

XI DEFENDS CHINA'S AMBITIONS, WARNS OF 'CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS'

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Xi Jinping

President Xi Jinping gave a robust defence of China's ambitions on Tuesday in a speech to the UN, warning against the perils of a "clash of civilizations" during a pandemic that has ripped through the world.

In an opening address presaged by a demand by his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump for China to be held "accountable" for the coronavirus outbreak, Mr. Xi said global unity was the only way to overcome the crisis.

The world must "oppose politicisation and stigmatisation" over COVID-19, Mr. Xi said in the pre-recorded address, urging world leaders to embrace the "concept of a big family... and avoid falling into the trap of a clash of civilizations".

The U.S. and China are eyeballing each other over a raft of issues: the origins of the coronavirus, trade and tech dominance, security and disputed seas.

The U.S. has called China out over its ambitions to control the strategically pivotal South China Sea as well as for its bid to crush democracy movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

'No Cold War'

But Mr. Xi reassured world leaders his country had no desire for "hegemony, expansion or sphere of influence".

"China has no intention to enter a Cold War with any country," he said, insisting that Beijing is instead a bulwark of international systems such as the World Trade Organization and a willing partner in the face of diplomatic spats.

"We insist on dialogue to bridge differences and negotiation to resolve disputes," he added.

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