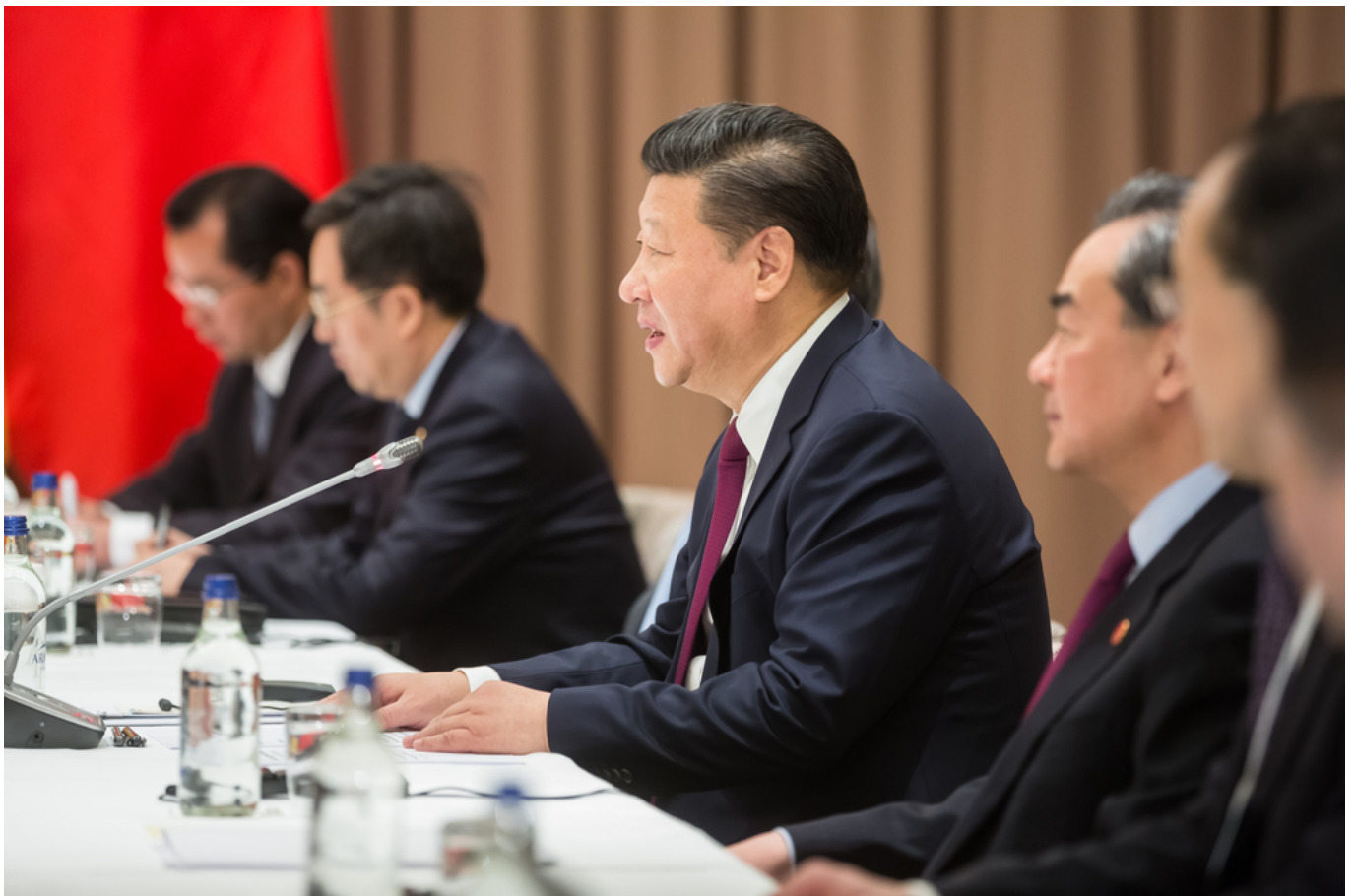




By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

New Chinese document on the global future - encouraging leaders ahead of difficult talks with the West



The Beijing government has published a new addition to a series of white papers: this time a comprehensive piece entitled "A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions".

The policy statement (English version), which is 37 pages long and contains over 14,000 words, outlines China's vision regarding how the world's interactions should generally be structured, naturally followed by criticism of the current system, whose redefinition it seeks.

