

Constructing Discourse Power in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics: Mission and Challenges

Yang Jiemian

Since the launch of reform and opening-up, China's comprehensive national strength has continued to grow, as a result it enjoys an increasingly higher status and influence in global affairs. However, the weaknesses in China's diplomatic discourse are also growing salient. Therefore, proceeding from the practice of major-country diplomacy, it is important that China deepen its diplomatic discourse with Chinese characteristics and strengthen the construction of the system for conducting its diplomatic discourse, so as to increase its international influence and fulfill its aims.

Main Features of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, China has been carrying out major-country diplomacy with distinctive features. In so doing, it has been enriching contemporary major-country diplomacy.

Bringing forth its new major-country diplomacy

China has consciously worked to go beyond its traditional diplomacy toward major countries to pursue and promote diplomacy as a major country. On the global level, China upholds justice and it is advancing in

Yang Jiemian is Senior Fellow and Director of the academic committee of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS).

a substantial way the development of the international system and order so it is fairer and more reasonable. It is injecting fresh impetus into global governance via important international platforms such as the G20, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations, and international frameworks such as the Paris Climate Conference. On the regional level, China actively participates and plays a leading role in regional, trans-regional and sub-regional cooperation. China has taken and continues to take steps to consolidate and further develop the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it is actively promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, and it has successfully hosted the summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Shanghai, the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Beijing, and commemorative events marking the 70th anniversary of victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-fascist War. China has initiated the establishment of economic and financial cooperation mechanisms such as the BRICS New Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Silk Road Fund, and the Lancang-Mekong River Cooperation Mechanism. On the interstate level, China is actively engaged in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic practices with other countries, setting a new pattern of international cooperation with the focus on promoting strategic partnerships.

Major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics

The major-country diplomacy pursued by China has been steadily taking shape. With its Chinese characteristics, it is completely different from the great power diplomacy pursued by the United States and other Western countries. As an outcome of its rich experience, China attaches greater importance to turning perceptual thinking into rational thinking, enabling it to play a promoting and guiding role in diplomatic practice.

Taking the initiative to create an environment conducive to peaceful development both at home and abroad. Over its long history, harmonious co-existence has been China's fundamental approach to external relations.

During his visit to Singapore in November 2015, President Xi Jinping said that “the belief in peaceful development is deeply rooted in the Chinese mind, and the vision of harmony and peaceful co-existence underpins China’s neighborhood diplomacy.”¹ Sticking to peaceful development in its foreign affairs has been China’s consistent position, yet it has had different features at different stages. China has taken advantage of its peaceful neighboring environment to engage in its own development in the past, but now China is prioritizing creating and shaping an environment at home and abroad that is conducive to its peaceful development. In contrast to the Western powers which strive for security through power politics and military alliances, China’s strategy of forging partnerships emphasizes interactions between security and development, and seeks to further promote peace and development by giving full play to its accumulated political influence and economic strength, which are distinctive characteristics of China’s major-country diplomacy.

Treating other countries as equals and seeking to strike a balance concerning interests. When China was poor and backward, it maintained that all countries, big or small, should be equals. It criticized superpower hegemony and opposed big countries bullying the small. These attitudes are relatively easy to understand because China needed to do this. Today, China’s economic strength ranks second in the world and it has ever-increasing overall national capabilities, but it still treats other countries as equals in its diplomacy, and promotes fairness, justice and equality in relations between countries. China attaches importance to reasonable appeals from small and medium-sized countries when it hosts multilateral diplomatic activities, and coordinates and cooperates with other developing countries in multilateral diplomacy, greatly enhancing the status and role of developing countries in global affairs. In addition, influenced by its own ideological concepts and cultural traditions, China stresses dialogue and negotiations, and takes care of

1 Xi Jinping, “Forging a Strong Partnership to Enhance Prosperity of Asia - Speech at the National University of Singapore,” November 7, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdynxjpxgsfw/t1313923.shtml.



