China 201

China's Three Global Initiatives

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China Promotes Xi's Global Initiatives as Solutions to World's Problems

Beijing continues to promote three mutually reinforcing foreign policy initiatives: the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative. Each is aimed at reshaping global governance in ways amenable to CCP interests. Now featuring prominently in China's new Foreign Relations Law, the three initiatives establish a blueprint for constructing a new global governance system to replace the rules-based international order lead by the United States and its allies.[1] In the proposed system, China would play a leading role in international affairs, other states and international organizations would respect and potentially even emulate China's authoritarian Party-state system, and universal values such as human rights and democracy would no longer be upheld as a standard for international behavior.[2]

While advancing this objective, China's leadership aims to gain recognition for contributing solutions to global problems.[3] The details of China's agenda for these three interrelated initiatives remain amorphous as China's government institutions continue to flesh out the initiatives via leadership speeches, Chinese state media commentary, and other avenues.

The **Global Development Initiative** aims to promote China's leadership in the international development sphere.[4] Xi introduced the initiative on September 21, 2021, in a speech before the UN General Assembly.[5] The initiative has been strategically promoted in association with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, allowing China to project an image of itself as a positive contributor to international economic stability and sustainability.[6] China has also established a forum at the UN called the "Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative" to discuss the agenda and implementation of the initiative.[7] Implementation of projects associated with the initiative has reportedly been occurring jointly between the China International Development Corporation (CIDCA),* China's Minister of Commerce, and various ASEAN and UN agencies.[8]

* As stated by Chairman of the CIDCA, Luo Zhaohui, CDICA manages China's foreign aid and international development cooperation and is in charge of coordinating Global Development Initiative projects. Luo Zhaohui, "GDI Contributes to UN Development Goals," *China Daily*, April 26, 2023.

The **Global Security Initiative** aims to establish China as a leader of global security affairs.* Xi introduced the Global Security Initiative in a speech at the Boao Forum in Asia† on April 21, 2022, in Hainan, China.[9] China presents the Global Security Initiative as a framework that is applicable worldwide and able to address a wide range of traditional and nontraditional security challenges.‡[10] Through the Global Security Initiative, China's leaders hope to undermine U.S. leadership in international security affairs, establish a role for China in mediating conflicts, and normalize its selective application of its stated principle of "non-interference."[11] The Global Security Initiative has been a constant theme in China's diplomacy in 2023, with leaders invoking the initiative in remarks at high-profile events, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue and the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting, and careful integration of the concept into China's other major diplomatic efforts.§[12] In February 2023, China released a Global Security Initiative Concept Paper elaborating on the initiative and laying out plans for its further implementation worldwide.[13] The concept paper specifically identifies the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Cooperation, the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum** as organizations that could promote Global Security Initiative principles.[14]

The **Global Civilization Initiative** focuses mainly on governance and aims to promote China's leadership in international political affairs. Xi introduced the Global Civilization Initiative in a speech at the CCP Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting on March 15, 2024.[15] Through the initiative, China's leadership seeks to normalize the concept of the relativity of values, undermining the idea that certain values such as democracy and human rights are universally applicable.[16] According the Evan Ellis, a research professor of Latin American studies at the U.S. Army War College, "By promoting the relativism of values and arguing against calling out bad behavior and seeking to stop it, the concept appeals to regimes that desire to do what they wish, from criminality and the spurious mantle of 'legitimate security concerns.'"[17] The concept also encourages ruling political parties to play a greater role in global governance worldwide.[18] As the newest of the three initiatives, the Global Civilization Initiative remains the least developed in its implementation, but China's ambassadors abroad are actively promoting the concept through various channels such as op-eds and webinars.[19]

* For more information and key objectives of the Global Security Initiative, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 3, Section 1, "Year in Review: Security and Foreign Affairs," in 2022 Annual Report to Congress, November 2022, 368–370. For more on the Global Security Initiative as a case study of China's foreign policy formulation process, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 1, "CCP Decision-Making and Xi Jinping's Centralization of Authority," in 2022 Annual Report to Congress, November 2022, 65–67.