The state campaign accompanying the document's publication highlights the relationship between the document's depiction of the future world and Xi Jinping's authorship over the entire concept.

This document is a quasi-theoretical-political monument to the 10th anniversary of Xi Jinping's rule.

The concept of global relations from the Chinese point of view, presented in the white paper, is strongly linked to Xi's programme from a decade ago on building a "global community of shared future".

This is how the Chinese Communist Party government is marking the jubilee of its leader and cementing his iconic status. It applauds his policy, which aims to elevate China to the leadership position in the global framework, even at the expense of aggressively imposing that concept on others.

No new policies

The white paper is a homage to Xi's strategy of increasing Chinese influence by weaving together phrases and slogans about world peace and international equality.

The document is based on China's 3 recent global strategies – development, security, and civilisation – and does not contain any new initiatives.

The essence of those documents has not

changed in the latest white paper. China opposes the existing "rule-based international order" as an instrument of Western global domination, and offers itself and its order as an alternative.

Regardless of the fact that nearly everything in this text pertains to the US and its allies in the West, it is evident that the authors of this document had a difficult time (and succeeded) in excluding every mention of the US.

"The world needs justice, not hegemonism", "No country has the right to dominate global affairs". Some countries are seeking to decouple from China, to "reduce dependence" and "de-risk, which will only backfire" intones the document, with significant but unsuccessful efforts to preserve a level of generality.

In one sole paragraph, the authors could not resist dropping a hint of whom they meant : "Democracy is not Coca-Cola, tasting the same across the world because the syrup is produced in one single country".

The "gap" between paper and reality

The new white paper will be used domestically despite being geared towards a global audience, policymakers and decision-makers outside China.

Its proclamations and projections of future global relations, where the Chinese model should be at the centre, suffer from a deviation from the practical behaviour of China, while in real terms, it imposes its own political, security and business model.

While the Belt and Road project (another legacy of Xi Jinping) takes centre stage in the white paper and is proof of China's commitment to new and fair relations in the world, the number of economies that are either exiting it or have an unsustainable debt to China has been growing, which was definitely one of its initial goals.

Beijing strongly opposes economic protectionism, particularly sanctions, even though only 2 months ago, it aimed for a ban on the export of some rare metals or applied harsh trade sanctions against Australia as soon as it dared to demand an international investigation into the causes of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even though this paper firmly defends the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, China only lightly touches on the Russian aggression against Ukraine, emphasising only its peace initiative from last March, which was an end in itself, and material for reports like this white paper.

Xi needs encouragement

The primary purpose of this document is to secure Xi Jinping's internal image as a leader under whom China has highlighted its ambition for global leadership, and has been acting aggressively, even imperially.

The establishment must strengthen this one-person cult and programme at a time when the anticipated significant economic recovery has not occurred following a 3-year lockdown.

Such a document is required as a self-encouragement for China in the face of its biggest competitors from the West, who are meanwhile strengthening their alliances in the Pacific and increasingly focusing their political, economic and security strategies on the Far East, and countering China's influence in the region.

At this moment, President Xi needs encouragement of this kind through a document that appears to be strategic and has global implications.

Collision with reality

President Xi will host the Belt and Road Initiative summit in October on the 10th anniversary of this project. But it will be a

more or less protocol meeting with partners (willing or unwilling), whom even Beijing does not expect to follow its global plans.

However, President Xi will attend a meeting with the leaders of the European Union, China's major trading partners along with the US, who have been increasingly aligning themselves with the bloc in favour of Washington's harsher stance on Beijing and its influence.

And lastly, Xi is expected to meet with the US president in San Francisco in November for the APEC summit. Even if the head of Chinese diplomacy Wang Yi declined to confirm this meeting a few days ago, he provided numerous arguments for why a summit between the US and China is very likely to occur.

Xi has limited room to avoid meetings with Western leaders after declining to attend the recent G20 summit in New Delhi for the first time since taking office.

Given the numerous unresolved issues between China and the West, particularly the relatively close positions of the EU and the US, which Beijing has worked hard to keep apart, they will undoubtedly not be simple.

These talks will be crucial for Beijing and Xi personally, no matter how challenging they may be, because they will determine China's future standing in the international political and economic systems.

That status is far from the self-encouraging visions and strategies contained in the latest white paper of the Beijing administration.