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China’s Paper on Ukraine and Next Steps for Xi’s Global Security Initiative

On February 24, General Secretary Xi Jinping did not make an expected “peace speech” to mark the first anniversary of Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Instead, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a “position paper.” Leading up to this publication, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has embarked on a narrative campaign to criticize U.S. foreign and domestic policies and attempt to undermine U.S.-European alliances. Throughout February, China’s diplomats have released a series of position papers, speeches, and reports that promote China’s Global Security Initiative (GSI), criticize the United States and alliances, and demonstrate continued support for Russia. The GSI’s core objective appears to be the degradation of U.S.-led alliances and partnerships under the guise of a set of principles that are full of ideals but empty on substantive steps for contributing to global peace or resolving existing disputes like the war in Ukraine.

This issue brief covers the following activities by Chinese diplomats in February:

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This issue brief was prepared by Jonathan Ray, Rachael Burton, Andrew Hartnett, and Sierra Janik. You may reach us at contact@uscc.gov.

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China's Paper on Ukraine "Says Everything...Commits to Nothing"

On the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released "[China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis](#)." Michael Auslin at the Hoover Institution [described the 12-point document as a "content-free diplomatic position"](#) that "says everything and commits to nothing." For resolving the war, it calls for all parties to support dialogue between Russia and Ukraine to "gradually deescalate the situation." Though it does not name the United States and Europe, it repeats criticisms of a "Cold War mentality" and the economic measures taken against Russia. Without naming Russia, the paper repeats opposition to any use of nuclear weapons and any attacks on nuclear power plants.

China's position paper has received skeptical reactions from Russia and Ukraine, and ultimately puts the onus on other parties to make progress in resolving the conflict. While a Kremlin spokesman initially thanked the Chinese government for the proposal, he [said conditions were not right](#) "for this matter to take a peaceful path," and [cited the proposal's lack of acknowledgement](#) of Russia's territorial gains. In Ukraine, President Zelenskyy [said at a press conference](#), "I believe that the fact that China started talking about Ukraine is not bad," and elaborated that "the question is what follows the words. The question is in the steps and where they will lead to." Amid these reactions, General Secretary [Xi Jinping signed expanded cooperation agreements](#) in Beijing with Belarusian President and Putin ally Alexander Lukashenko, who expressed support for China's position paper.

Wang Yi Says China-Russia Relations are "Solid as Rock"

After the Munich Security Conference, China's most senior diplomat, Wang Yi, Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, [traveled](#) to Moscow. There he [spoke with](#) Russian leaders including President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev. According to a press conference on February 23, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Wang Wenbin [said](#) that the two sides agreed to "firmly oppose hegemonism and bloc confrontation," and "jointly uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter," among other core concepts outlined in the GSI. Following Wang Yi's visit to Moscow, General Secretary Xi Jinping was [expected](#) to give a "peace speech" on Friday, February 24, on the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. [Newspapers reported](#) that Xi may travel to Moscow in April or May this year.

China Elaborates Next Steps for its Global Security Initiative

On February 21, 2023, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [published](#) a concept paper on the GSI. The GSI, as covered in the Commission's 2022 Annual Report, is Xi Jinping's proposal for a new global security architecture that aims to reshape norms of international security to be favorable to China and other authoritarian regimes, while delegitimizing traditional military alliances favored by the U.S. and Europe. While the concept paper is limited in details compared to a formal white paper, many of the themes are consistent with the Commission's analysis of the GSI in the 2022 Annual Report. The concept paper:

- [Repeats six concepts](#) that China will "stay committed to" under the GSI:
 1. The "vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security" as laid out by General Secretary Xi in 2014;
 2. "Respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries";
 3. "Abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter";
 4. "Taking seriously the legitimate security concerns of all countries";
 5. "Peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation"; and
 6. "Maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains."
- Repeats thinly veiled accusations of the United States "abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction," as well as "Cold War mentality, unilateralism, bloc confrontation and hegemonism."

- On Russia’s war against Ukraine, the paper fails to condemn Russia’s violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and says that under the GSI China supports “a political settlement of hotspot issues such as the Ukraine crisis through dialogue and negotiation.”