The 2016 G20 Hangzhou Summit, witnessing China's special contributions to global economic recovery, is the epitome of China's steadily improving discourse power in the global economic system.

and coordinates the interests and appeals of the parties concerned. This has enabled China to play a unique role in the Iranian nuclear issue, the Middle East peace process and the Syrian issue.

Making proactive efforts and shouldering responsibilities.

As it has assumed a more central role on the world stage, China has attached ever greater importance to its obligations and responsibilities as a major country. China has played an important role in promoting global governance and building-up the architecture of global governance, and has worked together with the international community to achieve important successes in tackling such pressing global issues of climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the Ebola epidemic and terrorism and extremism. In a speech at a meeting on China's diplomacy held in October 2013, President Xi Jinping stressed the importance of peripheral diplomacy, saying China should make proactive efforts to carry

forward diplomacy in the neighborhood,² which indicates an adjustment in the main theme of China's diplomacy. In September 2015, President Xi proclaimed at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit that China will establish an assistance fund for South-South cooperation, increase its investment in developing countries, and exempt the debt of the outstanding intergovernmental interest-free loans due by the end of 2015 owed by Least Developed Countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing countries.³ Xi also announced at the United Nations Peacekeeping Summit that China will join the new UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, take the lead in setting up a permanent peacekeeping police squad, build a peacekeeping standby force of 8,000 troops, and provide the African Union with US\$100 million to help it maintain regional security and stability.⁴ At the general debate of the UN General Assembly, Xi further announced that China will establish a 10-year, US\$1 billion China-UN peace and development fund to support the UN's work and promote multilateral cooperation projects.⁵

Continuously enriching diplomatic thinking

Today when the West still dominates the world's diplomatic thinking, China's efforts to enrich diplomatic thinking with its major-country diplomacy is of special significance.

The diplomatic thinking of a major socialist country. China has undertaken comprehensive and in-depth reform, the modernization of the country's governance systems and capacity building, and promoted the rule of law, all of these have enriched the theory and practice of socialism with

2 "Xi Jinping: China to further friendly relations with neighboring countries," October 26, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90883/8437410.html>.

3 "Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech at UN Sustainable Development Summit," September 27, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1302359.shtml.

4 "Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the United Nations Peacekeeping Summit," September 28, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1302562.shtml.

5 "Xi Jinping Attends General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly and Delivers Important Speech," September 29, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgsfwbcxlhgcl70znlflh/t1304144.shtml.

Chinese characteristics and created new content into China's diplomatic thinking, as well as reinforcing the interaction between domestic reform and global development, and enhancing the conformity of national governance and global governance. In addition, confronted with turbulent situations in North Africa and West Asia, as well as increasing threats caused by extremism and terrorism, China, in its diplomatic thinking, attaches greater importance to the Party's leadership, pays more attention to the country's overall national security and shows more confidence in the path it has taken and in the theory, the political system and the culture. With the international situation undergoing rapid changes, China's diplomatic thinking has presented new alternatives for the international community.

The diplomatic thinking of a major developing country. China's politics as well as its diplomacy are deeply rooted in the developing world. First, China's diplomacy reflects the diplomatic thinking of developing countries in Asia. Asia is the region where developing countries are concentrated. China's diplomatic thinking shows distinctive features of the developing countries in Asia, such as the "Asian consciousness" and "Asian values." An "Asian Community of Shared Destiny" and the "Asian Dream" initiated by China include as much common aspirations and shared interests as possible of Asian countries. China's proposals for setting up free trade areas, financial cooperation and infrastructure connectivity epitomize the will of the developing countries in Asia for peace and development. Therefore, they have great gathering effects and play a guiding role. Second, China's diplomacy reflects the diplomatic thinking of developing countries in the world. Strengthening cooperation among developing countries meets the desires, appeals and needs of developing countries. China has infused new ideas and theoretical connotations into the currents and discourse of the times. Finally, China's diplomacy reflects the diplomatic thinking of major developing countries. The emergence of developing countries on the world stage, as represented by the BRICS countries, is an important phenomenon in contemporary international relations. In view of this, President Xi Jinping pointed out at the CPC Central Conference on Work Relating to

Foreign Affairs in 2015 that “we should manage well relations with other major countries, build a sound and stable framework of major-country relations, and expand cooperation with other major developing countries.”⁶ This clearly sets forth the position and role of major developing countries in China’s diplomacy and indicates a shared direction for the diplomacy of China and other major developing countries.

