



TRENDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

# CHINA AS A RISING NORM ENTREPRENEUR

Examining GDI, GSI and GCI

Manoj Kewalramani

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# TRENDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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# FOREWORD

The economic, political, strategic and cultural dynamism in Southeast Asia has gained added relevance in recent years with the spectacular rise of giant economies in East and South Asia. This has drawn greater attention to the region and to the enhanced role it now plays in international relations and global economics.

The sustained effort made by Southeast Asian nations since 1967 towards a peaceful and gradual integration of their economies has had indubitable success, and perhaps as a consequence of this, most of these countries are undergoing deep political and social changes domestically and are constructing innovative solutions to meet new international challenges. Big Power tensions continue to be played out in the neighbourhood despite the tradition of neutrality exercised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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# **China as a Rising Norm Entrepreneur: Examining GDI, GSI and GCI**

By Manoj Kewalramani

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- This paper discusses Chinese President Xi Jinping's flagship global initiatives' normative implications for the world order.
- It argues that the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), which are key pillars of China's proposal to build a community of common destiny for mankind, are driven by Beijing's desire to cultivate authority in the international system.
- Analysing the speeches by Chinese leaders, policy documents, media and analytical discourse in China, along with policy decisions, this study provides an assessment of the Chinese leadership's worldview. It places the launch of GDI, GSI and GCI within this context, before detailing the elements of each initiative and offering a critical analysis.
- This study concludes that through GDI, GSI and GCI, the Chinese leadership hopes to shape an external environment that not only ensures regime security but is also favourable to China's development and security interests. In doing so, however, it is reshaping key norms of global governance towards a fundamentally illiberal direction.





# China as a Rising Norm Entrepreneur: Examining GDI, GSI and GCI

By Manoj Kewalramani<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Addressing a gathering at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in March 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping talked about the concept of mankind being a community of shared future or with a common destiny.<sup>2</sup> This was Xi's first major foreign policy speech, during his first foreign visit, after taking over as president. Analytical and media discourse at the time paid little attention to this concept. Instead, much of the discussion was focused on what appeared to be the articulation of shared grievances and a convergence of objectives between China and Russia.<sup>3</sup> From a policy perspective, the idea of people being a community

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<sup>2</sup> “Follow the Trend of the Times and Promote Peace and Development in the World”, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 23 March 2013, [http://nl.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/201304/t20130419\\_10043995.htm](http://nl.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/201304/t20130419_10043995.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Soldatkin, “In Moscow, New Chinese Leader Xi Warns Against Meddling”, Reuters, 24 March 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-russia-xi-jinping-idINDEE92M03M20130323>; David M. Herszenhorn and Chris Buckley, “China's Leader Argues for Cooperation With Russia”, *New York Times*, 24 March 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/24/world/europe/chinas-leader-argues-for-cooperation-with-russia.html>

of common destiny or shared future was rather vague. Moreover, it did not seem novel. In fact, in Chinese discourse, this concept can be traced back to the pre-Xi era.<sup>4</sup>

As far back as 2007, there were references to people in the Mainland and Taiwan forming a community of common destiny.<sup>5</sup> The phrase was also used by Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao, in his report to the 18th Party Congress in November 2012.<sup>6</sup> In Hu's articulation, the concept of mankind as a community of common destiny largely seemed to refer to the interconnected nature of the world. This implied that it was in China's interests to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries. At the same time, it encapsulated ideas of the need to pursue the construction of a global order featuring common security and common development.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to be aware of this, given the revisionism in Chinese discourse around the concept attributing it to Xi Jinping. See “携手建设更加美好的世界”, *People's Daily*, 23 March 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/23/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230323\\_3-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/23/nw.D110000renmrb_20230323_3-01.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Geremie R. Barmé, “Introduction: Under One Heaven”, in *Shared Destiny*, edited by Geremie R Barmé, Linda Jaivin and Jeremy Goldkorn (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt19893k8.3.pdf?refreqid=excelior%3A1c8f6b4ad1dfa7f936fbf78d8bc555fb&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt19893k8.3.pdf?refreqid=excelior%3A1c8f6b4ad1dfa7f936fbf78d8bc555fb&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1)

<sup>6</sup> “Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 18th Party Congress”, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Nepal, 18 November 2012, [http://np.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/Diplomacy/201211/t20121118\\_1586373.htm](http://np.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/Diplomacy/201211/t20121118_1586373.htm)

<sup>7</sup> In his speech in 2012, Hu Jintao had argued: “In promoting mutually beneficial cooperation, we should raise awareness about human beings sharing a community of common destiny. A country should accommodate the legitimate concerns of others when pursuing its own interests; and it should promote common development of all countries when advancing its own development. Countries should establish a new type of global development partnership that is more equitable and balanced, stick together in times of difficulty, both share rights and shoulder obligations, and boost the common interests of mankind.” See “Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 18th Party Congress”, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Nepal, 18 November 2012, [http://np.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/Diplomacy/201211/t20121118\\_1586373.htm](http://np.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/Diplomacy/201211/t20121118_1586373.htm)

However, in the decade that followed Xi's ascension to power, Chinese foreign policy gradually but decisively shifted away from the era of keeping a low profile towards more purposeful and proactive efforts to shape a favourable external environment.<sup>8</sup> This was reflected in the description of Chinese foreign policy under Xi as exploring a new pathway of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. In this context, the concept of mankind being a community of shared future began to acquire greater salience. It implied the desire to construct "a new concept of morality and interests" in international affairs, with the focus primarily being on China's neighbouring countries and the developing world.<sup>9</sup> Chinese scholars argued that the concept embodied China's responsibility and efforts to reform global governance.<sup>10</sup> Over time, with the expansion of China's comprehensive national power, the concept of building a community of shared future was expanded to have global significance and has been imbued with greater substance, resources and deeper narrative coherence.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> X. Yan, "From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement", *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, Issue 2 (2014): 153–84; Stella Chen, "Community of Common Destiny for Mankind", China Media Project, 25 August 2021, [https://chinamediaproject.org/the\\_ccp\\_dictionary/community-of-common-destiny-for-mankind/](https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/community-of-common-destiny-for-mankind/)

<sup>9</sup> "Xi Jinping: Let the Consciousness of a Community with a Shared Future Take Root in Neighboring Countries", *Xinhua*, 25 October 2013, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c\\_117878944.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c_117878944.htm); "Exploring the Path of Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 27 June 2013, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjzb\\_663304/wjzb\\_663308/2461\\_663310/201306/t20130627\\_468425.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjzb_663304/wjzb_663308/2461_663310/201306/t20130627_468425.html)

<sup>10</sup> Zhaohu Chen, "The Practical Way of the Community of Common Destiny for All Mankind: An Analysis of 'One Belt and One Road'", *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, Volume 205 (Atlantis Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> "Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13 September 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202309/t20230913\\_11142010.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202309/t20230913_11142010.html)

This paper argues that the Chinese leadership's proposal to build a community of common destiny for mankind presents an alternative vision of the world order. To bring this vision to fruition, Beijing is seeking to engineer fundamental institutional and normative changes to global governance. In that sense, China today is emerging as not just a rising power but also a proactive norm entrepreneur. It is within this context that this study places the new global initiatives launched by Xi Jinping, i.e., the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). The launch of these initiatives presages a far more proactive foreign policy approach by Beijing. Analysing the speeches by Chinese leaders, policy publications, media and analytical discourse in China, along with actual policy measures, the core argument of this paper is that through the GDI, GSI and GCI, the Chinese leadership hopes to shape an external environment that not only ensures regime security but is also favourable for China's development and security interests. In doing so, however, it is reshaping key norms of global governance towards a fundamentally illiberal direction.

The first section of this paper discusses theoretical perspectives on the concept of world order and the significance of norms in international relations. It aims to define key concepts, such as power and legitimacy, which underpin ideas of world order. The second section distils the broad worldview of the Chinese leadership, offering a SWOT analysis of the so-called "unprecedented changes unseen in a century" from Beijing's perspective. This helps in building a deeper understanding of the drivers of Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. The third section discusses how Chinese policymakers and analysts have framed the three global initiatives as key pillars of the concept of a community of shared future for mankind. It then details the elements of each initiative and distils their stated and implicit agenda. In addition, this section briefly touches upon the new Global AI Governance Initiative launched in October 2023 and analyses the implications of China's normative propositions for the future of the global order.

