

Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood In the New Era

Preface

China and its neighboring countries enjoy geographical proximity, cultural affinity and integrated interests with a shared future. The millennium-old friendly exchanges between the two sides are a vivid history of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. Such friendly bonds are best captured by the Chinese saying: “true friendship weathers the changing seasons without fading away and is made even stronger by hardships.”

The neighborhood is where China survives and thrives and the foundation of its development and prosperity. As a member of the Asian family and a responsible major country, China attaches great importance to neighborhood diplomacy, always prioritizes the neighborhood on its diplomatic agenda, and remains committed to promoting regional peace, stability, development and prosperity.

Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era, based on the assessment and overview of the current situation and future trends in Asia, comprehensively outlines the achievements, policies, visions and objectives of China's neighborhood diplomacy, and declares China's commitment to the path of peaceful development, to promoting development of the neighborhood through its own development, to working with

regional countries to advance modernization, to jointly building a community with a shared future among neighboring countries and to realizing the vision of a peaceful, secure, prosperous, beautiful, amicable and harmonious Asia in the new era.

I. Asia Faces New Opportunities and Challenges

In the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese President, pointed out that changes of our world, our times, and of historical significance are unfolding in ways like never before. The world has once again reached a crossroads in history. Asia, amidst the changes unseen in a century, stands at a new starting point towards development and revitalization and faces unprecedented opportunities and challenges.

Asia, with its vast land and abundant resources, is home to a large population with diverse cultures and development. It has remained generally stable in the past few decades. Regional countries have enjoyed growing political mutual trust and ever deepening cooperation and exchanges. As a result, Asia has doubled its share of the world economy, made the leap from a region of low income to one of middle income, and formed a momentum of cooperation, development and rapid rise in a short span of 40 years. In recent years, Asia, as an important engine driving global economic recovery and growth, has contributed more than 50 percent to global growth. Asia is the most dynamic region with the biggest development potential in the world and will remain a promising land for global development and prosperity.

Meanwhile, global governance is in dysfunction; Cold War mentality is resurfacing; unilateralism, protectionism and hegemonism run rampant; multiple risks in such fields as energy, food, finance, industrial and supply chains and climate change are having greater impact on Asia. Asia also faces challenges such as uneven economic growth, and pronounced security and governance issues. Some countries have intensified efforts to build regional military alliances; the Korean Peninsula issue remains complicated and intractable; Afghanistan faces numerous challenges in its reconstruction; terrorism, natural disasters and other non-traditional security threats persist.

There are two opposite propositions and trends concerning the future of Asia. One advocates open regionalism, true multilateralism, a development-first approach, mutually beneficial cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, integrated development, and pursuit of common development in harmony. The other represents a relapse into the Cold War mentality and exclusive clubs, and attempts to draw lines based on values, politicize economic issues, divide the region into different security blocs, and stoke division and confrontation.

Good principles keep abreast of the times. The right choice for Asia should be openness, solidarity, cooperation, justice and harmony rather than isolation, division, confrontation, hegemony and zero-sum approach. This not only hinges on the future prospects of countries in the region, but will also have a fundamental and far-reaching bearing on the future of Asia and the world. Building a community with a shared future for mankind is the sure path to a prosperous and better Asia and the

world.

II. Significant Progress Made in China's Relations with Its Neighbors

Over the past half century and more, Asia, once plagued by poverty, weakness, turbulence and wars, has progressed successfully toward peace, stability, development, and prosperity. This is mainly accredited to the commitment of regional countries to independence, unity for strength, mutual respect, inclusiveness, mutual learning, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. In this process, China and fellow Asian countries have jointly advocated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, carried forward the Bandung Spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation, and kept advancing good-neighborliness and mutually beneficial cooperation. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, China's relations with neighboring countries have been upgraded at a faster pace and produced fruitful results.

Political mutual trust has been growing. As of the date of this document's release, China has established diverse and substantive partnerships, cooperative relations and strategic relations of mutual benefit with 28 neighboring countries^① and ASEAN. China has reached common understandings with Pakistan, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Malaysia and Kyrgyzstan on building a community with a shared future, and has agreed with the five Mekong countries^② to build a community with a shared future among Lancang-Mekong countries, and announced with the five

Central Asian countries^③ the decision to build a China-Central Asia community with a shared future. China has resolved historical boundary issues with 12 neighbors on land^④ through negotiations and signed the treaties of good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation with nine neighboring countries^⑤. China has signed and ratified the *Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia*, respects Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, became the first to join the *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia* and is fully prepared to sign the *Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty* at any time.