† The Boao Forum for Asia is an international organization created by China with a stated mission of promoting economic integration and advancing development in Asia. The forum is headquartered in the town of Boao in Hainan Province, China. Boao Forum for Asia, "About BFA," 2021–2022.

‡ For example, China's Global Security Initiative Concept Paper identified 20 areas of cooperation that China will prioritize including addressing security challenges in ASEAN, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. According to the Concept Paper, issues pursued under the Global Security Initiative framework will reportedly include pursuing cooperation on transnational maritime issues, counterterrorism, information security, biosecurity, AI, outer space, food and energy security, law enforcement, and climate change. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper, February 21, 2023.

§ China's position paper on the war in Ukraine leaned heavily on talking points associated with the Global Security Initiative, and Chinese state media directly invoked the concept in connection to the peace deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Michael Schuman, Jonathan Fulton, and Tuvia Gering, "How Beijing's Newest Global Initiatives Seek to Remake the World Order," Atlantic Council, June 21, 2023; Kheir Diabat, "Security Initiative Works in Middle East," China Daily, March 16, 2023; China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis, February 24, 2023.

** The Global Public Security Cooperation Forum—commonly referred to by China as Lianyungang, after the name of the Chinese city where it is hosted—was established in 2015 by China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS). According to Jordan Link, an independent researcher, at the Lianyungang Forum, "The MPS holds international convenings, trains foreign police officers, pro-vides opportunities for information sharing, and promotes Chinese security technologies." The forum has been attended by police and security sector officials from 30 to 40 countries annually and representatives from organizations such as Interpol and the SCO. Jordan Link, written testimony for U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Hearing on China's Military Diplomacy and Overseas Security Activities, January 26, 2023, 6–7; Jordan Link, "The Expanding International Reach of China's Police," Center for American Progress, October 17, 2022.

Beijing Cultivates Middle Eastern Support for Chinese Initiatives and Global Leadership

China is utilizing Xi's foreign policy frameworks—the Global Security Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative—in diplomacy with Middle Eastern countries to cultivate support for Chinese leadership in matters of security, development, and culture.[20] Beijing has worked to attach the initiatives to various projects in order to advance their implementation across the Middle East. It is not clear how effective these initiatives have been in the region; [...] although the three initiatives have been appearing in joint communiques across the region and have been cited by local actors as useful contributions from China, they do not appear to be widely understood yet, and many local governments are not aware of them.[21]

Global Security Initiative

The Global Security Initiative was first introduced by Xi in an April 2022 speech at the Boao Forum and described as a proposal to address "deficits in peace, development, security, and governance" through adherences to six core concepts and principles that reflect China's preferences for regime security and state sovereignty.[*22] According to M. Taylor Fravel, a professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, China is utilizing the initiative to criticize and discredit the United States and its alliances, opening up space for Chinese-led alternatives.[23] Sheena Chestnut Greitens, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin, sees the Global Security Initiative as the externalization of Xi's Comprehensive National Security Concept and an effort to "create new forms of global security governance that bypass or reduce the importance of the U.S. alliance system, thereby blunting Washington's ability to contain China or foment 'color revolutions' inside it."[24]

The Global Security Initiative lists the establishment of a "new security framework" in the Middle East among its priorities for international cooperation.[†25] Minister Wang reportedly introduced the concept during the second China-led Middle East Security Forum in September 2022.[26] Minister Wang describes the new security architecture as emphasizing the leading role of Middle Eastern countries in regional security affairs, abiding by the UN Charter, and focusing on Israel-Palestine peace talks.[27] According to Dr. Fravel, the framework could be interpreted as an effort to undermine U.S. leadership in the region, given its emphasis on resisting outside interference and sanctions.[28] Beijing presented the March 2023 normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Beijing as a model for resolving "hotspot issues"[‡] and a major victory for the Global Security Initiative, crediting it with a "wave of reconciliation" across the region.[29]

[*] These six principles are commitment to: (1) the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security; (2) respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; (3) abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter; (4) taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously; (5) peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation; and (6) maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper*, February 21, 2023.

