

Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics

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As a great power, the major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics shall inherit the past with development. Two points are important for carrying on the past: first, capture the themes of times, which have transferred from war and revolution to peace and development. The cooperation between two countries is based on shared interests, to realize win-win cooperation. Second, we adhere to the peaceful development.

Wu Xinbo: Hi, Mr. Ambassador Wu, welcome to the 2015 Shanghai Forum. Thank you for accepting my interview. Since last year, people around the world have been talking about China's "Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics". As a veteran of China's diplomatic front, how do you see the so-called major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics?

Wu Jianmin: The idea of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics was put forward by President Xi Jinping on November 29 last year at the Central Meeting on Foreign Affairs. I think it comes in a right time. The reasons are: first, our nation has been approaching the center of the world stage. Perhaps, this is the highest international status that China has ever enjoyed since the Opium War broke out in 1840. For over a hundred years of time, we have been on the edge of the world stage, thus the country's diplomacy was pettily for seeking survival, far from the Major Country Diplomacy that China can now advance forward. Second, since we are now approaching closer to the center, the world also calls China to play a bigger role. The world is in an era of great change, then what kind of world order should we advocate and push for? Last October I went to New York, and chatted in a dinner with Former US Secretary of the States Henry Kissinger who has concluded his writing of a book called *The World Order*. He said in the dinner, the world keeps talking a lot about China, and people around the world are also looking for China's voice, but what is China's actual stand and what does China actually advocate for? Therefore in this particular international context, I think the proposal of the Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics comes just in a right time, compellingly and correspondingly.

Wu Xinbo: Mr. Ambassador, what are in common between the major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics and the diplomacy China held in the period since founding of People's Republic of China? And in what areas where developments have renewed the new China's diplomacy over the past few decades?

Wu Jianmin: Well, since founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 till now, China's diplomacy in general can be divided into 2 phases: The period prior to the Reform and Opening-up, and the period of the Reform and Opening-up. The two periods show some unique distinctions in China's diplomacy history.

During the period before the reform and opening-up, we think from China's diplomacy has endured an era of war and revolution, with supporting world revolution as the top priority. When I was young I had heard from a talk given by a central government leader that when a confliction of priority occurs between diplomacy and revolution, revolution always prevails. Chinese revolution had got supports of other countries, so we should support their revolutions, and at that time we also advocated for world revolution. That's the ideology we held then. The People's Republic of China at that special time is a new life that in nature which determines the diplomatic purpose was to seek survival.

Since 1978, China's diplomacy direction has shifted to the economic growth and reform and opening up as it adjusted its domestic strategic approach, and so was our diplomatic goal that has shifted to seeking development from seeking the bottommost demand of survival. World peace is the premise for seeking development. Thereafter Deng Xiaoping has taken a number of major moves, including: establishment of Sino-US diplomatic relations; signing of the China-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty; normalization of Sino-Soviet relations; and visiting the five neighboring countries: Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, purportedly to make clear to our neighbors that China adheres to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and China seeks cooperation, as well as the smooth return of Hong Kong and Macao. These big diplomatic moves have won China a long period of peace. It is significantly very successful.

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Two points are important for carrying on the past: first, capture the themes of times, which have transferred from war and revolution to peace and development. Such change implies that two main predicaments faced by the world at that time had been solved. Our policy keeps consistent with the world. The gist of the Five Principles of

Peaceful Coexistence is development and cooperation. The cooperation between two countries is based on shared interests, to realize win-win cooperation. Second, we adhere to the peaceful development. Here, we have three do's and three don'ts. First, we do need peace. How could we develop without peace? Second, we do need the development. The development is the key to solve many issues. Third, we do need cooperation. China's modernization drive couldn't be progressed without opening to the outside the world. We have three don'ts. First, we don't seek expansion. We will never repeat western colonial expansion. Second, we don't seek hegemon, as former Soviet Union and the USA. Third, we don't seek alignment. China does not align with any states. The sixth principle of ten principle of 1955 Bandung Conference states "abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers." It actually means non-alignment. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence proposes: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. It also means non-alignment. So, non-alignment is what we inherit from the past. China will not align with any states in the future, drawing the failure experience of Russia-China alliance after the founding of the People's Republic of China.

