

# Don't Let Our Vision Be Blocked by Floating Clouds

## —A Review of China's Foreign Affairs in 2018

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The year 2018 witnessed a great deal of turbulence in international affairs. In a period of unrivaled change not seen in a hundred years, the world political and economic structure has been undergoing profound adjustments, with an unprecedented display of great-power politics, rising unilateralism, protectionism and populism, and a deterioration in conventional and unconventional security. The transition between the old and new world orders has once again brought mankind to a crossroads, and has posed previously unforeseen risks to China's rise.

Faced with the ever-changing and precarious new circumstances and problems, China's diplomatic work, under the formidable guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, has kept in mind both internal and international imperatives, focused on major challenges, promoted national rejuvenation through thick and thin, and adamantly defended our national sovereignty, security and development interests with strategic vision and composure. At the same time, it has broken new ground, fostering a new image and writing a new chapter for major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era, made new contributions, fashioned a new look and demonstrated new achievements for actively maintaining world peace and promoting common development.

**First, with Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy established as the guiding principle by the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, China's major-country diplomacy in the new era has**

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**been equipped with an anchor.**

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, despite fluctuations in international affairs, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has been able to dispel the fog and see the sun. With a secure understanding of the laws of history and the trend of the times, it is leading China's diplomatic work to overcome difficulties and forge ahead in the great endeavor of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, carving out a new path for major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, and making a remarkable contribution to national rejuvenation and human progress. In the magnificent surge of diplomatic practices, Comrade Xi, pondering hard over the future of mankind, has raised a series of new concepts, new proposals and new initiatives endowed with Chinese characteristics and embodied with the spirit of the era. They are setting the trend of human progress and comprise Xi's diplomatic thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era, i.e. Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy.

The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, successfully held in June 2018, formally established the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy. It has great political, theoretical, practical and methodological significance. Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy is an integral part of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, an important theoretical crystallization integrating the basic principles of Marxism and the practice of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, and a quintessential reflection in the diplomatic field of the governing philosophy of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core. At the same time, it provides fundamental guidance for the practice of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and equips us with a powerful theoretical tool to cope with the chaotic world as well as its various risks and challenges. If China's diplomacy is viewed as a ship navigating in a vast sea, then Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy serves as the anchor that allows China to withstand the test of any storm.

Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy is also an outstanding creative new concept in the theory of contemporary international relations and a valued contribution of Chinese thinking to the common intellectual fount of human knowledge. By occupying the commanding heights of international morality, it strives to achieve win-win cooperation and transcend the old thinking in Western theories of international relations such as survival of the fittest, law of the jungle and zero-sum game, and is conducive for countries to charting a new path of interstate interactions. Standing at the cusp of a new era, it is taking the lead in the reform of global governance system, injecting strong and positive energy into the uncertain international situation, and pointing the direction toward world development and human progress. With wide recognition from the international community, it has profound significance for the world at large, and will serve as an important component in the dialogue of civilizations between the East and the West.

**Second, with the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up as the main theme, China is sending clear signals that it will expand opening-up to the outside world.**

The year 2018 marks the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up. Over the past four decades, by holding fast to the great endeavor of striving for self-reliance and national strength, the Chinese people have fully seized the opportunities brought about by economic globalization, and insisted on opening up the country for construction on the basis of deepening reform. It has not only facilitated great development for China itself, but also benefited the world at large, making reform and opening-up a distinctive symbol of contemporary China and the key to changing the country and influencing the world.

From whichever direction the wind blows, China remains resolute amid any hardships. At the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up, facing the adverse current of protectionism and unilateral bullying, as well as the setbacks for economic globalization, multilateralism and the free trade system, China adheres to the inherent laws, recognizes the trend of the times, and holds high the banner of reform and opening-up. It firmly

supports multilateralism and free trade, and follows and promotes the trend of economic globalization. This injects stability into an uncertain world, and provides a strong guarantee for China to alleviate external risks, meet external challenges, and carry socialism with Chinese characteristics to new victories.

