

## China's new Foreign Relations Law

### Why in news?

China's National People's Congress adopted new Law on Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China came into effect on July 1.

### What is the new law about?

- China's foreign relations law (FRL) was approved and put in effect on July 1, 2023.
- It consists of 6 chapters and the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative are a part of it.
- The law involving foreign affairs was drafted to safeguard China's sovereignty, national security and development interests.
- **Implications** - The law will tighten President Xi Jinping's control over foreign policy.
- The broader aim of the law is to give a legal stamp to many of the key objectives of Chinese foreign policy under President Xi.
- Law also makes it a punishable offence if individuals or organisations were deemed to act against those objectives.

### What will be the impact on foreign policy?

- **Centralised power** - President Xi took office in 2012 since then, the control over foreign policy has become increasingly centralised.
- **Challenging** - Now with legal stamp, challenging China's foreign policy may be deemed as a violation of Chinese laws.
- **Political shift** - The law also emphasises sovereignty and security as being at the heart of Chinese foreign policy as it is the case always.
- For the first time in the reform era, the policy prioritised security over development and opening up.
- **Legal response to Western sanctions** - China has repeatedly criticised US' bans and restrictions, refuted allegations of corporate espionage and currency manipulation.
- The law will reinforce the Law on Countering Sanctions.
- This will essentially make it illegal for Western companies operating within China to comply with sanctions aimed at the country.
- **Legal toolbox** - China tries to make full use of the Foreign Relations Law as response to acts of containment, interference, sanctions against China.
- **Providing loans** - The law appears to be a response to criticisms of China's foreign lending and the debt crises in several of its partners.
- According to **Article 19** of the new law, China would
  1. Respect the sovereignty of recipient countries.
  2. Not interfere in their internal affairs or attach any political conditions to its aid.

## What does the new law mean for India?

- **Neighbours** - The law says China will grow relations with its neighbouring countries in accordance with the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness.
- **Border dispute** - The emphasis of security, sovereignty and territorial integrity as key tenets of Chinese foreign policy coincide with the border dispute between India and China.
- **The case of Border law (2021)** - It formalises China's moves along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) upending both bilateral relations and decades-old mechanisms to manage the boundary dispute.
- **Similarity** - Both the law coincides with territorial disputes being framed as matters of national sovereignty by Beijing rather than issues to be negotiated by 2 sides, narrows the scope for resolution.
- **India-U.S. ties** - The US's increasing proximity to India is seen as threat by China.
- **Agreements** - It declares that implementation and application of treaties and agreements shall not undermine the sovereignty of the State, national security and public interests.
- This may have a potential bearing on the signing of agreements to resolve disputes between the countries.

*Article 8 - Any organisation or individual who commits acts that are detrimental to China's national interests in the course of engaging in international exchanges shall be held accountable by law.*

- **Indian companies** - Article 8 impacts particularly Indian and foreign companies operating within China.
- **Ambiguity** - What is deemed as "detrimental to China's national interests" is not clear which gives wider scope to authorities implementing them.

## Reference

1. [The Hindu - What is China's new law on foreign relations?](#)

