

China-Russia diplomacy at Olympics—a ‘tectonic shift’

By Rachel Douglas

Geopoliticians’ nightmare that, by constant hostile actions towards China and Russia, they would drive the world’s strongest economy and its second-biggest nuclear weapons power closer together, is coming true, as was visible in the summitry held in Beijing as the XXIV Olympic Winter Games opened on 4 February. For most people in the world, that’s good news!

President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin issued a joint statement, “On International Relations Entering a New Era and Global Sustainable Development”, which is described by friends and foes alike as marking a “tectonic” shift in global relations. The document is scathing in its rejection of Anglo-American confrontational geopolitics and description of its authors as “minority” powers on the planet. It emphasises economic development (not financial growth, but improvements in the real economy) as a “key driver” of better conditions in the world and relations among nations, and calls for the United Nations to play “the central Coordinating role” in international affairs, echoing US President Franklin Roosevelt’s original vision of the UN at its founding after World War II.

This 16-page document is available in English on the Kremlin website at <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>. A few excerpts, given here with emphasis added, may convince you to print out and study the whole text.

It begins: “Today, the world is going through momentous changes, and humanity is entering a *new era of rapid development and profound transformation*. It sees the development of such processes and phenomena as multipolarity, economic globalisation, the advent of information society, cultural diversity, transformation of the global governance architecture and world order; there is increasing interrelation and interdependence between the States; a *trend has emerged towards redistribution of power in the world; and the international community is showing a growing demand for the leadership aiming at peaceful and gradual development*. At the same time, as the pandemic of the novel coronavirus infection continues, the international and regional security situation is becoming complicated and the number of global challenges and threats is growing from day to day. *Some actors, representing merely a minority on the international scale, continue to advocate unilateral approaches to addressing international issues and resort to force; they interfere in the internal affairs of other states, infringing their legitimate rights and interests, and incite contradictions, differences and confrontation, thus hampering the development and progress of mankind, against the opposition from the international community.*

“The sides call on all States to pursue well-being for all and, with these ends, to build dialogue and mutual trust, strengthen mutual understanding, champion such universal human values as peace, development, equality, justice, democracy and freedom, *respect the rights of peoples to independently determine the development paths of their countries and the sovereignty and the security and development interests of States, to protect the United Nations-driven international architecture and the international law-based world order, seek genuine multipolarity with the United Nations and its Security Council playing a central and coordinating role*, promote more democratic international relations, and ensure peace, stability and sustainable development across the world.”

An opening section on “democracy” rejects the idea that

“certain states”—again, alluding to the USA and the UK—have the right to set “democratic standards” and define who is in compliance with them and who is not. China and Russia state, “The sides believe that democracy is a means of citizens’ participation in the government of their country with the view to *improving the well-being of the population* and implementing the principle of popular government.” They invoke the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights as the needed standards (as against, implicitly, politically motivated NGOs like the US National Endowment for Democracy that have been up to their ears in regime-change interventions under the flag of “democracy”).

In a lengthy section on international security challenges, Russian supports the “One China” principle under which Taiwan is part of China, while China supports Russia’s fight against the enlargement of NATO and its proposals for “long-term legally binding security guarantees in Europe” (“[Anglo-American war hawks push showdown with Russia](#)”, AAS, 12 Jan. 2022). They both “stand against the formation of closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the Asia-Pacific region and remain highly vigilant about the negative impact of the United States’ Indo-Pacific strategy on peace and stability in the region.”

Singled out for condemnation is AUKUS, the security alliance between Australia, the USA and the UK. Russia and China state that AUKUS projects like nuclear-powered submarine development “are contrary to the objectives of security and sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific region, increase the danger of an arms race in the region, and pose serious risks of nuclear proliferation.”

They affirm, “No state can or should ensure its own security separately from the security of the rest of the world and at the expense of the security of other states.” It is worth recalling that when Putin brought this principle of the “indivisible character of security” into his international speeches, in a famous February 2007 presentation to the Munich Security Conference, he did so by citing FDR: “As Franklin Roosevelt put it in the first days after the outbreak of the Second World War, ‘When peace has been broken anywhere, peace of all countries everywhere is in danger’.”

Development—the name for peace

An separate section takes up economic development issues: “The sides believe that *peace, development and cooperation lie at the core of the modern international system. Development is a key driver in ensuring the prosperity of the nations....* The sides will strengthen cooperation within multi-lateral mechanisms, including the United Nations, and encourage the international community to prioritise development issues in the global macro-policy coordination. They call on the developed countries to implement in good faith their formal commitments on development assistance, provide more resources to developing countries, address the uneven development of States, work to offset such imbalances within States, and advance global and international development cooperation.”

They cite particular measures, such as upgrading cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union, led by Russia and including several countries in Central Asia, and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for building infrastructure

around the world. Russia supports the Global Development Initiative, which Xi Jinping proposed last September in the framework of the UN, to foster economic revitalisation after the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The terminology and policies expressed in the statement's section on development hark back to the most promising initiatives from the end of World War II and thereafter, initiatives that were disrupted or weakened by the Cold War and the rise of the current Transatlantic financial oligarchy and its speculation-centred regime.

