

**Focus**

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**China's Global Security Initiative and Global  
Development Initiative: A Challenge  
to the US-led Global Order?**

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## Introduction

No other great power like Germany, Japan, or USSR posed as significant a challenge to the United States as China. The US national security strategies of 2017 (Trump administration), 2021, and 2022 (Biden administration) clearly mention China as a threat to the US national security interests.<sup>1</sup> *The US* Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin once said, "China is the only competitor out there with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, a power to do so."<sup>2</sup> Although China tried to adjust to the international system and has benefitted from the existing world order of China's rise as major a power, the US considers this rise a challenge to its hegemony.

After Xi Jinping came to power, a shift can be seen from Deng Xiaoping's policy of "hiding the strength and biding the time."<sup>3</sup> This is in consonance with the behaviour of great powers: they adopt grand strategies to secure their interest through different military, economic, political, and diplomatic tools.

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Similarly, the grand strategy of China under Xi is 'national rejuvenation' to achieve 'China's Dream'.<sup>4</sup> This dream became the attention and at the same 'alarming signal', for the existing world order characterized by the US hegemony and US-led unipolar world order, after which official US documents such as the 2017 National Security Strategy called China a 'revisionist power'<sup>5</sup> trying to adjust the international system according to its own interests while changing the rules-based world order.

The global financial crisis of 2008, Trump's withdrawal from international agreements, and Covid-19 pandemic are instances when the US abandoned its global leadership role and created a vacuum. The US, being a champion and protector of human rights across the world, failed to fulfil its responsibility.<sup>6</sup> This vacuum was filled by Beijing and since then it is playing a major role in the US-led international system. However, the US is putting efforts to sustain unilateralism to keep firm a hand on global governance which is provoking China to take defensive measures. China has adopted the path of peace and development to stimulate regional and global cooperation while upholding the principle of the United Nations Charter. China wants to challenge this global world order by bringing reforms in global governance, particularly striving for a multipolar world order based on equal participation and mutual respect of all states.

China is ready to present itself as more 'responsible great power' and aspires to expand its footprint in the region and globally. For this purpose, China has devised various initiatives which include the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and alignment with regional countries under BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO).<sup>7</sup> Recently, President Xi Jinping floated two new initiatives: the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Development Initiative (GDI). The GDI is response of the China to the global economic crisis aftermath the Covid-19 pandemic while the GSI is in response to global security crisis incurred by the Ukraine crisis. Through these initiatives, China aims to bring stability and peace to the world, promote global economic development, and create a community for the shared destiny of mankind. These initiatives aim to advance China's own understanding of global governance, which will create new opportunities for peace and development for the international community. This piece aims to analyse the objectives of China behind these initiatives and highlights the growing role of China in the international and regional community.

### **Objectives of GDI and GSI: An Overview**

The GDI was proposed by China's President Xi Jinping in 2021 and propagated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi in September 2022 while chairing the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the GDI in the New York on the sidelines of UN General Assembly Session. It is calling the international community to jointly promote common, inclusive, and balanced development. It is the response to challenges posed by Covid-19, the global economic crisis, and climate change to make the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development successful.<sup>8</sup> The core objectives of GDI include development-based innovation, poverty reduction, food security, industrialization, climate change, and green development.<sup>9</sup>

While the GSI is its political accompaniment proposed by Xi at the Boao Forum of Asia in April 2022 aimed at comprehensive, common, cooperative, and sustainable security.<sup>10</sup> It came in response to challenges like Ukraine crisis caused by NATO's eastward expansion geopolitical complexities, and regional conflicts as they are alarming for the security of humans. Its main objectives are to oppose unilateralism, reject the cold war mentality, uphold the principle of indivisible security, peaceful resolution of disputes, and maintenance of security in traditional and non-traditional domains. It is the approach to securitize China's international development agendas.

### **China's Efforts for Implementation of Initiatives**

China along with international partners is putting effort into successfully implementing these initiatives to transform these ideas into reality. They want to bring development through various cooperation platforms in multiple areas such as education, the Covid-19 pandemic, climate, industrialization, agriculture, and poverty alleviation.<sup>11</sup> China launched the 'World Technical Vocational and Education Training League' to support the global development agenda. The first conference of World Vocational and Technical Education Development was held in August 2022 in Tianjin and attended by 123 countries from all over the world. The education sector, industrialists, research institutes of participant countries, and international organizations were encouraged in this event to support vocational education to impart skills and practical experience to students. They were also suggested to contribute to this partnership to achieve the UN development goal.<sup>12</sup>