## FASHIONING A WORLD ORDER: KEY CONCEPTS

### *What Is World Order?*

The past few years have seen scholars and practitioners struggle to define the present state of the world order. For some, the world today is in a state of disorder: great power contestation is intensifying, key norms of international relations are weakening, and the UN-centred institutional architecture is facing deep challenges from within and without. Others have argued that rather than the world being in a state of disorder, what is evident is that a recognizable global order is absent. The world, they argue, is adrift—in between orders of bipolarity and multipolarity.<sup>12</sup> This phase, they argue, is characterized by a “high degree of strategic uncertainty” for all actors. Others still have harkened back to the past to identify commonalities and/or offer prescriptions. These have ranged from deterministic assessments about a New Cold War,<sup>13</sup> or even conflict between the US and China, to calls for the establishment of a new Concert of Powers.<sup>14</sup>

Understanding these debates, however, first requires understanding what constitutes a world order. As Hedley Bull has argued: “A study of order in world politics must begin with the question: what is it?”<sup>15</sup> Thinkers, scholars and practitioners have historically sought to answer this question from different theoretical perspectives.

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<sup>12</sup> Nitin Pai and Prakash Menon, “India’s Path to Power: Strategy in a World Adrift”, Takshashila Institution, 2021, <https://takshashila.org.in/research/indias-path-to-power-strategy-in-a-world-adrift>

<sup>13</sup> “Cold War II: Niall Ferguson On The Emerging Conflict With China”, Hoover Institution, 1 May 2023, <https://www.hoover.org/research/cold-war-ii-niall-ferguson-emerging-conflict-china>

<sup>14</sup> Richard Haass and Charles Kupchan, “The New Concert of Powers”, *Foreign Affairs*, 23 March 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2021-03-23/new-concert-powers>

<sup>15</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

Realists tend to view order from the perspective of the desire for power and security within an anarchical world. Power, in this conception, is the primary currency of international relations, self-interest is the key driver, and security and survival are a core objective. From the realist prism then, driven by self-interest, states, being the primary actors, are navigating immutable anarchy, managing conflict and seeking cooperation in a competitive global arena. In this sense, world order refers to how the distribution of power gives rise to structures, relationships and activities that configure competition between states. Orders, therefore, change or evolve based on shifts in the distribution of power.

In contrast, the liberal institutionalist school of international relations seeks to move beyond the traditional military-political understandings of power and balance of power. In addition to that conception, it emphasizes the importance of transnational institutions, global agreements, treaties and regimes, and even international civil servants who regulate various aspects of global politics and governance.<sup>16</sup> While states remain the primary actors within the conception, their behaviour is moderated and mediated through an institutional architecture that facilitates communications, provides a framework for cooperation and manages conflicts.

Finally, constructivists extend the debate beyond material factors. They argue that the system or order within which states operate is not simply a product of the balance of power or mediation by institutions and processes amid the persistence of an immutable state of anarchy. Rather, it is socially constructed. Constructivists stress the role of ideas, norms, identities, discourse, values and shared understandings, which have a constitutive impact on the behaviour of states. This in turn leads to the establishment of structures of order that organize state action and guide patterns of behaviour.

As the late American diplomat Henry Kissinger argued, the concept of world order implies “the nature of just arrangements and the distribution

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<sup>16</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Power and Interdependence”, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 15, Issue 4 (1973): 158–65.

of power”.<sup>17</sup> In other words, a world order has two components, i.e., legitimacy and power. The former represents a set of commonly accepted norms and rules that define the limits of permissible action. The latter enforces restraint and costs where and when the rules break down. It is this interaction between power and legitimacy that has historically shaped shifts in world order. And at their intersection resides what great powers desire, i.e., authority, or the exercise of power that is deemed legitimate (Figure 1).

### *Key Definitions*

- *Power*: For the purposes of this study, Power is defined as the ability of a state to achieve its objectives, regardless of the opposition. This entails the ability to deter, compel, persuade and coerce in order to ensure desired behaviour by other actors.
- *Legitimacy*: This can be understood as popular acceptance of the righteousness of ideas, rules, institutions, interests and actors. This can be explicit or implicit, and is a product of acceptance and of the perceptions of others of someone being correct and proper.
- *Norms*:<sup>18</sup> In liberal-constructivist literature, norms are conventionally defined as collective, inter-subjectively shared expectations of behaviour. They provide standards of behaviour for a group of actors who share a common identity. In that sense, they legitimize certain actions while delegitimizing others.
- *Norm Entrepreneur*: This study understands norm entrepreneurs as states that set out to change the existing normative context of the regional or international order and to alter the behaviour of others in adherence to their normative preference. When a critical mass of

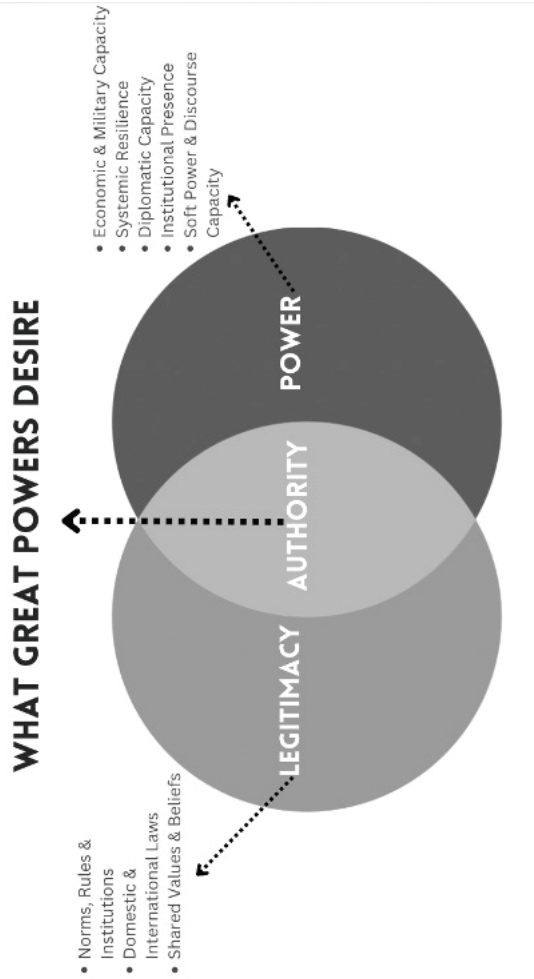
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<sup>17</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (Penguin Books Ltd, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> For a thorough discussion on understanding international norms and their significance, along with the role of norm entrepreneurs, see Carmen Wunderlich, *Rogue States as Norm Entrepreneurs: Black Sheep or Sheep in Wolves' Clothing* (Switzerland: Springer, 2020).



*Figure 1: Concept of World Order*



actors accedes to the legitimacy of the proposed norm, it leads to a norm cascade. The final stage of this process is norm internalization, whereby acting in accordance with the accepted norm becomes an end in itself.

- *Authority*: This study understands authority as lying at the intersection of power and legitimacy. It is defined as the exercise of power which is not considered to be coercive, but legitimate. Authority, thereby, is critical for a state to fashion an order.

## HOW XI JINPING’S CHINA VIEWS THE WORLD

Barely two months after taking over as Foreign Minister in March 2013, Wang Yi told a forum at Tsinghua University that the world was “undergoing changes as never seen before”.<sup>19</sup> “China’s relations with the outside world are also changing as never before”, he added, noting that there was greater “expectation for a fast-growing China to undertake its due responsibilities and make greater contribution to world peace and common development”. In light of this, he said that the new Communist Party leadership was “actively exploring a path of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics”.

A year later, at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, Xi Jinping told the gathered officials that China’s “relations with the rest of the world are going through profound changes ... China’s dependence on the world and its involvement in international affairs are deepening, so [is] the world’s dependence on China and its impact on China.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, China must “develop a distinctive

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<sup>19</sup> “Exploring the Path of Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 27 June 2013, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/wjbz\\_663308/2461\\_663310/201306/t20130627\\_468425.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/201306/t20130627_468425.html)

<sup>20</sup> “The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs was Held in Beijing”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 29 November 2014, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/xws\\_665282/xgxw\\_665284/201412/t20141201\\_600270.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xws_665282/xgxw_665284/201412/t20141201_600270.html)

diplomatic approach”, which, he said, must be based on “a Chinese vision.” Therefore, very early on, under Xi’s leadership, Chinese foreign policy began to be imbued with not just greater ambition but also a self-perception of being a major power, with a key goal being to craft a more favourable external environment.