[†] The Global Security Initiative is frequently mentioned during China's diplomatic meetings and has been written into numerous bilateral and multilateral documents. Xi also promoted the initiative during his second major diplomatic tour of the Middle East in December 2022, mentioning it in speeches given at the first China-Gulf Cooperation Council and China-Arab States Summits. China Institute of International Studies, "Report on the Implementation of the Global Security Initiative," July 2024, 10. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Building on Past Achievements and Jointly Creating a Brighter Future of China-GCC Relations*, December 9, 2022; China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Carrying Forward the Spirit of China-Arab Friendship and Jointly Building a China-Arab Community with a Shared Future in the New Era*, December 9, 2022; Saudi Press Agency, "Riyadh Declaration - The First Arab-China Summit," December 9, 2022; China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Carrying Forward Our Millennia-Old Friendship and Jointly Creating a Better Future*, December 8, 2022.

[‡] Xi stated in June 2024 that international hotspot issues include Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the Korean Peninsula, Iran, Myanmar, and Afghanistan at an event in Beijing celebrating the 70th anniversary of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." Shi Jiangtao, "China's Xi Jinping Calls on Nations to Unite against 'Iron Curtains of Confrontation,'" *South China Morning Post*, June 28, 2024.

Global Development Initiative

The Global Development Initiative is China's development framework that Beijing claims aims to unite countries under the concepts of common development and "win-win cooperation."[30] This initiative focuses on smaller-scale development projects* implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with existing and newly established multinational institutions, in contrast to BRI's large state-owned enterprise-drive infrastructure projects, but together they act as drivers of China's "South-South cooperation" strategy.†[31] According to Chen Yunnan, a research fellow at the London-based Overseas Development Institute, a global affairs think tank, the Global Development Initiative is "conveniently free of the negative optics and baggage that the BRI has accumulated over the years with its spotty environmental record and especially, the polemical accusations of predatory lending and debt traps that is has been unable to shake."[32]

Since the Global Development Initiative was announced in 2021, 17 Arab countries have endorsed it and 12 Arab states have joined the initiative's "Group of Friends."[33] A June 2023 progress report on the initiative, published by the State Council-affiliated Center for International Knowledge on Development, said that the China-led Global Clean Energy Cooperation Partnership—which has encouraged participation by members of the Arab League, the SCO, BRICS, and others to make a joint effort in the development of green and low-carbon energy—will be developed under the Global Development Initiative framework, without providing further details on how the initiative will enhance or change the partnership.[34] During a May 2024 speech, Minister Wang said China has initiated 30 development cooperation projects involving Arab countries under the Global Development Initiative.‡[35]

Global Civilization Initiative

The Global Civilization Initiative is a Chinese framework intended to combat Western countries' promotion of "universal values" by advocating for the respect of a "diversity of civilizations."[36] The Global Civilization Initiative, launched in March 2023, is intended to create an alternative framework to liberal values and norms.§[37] During Xi's March 2023 speech announcing the initiative to the Chinese Communist Party High-Level Dialogue with Political Parties, he stated that countries must "refrain from imposing their own values or models on others."[38] According to R. Evan Ellis, a research professor at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, "By promoting the relativism of values and arguing against calling out bad behavior and seeking to stop it, the concept appeals to regimes that desire to do what they wish."[39]

While the initiative remains somewhat nebulous, an official readout from the July 2023 China-Arab States Political Parties Dialogue suggests it will take the form of exchanges and cooperation between local

* According to Manoj Kewalramani, a fellow in China studies and chair of the Indo-Pacific Studies Programme at the Takshashila Institution, Global Development Initiative projects cover domains including poverty reduction, food security, pandemic and vaccines, climate change, industrialization, the digital economy, digital connectivity, and development finance. Manoj Kewalramani, "China as a Rising Norm Entrepreneur: Examining the GDI, GSI and GCI," *Trends in Southeast Asia* 2:2024 (January 2024).