Mutual benefits keep deepening. China is the largest trading partner of 18 neighboring countries^⑥. In 2022, China's trade in goods with neighboring countries exceeded USD 2.17 trillion, up by 78 percent from 2012. The two-way investment between China and ASEAN has exceeded USD 380 billion in cumulative terms. China took the lead in ratifying the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and worked for its entry into force and implementation, enabling and enhancing regional economic integration.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has delivered benefits to the neighborhood. China upholds the principle of planning together, building together and benefiting together, stays committed to the philosophy of open, green and clean cooperation, strives to achieve high-standard, sustainable and people-centered cooperation. China has signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with 24 neighboring countries^⑦, and worked to synergize the BRI with cooperation plans of ASEAN and the Eurasian Economic Union. China has initiated the establishment

of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund to provide financial support for infrastructure projects. Thanks to the joint efforts of all parties, a general connectivity framework consisting of six corridors, six connectivity routes and multiple countries and ports has been put in place. The fruitful Belt and Road cooperation has spurred economic growth and improved people's lives in relevant countries and has injected strong impetus into economic recovery in the region.

Regional cooperation has grown in depth and substance. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), co-founded by China and neighboring countries, has become a comprehensive regional organization with the largest geographical coverage and population. The China-Central Asia mechanism established by China and the five Central Asian countries has emerged as an important platform for in-depth cooperation between the six countries. Lancang-Mekong Cooperation is a success story of mutually beneficial cooperation in the sub-region, and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Economic Development Belt is taking shape. In a spirit of openness and inclusiveness, China actively participates in multilateral cooperation, including the ASEAN-centered East Asia cooperation mechanism, China-Japan-ROK cooperation, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), contributing to the region's integrated development and people's well-being.

Hotspot issues have been effectively managed and controlled. China has contributed solutions to political settlement of regional hotspot issues, and proposed and put into action the Chinese approach to addressing hotspot issues. On the Korean Peninsula issue, for the sake of peace, stability, and lasting

security on the Peninsula, China has put forward the innovative “suspension-for-suspension” proposal and the dual-track approach, stayed committed to political settlement and actively facilitated peace talks. On Afghanistan, China has established a mechanism for coordination and cooperation among Afghanistan’s neighbors, relaunched the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers’ Dialogue, and issued the Tunxi Initiative on helping Afghanistan with reconstruction and development, building synergy among various parties. On Myanmar, China has encouraged the parties to bridge differences, restore social stability in the country, and launch political dialogue as quickly as possible.

Risks and challenges have been addressed effectively. China and neighboring countries have worked together in tackling such challenges as terrorism, separatism and financial crisis in the region. Since COVID-19 broke out, China and neighboring countries have come together to overcome difficulties, which reflects the spirit of a community with a shared future and provided leadership for global solidarity against the pandemic.

The remarkable progress made in Asia is attributable to the joint efforts of China and neighboring countries, and need to be cherished. China’s development would not be possible without a peaceful and stable neighboring environment. The development of China and that of neighboring countries complement and reinforce each other. China’s development will bring major opportunities and long-term benefits to countries across Asia, and will make even greater contributions to peace and development in the region.

III. Concepts and Propositions of China's Neighborhood Diplomacy in the New Era

In the Report to the 20th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping underscored that “China has always been committed to its foreign policy goals of upholding world peace and promoting common development, and it is dedicated to promoting a community with a shared future for mankind”. Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, China will maintain the continuity and stability of its neighborhood diplomacy, adhere to the policy of developing friendship and partnership with neighbors, and act on the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. China is committed to good neighborliness, good faith and amity; believes in sincerity and mutual assistance; pursues mutual benefit and win-win cooperation; advocates inclusiveness and mutual learning, and seeks common ground while shelving differences. China will endeavor to further the political relations, strengthen the economic bonds, deepen security cooperation and foster even closer cultural ties with neighboring countries, in a bid to further advance the building of a community with a shared future among neighboring countries.

China will foster a new type of international relations, and work with regional countries to deepen partnerships featuring equality, openness and cooperation. China firmly defends its sovereignty, security and development interests, respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, respects the development path and social system chosen independently by the people of each country, and does not interfere in other countries' internal affairs. China upholds equality between countries regardless of

their size, promotes the unity and cooperation of the Global South, upholds the common interests of developing countries, and works to raise the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries in global affairs. China promotes coordination and sound interactions among major countries, and pursues major-country relationships that feature peaceful coexistence, overall stability and balanced development. China and the United States should, on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, engage in sound interactions in the Asia-Pacific and contribute positive energy to regional stability and development.