The 2018 Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs codified these ideas under the ambit of a new Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy. The key objective of diplomacy under this thought was to “fulfil the mission of realizing national rejuvenation”. Promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind was determined as the pathway towards achieving this goal.<sup>21</sup> Explaining this, Chinese diplomats and commentaries argued that the “new ideas, new propositions and new initiatives with distinctive Chinese features” that have been proposed under Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy also sought to “reflect the call of our times and lead the trend of human progress”.<sup>22</sup> This, they contended, reflects the responsibility of a major power. Such statements underscored the objective of the Chinese leadership under Xi to pursue greater authority in the international system, which has been viewed as critical to the achieving of national rejuvenation.

In order to grasp the policy implications of these developments and the normative import of these ideas on the world order, it is important to understand the worldview within which this thought is based.

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<sup>21</sup> “Xi Urges Breaking New Ground in Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics”, *Xinhua*, 24 June 2018, [http://xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/24/c\\_137276269.htm](http://xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/24/c_137276269.htm); “Yang Jiechi’s Remarks on the Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy”, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Commonwealth of Dominica, 1 September 2018, [http://dm.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zt/xi1/201904/t20190424\\_4087454.htm](http://dm.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zt/xi1/201904/t20190424_4087454.htm)

<sup>22</sup> “Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Conscientiously and Break New Ground in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 20 July 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng./wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/202007/t20200721\\_678873.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng./wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202007/t20200721_678873.html)

From Beijing’s perspective, the world is in a new era of turbulence and volatility. A “great transformation”, which engenders a “great state of disorder”, is currently underway.<sup>23</sup> The international balance of power is undergoing “unprecedented” and “revolutionary changes”.<sup>24</sup> These are reflected in the rise of developing countries and emerging economies; the shifts in patterns of globalization and the emergence of protectionism, populism and unilateralism; and key changes taking place in scientific and technological domains. In this situation, while the West continues to enjoy relative superiority, the geopolitical and geoeconomic balance of power is shifting towards the East.<sup>25</sup> Within this context, China possesses significant strategic advantages and opportunities but also faces increasing risks and challenges in pursuing national rejuvenation and emerging as a global power. In his speech at the 20th Party Congress, Xi articulated this perspective, saying that China was in an era “in which strategic opportunities, risks, and challenges are concurrent, and uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising”.<sup>26</sup>

Amid this turbulent change in the balance of international power, the Chinese leadership appears to believe that four critical deficits have emerged, which infuse greater instability. In his speeches, Xi Jinping has repeatedly characterized the world as being plagued by the deficits of development, peace, governance and trust. To address these,

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<sup>23</sup> “强国复兴开新篇（中国式现代化面对面①）”, *People’s Daily*, 13 September 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-09/13/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230913\\_1-07.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-09/13/nw.D110000renmrb_20230913_1-07.htm)

<sup>24</sup> “人间正道开新篇（习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学习问答④）”, *People’s Daily*, 22 July 2021, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-07/22/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20210722\\_1-05.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-07/22/nw.D110000renmrb_20210722_1-05.htm)

<sup>25</sup> Chris Buckley, “‘The East Is Rising’: Xi Maps Out China’s Post-COVID Ascent”, *New York Times*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/03/world/asia/xi-china-congress.html>

<sup>26</sup> “Full Text of the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 25 October 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202210/t20221025\\_10791908.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202210/t20221025_10791908.html)

he has called for reforming global governance to reflect “fairness and reasonableness”, “consultation and understanding”, “joint efforts and mutual assistance” and “mutual benefit and win-win cooperation”.<sup>27</sup> This proactive intervention, from Beijing’s perspective, is necessary because China’s future development and security interests are dependent on its external environment. In fact, there appears to be a persistent debate within the Chinese policymaking ecosystem around balancing the desire to mitigate vulnerabilities through self-reliance while continuing to expand external economic and security engagement. On the one hand, amid an increasingly hostile external environment, there have been calls to pursue self-reliance as a strategic objective. Yet, it is also evident that China’s prosperity and future growth are linked to deeper economic and political engagement with the outside world. This dilemma was expressed by Xi Jinping in his address at the Central Party School in February 2023, where he argued that pursuing Chinese-style modernization required the correct handling of “a series of important relations, such as top-level design and practical exploration, strategy and tactics, integrity and innovation, efficiency and fairness, vitality and order, self-reliance and self-improvement and opening up”.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, considering the “complex and severe” nature of the external environment that necessitates pursuing a delicate balancing act, “struggle” is expected to be the key theme for China in the new era.<sup>29</sup>

The objective of this struggle is to leverage systemic strengths and opportunities while overcoming weaknesses and countering the threats that China faces. Domestically, risks and challenges persist in the fields of politics, ideology, economy, science and core technologies, social

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<sup>27</sup> “Xi Outlines 4-Pronged Proposal on Global Governance”, *Xinhua*, 27 March 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/2019-03/27/c\\_137925702.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/2019-03/27/c_137925702.htm)

<sup>28</sup> “正确理解和大力推进中国式现代化”, *People’s Daily*, 8 February 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-02/08/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230208\\_1-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-02/08/nw.D110000renmrb_20230208_1-01.htm)

<sup>29</sup> “初心砥柱天地间（习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学习问答(12)）”, *People’s Daily*, 3 August 2021, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-08/03/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20210803\\_1-05.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-08/03/nw.D110000renmrb_20210803_1-05.htm)

governance, and party building.<sup>30</sup> These were encapsulated in Xi's speech at the 20th Party Congress, which drew a "grand blueprint" for addressing them.<sup>31</sup> This blueprint has essentially meant greater emphasis on central planning and control, strengthened ideological conformity, and narrowing of individual freedoms and private sector autonomy. Externally, the belief is that the threats that China faces are structural and long-term in nature. Chief among these is the intensifying systemic competition between China and the US, which is reshaping the geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape. From Beijing's perspective, the principal contradiction in the world today is the "struggle between development and containment of development, and between global justice and power politics".<sup>32</sup> In other words, Beijing believes that Washington is pursuing a strategy of containment, which threatens to ignite a New Cold War. This, in turn, could result in altering the incentives of middle powers to pursue counterbalancing against China, undermining China's development and security interests, which could potentially result in regime instability for the Communist Party.<sup>33</sup>

That said, Beijing does believe that it is in a relatively good position to leverage the opportunities that are emerging from the shifts in the international order. Western democracies, led by the US, are struggling to cope with the internal contradictions of political polarization, economic stagnation and social instability, along with the rise of populism. This

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> "强国复兴开新篇 (中国式现代化面对面①)", *People's Daily*, 13 September 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-09/13/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230913\\_1-07.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-09/13/nw.D110000renmrb_20230913_1-07.htm)

<sup>32</sup> "一次世界瞩目的友谊、合作、和平之旅", *People's Daily*, 23 March 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/23/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230323\\_4-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/23/nw.D110000renmrb_20230323_4-01.htm)

<sup>33</sup> "Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Opening up New Horizons in China's External Work", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 16 May 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/202205/t20220516\\_10686371.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202205/t20220516_10686371.html)

has also fuelled concern among American allies and partners about the credibility of US engagement and commitment to the international order and their security and well-being. In contrast, China has enjoyed relative political and economic stability. Moreover, Beijing has been actively positioning itself as a champion of economic globalization. Chinese policymakers and analysts have contended that this demonstrates the superiority of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics as well as the structural ailments of the capitalist system of governance championed by the West.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, the Chinese leadership has argued that China has taken “merely decades to complete the industrialization process that Western developed countries went through over hundreds of years, thereby creating a miracle of rapid economic development and long-term social stability, and opening up broad prospects for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.<sup>35</sup> In particular, the ten years of Xi Jinping’s reign have led to “great”, “all-round” and “groundbreaking” changes,<sup>36</sup> which have resulted in enhanced economic, scientific and technological, spiritual and