Other sections of the GSI concept paper identify regions and activities to monitor as China aims to implement the initiative globally. The concept paper:

- **Continues to explicitly link the GSI to the concept of “indivisible security” used by Russia as a justification for its invasion of Ukraine.** In 2022 the Commission’s Annual Report noted Chinese media and diplomats’ repetition of Russia’s talking points of “indivisible security” and “legitimate concerns” as a pretext for its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Xi explicitly included both of these phrases in his [first description of the GSI’s core content](#) in April 2022. The concept paper similarly states China “...uphold[s] the principle of indivisible security, advocating the indivisibility between individual security and common security.”
- **Calls for new security forums and dialogues to carry out the GSI’s objectives.** The concept paper says that the government should “promote the establishment of more global security forums to provide new platforms for governments, international organizations, think tanks and social organizations to leverage their advantages and participate in global security governance.” Some of the forums mentioned in the concept paper include the Beijing Xiangshan Forum and Lianyungang Forum, which are discussed in the first panel of the Commission’s January 26, 2023 [hearing on “China’s Military Diplomacy and Overseas Security Activities.”](#) It also explicitly notes China’s intention to “hold high-level conferences on the GSI” at an undetermined time in the future.
- **Identifies UN forums and efforts, as well as regional organizations for engagement under the GSI.** The concept paper notes the importance of the GSI utilizing various UN initiatives, including the Secretary-General’s Peace and Security Sub-Fund of the China-UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, the UN General Assembly and Security Council counter-terrorism resolutions and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Expands the GSI’s emphasis on nontraditional security tools such as the [projection of law enforcement outside of China](#).** In 2022 the Commission noted [Xi’s pledge at the SCO Summit](#) to train 2,000 law enforcement personnel for SCO member states over the next five years as part of the GSI. The 2023 the GSI concept paper encourages “...more exchanges and cooperation among university-level military and police academies. China is willing to provide other developing countries with 5,000 training opportunities in the next five years to train professionals for addressing global security issues.”
- **Elaborates on nontraditional security issues including information security and biosecurity.** The paper lists support for China’s Global Initiative on Data Security, the China-LAS Cooperation Initiative on Data Security, the Data Security Cooperation Initiative of China+Central Asia, and the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists.
- **Calls for establishment of “pilot” efforts for the GSI in Southeast Asia and Africa.**
 - In Southeast Asia, “support efforts to promote cooperation in non-traditional security areas under the framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC), implement relevant cooperation projects under the LMC Special Fund, and strive to foster a pilot zone for [the] GSI to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.”
 - In Africa, “actively implement the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa, promote the institutionalization of the China-Horn of Africa Peace, Governance and Development Conference, and work actively to launch pilot projects of cooperation.”

China Questions Europe’s Strategic Ties with the United States

The GSI concept paper comes after Wang Yi’s visit to Europe, where he delivered a [keynote](#) speech at the 59th Munich Security Conference highlighting core themes of the GSI. Wang Yi [asserted](#) that “unilateralism is rampant” and that the “Cold War mentality is making a comeback.” Wang Yi also [blamed](#) “camps and divisions,” a subtle

job at U.S.-led security architecture and NATO, as contributing to confrontation and building a zero-sum mentality. In [remarks after the conference](#), Wang Yi openly questioned Europe’s security architecture and called for the continent to “realize its strategic autonomy” from the United States.*

China Issues Spate of Anti-U.S. Reports

The GSI concept paper and Wang Yi’s remarks occurred in the midst of a broader campaign of anti-U.S. propaganda from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in February published three English-language reports criticizing U.S. domestic and foreign policy.

- “[US Hegemony and Its Perils](#),” published on February 20, accuses the United States of “clinging to the Cold War mentality” by increasing “bloc politics” and stoking conflict, echoing sentiments that Wang Yi [presented](#) at the Munich Security Conference on February 18. Wang Yi [differentiated](#) China from the United States in his keynote speech with the assertion that “For more than 70 years, China has never provoked a war, never invaded an inch of land from other countries, and is the only country in the world that has written peaceful development into its constitution.”
- “[Gun Violence in the United States: Truth and Facts](#),” published on February 16, criticizes American gun ownership, mass shootings, and the overall toll of gun violence on the U.S. economy and society.
- “[Drug Abuse in the United States](#),” published on February 9, presents statistics on the damage of drug use on U.S. society and accuses the federal government and state governments of failing to combat the issue.

Key Sources for Further Detail

- **China’s Position Paper on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis** (*approximately 1.5 English pages*)
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:YYCz5DcT6fAJ:https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html
- **The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper** (*approximately 6 English pages*)
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ZmpxBD3QD2YJ:th.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sgxw/202302/t20230221_11028312.htm
- **Wang Yi’s Keynote Speech at Munich Security Conference** (*approximately 3 English pages*)
<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:6FnYlffwW4J:www.cpifa.org/en/article/2390>
- **Wang Yi’s Remarks to Reporters at Munich Security Conference** (*approximately 1 English page*)
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:UXEn6cgkZCcJ:https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202302/t20230220_11027348.html

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* Xi and Chinese diplomats have repeatedly invoked the EU policy of “strategic autonomy” in the past in an effort to convince European countries to distance themselves from the United States. For example, see China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wang Yi Holds Video Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France Catherine Colonna*, December 21, 2022; China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wang Yi Holds Video Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto of Hungary*, December 13, 2022; and China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wang Yi Meets with High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles*, September 22, 2022; China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *President Xi Jinping Speaks with French President Emmanuel Macron on Phone*, May 10, 2022.