China and Pacific Island countries agreed to take cooperative measures for climate change. The opening ceremony of the 'cooperation center for China and Pacific Island countries on climate change' was held, in Liaocheng City, Shandong Province. China showed commitment and dedication to assisting Pacific Island countries to deal with climate change. It was decided that this centre would focus on practical solutions for climate action, focus on green development, and low carbon emissions, and build a platform for training on climate cooperation. To make its working more effective, research will be conducted by 'Liaocheng University- Research Center for Pacific Island Countries' to provide knowledge and solutions for tackling climate change.<sup>13</sup> China also developed the 'Global Development Promotion Center' to promote global development through international cooperation<sup>14</sup> because only cooperation and dialogue can solve global challenges. This centre will also help to fulfil the Agenda for Sustainable Development by bringing new opportunities for development.

China announced the 'Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund' and 'Phase III of China-FAO South-South Cooperation Trust Fund'<sup>15</sup> to support developing countries in implementing initiatives through aid provisions, further enhancing south-south cooperation. One of the key development areas of GDI is poverty reduction to improve the livelihood of all humanity without any discrimination. For this purpose, China launched the 'International NGOs Network for Poverty Reduction Cooperation' which is joined by institutions from seventeen countries to eradicate poverty through cooperative measures. Additionally, China has provided and will provide multiple emergency food

assistance to invulnerable communities. To protect humanity China is cooperating with developing countries in the production of vaccines through technology transfer to make international cooperation more effective.<sup>16</sup>

To implement GSI, China is committed to supporting African nations in multiple areas such as providing military support, helping them to fight terrorism, and conducting the joint naval exercise. Meetings of the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum have been held attended by 50 leaders and representatives from African Union in which African nations also agreed to practice these initiatives to build a China-Africa security community with a shared future.<sup>17</sup>

### **GSI and GDI: Consistency with China's Foreign Policy**

These initiatives will have a prominent role in China's foreign policy posture as China unfolds them at a time when there is a threat to China's interest and at the same time opportunity for them to increase their geopolitical significance. These two nascent initiatives are the foreign policy priorities and part of President Xi's report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. President Xi showed dedication to work on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence including the independent foreign policy of peace and participation in the global development and security system.<sup>18</sup> It shows the constant struggle of President Xi to expand his global reach. Predominately, these initiatives will focus on the development and security of the global south (developing countries plus less developed countries) which has been ignored by the West while also having its global outreach. According to

Chinese experts providing prosperity to the less developed regions is imperative to secure the global environment.

President Xi has advanced major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics under the guidance of 'Xi thought on diplomacy' which will create an environment for the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation and open up China to the outside world.<sup>19</sup> These initiatives are the practical implementation of Xi's thought on diplomacy because both have an analogous goal which is a 'shared future for mankind'. These initiatives will project a peaceful aspect of China's foreign policy as they are centred on win-win cooperation, mutual benefits, and modernization based on the Chinese style. It will also, not replace BRI, as GDI is the response of China to global criticism of BRI. Both will go alongside, sharing the same agenda of human development and economic growth.<sup>20</sup>

### **Strengthening Russia-China ties**

China and Russia are becoming natural allies even without written accords due to the shared threat from NATO expansion and the new groupings such as the QUAD'-Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the US, Japan, India and Australia, 'AUKUS' -a trilateral security pact between Australia, UK, and the USA, AUKUS, and 'I2U2'-a grouping of India, Israel, the UAE and the US. When the US and European countries called on China to stop Russia from aggression then Xi came up with the GSI initiative, to protect itself and other like-minded countries. He used the term indivisible security in this initiative which highlights that security is a collective concept and it is indivisible, so any state should not ensure its security by making others insecure because it will lead



to a security dilemma. Through this concept, China warns NATO to abandon the cold war mentality and not use the Ukraine crisis leading toward bloc confrontation.<sup>21</sup>

China did not support Russia on the international platform directly but when President Putin met President Xi on 4 February 2022 the two leaders issued a joint statement that they have 'friendship with no limits' and 'cooperation with no forbidden areas'.<sup>22</sup> When this statement was misinterpreted, China clarified that there is not involvement of China in the conflict.<sup>23</sup> China-Russia relation is based on 'non-confrontation', that is why they will not put any limit on their cooperation. China is always committed to the 'principles of the UN Charter' and will always encourage peace talks.<sup>24</sup>

China also opposes western sanctions against Russia and promotes the concept of 'global security with the cooperation of all states' rather than the exceptionalism of one country. It will strengthen Russia-China's alignment against the hegemonism of the West.