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<sup>34</sup> See Delia Lin, “The Construction of Political Superiority”, in *Yearbook 2020: Crisis, The China Story*. <https://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2020-crisis/chapter-1-the-construction-of-political-superiority/>; 感知中国式民主的生动实践(和音), *People’s Daily*, 29 March 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-03/29/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20210329\\_2-03.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-03/29/nw.D110000renmrb_20210329_2-03.htm); “五位一体”谱华章(习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学习问答(31))——关于中国特色社会主义事业总体布局, *People’s Daily*, 30 August 2021. [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-08/30/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20210830\\_1-05.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-08/30/nw.D110000renmrb_20210830_1-05.htm); Li Yunlong, “‘American Democracy’—The End of the Myth”, *People’s Daily* (Translation by Interpret China-CSIS); 13 January 2021. <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/american-democracy-the-end-of-the-myth/>

<sup>35</sup> “正确理解和大力推进中国式现代化”, *People’s Daily*, 8 February 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-02/08/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230208\\_1-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-02/08/nw.D110000renmrb_20230208_1-01.htm)

<sup>36</sup> “自信自强启新程 (中国式现代化面对面②)”, *People’s Daily*, 14 September 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-09/14/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230914\\_1-07.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-09/14/nw.D110000renmrb_20230914_1-07.htm)

comprehensive national strength. These are reflected in sustained GDP growth and economic development despite the challenges of segmented globalization or decoupling and de-risking; China's contribution to global economic growth and its centrality to key industrial supply chains; the size of China's domestic market and its increasing salience to international businesses; and the country's expanding innovation ecosystem and R&D capabilities; along with the demonstrated mobilizational and governance capacity of the Communist Party, which enjoys strong popular legitimacy at home and has attracted international acclaim. From the leadership's perspective, China today enjoys a "solid material foundation and more complete institutional guarantees", particularly with the emergence of Xi Jinping's unchallenged authority at the helm of political and national affairs.<sup>37</sup>

These advantages, coupled with the West's relative weakness owing to internal strife, create favourable conditions for China to contest Western narratives on political alliances, modernization, democracy and values. Over the past decade, Beijing has grown increasingly suspicious of American intentions, arguing that the real purpose behind the US alliance system, its coining of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic space, and Western advocacy of democracy, freedom, human rights and universal values are aimed at stymying China's rise and competing with the Communist Party for status and for hearts and minds, with the ultimate aim being to overthrow its leadership and China's socialist system.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, as much as there has been an emphasis on ideological conformity at home along with increased securitization and expanded Party-state control, Chinese foreign policy has also become far more proactive in expanding external engagement and using a toolkit of carrots and sticks to shape the

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<sup>37</sup> “从政治高度深刻领悟“两个确立”的决定性意义(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)”, *People's Daily*, 7 September 2022, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2022-09/07/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20220907\\_1-09.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2022-09/07/nw.D110000renmrb_20220907_1-09.htm)

<sup>38</sup> ““五位一体”谱华章(习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学习问答(34))”, *People's Daily*, 2 September 2021, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-09/02/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20210902\\_1-05.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2021-09/02/nw.D110000renmrb_20210902_1-05.htm)



incentives and perceptions of other actors. From the Chinese leadership's perspective, it is not merely the responsibility of a major power but also a political imperative to offer Chinese solutions and propositions to address the deficits facing the world.

The recently released "Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on its Neighbourhood in the New Era" argued:

There are two opposite propositions and trends concerning the future of Asia. One advocates open regionalism, true multilateralism, a development-first approach, mutually beneficial cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, integrated development, and pursuit of common development in harmony. The other represents a relapse into Cold War mentality and exclusive clubs, and attempts to draw lines based on values, politicize economic issues, divide the region into different security blocs, and stoke division and confrontation ... The right choice for Asia should be openness, solidarity, cooperation, justice and harmony rather than isolation, division, confrontation, hegemony and zero-sum approach ... Building a community with a shared future for mankind is the sure path to a prosperous and better Asia and the world.<sup>39</sup>

## **CHINA'S THREE GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

Over the years, there has been an increasing focus on the Chinese leadership's investments in different sources of political power. However, Beijing's attempts to expand normative influence and discourse power remain insufficiently studied and poorly understood. One key reason for this is that Chinese narratives about reshaping global governance

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<sup>39</sup> "Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era", Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of India, 24 October 2023, [http://in.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202310/t20231024\\_11167100.htm](http://in.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202310/t20231024_11167100.htm)

and the normative initiatives undertaken to that effect have evolved gradually, as China's power and state capacity expanded. Consequently, while some concepts and ideas may have long been articulated, it is only very recently that they have been imbued with substance, resources and deeper narrative coherence. A recent official publication exploring the themes of Chinese-style modernization stated: "For a country to become a modern and powerful nation with significant international influence, its diplomatic theory and practice must keep pace with its growing strength."<sup>40</sup>

As discussed above, the key normative shift in the global order that the Chinese leadership has called for is encapsulated in the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. The year 2023 marked the tenth year of this concept being expounded by Xi Jinping. Celebrating this in March, an authoritative state media article claimed that through the decade the "influence and appeal" of this concept had "become increasingly prominent".<sup>41</sup> Another assessment argued that this concept was a "solution offered by the Communist Party of China in the new era to address the question of the future and destiny of humanity". Then foreign minister Qin Gang wrote in the Party's flagship *People's Daily* that through the decade, this idea had been "transformed from concept to action and from vision to reality".

Other writings have further clarified the broad objectives of China's articulation of this concept, arguing that it was an "inevitable requirement for countries to meet global challenges in a world of interdependence", it "transcends Western international relations theories", "points the right direction for the improvement of global governance", and is key to building a new type of international relations. It is within this framework that the Chinese leadership has now located its flagship foreign policy

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<sup>40</sup> "天下为公行大道(中国式现代化面对面⑮)", *People's Daily*, 11 October 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-10/11/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20231011\\_1-06.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-10/11/nw.D110000renmrb_20231011_1-06.htm)

<sup>41</sup> "携手建设更加美好的世界", *People's Daily*, 23 March 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/23/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20230323\\_3-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/23/nw.D110000renmrb_20230323_3-01.htm)

efforts, i.e., the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), GDI, GSI and GCI. These, as per Chinese official documents and media commentaries, constitute interconnected pillars, under the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind.<sup>42</sup> These initiatives, it argues, embody Chinese wisdom and solutions for the deficits facing the world. The new Law on Foreign Relations of the PRC passed in June 2023 makes building a community of common destiny for mankind and implementing GDI, GSI and GCI legal imperatives.

The rest of this section provides a brief overview of each of these initiatives before engaging in a substantive discussion about their normative implications.

### *a. Global Development Initiative (GDI)*

The Global Development Initiative was proposed by Xi Jinping at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2021.<sup>43</sup> In his speech, Xi linked GDI to the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In proposing GDI, he outlined six commitments. These are:

1. Staying committed to development as a priority, which entails placing “development high on the global macro policy agenda” and

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<sup>42</sup> “Proposal of the People’s Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 13 September 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202309/t20230913\\_11142010.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202309/t20230913_11142010.html); Imran Khalid, “Three Forward-Looking Initiatives by China”, *CGTN*, 18 March 2023, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-03-18/Three-forward-looking-initiatives-by-China-1ih5nxbUEU/index.html>; “Full Text: A Global Community of Shared Future: China’s Proposals and Actions”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 26 September 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202309/t20230926\\_11150122.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202309/t20230926_11150122.html)

<sup>43</sup> “Statement by President Xi Jinping at the General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN, 21 September 2021, [http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/hyyfy/202109/t20210922\\_9568875.htm](http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/hyyfy/202109/t20210922_9568875.htm)

“fostering global development partnerships that are more equal and balanced”;

2. Staying committed to a people-centred approach, which entails “promoting human rights through development”;
3. Staying committed to benefits for all, which implies focusing on the “special needs of developing countries” through “means [such] as debt suspension and development aid” and “addressing unbalanced and inadequate development among and within countries”;
4. Staying committed to innovation-driven development, which calls for greater “efforts to harness technological achievements to boost productivity” and fostering “an open, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory environment for the development of science and technology”;
5. Staying committed to harmony between man and nature, which covers improving global environmental governance, responding to climate change, and accelerating the transition to a green and low-carbon economy; and
6. Staying committed to results-oriented actions, which entails focusing on “poverty alleviation, food security, COVID-19 response and vaccines, development financing, climate change and green development, industrialization, digital economy and connectivity, among other areas, and accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

Compared to BRI, which largely covers expensive transport, energy and infrastructure projects, GDI projects are smaller in scale. Official discourse describes them as “small and helpful projects that benefit people’s livelihoods”.<sup>44</sup> It adds that “the GDI emphasizes the combination of both hard and soft assistance, blending development aid with mutually beneficial cooperation, aiming not only to give people fish but also to

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<sup>44</sup> “The Practical Achievements and Global Contributions of the Global Development Initiative”, Xinhua Institute, October 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics\\_665678/GDI/wj/202310/P020231018368829930417.pdf](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/GDI/wj/202310/P020231018368829930417.pdf)

teach them how to fish. In the teaching process, the initiative goes beyond narrow economic rationality and advocates for a steadfast commitment to the right balance between morality and self-interest, prioritizing the moral aspect.”<sup>45</sup>

GDI projects cover domains like poverty reduction, food security, pandemic and vaccines, climate change, industrialization, digital economy, digital connectivity and development finance. At present, the GDI project pool comprises around 200 projects, in addition to the 32 broad deliverables agreed upon during a High-level Dialogue on Global Development held in June 2022.<sup>46</sup> A formal grouping called the “Group of Friends” of GDI at the UN, comprising 70 countries, has been established to discuss and agree upon specific projects. However, Chinese officials claim that nearly 100 countries and international organizations have expressed support for GDI.