As a Chinese saying goes, “what makes the river the king of the valleys is its location at the lower level.” China’s opening-up has taught it to accommodate differences. As President Xi Jinping pointed out at the 2018 Boao Forum for Asia, China’s economic development in the past 40 years has been made possible by opening-up, and now China needs to expand opening-up in order to achieve high-quality economic development in the future. “China’s door of opening-up will not be closed and will only open even wider,” he solemnly proclaimed, and put forward four major measures, including significantly broadening market access, creating a more attractive investment environment, strengthening protection of intellectual property rights and taking the initiative to expand imports, which sounds the clarion call for China to expand opening-up to the outside world in the new era.

The first China International Import Expo, held in November 2018, is the world’s first national expo with a specific theme of expanding imports, and thus serves as a pioneering effort in the history of international trade. The expo attracted as many as 172 countries, regions and international organizations, 3,600-strong overseas companies and over 400,000 buyers from home and abroad, achieving fruitful results with total intentional transactions worth US\$57.83 billion. At the expo, President Xi Jinping further proposed five major initiatives, including stimulating the potential for increased imports, continuing to broaden market access, fostering a world-class business environment, exploring new horizons of opening-up, and promoting international cooperation at multilateral and bilateral levels. With practical actions, he demonstrated once again to the world China’s resolve and sincerity in promoting a higher level of openness and developing an open world economy.

**Third, by taking the initiative in leading global governance, China’s**

**diplomacy fully demonstrates its compassion and sense of responsibility toward the world's future.**

The current transformation of the international system is at a crucial moment, with the world economy standing at a crossroads and the international community experiencing rising perplexity and anxiety. At this juncture, China, concerned about the future of the world, has pioneered in adapting to the trend of the times, holding high the banner of the dual objective of fostering a new type of international relations and building a community with a shared future for mankind, and is leading the global governance system in a fairer and more reasonable direction.

As an old saying goes, “the flames rise high when everybody adds fuel.” China has joined hands with other parties to promote building the community with a shared future for mankind. During the past year, guided by this objective, China’s diplomacy has striven to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation and shared development with other countries, and combine forces from all sides to advance the Belt and Road Initiative, thus integrating and synergizing theory with practice. The notion of building a community with a shared future for mankind has received worldwide recognition, and has been written into the outcome documents of the Beijing summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Qingdao summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, among other bilateral and multilateral high-level exchanges.

China is also steadily fostering a new type of international relations. During the past year, China’s diplomacy has adhered to the principle of mutual respect, equity and justice, and win-win cooperation, and proposed a policy of “more hand-shaking and less fist-clenching, more mutual understanding and less mutual antagonism.” It is actively exploring a new path of interstate interactions based on dialogue rather than confrontation, partnership rather than alliance, and amity rather than enmity, and is guiding its relations with other major countries in a right direction of no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. By the

end of July 2018, China has established various forms of partnerships with 108 countries, regions and organizations, winning friends in every corner of the world.

By taking the world's well-being into account, China actively points the way forward for global governance reform. Confronted by the chaos in global governance, President Xi Jinping held high the banner of globalization successively in multilateral platforms such as the BRICS summit, the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting and the G20 summit, clearly opposing all forms of protectionism and unilateralism, adamantly safeguarding the international order and system with the United Nations Charter at the core, insisting on a rules-based multilateral free trade system, maintaining the authority of the World Trade Organization rules, and arguing for striking a balance between the WTO reform and safeguarding the interests of developing countries.

**Fourth, with breakthroughs in relations with India and Japan, China's neighborhood diplomacy has witnessed many bright spots.**

The countries in the immediate neighborhood are those on which China depends for its survival and prosperity. For some time, however, due primarily to provocation and instigation by external forces, and to disputes over territorial sovereignty and other rights with neighboring countries, China's relations with Japan, India, Vietnam and South Korea, among other countries, had been disrupted. Tensions had arisen to varying degrees and created a complex and harsh environment in China's neighborhood. Since 2018, China's relations with India and Japan have markedly improved, making great headway for its neighborhood diplomacy. The regional environment has not seen such strong momentum for many years.