The diplomatic thinking of a global major country. China now shoulders a greater responsibility to contribute to provide more public goods to the international community, including diplomatic thinking and theories. First, China is setting up a good model for major-country diplomacy: China adheres to peaceful concepts such as “harmony is most precious” and “a warlike country, however big it might be, is bound to collapse.” China cherishes a major-country mindset that one should “share the benefits you have gained with others, and the more you share with others, the more benefit you will gain.” China is resolved to address world affairs with foresight and determination. China is willing to shoulder more international responsibilities and obligations, and has said it welcomes countries taking a “free ride” on its development. Second, China attaches importance to the forming of diplomatic theory concerning major countries. In its overall thinking, strategic mindset and policy planning, China has made efforts to build a forward-looking major-country diplomatic theory. While promoting the realization of the “Chinese Dream” and “Asian Dream,” China has put forward new concepts for China-Russia “strategic leadership,” the “new type of major-country relations” between China and the United States, and a “community of shared destiny for mankind.” By taking into consideration the changing times, the evolving connotations in international relations and China’s position in the world, all these new theories have created the framework for the major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. Finally, China has made efforts to interpret and elaborate its major-country diplomatic thinking. In its major-country diplomacy, China attaches greater

6 “The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs was Held in Beijing,” November 29, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml.

importance to publicity, introducing its diplomatic thinking on various occasions, so as to help the world get acquainted with and understand China's major-country diplomacy. President Xi Jinping has stressed that communication platforms and media channels overseas should be expanded so that contemporary Chinese values and concepts can be elaborated.⁷ The introduction of China's concepts in major-country diplomacy has helped widen and deepen diplomatic thought, and won it more acknowledgement and recognition from the international community.

Challenges to the discourse in major-country diplomacy

China, in pursuit of its major-country diplomacy, has encountered problems in influencing the international diplomatic discourse. It has become a weakness China needs to fix as soon as possible.

Definition of diplomatic discourse

The concept of discourse originated in linguistics and then gradually expanded to other areas in the 1920s. In 1970, the French post-modern theorist Michel Foucault proposed the famous proposition "discourse is power" in his inaugural lecture "L'ordre du discours" at the Collège de France. Since then, "discourse" as well as the right to discourse right and discourse power have been extensively used.

Diplomatic discourse has at least three meanings: diplomatic discourse, the right to diplomatic discourse and discourse power. Chinese scholars hold various positions on diplomatic discourse. Jin Zhengkun holds that diplomatic discourse is the language used by a diplomatic entity, mostly a sovereign state, to express its international strategy and foreign policies in a certain historical period, primarily in official documents, the remarks of leaders, and international treaties, agreements, bulletins, statements and

7 "Xi: China to Promote Cultural Soft Power," January 1, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/01/c_125941955.htm.

declarations.⁸ Ye Shulan thinks that diplomatic discourse can be a specialized discourse or strategic discourse. The former gives guidance to diplomacy in a specific area, and exerts only a partial influence on foreign affairs, while the latter is characterized by clarity, integration, comprehensiveness, objective-orientation, and has a mid-to-long term nature.⁹ In my opinion, against the backdrop of rapidly changing technology and the evolution of international system and order, diplomatic discourse should be expressions of basic official positions reflecting national cultural heritage, ideology, vital interests, strategic direction and policy initiatives.