The initiative’s implementation is primarily led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but entails Chinese agencies partnering with established multinational institutions. This is different from how BRI projects have been implemented, with Chinese state-owned enterprises being the primary actors.<sup>47</sup> In addition, GDI’s mandate includes establishing new institutions and forums. For instance, in November 2022, a new Global Development Promotion Center, located under the China International Development Cooperation Agency, was established. Chinese officials claim that over 30 counterpart departments of countries and regional organizations have joined this centre. Likewise, a network of NGOs for poverty reduction and a global knowledge network have been established. These allow discussions on governance models and information and experience sharing. Another distinction between GDI and BRI is in terms

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> “Progress Report on the Global Development Initiative”, Center for International Knowledge on Development, June 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics\\_665678/GDI/wj/202306/P020230620670430885509.pdf](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/GDI/wj/202306/P020230620670430885509.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Christoph Nedopil, “China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Investment Report 2022”, Green Finance & Development Center, FISF Fudan University Shanghai, January 2023, [https://greenfdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Nedopil-2023\\_China-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-BRI-Investment-Report-2022.pdf](https://greenfdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Nedopil-2023_China-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-BRI-Investment-Report-2022.pdf)

of funding. Financing for BRI projects primarily comes from Chinese policy banks, some commercial banks and the Silk Road Fund. The funding for GDI projects, meanwhile, is coming from diverse sources. For instance, in 2022, China upgraded its South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund to establish the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, expanding the fund scale to US\$4 billion. It also committed funding under the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund to support cooperation under the GDI. Another example of diversified funding is the commitment by large multinational corporations, including Chinese companies such as Alibaba Group, China Energy Conservation and Environmental Protection Group Limited, Danone China, Lenovo Group and Xiamen Air, to the UN Global Compact's GDI for SDG pilot project, which was launched in 2022.<sup>48</sup>

### *b. Global Security Initiative (GSI)*

Xi Jinping announced GSI in a speech at the Boao Forum for Asia in April 2022.<sup>49</sup> In doing so, he outlined six core principles or commitments of GSI. Xi called on countries to stay committed to:

1. the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and working together to maintain world peace and security;
2. respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, upholding non-interference in internal affairs, and respecting the independent choices of development paths and social systems made by people in different countries;
3. abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, rejecting Cold War mentality, and opposing unilateralism, group politics and bloc confrontation;

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<sup>48</sup> Progress Report on the Global Development Initiative”, Center for International Knowledge on Development, June 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics\\_665678/GDI/wj/202306/P020230620670430885509.pdf](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/GDI/wj/202306/P020230620670430885509.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> “Xi Jinping Delivers a Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 21 April 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202204/t20220421\\_10671083.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202204/t20220421_10671083.html)

4. taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, upholding the principle of indivisible security, building a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and opposing the pursuit of one's own security at the cost of others' security;
5. peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation, supporting all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises, rejecting double standards, and opposing the wanton use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction; and
6. maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, and working together on regional disputes and global challenges such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity and biosecurity.

Subsequently, in February 2023, the Chinese government issued a GSI Concept Paper, which reiterated the six commitments, and outlined twenty cooperation priorities and five platforms and mechanisms.<sup>50</sup> The paper clarified that GSI broadly brought together current Chinese security policy measures across domains under one rhetorical umbrella. It also suggested that Beijing would be much more proactive in terms of its security engagement with the world. However, unlike GDI, GSI remains a rather nebulous initiative in terms of its specific measures and implementation. This is likely an outcome of several factors.

First, the broad definition of security under GSI,<sup>51</sup> cutting across several ministries and departments, makes it extremely difficult to have a single implementing agency domestically. Appointing a national security coordinator or advisor would perhaps aid GSI's coordinated

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<sup>50</sup> "The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 21 February 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221\\_11028348.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html)

<sup>51</sup> This definition ties in with Xi Jinping's Comprehensive National Security Concept. See Katja Drinhausen and Helena Legarda, "'Comprehensive National Security' Unleashed: How Xi's Approach Shapes China's Policies at Home and Abroad", MERICS, 15 September 2022, <https://merics.org/en/report/comprehensive-national-security-unleashed-how-xis-approach-shapes-chinas-policies-home-and>

implementation. That said, China's National Security Commission has a very different form and function when compared with the US National Security Council, and such an empowered appointment would adversely impinge on different bureaucratic and political interest groups within the Party-state ecosystem. Thus far, what has been evident is that Chinese defence and law enforcement agencies have overtly been the most active in terms of pursuing GSI's implementation.<sup>52</sup>

Second, unlike GDI, there is no mechanism like the "Group of Friends" of GSI to coordinate with other international actors. Instead, China says that over ninety countries and regional organizations have expressed "appreciation and support" for GSI. This lack of institutional mechanism is likely an outcome of a congruence of perspectives among China and the supporting countries. Beijing has pitched GSI as the panacea to the "Cold War mentality" and bloc confrontation. Creating a formal institution would run counter to that objective, and send an adverse signal. At the same time, the absence of a singular, formal GSI mechanism is likely also a reflection of the hesitations of developing countries.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, under GSI, Beijing is looking to leverage bilateral

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<sup>52</sup> State Councilor and Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong has led the discussions around law-enforcement cooperation, while the Defence Ministry and CMC have led military cooperation dialogues under GSI.

<sup>53</sup> Hoang Thi Ha, "Why Is China's Global Security Initiative Cautiously Perceived in Southeast Asia?", *ISEAS Perspective*, no. 2023/11, 22 February 2023, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2023-11-why-is-chinas-global-security-initiative-cautiously-perceived-in-southeast-asia-by-hoang-thi-ha/>. Two other examples worth noting are the China-Nepal joint statement in October, which highlighted the "great significance" of law-enforcement cooperation but did not offer an endorsement of GSI by Nepal (see "Full Text: Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Nepal", *Xinhua*, 26 September 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20230926/7532c8940d6b4f9f92d324704718430c/c.html>). Likewise, during his engagement with Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the China-Central Asia Summit in May, Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov was the only Central Asian leader to not overtly endorse GSI. That said, the joint statement after the summit did include support for GSI (see "Xi Meets Turkmen President", *Xinhua*, 18 May 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20230518/976e89bd4bed464ba5af29531f8771dc/c.html>)



ties and platforms under the UN umbrella, along with others like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and new mechanisms to build consensus among developing countries on issues of security governance.

Third, the Concept Paper makes it clear that GSI involves different actions for different regions, and has a very broad scope. For instance, cooperation areas include support for the initiative of Silencing the Guns in Africa, backing a “just solution to the Palestinian question”, establishing a new security framework in the Middle East, counter-terrorism capacity-building, data security, training and exchanges between military and police academies, etc. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to locate individual projects, programmes or measures that would fall within its ambit. Nevertheless, what GSI does reflect is a recognition by the Chinese leadership that:

1. expanded overseas interests require more purposeful security diplomacy through military-to-military diplomacy, law-enforcement diplomacy and addressing hotspot issues;
2. securitization of China’s economic engagement and development interests helps address vulnerabilities and mitigate risks; and
3. shaping global norms in domains ranging from human rights, biosecurity, and terrorism to space, nuclear and cyberspace as a security imperative is needed.