To push forward the Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, we should take into account the world, take into account our own country, and take into account the interests implied. For example, to judge that the theme of the era has changed, this is a consideration given to the world; China's taking economic interests as the center of government policies to achieve a comprehensive well-off society, this is a consideration given to China our motherland; and taking account of the combination of the interests of China and the fundamental interests of the world, this is a consideration given to the interests.

Wu Xinbo: You just mentioned that in the time of our age, to make good judgment of the era is very important for China. Generally, Chinese stresses to

adapting to the trend of time, or in a literal sense, taking a ride of downstream flow. So in the current era, what are favorable things that we face in pushing forward the strategy of Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics?

Wu Jianmin: First, let me make clear what is called “adapting to the historical trend of time”. After the theme of the era has changed, the world has formed the trend of peace, development, and win-win cooperation. The night before the 10th anniversary of 911, I accepted an interview of a Washington Post reporter. His opening words are: "China is the biggest beneficiary of the 911. In the past decade, China has developed very fast. But We the U.S. were only caught in wars." I replied that I do not agree with your first sentence, we are not the biggest beneficiary. The key is we adapted to the world trend, while your country went against the wind. The ear of war and revolution has been long a thing of memory, but your country is still waging wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. The outcome is the more the US involved, the more chaos the world becomes. Your country just goes against the trend of the era. Comparatively, China just takes the ride of this trend. Our big development over the past three decades rests on our adaption to this trend. I think this will continue.

Second, what are favorable advantages we are facing? One, today's world is embedded with a rules-based global trading system, such as the WTO, in which we can sell to the world the products we produced, and we can buy goods other countries made. Two, Asia is on the rise, and China is located opportunely in Asia. We see Asia's rise has been through five postwar waves: The first wave is Japan, the country adopted the export-oriented model to develop its economy; the second wave is in 1960s, when the 4 Asian tigers - Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea, emerged; the third wave is in 1970s, ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand took on the wave for development; the fourth wave is China which, since it took the reform and opening policy in 1978, joined the tide of development; and the fifth one is India, this country began reform since 1991. Transforming from a planned economy to a market economy is a painful thing we encountered. At that time we sent a lot of people

to Hong Kong and Singapore, for studying their successful experiences, and we gained a lot of precious lessons to light on our own road to modernization. In 2011, China's trade with the Asian countries reached \$1.2 trillion. The number is larger than the total of Sino-US trade and Sino-EU trade. As located in Asia where hosts some of most rapid and vibrant economies in the world, it is sure that would benefit China greatly.

Wu Xinbo: Today, global governance is riddled with many problems. As one of the fastest growing economies in the world today, China is vested with more expectations of other countries in hoping that it could play a greater role in global governance. Therefore in this sense, we think it also provides a better environment for us to push forward the Major Country Diplomacy. But, from a different perspective, what are unfavorable factors you feel that we have to face in pushing forward the Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics?

Wu Jianmin: In terms of challenges, the biggest challenge for China I think is the habitual thinking. For thousands of years of the human history, what happened were always zero-sum games where one party gains what exactly the other loses. This habitual thinking has a very strong inertial sluggishness. In modern days, the world has changed greatly. Wars have lost its market to deter opponents, and hegemony, power politics and law of the jungle simply does not work. This is great progress of human civilization. However, if one remains steeped in the old thoughts of class struggle, Cold War mentality, and the feel that wars can solve problems, their minds would be misled, and they would be unable to judge the world, unable to see the benefits brought about due to China and Asia's rising today, and unable to see the good environment we created.

Wu Xinbo: China's national strength is growing. In advancing the policy of the major country diplomacy, how should China use our strength in the process? Other countries are quite concerned about this. In a sense it is also a test of our capability.

