

China's Evolving Foreign Policy

It is necessary to better understand China's constantly evolving foreign policy as a superpower with thousands of years of history and a rich population

Since Operation 1027, China has assumed a more significant role in mediating the Myanmar conflict. Previously, Myanmar's peace process was primarily led by Myanmar nationals, claimed limiting to international involvement. However, China's mediation efforts are now being acknowledged and accepted. Foreign Minister Wang Yi has emphasized China's commitment to addressing the issue as a matter of importance. Given China's increased role in Myanmar, it is necessary to better understand China's constantly evolving foreign policy.

At a press conference on March 7, Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted China's prioritization in addressing three international hot spots: Saudi Arabia-Iran relations, Iran-Pakistan relations, and the Myanmar situation. He stated that China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has participated responsibly by intervening in the Myanmar conflict. Wang Yi also stated that wisdom drawn from Chinese culture would help China in finding solutions with Chinese characteristics to heated issues. Some though have opposed his statement in regards to the Myanmar issue.

Wang Yi further emphasized that China, as a large country with thousands of years of history and a rich population, cannot practice its foreign policy with expediency.

He highlighted the importance of implementing a stable and strong foreign policy. Looking back at China's foreign policy in particular, the principles adopted by the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China are crucial. On December 28, 2023, the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was held. Implementation of the Guiding Principles of the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs comprises ten points, four guiding principles and six imperatives. Three of the four guiding principles are most important to China's foreign policy towards the Myanmar issue. Firstly, China's foreign policy is based on President Xi Jinping's Thought on Diplomacy. Secondly, it is rooted in leveraging China's unique strengths to cultivate the image of a major country capable of accommodating all forces, characterized by being confident, self-reliant, open, and inclusive. Thirdly, to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

In addition, China's provinces must adhere to the central principles and implement them accordingly, while self-administrative regions can independently manage some flexible aspects of foreign relations. However, the central policy binds them and cannot override them. In addition, China's Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global

- ▶ Civilization Initiative are also to be implemented through applied Chinese foreign policy.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi's press conference speech prioritized the 'Four Commitments' of China in solving international conflicts. The first commitment is to not interfere in the internal affairs of other states reiterating China's respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity in line with the United Nations' charter. The second commitment is to prioritize political settlements in disputes, not to rely on sanctions obsessively, but rather to advance dialogue and consultation with utmost patience to find a common ground that accommodates the needs of all sides. The third commitment is to objectivity and impartiality, to not practice one-sided favoritism and to seek common geopolitical interests in solving issues for

the betterment of the world. The fourth commitment prioritizes addressing conflicts' symptoms and root causes, aiming to de-escalate tensions and swiftly prevent any further spread. It emphasizes systematic and logical analyses of root causes and employs multi-strategic approaches to resolve them effectively.

As a superpower and neighboring country, China has a deep historical relationship with Myanmar. Understanding China's foreign policy is crucial for interpreting its involvement in Myanmar's affairs. When China intervened in Myanmar in an attempt to resolve the northern Shan State conflicts, did China follow the basic principles it has set out for itself? It would seem to be a point of discussion for readers to decide whether China has acted according to its own principles. Readers might want to take it with a grain of salt. ■