China will stay committed to the principle of equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, and work with regional countries to advance modernization. Chinese modernization provides a new choice for developing countries to explore their modernization pathways. China will seek to develop itself while safeguarding regional peace and development, keep creating new opportunities for neighboring countries with China's new development, and follow a path of open, cooperative and win-win development together with neighboring countries.

China will stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and work with regional countries to maintain regional peace and stability. China rejects the Cold War mentality, unilateralism, group politics and bloc confrontation. China attaches importance to the legitimate security concerns of all countries, upholds the principle of indivisible security, seeks to build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and follows a

new path to security that features dialogue over confrontation, partnership over alliance, and win-win over zero-sum together with regional countries.

China will firmly uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order underpinned by international law, and the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. China upholds open regionalism, practices true multilateralism, and works with neighboring countries to foster Asian values centered on peace, cooperation, inclusiveness and integration and promote the unity, development and revitalization of Asia. China advocates inclusiveness, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations that pursue harmony without uniformity and live together in diversity, as well as the Asian Way of mutual respect and consensus building. China upholds Asia's tradition of solidarity and mutual assistance. We firmly support ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture, and constantly work with ASEAN countries and other neighboring countries to deepen converging interests and forge a strong bond among the peoples.

China will resolutely take forward the endeavor of national reunification, firmly oppose "Taiwan independence" separatist activities in any form, and firmly safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity. We appreciate Asian countries' commitment to the one-China principle. The more unequivocal we are on upholding the one-China principle and the more forceful our measures are to forestall separation, the greater possibility there is to ensure peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and uphold peace and prosperity in the region.

When China engages with the world, it all along values good faith and good neighborliness. China was, is, and will always be a good neighbor, good friend and good partner of regional countries, and will always be a major force underpinning peace, stability, development and prosperity.

IV. A New Vision for the “Asian Century” in the New Era

In today’s Asia, peace and stability reflect the overwhelming trend, and development and prosperity represent the aspiration of the people. China and regional countries share the same continent and the same ocean. Living and thriving here together, we share a common destiny and future. China will work with regional countries in solidarity to build a peaceful, secure, prosperous, beautiful, amicable and harmonious Asian home.

We need to jointly build a peaceful and secure home. The concept of peace, amity and harmony is Asian countries’ remarkable contribution to human civilization. It is important to uphold peaceful coexistence, defend the red line of peace and stability, attach importance to the legitimate security concerns of all countries, and jointly respond to threats that undermine peace. China hopes to work with neighboring countries to cultivate long-term good-neighborliness and friendship, expand common ground while shelving and resolving differences, address differences and disputes between countries peacefully, and jointly safeguard enduring peace in the region. No matter what stage of development it reaches, China will never seek hegemony or expansion. China will continue to work with

ASEAN countries to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and actively advance consultations and conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), and work with parties concerned in the South China Sea to properly address maritime disagreements and differences through dialogue. We need to strengthen maritime cooperation, deepen mutual trust and security, and promote joint development, in an effort to make the South China Sea a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation.

China will work with regional countries to manage regional security affairs with a coordinated approach. We need to enhance economic and financial security cooperation, deepen macro economic policy coordination, and bolster regional financial stability. It is important to advance cooperation in such fields as counterterrorism, deradicalization and fighting cross-border crimes, and enhance security cooperation on nuclear facilities, cyberspace, outer space and polar regions. We need to enhance the region's capacity in public health security governance, and strengthen cooperation in biosecurity, prevention and treatment of dangerous communicable diseases, medical supplies, and vaccine and pharmaceutical technologies. Cooperation on food and energy security needs to be enhanced to ensure the safety and stability of production and supply chains.

We need to jointly build a prosperous and beautiful home. China will continue to firmly pursue the strategy of openness, development and mutual benefit, raise the level of trade and investment facilitation and liberalization, deepen regional

economic integration, and build a more open Asian big market. China will further expand trade with regional countries, increase imports from neighboring countries, and improve customs clearance facilitation. China will continue to promote the process of joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA). China stands ready to negotiate high-standard free trade agreements with more regional countries, improve the regional free trade network, and build a common big market. To promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, China will give priority to connectivity corridor projects of railways and highways with neighboring countries, and accelerate the development of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor. We need to speed up development of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement 3.0, effectively implement RCEP and work for its expansion and upgrading in due course. It is important to maintain the stable and smooth operation of industrial and supply chains to underpin open and inclusive cooperation. We need to vigorously develop the digital economy, strengthen exchange and cooperation in artificial intelligence, bio-medicine, modern energy and other fields, and translate scientific and technological innovation achievements into greater benefits to the people of regional countries.