China-India relations have picked up steam. After the BRICS Xiamen summit which put the brakes on the deteriorating bilateral relations over the Donglang (Doklam) crisis, leaders of the two countries grasped the opportunity and held the "East Lake meeting" in Wuhan in April 2018 to deepen strategic communication. The "East Lake meeting" set up a new model of high-level exchanges, with both countries going "full throttle"

to improve bilateral relations. It helped establish a new beginning for the “dance of dragon and elephant together” and the model of “1+1=11,” which will no doubt go down in the annals of history of China-India relations.

China-Japan relations have also got on the right track with positive momentum restored. The year 2018 marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship and is also a key year for the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations. Within less than half a year, Chinese premier and Japanese prime minister exchanged visits, and confirmed the two countries’ political consensus of being cooperative partners rather than mutual threats, and supporting each other’s peaceful development, which has greatly helped create conditions for transforming bilateral relations from competition to coordination and represents a fresh start.

2018 is also an important year in the history of China-DPRK relations. Secretary General Xi Jinping met with Chairman Kim Jong-un three times within just three months, where they exchanged in-depth views on China-DPRK relations and the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and reached important consensus, revitalizing the traditional friendship between the two countries and opening a new chapter in bilateral relations.

At the same time, China-ROK relations continue to develop steadily, and the trilateral cooperation among China, Japan and the ROK has restarted, breaking new ground for East Asian regional cooperation. With China’s persistent efforts to urge reconciliation and promote talks, the situation on the Korean peninsula has also taken a major turn. The Singapore meeting between leaders of the US and the DPRK broke the deadlock on the nuclear issue, and DPRK and ROK leaders met three times to accelerate the thaw in North-South relations.

In addition, the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and ASEAN has been maturing. In 2018, President Xi Jinping visited Brunei and the Philippines, and Premier Li Keqiang attended a series of meetings during the East Asia Summit and visited Singapore. The two sides have deepened strategic mutual trust in managing differences. Consultations

on the formulation of a code of conduct in the South China Sea has been put on a fast track, and attempts by external forces to estrange regional countries through the South China Sea issue have become increasingly unpopular.

**Fifth, with a focus on managing major-country relations, China has maintained overall stability with key major powers.**

Maintaining overall stability and balanced development of relations with other major countries is essential for China to deepen all-round international cooperation and ensure a favorable external environment. China-US relations are critical to the world's overall political and economic stability and China's economic and social development. Over the past year, developments in China-US relations have attracted worldwide attention. By initiating economic and trade frictions, the United States has intensified efforts to contain and exert pressure on China in an unprecedented manner. In this context, some political forces within the US have attempted to decouple relations with China and launch a "new Cold War," which dealt a tremendous blow to and created great risks for bilateral relations. Confronted with these negative trends in US policy, China's diplomacy has squarely faced up to the challenge and firmly defended its national interests, national dignity and development rights. After a tough struggle followed by active negotiations, leaders of China and the US met during the G20 summit, where they agreed to jointly promote bilateral relations based on coordination, cooperation and stability. In particular, the two heads of state held constructive discussions on economic and trade issues, which prevented a further escalation of economic and trade frictions, pushed the two sides to return to the track of dialogue and consultation, and indicated positive expectations for the development of bilateral relations.

China-Russia relations have maintained at a high level, and the "back-to-back" strategic coordination has been continuously strengthened. President Xi Jinping has visited Russia seven times since 2013 and held more than 20 meetings with President Vladimir Putin, setting a record for the two heads of state. In 2018, the two leaders also met several times

and exchanged visits. President Xi went to Russia to attend the Eastern Economic Forum and President Putin paid a state visit to China. The strategic guidance of the two heads of state has allowed China and Russia to maintain a high degree of mutual trust and rock-solid bilateral relations, which have become the anchor of strategic balance and stability in the world.

China-EU relations have maintained a good momentum and overall stability in cooperation. President Xi Jinping visited Spain and Portugal, and Premier Li Keqiang attended the China-EU Summit, while leaders of Britain, France, Germany, and the European Union made visits to China respectively. The two sides hold similar positions and rely on each other in supporting multilateralism and free trade as well as in meeting global challenges, and are making efforts to push forward negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty.

