which had come "within 12 nautical miles of a new island built by China".

6. A separate sub-paragraph of the report's section captioned 'Neighbour Countries', declared that "peace and stability in South Asia is in China's interest". "India's unilateral move to change the legal status of Kashmir could deal a lethal blow to India-Pakistan relations. China accused New Delhi of undermining its own and Pakistani territorial sovereignty and national interests, but urged India and Pakistan to settle disputes amicably". Afghanistan was mentioned with the report observing that "Russia, China, the US and Pakistan agreed that negotiation is the only road to peace in Afghanistan". The report said that China had stepped up efforts to mediate since September 2019.

7. On global governance, the report identified building "a community with a shared future" as a call for world progress and the BRI connectivity as providing momentum for a sustainable world economy. It enumerated China's efforts in organizing the 2019 Beijing International Horticultural Exhibition, Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilisations in May 2019, the 2019 Military World Games and as well as China's participation in the G-20 and BRICS Summits. It assured again that "China maintains an UN-centered international order" and "looks for settlement of major regional hotspot issues, such as the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, the Iranian nuclear issue, Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Middle East, Syria, and South Sudan". South Asia was not mentioned.

8. The section captioned 'Protect Sovereignty against Foreign Intervention' began with the statement that "outsider intervention has undermined Chia's sovereignty and territorial integrity in 2019". Asserting that the Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, it said "China-US gambling has exacerbated robust, unofficial Taiwan-US relations, but 'One China' is what people want". Taiwan it said has lost seven diplomatic allies since 2016. It said that the US, which is Taiwan's only ally, is using Taiwan to "balance China's rapid rise as a regional power". The report listed the numerous steps the US has taken to bolster Taiwan and said "China urges the US to abide by the one-China principle and the three

China-US joint communiqués, and not to interfere in China's domestic affairs". It emphasized that "China deters Taiwan's attempt to split the state sovereignty" and reiterated that Taiwan has no right to participate in international organisations like the UN, WHO and ICAO. It accused the US and UK of "being behind the pro-democracy protests" in Hongkong and named Canada and Germany as the other countries. The report reiterated China's rejection of foreign criticism in its internal affairs.

9. The CICIR report described the National Day Celebrations as demonstrating "the achievement, confidence and responsibility of China in the new era". Emphasising that "China stood up under Mao Zedong, became rich under Deng Xiaoping, and became strong under Xi Jinping", the report asserted that China is now economically and militarily stronger than ever and Xi Jinping had called on the people to make more efforts for a brighter future. It recalled Xi Jinping's declaration on October 1, 2019 that "There is no force that can shake the foundation of this great nation, ... No force can stop the Chinese people and Chinese nation forging ahead".

10. The final section entitled "A New Era" spoke of the historic changes in relations between China and the world. Listing the principles being advanced by China's diplomats, it said "five principles of peaceful coexistence, peaceful development, and a community with a shared future for mankind" contribute to international peace and justice. The report stressed that "relations with major powers are crucial for China to expand strategic space". Saying "Chinese diplomacy is seeking common ground while reserving differences" it pointed out that China has "built friendship and partnership with neighbouring countries". It said China maintains UN-centered international mechanisms and that the BRI has fostered growth of countries along it. It asserted that "Chinese diplomacy is essential to sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity and for mutual understanding". The report made specific mention that a strong Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s leadership in diplomatic affairs ensures success including in the Chinese being independent and excluding foreign interventions in China's pursuit of socialism. It said China's non-alliance has prevented it from getting involved in the confrontations and conflicts between political blocs. The report stated, in conclusion, that pragmatism and prudence are best for dealing with the "enduring challenges from the US."

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