We should recognize that today any sovereign state has the right to diplomatic discourse, while the power of its diplomatic discourse will be demonstrated by its influence and ability to persuade other countries to follow its lead. Having the right does not necessarily mean having the power. Lu Wei believes that international discourse is by no means the right of a country to speak in the world, it means the effectiveness and power (influence) of its words.¹⁰ Liu Xiaoying maintains that discourse power is obtained by masterminding the creation and maintenance of discourse so as to affect public opinion and even the behavior of others.¹¹ Pang Zhongying believes that the diplomatic discourse that can be converted into discourse power generally has the following four features: It defines a country's foreign policies and their content; reflects basic national positions and values; calls for transformation and represents the aspirations of most people in the international community; and maintain global justice and fairness and provides international public goods.¹² What we are discussing here concerns China's right to diplomatic discourse that can be transformed into discourse

8 Jin Zhengkun, *Introduction to Modern Diplomacy*, Renmin University of China Press, 1999, p.114.

9 Ye Shulan, "Construction of China's Strategic Diplomatic Discourse," *Foreign Affairs Review*, Issue 5, 2012, p.70.

10 Lu Wei, "National Discourse and Information Security in Economic Globalization," *Qiushi*, Issue 14, 2010, p.13.

11 Liu Xiaoying, "Thoughts on Constructing China's Discourse System," *International Communications*, Issue 6, 2013, p.33.

12 Pang Zhongying, "Relationship between Diplomatic Discourse and International Power," *Huanqiu*, July 23, 2015, <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/1152/2015-07/7074061.html>.

power in Chinese major-country diplomacy. Once power is possessed, it can further enhance the right.

Discourse system of Chinese major-country diplomacy

The discourse system of Chinese major-country diplomacy is an important part of China's international discourse. Composed of theoretical thought and cultural values, its structure and basic features are now being improved.

Theoretical thought and cultural values. Diplomatic discourse is the externalization and expression of the theoretical thought and the cultural values that are considered its soul and core. The theoretical thinking in Chinese major-country diplomacy stems from the theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics. At present, China is building up its diplomatic thinking in the process of practice and development. That is also the case for China's diplomatic discourse. The core values of Chinese diplomacy are fundamentally determined by China's core cultural values. Their relationship is one between the whole and the parts. While diplomacy serves national interests, it needs to seek a distribution of interests and interchange with the international community. It needs to gather the greatest common denominator of core values in the world, instead of simply copying from domestic practices.

Discourse structure. The structure of China's diplomatic discourse includes basic concepts that have steadily been developed. These basic concepts include the "maintenance of sovereignty and territorial integrity," "independence," "peaceful co-existence," "peaceful development," and "justice and fairness." The terms and expressions used to convey the aims and purposes of these concepts include "win-win cooperation," "mutual equality" and "mutual respect." In terms of basic expressions, there are four types: (1) expressions that have been frequently used for a long time, such as "promises must be kept and actions must be resolute;" (2) expressions that have developed gradually in meaning, such as "the third world" and "developing countries;" (3) expressions that were created by critically developing old ones, such as "geo-strategy," "major-country competition" and "new security

concept,” and (4) expressions that have been discarded such as “revisionism,” “social imperialism” and the “three worlds.”

Basic features. The discourse for Chinese major-country diplomacy has three basic features. First, the discourse inherits the richness of traditional Chinese culture. The Chinese discourse is rooted in China’s unique historical culture and its path of development. It incorporates the Chinese way of thinking. For example, different from the Western mindset, Chinese people tend to regard responsibility as superior to freedom, obligations outweighing rights, groups taking precedence over individuals and harmony being the remedy for disorder. These are all indelible Chinese characteristics.¹³ Second, the Chinese discourse represents the trend of the times. After the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, China enjoys indisputable discourse power with regard to the struggles against imperialism, colonialism and oppression, as it is admired by a great number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the 1950s, China jointly proposed with India, Myanmar and other countries the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, which still have widespread influence in the 21st Century and have developed into basic norms of international relations.¹⁴ Third, as a major developing country, China shoulders historic missions. After the Cold War, the bipolar order came to an end and the global communist movement was at low ebb. Since then, China has actively sought and effectively promoted the representation, discourse rights and rule-setting rights for developing countries in the international system and order, reflecting the progressive nature of Chinese major-country diplomacy.