China stands ready to work with regional countries to pursue green development and green growth model, drive economic growth with innovation, transform and upgrade economic, energy and industrial structures, and strike a fine balance between emission reduction and economic growth, in a bid to build an Asian home enjoying the concerted progress of

economic growth and environmental progress. It is important to uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and strengthen climate cooperation. In the process of achieving carbon peaking and carbon neutrality, China stands ready to promote mutual learning and mutual benefit with neighboring countries, strengthen cooperation in green finance and green investment, and support low-carbon, sustainable development in the region. Efforts should be made to build a blue economic partnership and promote the sustainable development of the ocean.

We need to jointly build an amicable and harmonious home. We uphold mutual respect and equality in promoting exchanges, dialogue, inclusiveness and mutual learning among civilizations. It is important to extract nutrients from the millennia-long Asian civilization, to help forge the collective identity of the Asian value, way and tradition, expand people-to-people exchanges and cooperation in the region, and cement popular support for good-neighborliness. More measures need to be introduced to facilitate traveling. China will strengthen cooperation in vocational education, higher education and mutual recognition of educational certificates, provide more government scholarships and scholarships for various universities and majors for neighboring countries, and facilitate the traveling of international students. We will continue to promote exchanges in the fields of culture, arts, youth, tourism, localities, media, think tanks and non-governmental organizations, and strengthen cooperation on Asia's cultural and sports industry.

China stands ready to work with neighboring countries to, relying on the four pillars of connectivity, development, security

and people-to-people exchanges and focusing on the six cooperation areas of the political sector, economy and trade, science and technology, security, people-to-people exchanges and global challenges, work for a community with a shared future among neighboring countries that features shared concepts, plans, benefits, security and responsibilities. We need to jointly build a demonstration area of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and deepen “physical connectivity” of infrastructure and “institutional connectivity” of rules and standards. We will work together to build Global Development Initiative pilot zone featuring more equitable, balanced and inclusive development partnership, Global Security Initiative pilot zone featuring an Asian pathway of security defined by planning together, building together and benefiting together, and Global Civilization Initiative pilot zone that boosts people-to-people exchanges and the mutual learning, harmonious coexistence of civilizations.

China will take an active part in East Asia cooperation, China-Central Asia mechanism, SCO, BRICS, APEC, Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and other multilateral mechanisms and organizations, and strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum, Indian Ocean Rim Association and other regional organizations, in a bid to jointly promote the connectivity, stability and development of Asia, Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean regions.

Conclusion

Asia is poised for promising prospects and revitalization. As

President Xi Jinping pointed out, when Asia fares well, the whole world benefits. In this spirit, we need to work for sound progress and development in Asia, demonstrate Asia's resilience, wisdom and strength, and make Asia an anchor for world peace, a powerhouse for global growth and a new pacesetter for international cooperation.

One Asia, one future. We are all in an era full of both challenges and hope. Unprecedented opportunities and challenges require countries to work together in unprecedented solidarity and coordination. Only when all countries pursue the cause of common good, live in harmony and engage in win-win cooperation, will there be sustained prosperity and guaranteed security.

China is now building a modern socialist country in all respects and striving to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. In this process, China stands ready as always to support the efforts of people in the region to pursue a happy life, and work hand in hand with regional countries to realize the Asian dream of lasting peace and common development, and build a community with a shared future among neighboring countries.

^① The 28 countries that have established partnerships, cooperative relations or strategic relations of mutual benefit with China are Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste, Russia, the Philippines, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Japan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Brunei, Uzbekistan, Singapore, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

^② The five Mekong countries are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand

and Viet Nam.

③ The five Central Asian countries are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

④ The 12 land neighbors that have resolved the boundary issues with China through negotiations are: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Laos and Viet Nam.

⑤ The nine neighboring countries that have signed treaties of good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation with China are Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

⑥ The 18 neighboring countries whose largest trading partner is China are Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Japan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Singapore, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

⑦ The 24 neighboring countries that have signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with China are Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Russia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Kazakhstan, Laos, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Brunei, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Singapore, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Viet Nam.