Wu Jianmin: Chinese should keep minds clearly awaking, the blue song of "China threat" will be sung throughout the whole process of China's rise. The first reason is, among the world's 7.2 billion people, only a small fraction can really know and understand China, while most will take the historical rise of other countries as their mirror to make a reference to China. Historically, a great power after rising was always bullying others. How come China can be exceptional? They think. The second reason is, they will refer China to the former Soviet Union. They said, although President Xi Jinping put it very well, no expansion, no aggression, and no hegemony, then why did the Soviet Union took on the road of expansion, aggression and hegemony after it became a power? Why is that? Soviet Union was led by the Communist Party, so as your country. Why is that difference between the two? How can? Actually, they do not know the difference between the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party. The third reason is, we are rising with a population of almost 1.4 billion that has never any precedent historically for such a rise with so many people. China is so large in size, and it is sure it will break the existing pattern of interests, so people are not very happy about that.

We should not underestimate the force of resistance coming from future. How should we do in that particular situation? First, we must build our muscle, the strength, behind us. No strength, no opportunity to get close to the center of the world stage. Now we get close to it, it just proves the growth of strength of our country. Second, we should justify our activities by bringing out the facts and reasons. What is soft power? Soft power is about reasoning and justifying, bringing out the facts and reasons to make people understand, to persuade them and make them moving. China's development and rise indeed will benefit the world. But to make people know this, what we should do is publicity, and our actions.

Wu Xinbo: It's conveniently like the case of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank that we initiated and put advance forward, despite the US opposition, in the

end the majority of countries, including some major US allies, have still sought to join as member country. This is just because that it is a good thing for all of countries and that the way we move it forward is decent. So, it is just like what you talked about, most countries are countries of upholding justice, and most people of the world are upright people, sharing common sense. How does China's diplomacy get the people to understand China's idea and accept? It is about to bring about reasoning and make persuasions, and to do things good for all, thus we can win their hearts and minds.

Previously, you had talked about the world order, and indeed, the world order has been riddled for far to a point for overhaul. In modern days, especially after the rapid rise of China, people are more concerned about how to change it, and what kind of changes China could bring about to it. Well, from your opinion, to what degree and what role do you think China can play to reform the world order in the 21st century, and how to define it?

Wu Jianmin: China is both a reformer and promoter to the world order. It should be fairly said that China benefits from the current world order. Otherwise, it is hard to explain the great achievement that China made in the past thirty years. However, the current world order is the order erected by the Western powers. No doubt, it is more favorable to the West. Some of the orders are in line with economic laws, but some are in favor of Western countries, for example, the actual control of the international financial institutions is still in the hands of Western powers. How to change this situation? The answer is the gradual reform. It is a progressive reform, not a revolution. We are both a participant and a facilitator of the reform. To push for reform is not easy, as it would impact to those vested interests. Therefore, we should bring out the facts and reasons to justify reforms, speak out the truth, and take actions. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a good example to explain China's push for reform. We do so, and the world comes together to promote infrastructure construction in Asia, to build a better Asia which, as a global economic power house, will have

greater strength to develop the continent and the world. But we should keep our mind even more open. So many countries have participated in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and we hope that one day the United States and Japan would also join in.

Wu Xinbo: Speaking of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, Ambassador Wu yourself is a very good, typical case for China's diplomatic success. Do you think in the 21st century, for our young people who would join the practice to push forward the strategy of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, what basic qualities do you think should they have?

Wu Jianmin: I think there are a few qualities that young people must have. First, the youths should understand the world, understanding what the trend is the world is going now. If you misjudge the world, do not know that the biggest changes in today's international relationship is the theme change of the era, but just keep stuck in the old thoughts of war and revolution, then you are deemed unable to get things done. Second, the youths must know our country, and understand our basic principles. Our foreign policy is to adhere to peaceful development strategy. Third, we should be able to be reasonable. Know ourselves, know others, and know how to speak to get people understand you and to make more friends rather than enemies.

Wu Xinbo: Thanks! Ambassador Wu. Thanks for accepting my interview, your view today is very insightful and valuable. I think this will inspire the audience a lot. Thank you!

Wu Jianmin: Thank you!