First and foremost, they echo Roosevelt's original concept of the United Nations. FDR envisioned a post-war order of sovereign nation-states, each and all developing economically for the benefit of their populations, to be guaranteed by agreements among the Big Four: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China, which would collaborate under the aegis of the new United Nations Organisation. The great powers would assist the economic development of the former powers colonies of the British, French, Dutch and other empires.

That cooperation did not come to pass during the Cold War, but the impulse remained alive with the declaration of the First UN Development Decade in 1960, under which countries with more advanced economies were called on to adopt "policies designed to enable the developing countries to sell more of their products at stable and remunerative prices in expanding markets in order to finance more of their economic development".¹ Later in the decade, in 1967, Catholic Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples)*, in which he declared, "development is the new name of peace".

In a section on various formats of international cooperation, China and Russia link the "central coordinating role" of the UN with the Chinese idea of building a "*community of the common destiny of mankind* ... to ensure greater solidarity of the international community and consolidation of efforts in responding to common challenges." Calling for "a new kind of relationship between world powers on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation", they cite their own bilateral ties as a step in the right direction (by two countries that only 50-some years ago were in a shooting war on their border, it should be noted):

"They reaffirm that the new inter-State relations between Russia and China are superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War era. Friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no 'forbidden' areas of cooperation, strengthening of bilateral strategic cooperation is neither aimed against third countries nor affected by the changing international environment and circumstantial changes in third countries."

China and Russia signed 15 bilateral agreements during the 4 February summit, many of heightened importance as the USA threatens to punish Russia with brutal sanctions over its allegedly planned "invasion" of Ukraine. In one major deal, Russia guarantees the sale to China of 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas each year via a new pipeline in the Russian Far East. The new gas-field tap is to start in 2023. Separately, Russian oil giant Rosneft signed a deal with China's CNPC oil company to supply 100 million tons of oil through Kazakhstan over 10 years, extending an existing deal. Russian Ambassador to China Andrei Denisov recently said that China and Russia were developing an energy "alliance", including the development of nuclear energy. Russia is already working with China on building several nuclear plants.

1. "Economic and Social Development - First UN Development Decade", *Encyclopedia of the Nations*.

New agriculture-related agreements will facilitate the supply of wheat, barley and alfalfa from Russia to China. In the area of satellite technology, the two sides will work towards interoperability between China's BeiDou system and Russia's GLONASS.

Xi Jinping met other world leaders, visiting for the opening of the Olympics. Top on the list, after Putin, was President Alberto Fernandez of Argentina on 5 February; Fernandez had just been in Moscow for talks with Putin and discussions of potential cooperation on oil and gas infrastructure, railroad construction, nuclear energy, aerospace and vaccine production. China and Argentina signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Argentina's joining the BRI, with up to US\$23 billion Chinese investment in Argentina for rail and energy infrastructure, agriculture and high-tech R&D. China will renew and strengthen currency swap agreements with Argentina, which are important given Argentina's contentious negotiations with the International Monetary Fund over rescheduling its foreign debt service.

On 5 February Xi Jinping hosted a diplomatic dinner for world leaders attending the Olympics, and met individually that day and the next with PM Imran Khan of Pakistan and the Presidents of Egypt, Serbia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, their discussions focused on industrial, infrastructure, and poverty-alleviation projects in each case.

Rumpelstiltskin

Outlets for Anglo-American financial and overseas-war-promoting institutions were fit to be tied over the Chinese-Russian diplomacy, recognising its momentous nature. "Russia and China Rise from Their Knees to Challenge US Dominance", headlined the *Telegraph* in horror, and went on: "... the message here is anything but routine. At a moment of immense international tension, Russia and China are asserting the arrival of a new geopolitical era. From now on, the dominance of the US-led global West will no longer be taken for granted—or tolerated. After decades of humiliation the world's autocratic superpowers have risen from their knees and will now up-end the inequitable post-Cold War world order."

In Washington, the Atlantic Council—a British government-funded outfit known as the think tank for NATO—brought out its president and CEO Frederick Kempe, who wrote 6 February under the headline "The world's top two authoritarians have teamed up. The US should be on alert". He wrote, "Russia and China are throwing in their lot with each other in an unprecedented manner in each other's regions and around the world. For the first time, Beijing has joined Moscow in opposing NATO enlargement; Russia returned the favour by opposing the new AUKUS defence pact". For Kempe, "The broad areas that the agreement covers are head-spinning", and "this week's joint statement underscores a tectonic shift in global relations".

Elbridge Colby, the lawyer masquerading as hyper-belligerent military strategist who exerts unwarranted influence of the Australian government,² was quoted by Sky News 6 Feb., calling the China-Russia rapprochement an "indictment of American statecraft", since "basic geopolitical prudence" dictates they should be kept apart.

Western media coverage of the Beijing Olympics opening, which treated the colourful display as the excesses of an evil empire, was too ridiculous to report here.

2. "Elbridge Colby peddles World War III", AAS, 26 Jan. 2022; "A clear and present danger: Peter Dutton and the 'Strategy of Denial'", AAS, 19 Jan. 2022.