The realities of international diplomatic discourse

The struggle for discourse power implies the competition among states for position and strength, and records their rivalry for national interests and

13 Zhang Yan, “Supporting Factors for Constructing Chinese Discourse,” *Ideological & Theoretical Education*, Issue 1, 2016, p.18.

14 Cai Penghong, “Home-field Diplomacy’ and China’s Global Discourse Right,” *Frontiers*, Issue 24, 2014, p.12.

ideology. Generally speaking, the current reality is still one where the North is stronger than the South and the United States stronger than China. For a long time, the United States and other Western countries have constituted the main origin of international diplomatic discourse as well as being the masters of communication channels, thus dominating both the content and means of diplomatic discourse. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and other Western countries have continually created new concepts in diplomatic discourse, such as a “new world order,” “humanitarian intervention,” “responsibility to protect” and “color revolution,” and their scholars have talked about “the end of history,” “clashes of civilizations,” “China threat” and “clash between major powers” (the Thucydides Trap). They rely on their dominance in international organizations and mechanisms to unilaterally set topics and agendas; they work in concert in organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, in order to influence and shape the global landscape. They also dominate the international discourse system by peddling Western ideology, culture and values and imposing political influence via traditional and new media.

However, in general, the dominance enjoyed by the United States and the rest of the West in the international discourse system is in decline. With the overall strength of most developing countries, in particular that of major developing countries, on the rise, their diplomatic discourse power is being enhanced. It should be noted that at the moment it is difficult for China to fundamentally change the reality of the North stronger than the South and the United States stronger than China, yet, China’s advantages in various areas are accumulating and growing into an overall advantage. More importantly, the core value in China’s diplomatic discourse agrees with the development goals of the international community and represents the general trends of the times. Although China’s discourse power is still relatively weak, it will eventually develop strong discourse power.

Main challenges facing China’s diplomatic discourse

It is only a few years since the “major-country diplomacy with Chinese

characteristics” was officially initiated. There is no doubt that the ensuing challenges are complex. It is a consensus in both policymaking and academic circles that China’s voice in the world is not on a par with its national strength due to historical, cultural and operational reasons.¹⁵ First of all, China’s basic theoretical research into major-country diplomacy is relatively weak. It is in the initial stage in this respect, and is short of both the basis and personnel for research. Second, China is confronted with multiple challenges both at home and abroad. The public has higher expectations for China’s major-country diplomacy than its capability. Populist sentiments and online remarks have handicapped to a great extent the formation and development of China’s discourse power. The challenges from abroad are even more severe, with the United States and other Western countries attempting to downplay and clamp down on China’s major-country diplomatic efforts and resorting to hegemonic discourse. Third, China does not have sufficient discourse power. Excluded from the West-led world order for a long time, China used to say “no” on many major global issues. Then, after it initiated reform and opening-up, it was, for a long time, in a learning phase of integration and copying. As a result, China did not play much of a role in constructively leading and shaping the world. Fourth, China lacks stability in its core diplomatic discourse. New expressions for existing foreign policy appear frequently, and the changes in the way they are expressed leads to perceptions of inconsistency, which increases uncertainty in external relations. Fifth, China lacks dexterity in creating internationally understandable discourse. Chinese words and expressions used in diplomacy tend to use parallelism, repetition and metaphor, which may confuse foreign audiences although the couplets and phrase may be extremely elegant and appealing in Chinese. Finally, although building up its discourse power is an inherent need in its major-country diplomacy, it is still regarded as a “soft task” and not enough attention is given to it compared with other diplomatic tasks. Furthermore, in China’s political system, diplomacy and publicity are

15 Zuo Fengrong, “China’s International Discourse Power: Coordinated Advance of Strength and Concept,” *Theoretical Horizon*, Issue 4, 2016, p.5.

managed by two parallel mechanisms, hence the two will sometimes hinder and diverge from each other.