† China often uses the term "South-South cooperation" to refer to its engagement with developing countries. According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "South-South cooperation" is "an important component of Deng Xiaoping Theory" that is necessary for developing countries to sup-port and "enhance solidarity" with one another. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, A "*Dialogue of the Century" on South-South Cooperation*, August 29, 2022.

‡ The first batch of Global Development Initiative projects, published in 2022, listed projects involving Middle Eastern countries that focus on issues such as pandemic response, poverty reduction, green development, and food security and are sponsored by the China International Development Cooperation Agency, China's Ministry of Commerce, and various UN organizations. Wang Yi has stated that a total of 45 development cooperation or aid projects were "underway or under consideration" in the region. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Let Us Take Real Action to Build a China-Arab Community with a Shared Future*, May 30, 2024; China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *List of First-Batch Projects of GDI Project Pool*, September 21, 2022.

§ According to R. Evan Ellis, a research professor of Latin American studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, "The emphasis on 'civilizations' arguably prioritizes China, as well as other states with linkages to ancient empires, including Beijing's current illiberal partners Russia and Iran (Persia), and Global South countries China is courting (Egypt and Turkey) while deprivileging the voice of the United States as a relatively new and heterogeneous actor in 'civilizational' terms." R. Evan Ellis, "The Trouble with China's Global Civilization Initiative," *Diplomat*, June 1, 2023.

governments, think tanks, universities, nongovernmental organizations, and media entities.[40] The readout also stated that the CCP is "willing to invite" 200 leaders of Arab political parties, political organizations, and think tank and media representatives to visit China for exchanges every year, but it did not outline specific details regarding which countries will be invited, what kinds of activities they will participate in, or how long the CCP will carry out the exchanges.[41] In May 2024, Xi announced that China would establish a China-Arab Center of the Global Civilization Initiative and work with Arab countries to "achieve the goal of 10 million two-way visits of tourists in the next five years."[42] If these exchanges come to fruition, this may indicate the use of the Global Civilization Initiative as a new brand and tool for greater soft power influence.

The Global Development Initiative Inserts Chinese Interests into the UN Agenda

In September 2021, during his address to the UN General Assembly, General Secretary Xi unveiled China's newest plan to forge itself into a leader in international development through the Global Development Initiative (GDI). The GDI is explicitly tied to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and aims to make China a leader in public health, poverty alleviation, and environmentally responsible economic growth.[43] China has not clarified how exactly it intends to contribute to these goals.[44] Much like BRI, the GDI arrived as a blank slate with little initial policy vision attached, giving China space to adapt the initiative and revise its purported vision to meet evolving foreign policy objectives.

Whereas BRI sought to extend China's influence through bilateral linkages, the GDI seeks to operate multilaterally through the UN. Within a year of its launch, more than 55 countries stated their support for the initiative, calling themselves the "Group of Friends" of the GDI and hosting working sessions at the UN.[45] Co-opting UN platforms benefits China by reducing the costs of coordination, lending legitimacy to its objectives, and amplifying its influence globally.† In addition, BRI has focused on funding infrastructure projects through some development aid but mostly loans. By contrast, in his address to the UN, Xi stated that the GDI would revitalize the economy by providing debt suspension and aid to developing countries, particularly those facing "exceptional difficulties."[46] This suggests that debt relief may become a component of the GDI, perhaps even as China has yet to provide bilateral forgiveness to many of its own borrowers. Any potential multilateral UN-sponsored effort to reduce the debt burdens of countries weighted down by BRI loans would benefit China by sharing the costs of its irresponsible lending while burdening the United States with providing relief for Chinese loans.

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* The UN's Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 global objectives adopted by all member states in 2015 that "provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and in the future." The objectives primarily seek to reduce poverty while improving health and education, reducing inequality, and spurring environmentally sustainable economic growth. United Nations, "Department of Economic and Social Affairs—Sustainable Development."

† For more on China's co-option of UN agencies, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *PRC in International Organizations*, December 3, 2022; U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 1, Section 2, "The China Model: Return of the Middle Kingdom," in *2020 Annual Report to Congress*, December 2020, 80-135.

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