**Sixth, utilizing the opportunity of China-Latin America, China-Arab and China-Africa cooperation forums, China takes its cooperation with developing countries to a new stage.**

The year 2018 is one of South-South cooperation for China's diplomacy, and the convening of China-Latin America, China-Arab and China-Africa cooperation forums marks the coverage of all major regions by collective dialogues between China and other developing countries.

China-Latin America cooperation ushered in new opportunities. President Xi Jinping's fourth visit to Latin America since assuming presidency led to a historic leap on the new era in China-Latin American relations. The political basis of mutual trust between the two sides has been further consolidated, the alignment of respective development strategies accelerated, and China-Latin American relations have been duly enriched. Latin American countries enthusiastically embraced the Belt and Road Initiative. At the beginning of 2018, the ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum adopted a special statement on supporting and participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, and formulated a joint action plan of priority areas of cooperation by 2021.

China-Arab friendship has lasted for a long time. At the ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in mid-July 2018, the two sides agreed to establish a Sino-Arab future-oriented strategic partnership of comprehensive cooperation and common development. The two sides also issued a declaration of action on the Belt and Road Initiative and reached more than 100 agreements on cooperation in economics and trade as well as energy.

The door to China-Africa cooperation is opening ever wider. The Beijing summit of the FOCAC held in September 2018 was a historic event for China-Africa friendship. It set a new record for the summit and the highest standard ever for China's host diplomacy, which was attended by 40 presidents, 10 prime ministers, one vice president and the chairperson of the African Union Commission. The FOCAC Beijing Declaration and Beijing Action Plan crystallized consensus of the two sides and launched hundreds of cooperation measures with eight major initiatives at the core, sending a strong signal to the world that China and Africa would join hands in even greater ventures.

In addition, President Xi Jinping chose Middle Eastern and African countries for his first state visit in 2018. At the end of the year, he met with the leaders of eight Pacific island states having diplomatic ties with China in Papua New Guinea. These major diplomatic moves have effectively promoted solidarity and cooperation between China and other developing countries, and pushed the development of the relationship to a higher level.

**Seventh, taking national interests and people's needs as its central task, China's diplomacy demonstrates its unchanging aspirations.**

China's diplomacy adheres to the bottom line of safeguarding national sovereignty and security. In 2018, China resumed diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic, Burkina Faso and El Salvador, raising the total number of countries having diplomatic ties with China to 178, and greatly consolidating the international community's adherence to the One-China policy. China also resolutely opposes the interference of external forces in Hong Kong and Macao affairs, solidly carries out diplomacy with regard to

Tibet and Xinjiang, and strengthens international cooperation in counter-terrorism and law enforcement.

China's diplomacy insists on doing good things and solving real problems for the people. In 2018, China has been actively building a safety system for overseas Chinese, and enhancing consular protection and service. Chinese embassies and consulates in every corner of the world have been working tirelessly to protect the safety and legitimate rights of Chinese citizens abroad. China has taken and will continue to take vigorous counter-measures against any bullying act that willfully infringes upon the legitimate rights of Chinese citizens to ensure that the world is a fair and just place for all.

China's diplomacy actively serves the country's economic and social development. In 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held global promotion activities for Hainan, Henan, Hubei, Shandong, Heilongjiang and the Xiong'an New Area of Hebei, with the aim of highlighting to the world their unique styles and building a bridge for international cooperation.

Looking ahead to 2019, the complex and grim aspect of the international situation will become more prominent. However, the international trend is gaining momentum, where those who follow will prosper and those who oppose will be left behind. In particular, the aspiration of the people for peace and development remains irreversible and irresistible. The year 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Over the past seven decades, China has seen great changes, strong turbulence and even storm clouds filling the skies, all of which have kindly influenced its trajectory of development. Under the strong guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, China's diplomacy will proceed from a new historic starting point, continue to overcome difficulties and make greater contributions to national rejuvenation and human progress. 🌐