Constructing China's Major-Country Diplomatic Discourse

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has been strengthening its efforts to tackle the weaknesses in its diplomatic discourse. At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the Decision on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform was adopted, in which it emphasized the promotion of Chinese culture to the world and the enhancing of its international communication capabilities and external discourse system. This was the first time in a CPC Plenum document that the building of an external discourse system was clearly specified. "When it comes to analysis of China's experiences and construction of Chinese theories, we should have the best say. However, in reality, the voices of our philosophy and social sciences are still small in international society and our voices are not widely spread and heard," President Xi Jinping said at a symposium in May to discuss philosophy and social sciences in China.¹⁶ This shows the building of a discourse system for China's major-country diplomacy is considered an important task.

Giving full play to China's advantages in diplomatic discourse

Compared with discourses in other fields, China's discourse in its major-country diplomacy has the following advantages: First, China's rich diplomatic practices are constantly "Chinese concepts" and "Chinese stories." As early as 2001 when China hosted the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shanghai, the concept of "pathfinder" was first proposed in the "Shanghai Accord." This concept resulted in the APEC reform going beyond the long-standing principle of consensus-based decision-making, so that parallel actions need not be taken by all the members simultaneously; those

16 "Xi Says Marxism Scientific, Robust," *Xinhua News*, May 19, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-05/19/c_135369773.htm.

economies ready to initiate and implement a cooperative arrangement may proceed to do so.¹⁷ In recent years, China has continued to explore and make innovations in major-country diplomacy, and has gained a bigger voice in pushing forward a new type of international relations with its proposals for a Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and South-South Cooperation. Second, China's discourse power in the global economic system is steadily improving. The current rivalry in diplomatic discourse between major countries is, to a large extent, the competition of institutional discourse power. In this respect, how big the role played by a country in international mechanisms reflects its discourse power.¹⁸ In 2008, China became a core country in the G20, and its quota and voting power in the IMF increased in the following years. On November 30, 2015, the Executive Board of the IMF decided that, effective October 1, 2016 the Chinese currency would be determined to be a freely usable currency and would be included in the SDR basket as a fifth currency. Third, there is great potential for the development of Chinese major-country diplomatic discourse. With its civilization and culture having a long history of 5,000 years, its spirit of staying true to the mission and pushing forward the cause of nation-building and reform, the vibrancy of its economic and social development, as well as its ever-expanding circle of friends worldwide, China enjoys massive impetus for the continuous development of its diplomatic discourse power.

Multiple build-up of China's diplomatic discourse system

To build up its discourse power in major-country diplomacy, China also needs to take into consideration the essential qualities of diplomatic discourse such as universality, interaction and continuity.

Political dimension. First of all, China's diplomatic discourse must serve the nation's core national interests. These interests include not only territorial integrity and sovereignty but also its political system and political security.

17 Cai Penghong, "Home-field Diplomacy' and China's Global Discourse Right."

18 Yang Qinglong, "Using International Mechanisms to Strengthen China's International Discourse," *Theoretical Horizon*, Issue 4, 2016, p.12.

Second, China's discourse system should completely reflect the political basis (e.g. the developing countries) and propositions (e.g. upholding fairness and justice) of its diplomacy. Finally, China's diplomatic discourse system should benefit the worldwide dissemination of China's chosen development path, and its theories and culture. That means its diplomatic discourse should, to the greatest extent, reflect the political consensus in the international community. The present international political consensus should focus on global governance and coping with global challenges.

Academic dimension. Diplomatic discourse has an academic dimension to its political nature. Diplomatic discourse should have a high academic quality. It should be inherently logical, understandable overseas, and broadly based both domestically and internationally. The support from scholars should help steadily advance China's diplomatic theory and enrich China's diplomatic practice. To enhance Chinese diplomatic discourse, it is imperative to accurately express the content of its discourse, namely, the theoretical thinking, practice and exploration of socialism with Chinese characteristics through precise concepts, definitions and logic. At the same time, more efforts have to be made to summarize the established discourse in a systematic way so as to form a comprehensive diplomatic discourse system to guide China's future diplomatic discourse.