### *c. Global Civilization Initiative (GCI)*

The Global Civilization Initiative was launched at the dialogue forum between the CCP and World Political Parties in March 2023.<sup>54</sup> Conceptually, GCI is China’s solution to the deficit of trust that Xi

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<sup>54</sup> Xi Jinping, “Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization” (Speech, Beijing, 15 March 2023), The State Council Information Office, The People’s Republic of China, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content\\_85171478.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content_85171478.htm)

believes plagues the world. To do so, GCI proposes that the diversity of human civilization is a basic feature of the world and the source of human progress, and that this diversity must be respected while seeking dialogue, interaction and learning among civilizations. Under GCI, China advocates:

1. respect for the diversity of civilizations, while calling on countries to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority;
2. the common values of humanity, which include peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom. Countries are called upon to appreciate the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation;
3. the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations, which implies that countries must push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures; and
4. robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation, in order to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures.

Currently, GCI too does not seem to have a formal structure or group that brings together countries. Instead, it is a concept under which Beijing is calling for dialogue between civilizations in a world that is experiencing turbulence and ideological divisions. This case is based on principles like modernization does not imply Westernization, the inviolability of state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, and the particularity of human rights and governance systems based on the historical, cultural and practical contexts of different countries. This appears to be a deliberate choice, as the core agenda of GCI appears to be to influence patterns of thinking and achieve norm internalization in order to accord legitimacy to the Party-state system of governance under the guise of respect for diversity rather than the implementation of

specific projects. That said, there are specific projects related to cultural heritage preservation, people-to-people connectivity, education, art, literature, archaeology, media and tourism, which have been classified under the ambit of GCI. These appear to be aimed at improving public perceptions of China in other countries.

## **CRITICAL ANALYSIS: NORMATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA’S GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

Beyond the stated agenda, measures and projects, the three global initiatives discussed above have significant normative implications for the world order. The ideas that they embody are intrinsically linked to furthering the Communist Party’s core interests. The cumulative effect of the normative intervention that the Communist Party is hoping to achieve through these initiatives is to bolster regime legitimacy and security, while protecting China’s development interests.

Before engaging in a critical analysis, however, it is important to understand why these initiatives and the normative propositions they embody tend to have some resonance with large parts of the developing world. Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a gradual erosion of the legitimacy of the Liberal International Order (LIO).<sup>55</sup> This has been driven by American unilateralism and the grievances it has generated—particularly in the context of the War on Terrorism, Washington’s approach to multilateral institutions, and interference in others’ internal affairs on grounds of values and human rights—along with the changing nature of domestic politics across the West—particularly the rise of populism, trade

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<sup>55</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, “The End of Liberal International Order?”, *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (January 2018): 7–23; R. Hass, “Liberal World Order, R.I.P.”, *Project Syndicate*. 21 March 2018, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/end-of-liberal-world-order-by-richard-n-haass-2018-03>; Sarang Shidore, “The Return of the Global South”, *Foreign Affairs*, 31 August 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/return-global-south-critique-western-power>

protectionism and hostility towards liberal internationalism. Britain's exit from the European Union, electoral gains by far-right political parties in Europe and Donald Trump's presidency in the US exemplified these changes, which adversely impact the development environment and opportunities for countries in the developing world. Consequently, there is disaffection in large parts of the developing world around the LIO essentially being an instrument to further Western interests and legitimize Western geopolitical dominance, along with perceptions of Western double standards on the issues of upholding international norms and values.<sup>56</sup> The most recent example of this is the stark difference in American and European positions on the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas war.

This period of discontent with American and Western policies and alienation from the LIO coincided with the rapid expansion of China's economic growth and developmental diplomacy. Over the past two decades, China has not only emerged as the largest trading partner of over 120 countries; it has also been a key investment partner for developing countries. Such economic depth tends to generate political cachet. In addition, China's remarkable economic growth has provided it with a uniquely strong story to tell. For leaders across the developing world, there is an evident demonstration or exemplar effect of Chinese policies related to infrastructure development, poverty alleviation, manufacturing development, and science and innovation.<sup>57</sup> Beijing has worked to further

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<sup>56</sup> N. MacFarquhar, "Developing World Sees Double Standard in West's Actions in Gaza and Ukraine", *New York Times*, 23 October 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/23/us/ukraine-gaza-global-south-hypocrisy.html>

<sup>57</sup> Sarina Patterson, "From 'World Factory' to 'World Builder': New Research Decodes How China's Belt and Road Initiative Is Received", *Aid Data*, 9 December 2022, <https://www.aiddata.org/blog/from-world-factory-to-world-builder-new-research-decodes-how-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-is-received>; L. Silver, C. Huang, L. Clancy, N. Lam, S. Greenwood, J.C. Mandapat, and C. Baronavski, "Comparing Views of the U.S. and China in 24 Countries", *Pew Research Center*, 6 November 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/11/06/comparing-views-of-the-us-and-china-in-24-countries/#leading-economic-power>

nurture this sense. It has emphasized shared experiences of colonialism and underdevelopment, and the distinctly non-Western nature of its approach to development. Moreover, in the public articulation of its global initiatives, China has been careful in emphasizing norms of sovereignty and equality, and the agency of partner states. This enhances a partner state's sense of sovereign self, while positioning China as a benign actor that does not seek to interfere in one's internal affairs.<sup>58</sup> Finally, large parts of the developing world and even key American allies do not desire Cold War-like bipolarity.<sup>59</sup> This would enhance security risks and limit development opportunities. Beijing's articulation of its initiatives has demonstrated a keen awareness of this anxiety.<sup>60</sup>

For instance, GDI essentially positions China as a partner that is prioritizing development and engaging in constructive multilateralism as opposed to unilateralism, zero-sum games and self-interest. In this framing, China under the Communist Party is a re-emerging power, a morally righteous actor and a major power that is unselfish in sharing its developmental achievements, experiences and material strength to support developing countries. Implicit in this is the juxtaposition of China as fundamentally a different and benevolent global power, unlike the apparently hegemonic and Cold-War-minded US. This is also significant given that internationally, BRI projects have been criticized for being economically unviable, extractive, environmentally damaging and

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<sup>58</sup> See Silver et al., "Comparing Views of the U.S. and China in 24 Countries". The survey found that except for Hungary, Indonesia and Argentina, at least 50 per cent of the people polled in all other countries saw China as interfering in their internal affairs. The numbers for the US were much higher, however.

<sup>59</sup> See J. Puglierin and P. Zerka, "Keeping America Close, Russia Down, and China Far Away: How Europeans Navigate a Competitive World", European Council for Foreign Relations, 7 June 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/keeping-america-close-russia-down-and-china-far-away-how-europeans-navigate-a-competitive-world/>; "ASEAN Leaders Warn of 'Destructive' Rivalry, 'Divisive' Actions", Reuters, 5 September 2023, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2641833/indonesia-warns-aseans-on-destructive-rivalry-as-jakarta-summit-opens>

<sup>60</sup> See "Speech by Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the 26th China-ASEAN Summit", Xinhua, 8 September 2023, [http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2023-09/08/c\\_931826.htm](http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2023-09/08/c_931826.htm)

engendering financial and political risks.<sup>61</sup> Through GDI, and specifically by focusing on capacity building and experience sharing, Beijing is looking to rebrand and reboot its economic diplomacy, positioning itself as a preferred partner for developing countries, which can do more than simply build infrastructure and which is a responsible great power whose developmental successes serve as lessons for others.

The GDI, GSI and GCI discourse also adopts ideas from China's domestic policy approaches. For instance, GDI stresses people-centred approaches, results-oriented projects, addressing unbalanced and inadequate development, the need to transition to a green and low-carbon economy and the importance of prioritizing development as a human right as opposed to civil and political rights. This not only aids in legitimizing domestic policy approaches but also reduces external pressures through norm contestation. Beijing's arguments that countries' "own distinctive modernization paths" must be respected and that democracy is not an ornament but rather a system to solve the problems for the people, should be viewed in the context of the threat it perceives from American advocacy of democracy. From Beijing's perspective, democracy promotion is a tool of American foreign policy to effect political change or "colour revolutions" in other countries. Chinese policymakers and scholars have argued that under the guise of promoting democracy, historically, the US has systematically undermined the political stability and regime security in other countries to suit its interests, while nurturing the "myth" of the superiority of Western democracy.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, as part of

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<sup>61</sup> See A. Malik, B. Parks, B. Russell, J. Lin, K. Walsh, K. Solomon, S. Zhang, T. Elston, and S. Goodman, "Banking on the Belt and Road: Insights from a New Global Dataset of 13,427 Chinese Development Projects", Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary, 2021, <https://www.aiddata.org/publications/banking-on-the-belt-and-road>; A. Sattar, M.N. Hussain, and M. Ilyas, "An Impact Evaluation of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on Environmental Degradation", SAGE Open 12, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221078836>

<sup>62</sup> For instance, in September 2022, the *People's Daily* ran a series of articles by prominent Chinese scholars making this argument. See Zhang Weiwei, "制造混乱动荡, 美式民主神话破灭——美国煽动“颜色革命”危害世界和平稳定", *People's Daily*, 20 September 2022, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2022-09/20/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20220920\\_2-17.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2022-09/20/nw.D110000renmrb_20220920_2-17.htm)

the pushback against the perceived threat from democracy promotion by the US, China has increasingly been contesting the definition of the concept of democracy. For instance, in December 2021, the State Council issued a White Paper, titled “China: Democracy That Works”. It put forth a set of parameters to assess the democratic credentials of a country.<sup>63</sup> These were carefully worded to make the case that in its own distinctive way, the Communist Party-led system of governance in China meets the parameters of being called a democracy. The key argument underpinning the paper was that democracy “manifests itself in many forms”, “countries with different histories, cultures and national conditions may choose different forms of democracy” and democracy is about governance efficiency and development outcomes rather than transparency and accountability, free and fair elections, separation of powers, political pluralism and protection of individual rights and freedoms. In making this case, the Chinese leadership has basically been juxtaposing China’s development achievements and political continuity and social stability—“two great miracles”<sup>64</sup>—against the

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<sup>63</sup> The paper said: “The best way to evaluate whether a country’s political system is democratic and efficient is to observe whether the succession of its leaders is orderly and in line with the law, whether all the people can manage state and social affairs and economic and cultural undertakings in conformity with legal provisions, whether the public can express their requirements without hindrance, whether all sectors can efficiently participate in the country’s political affairs, whether national decision-making can be conducted in a rational and democratic way, whether people of high caliber in all fields can be part of the national leadership and administrative systems through fair competition, whether the governing party is in charge of state affairs in accordance with the Constitution and the law, and whether the exercise of power can be kept under effective restraint and supervision”. See “China: Democracy That Works”, The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 4 December 2021, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2021-12/04/content\\_77908921.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2021-12/04/content_77908921.htm)

<sup>64</sup> See “高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜 为全面建设社会主义现代化国家而团结奋斗——在中国共产党第二十次全国代表大会上的报告”, *People’s Daily*, 26 October 2022, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/20th/n1/2022/1026/c448334-32551867.html>

rise of populism, partisan polarization and interest group politics in the Western democracies.<sup>65</sup> Through this normative shift in the very concept of democracy, Beijing is hoping to blunt critics of the regime at home and abroad while gathering support in the developing world, and securing its developmental interests.

Finally, under GDI, Beijing has called for the building of an “open, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory science and technology development environment”. This, of course, is a normative pushback against the threats posed by de-risking strategies being pursued by the US and its allies. What, however, is more pertinent is that these values that Beijing is articulating do not truly accord with China’s own domestic technology development and governance, which has prioritized domestic actors over foreign enterprises and used market access as a strategic tool. This continues to remain a major concern for US, European, Japanese and even Indian companies. In addition, over the past two decades, Chinese policies and legislation have sought to strike an uneasy balance between supporting technology development, while maintaining political security. Increasingly, under Xi, this balance has shifted towards the security prism. This is evident in the intensified state intervention in the technology sector, the emphasis on the importance of cyber sovereignty, the passage of the Data Security Law, and the amendment to the State Secrets Law. In addition, China has been investing in developing new tools of economic and technological coercion, such as export controls, entity lists, and a legal regime for imposing sanctions. Therefore, Beijing’s arguments for creating a fair, equitable and non-discriminatory environment are simply self-serving. In that sense, among the US and its allies on one side and China on the other, there is, to a certain extent, policy mirror-imaging that is taking place when it comes to the securitization of economic activities.

Securitization of economic and technology policy, of course, is a key component of GSI too. The principles that GSI articulates to

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<sup>65</sup> For example, see “The State of Democracy in the United States: 2022”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 20 March, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/202303/t20230320\\_11044481.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202303/t20230320_11044481.html)



effect this is the indivisibility of security—i.e., indivisibility between individual and common security, between traditional and non-traditional security, between security rights and obligations, and between security and development—sovereign independence, inviolability of territorial integrity and the right of states to independently choose social systems and development paths.

Out of the three global initiatives, GSI is the most overtly geopolitical, in that its implicit agenda is rather transparent.

Through GSI, Beijing is clearly attempting to push back against the idea of “collective security” and alliances as a Cold War relic and an example of hegemonism. Instead, it is calling for “taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously” and building a “balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, so as to realize universal security and common security”. These concepts, of course, remain vague in practice. In fact, in responding to recent crises, such as the war in Ukraine or the Israel-Hamas war, China has argued that its ability to decide a position based on “the merits of the issue” and putting aside “geopolitical considerations and double standards” was a virtue.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of the rhetoric, Beijing has pursued a subjective, interest-based approach rather than a principled policy position.<sup>67</sup>

This, however, has not stopped Chinese policymakers and analysts from using the ideas articulated under GSI to lash out at the legitimacy of

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<sup>66</sup> See “Foreign Minister Qin Gang Meets the Press”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 7 March 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202303/t20230307\\_11037190.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202303/t20230307_11037190.html); “Remarks by China’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Zhang Jun at the UN Security Council Emergency Meeting on the Palestinian-Israeli Situation”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 10 November 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb\\_663304/zwjg\\_665342/zwb\\_d\\_665378/202311/t20231113\\_11179208.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwb_d_665378/202311/t20231113_11179208.html)

<sup>67</sup> See “China and the Ukraine War One Year After the Invasion, with Evan Feigenbaum and Alexander Gabuev”, The China Project, 23 February 2023, <https://thechinaproject.com/2023/02/23/china-and-the-ukraine-war-one-year-after-the-invasion/>; Manoj Kewalramani, “The Israel-Hamas War: China’s Interests & Crisis Diplomacy”, Takshashila Institution, 5 December 2023.

NATO's existence, describing the US Indo-Pacific Strategy as an effort at containing China's rise through bloc formation in Asia, and criticizing the concept of the "rules-based order" articulated by the US as fundamentally exclusionary and hypocritical. These American approaches are juxtaposed against the projection of China as a responsible major power that is invested in upholding the UN-centred international order and is offering a more participatory, multilateral approach to reforming global security governance. Such narratives are an effort to dissuade Asian countries in particular from closer security alignment with the US and building a new security architecture in Asia suited to Chinese interests.

Through GSI, Beijing hopes to mitigate what it believes is the threat of American encirclement and containment while actively shaping norms across domains like biosecurity, human rights, terrorism and cyberspace, along with what Beijing argues are "new frontiers", such as deep sea, polar regions, outer space, digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Leveraging the minilateral cooperation platforms identified under GSI, it is seeking to arrive at common understandings and mobilize larger numbers of developing countries to then shape global security governance within the UN framework in line with Chinese interests. China's Global AI Governance Initiative, its Data Security Initiative and its advocacy on norms related to the particularity of human rights are examples of such efforts. These initiatives are essentially an effort to expand the global popularity, export, acceptance, and adherence to and thereby legitimacy of Chinese governance practices through the setting of standards in emerging domains. Of course, doing so requires Beijing to formulate legislation and norms domestically. In this regard, Chinese authorities have been rather prompt and decisive compared to several other key actors in framing rules on recommendation algorithms, synthetically generated content, generative AI, data governance and security, tackling monopolies, and so on. However, as argued earlier, these efforts have prioritized the interests of the state, particularly state security concerns, over individual and enterprise interests.

Another key takeaway from GSI is that it presages intensified Chinese military and security diplomacy across the developing world. For instance, increasingly joint statements between China and other states along with outcomes at China's regional diplomacy platforms

have included commitments to deepen experience sharing between the militaries and police; strengthening cooperation in personnel training military medicine, equipment and technologies; and joint work to combat transnational crimes and on issues of terrorism, cyber security and political security.<sup>68</sup> In addition, under GSI, China has committed to train 5,000 professionals from developing countries to address global security issues. These actions, of course, address joint concerns and help developing countries boost their capacities. But they are also clearly part of a long-term process of expanding Chinese weapons and equipment sales, security presence, and governance practices. Such practical cooperation potentially lends Beijing greater policy sway in recipient countries and strengthens its ability to better protect its overseas interests.