Concerted efforts of policymakers and academic circles. First, a full understanding of the particularities of diplomatic theory is required. A high-degree of centralization is one basic feature of C diplomacy whose theory is usually proposed by state leaders.¹⁹ This is why leaders are said to be ahead of academia, and scholars have to closely follow the foreign policies and principles put forward by the leaders. Second, the interaction between China's politicians and scholars should be enhanced. The top leadership of the Party and the central government attach importance to the role of think tanks, thus enhancing the interaction between the two. Similarly, scholars in China need to be more proactive and become more involved in extensive

19 Jin Zhengkun, *Diplomacy*, Renmin University of China Press, 2004, p.259.

research concerning China's diplomatic discourse. Third, China's institutional advantages should be leveraged, it should concentrate its resources to achieve big things. The building of China's diplomatic discourse needs to assemble expertise and wisdom from the whole country. In recent years, the construction of a new type of socialist think tank with Chinese characteristics has given strong impetus to the building of a discourse system. However, barriers between sectors and regions have to be removed, and the top-level design and execution of prioritized projects need to be improved so as to make progress and early breakthroughs.

Joint construction by China and other countries. China's diplomatic discourse system originates from China, yet it should keep the whole world in mind. First of all, we should fully realize that Chinese characteristics are not only necessary, they also come in stages. As a major socialist developing country, China's rise is of milestone significance to the development of human civilization and to the in-depth evolution of international relations. Therefore, sufficient emphasis should be put on the Chinese characteristics during this period. However, China has to move forward after completing its historic mission. Thus, the Chinese characteristics represent a phase in its journey. Second, great efforts should be made to incorporate all valuable ideas and opinions. China's discourse system needs to absorb all the outstanding achievements of human experience. In an age of globalization and information, we should be open-minded, intensify cultural exchanges and be more audience-oriented in the course of building our discourse power. Institutions which are engaged in diplomacy are in the vanguard in China's opening-up to the outside world. Therefore, they should stand in the forefront of history and incorporate all valuable ideas. They should create a discourse system which serves the country as well as the international community and contributes to global peace, development, and win-win cooperation. Third, the strategy of "going global" should be advanced in a coordinated and phased way. When the Chinese diplomatic discourse goes global, it is desirable to achieve unity between motive and effect as well as an overall balance between domestic and international impacts. The first step is for new

initiatives to go global, such as specific cooperation and early harvests in the Belt and Road Initiative; the second step is for new concepts to go global, such as “joint construction, mutual consultation and win-win cooperation;” the third step is for new thinking and new theory to go global, such as the “community of common interests,” “community of common responsibility” and “community of shared destiny.” Fourth, efforts should be made to win China understanding and recognition in the world. Its diplomatic discourse should play the role of agenda-setting, and having its message recognized.²⁰ Only when China’s diplomatic discourse is accepted and shared by the world can China’s right to discourse be converted into a powerful discourse, and China play a role and exert its influence as a global power. Therefore, when using and disseminating the Chinese major-country diplomatic discourse in the world, more emphasis should be put on commonality between China and the outside world, and excessive ideological and purely Chinese words and expressions should be avoided. Ways of expressions like the “Chinese Dream” meets the principle of universality, and therefore it is easier to obtain understanding and acceptance by the people around the world.

Fields and technology build-up of diplomatic discourse. China is a major country in the world, and China’s diplomatic discourse is constantly being enhanced. Traditional practices cannot meet the needs of the times. To advance overall diplomacy in the political, economic, security and cultural fields, China needs to seize the high ground by initiating a new discourse, present oriented objectives, and demonstrate China’s strength in implementation and institutional guarantees. This is not only an issue of theory, but also one of practice. In today’s information age, China should get accustomed to the revolutionary change brought about by the internet, and make greater progress in strengthening its diplomatic discourse power by making use of the technologies with wide-range interactivity and strong penetrability. 🌐

20 Zhang Zhizhou, “How to Enhance the International Discourse Power of Chinese Media?” *International Communications*, Issue 3, 2011, p.38.