Finally, peaceful dispute and conflict resolution has been highlighted as a key goal of GSI. Chinese officials have, in fact, engaged in rather vigorous self-congratulations for the March 2023 agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore diplomatic ties. They cited this as an example of GSI's success in dispute resolution. Likewise, amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, Beijing has been advocating for a ceasefire and a new peace conference. While these are signs of proactiveness, given the history of China's conflict resolution diplomacy, whether in the Korean Peninsula, the Horn of Africa, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, around the Ukraine war or on the Rohingya issue, it appears

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<sup>68</sup> See “Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Colombia on the Establishment of Strategic Partnership”, *People’s Daily*, 26 October 2023, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-10/26/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20231026\\_1-03.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-10/26/nw.D110000renmrb_20231026_1-03.htm); “Full Text: Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Zambia on Establishing the Comprehensive Strategic and Cooperative Partnership”, *Xinhua*, 15 September 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20230915/a2d84d1722b24f86a91d3da495f868b4/c.html>; Xi Jinping, “Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship” (Speech, Xi’an, Shaanxi, 19 May 2023), *ECNS*, <http://www.ecns.cn/news/politics/2023-05-19/detail-ihcpmkqz3546437.shtml>

unlikely that Beijing will be willing to commit force unless it is under a UN mandate or to provide security guarantees underwriting peace deals. In that sense, Beijing's approach is deeply pragmatic rather than principled. In the meantime, Chinese officials, analysts and media have continued to engage in narrative contestation with the US, arguing that, unlike Beijing, Washington has been fanning flames of crises and conflicts owing to its geopolitical agenda and selfish interests.

Like GDI and GSI, geopolitics is also at the heart of the agenda of GCI. On the surface, the proposition articulated under GCI, i.e., respecting the diversity of civilizations and appreciating civilizational interpretations of common values of mankind, appears to be rather benign. However, the geopolitics that underpins these principles indicates a shaping of a world in which civil liberties, economic freedoms and political rights of individuals are likely to regress, while reactionary, regressive and autocratic regimes and practices grow in strength. The implicit objective of GCI is to engender certain mindset changes with the goal of reducing external ideological pressures on the rule of the Communist Party. To achieve this, there are three key changes to the normative model around values of governance that GCI seeks to engender.

First, while preaching diversity, GCI applies a civilizational frame to governance values, blending it with the norm of state sovereignty. It also emphasizes the particularity of human rights. The argument is that there are certain common values—peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom—and states should be allowed to interpret them based on their socio-cultural histories and experiences and political and economic conditions. In essence, such a proposition strikes a blow at the aspirational appeal of international human rights norms and standards guiding humanity towards greater justice. Moreover, it reinforces the perspective that human rights are merely a matter of geopolitical contestation. In fact, GCI conflates liberal ideas with Westernization, thereby adding a geopolitical tinge to liberal perspectives on political, civil, social and economic rights, and undermining them under the guise of respecting diversity. It also undermines the scope for action by institutions, such as the UN Human Rights Council, UN Security Council and non-governmental organizations, which seek to protect and uphold human rights globally.

Second, GCI applies a state-centric lens to the global discourse on governance values and rights. In doing so, it places state and, to a certain degree, community interests over individual interests. This portends a fundamental shift potentially eroding decades of progress in advancing individual rights. Particularity also has the potential to be used as a convenient cudgel by authoritarians around the world, including the West, to bolster legitimacy, enhance state control and erode or deny political rights. If development is the “primary basic human right” as Beijing argues, states can also rather conveniently jettison civil and political rights that are seen as hindrances to development objectives or are not seen to be in line with the dominant, state-sanctioned understanding of culture. In fact, the emphasis on cultural and/or civilizational experiences underpinning particularity can embolden ethno-nationalist, regressive and discriminatory practices under the garb of cultural inheritances and sovereignty. This could potentially have adverse implications for the protection of the rights of ethnic, religious and/or linguistic minorities, women and LGBTQ communities.

Third, Chinese discourse on respecting the diversity of civilizations and cultures and seeking harmony should be assessed in the context of its assimilationist policies with regard to linguistic and ethnic minorities within China. Over the years, the Communist Party’s policies have entailed undermining the autonomy of linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. This has taken shape in the form of increased Party-state control over the practice of religion; Sinicization of religious doctrines, customs and practices; restrictions on the study and use of languages other than standard Mandarin; to even carrying out architectural changes to places of worship to reflect what the Party-state describes as Chinese culture.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> “How China Is Tearing Down Islam”, *Financial Times*, 27 November 2023, <https://fig.ft.com/china-mosques/>; Lim Peh Hong, “China Steps Up Assimilation of Ethnic Minorities by Banning Languages in Schools”, VOA, 24 October 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-steps-up-assimilation-of-ethnic-minorities-by-banning-languages-in-schools-/6281558.html>; “10 Things to Know about China’s Policies on Religion”, Pew Research Centre, 23 October 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/10/23/10-things-to-know-about-chinas-policies-on-religion/>

In fact, the Communist Party's assimilationist policies have become far harsher during Xi Jinping's tenure.<sup>70</sup> Such policies reveal the deep chasm between Beijing's rhetoric on respecting the diversity and equality of different cultures and civilizations and the realities of its actions. Can a system that does not respect or nurture diversity domestically value its significance in other societies and foster it externally? Moreover, increasingly, Beijing has sought to influence values like freedom of expression, press and media freedom, scholarly and public discourse, and religious freedom in other countries when they impact its interests.<sup>71</sup> Such efforts obviously belie the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and respect for diverse interpretations of the common values of mankind.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that GDI, GSI and GCI are key pillars of the concept of a community of shared future for mankind proposed by Xi

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<sup>70</sup> Aaron Glasserman, "Is Assimilation the New Norm for China's Ethnic Policy?", Epicenter, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 25 February 2022, <https://epicenter.wcfia.harvard.edu/blog/assimilation-new-norm-chinas-ethnic-policy>

<sup>71</sup> See Paul Charon and Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer, "Chinese Influence Operations: A Machiavellian Moment", Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'École Militaire, October 2021, <https://www.irsem.fr/report.html>; "They Don't Understand the Fear We Have' How China's Long Reach of Repression Undermines Academic Freedom at Australia's Universities", Human Rights Watch (2021), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/06/30/they-dont-understand-fear-we-have/how-chinas-long-reach-repression-undermines>; Sudha Ramachandran, "China's Panicked Reaction to Sri Lanka's Invitation to the Dalai Lama", *The Diplomat*, 1 February 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/02/chinas-panicked-reaction-to-sri-lankas-invitation-to-the-dalai-lama/>; Elizabeth Roche, "Chinese Embassy in Delhi Issues Directives to Indian Media for Covering Taiwan's National Day", *Mint*, 7 October 2020, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/chinese-embassy-in-delhi-issues-directives-to-indian-media-for-covering-taiwan-s-national-day-11602082882343.html>; Eric Olander, "Assessing the Impact of Chinese Media Influence in Africa", The China-Global South Project, 26 October 2023, <https://chinaglobalsouth.com/podcasts/assessing-the-impact-of-chinese-media-influence-in-africa/>

Jinping. It has argued that the launch of these initiatives is an effort by Beijing to cultivate international authority and shape the future direction of the world order. The Communist Party appears optimistic that the cumulative effect of the normative intervention through these initiatives will bolster regime legitimacy and security while supporting China's developmental interests. If successful, the outcome, however, will also likely be the creation of a world wherein statist perspectives triumph over individual rights, diversity would justify regressive practices and great powers would avoid conflict and keep the peace by accepting each other's spheres of influence.

It is, thus, imperative for liberal democracies to devise appropriate policy responses. However, any such response, apart from being backed by significant material capabilities, requires a holistic approach. It also requires an understanding of the interests of large parts of the developing world and what it is that they find attractive about China's propositions. The response by liberal democracies, therefore, must entail a well-thought approach rather than ideological hectoring and zero-sum diplomacy. What is required is self-reflection and engaging in thoughtful and targeted diplomacy that addresses the sources of discontent in the developing world.

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