## **Countering the Hegemony of the United States**

These initiatives will counter the existing world order steered by the USA, as one of the main objectives of the GSI is to oppose, unilateralism while that of the GDI China is to strive to break US hegemony with a human development agenda. According to Chinese experts, hegemonism and power politics are the issues that threaten world peace and intensify security challenges in this globalized era. This interconnected world now wants to get rid of unilateralism and needs multilateralism because everyone has the right to security. China has followed the

existing international system for two decades, but after Xi's assertive foreign policy behaviour, it seems that China wants to alter the international system according to its own interests by making China at the centre of global leadership. Through the GSI and the GDI, China is looking for a new order based on multilateralism that develops deep economic interdependence and regional integration among China and all other developing countries. China also does not want other states to adopt its system of governance.<sup>25</sup>

In this new emerging world, every region of the world would participate in the global governance process including Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia.<sup>26</sup> It will be a combined effort of all to address traditional and non-traditional security threats which will improve global security governance and the global development system. China will achieve these objectives by adhering fully to international law and UN-based principles, which reveals the true roots of these initiatives in multilateralism.<sup>27</sup>

The Indo-Pacific strategy is given by the US to directly confront China and they are trying to manifest this strategy through QUAD and AUKUS. China called QUAD 'Asian NATO' and AUKUS as 'anti-China military clique' leading to nuclear proliferation which is a threat to China's rise. Looking into these initiatives it seems that Xi is targeting the security partnership of the United States and its allies when he says "no to group politics and bloc confrontation."<sup>28</sup> China wants to oppose the new cold war because the cold war mentality of the west has disturbed global peace and security.

At the opening session of 'the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party Congress' President Xi stated, "China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansionism."<sup>29</sup>

### **Asian Model of Security**

The other most important objective of these twin initiatives is to build 'new regional security architecture' to promote Asian unity and stability. Asia is a region that can lead to a secure and peaceful world with the help of security and a strong economic base. This new architecture will be based on mutual respect in which all countries would contribute to the peace of Asia regardless of their size. It would make Asia into one family, looking for win-win cooperation. Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence "mutual non-interference, mutual non-aggression, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect for sovereignty and co-operation for mutual benefit" must be incorporated to uphold the interests of the developing world.<sup>30</sup>

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a free trade agreement and consists of members of ASEAN and its other five partners including China, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand.<sup>31</sup> For the Asian region's development, economic growth, and cooperation, RCEP is emphasized in these initiatives, to enhance regional trade. Through this multilateral trade agreement, China wants to unite the 'Asia Pacific' region.<sup>32</sup> It broadens the opportunities for China to integrate all developing countries' economies, where countries will become more dependent on China. Through this multilateral trade agreement, China wants to unite the 'Asia Pacific region. China has a dominant position in RCEP, which will raise the profile of china as a leader

having ambitions to invest for the benefit of the region. It also raises the possibility for Beijing to counter the influence of the US in the Asia Pacific region, as this agreement links US allies such as South Korea, Japan, and Australia.<sup>33</sup>

China wants to adopt modernization but without Westernization. For this purpose, they want that Asian affairs must be controlled by Asian countries, so no other power out of this region (pointing out the US Indo-Pacific alliance) would interfere. It would provide China the upper hand in the region as being dominant power by decreasing the region's dependence on the US.

At the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi highlighted that through GSI and GDI China wanted to integrate ASEAN. It will strengthen ASEAN by accommodating the interests of all parties. China already started making inroads in this region through the projects such as the China-Malaysia defence pact, new Mekong joint patrols, Cambodia's Ream Naval Base, and normalized relations with US allies such as the Philippines and Thailand in Southeast Asia. But now China wants to work and strengthen relations with ASEAN under Cambodia's chairmanship to implement both the GSI and GDI.<sup>34</sup>

At one of the opening ceremonies of the GDI at the Jakarta Forum on ASEAN-China Relations, Assistant Foreign Minister Wu Jianghao said that the GDI has been actively supported by ASEAN countries.<sup>35</sup> The GDI is aligned with ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Many states became members of the Group of Friends of the GDI. It will build a peaceful, secure, prosperous, and friendly home together to promote global development.<sup>36</sup>

## Response of the world

The International community had expressed positive support for these nascent initiatives. The GDI has been supported by 100 countries and international organizations including the United Nations and more than 60 countries have joined the 'Group of a friend' of the GDI.<sup>37</sup>

At the 14<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit in June 2022, President Xi chaired the High-level Dialogue on Global Development attended by leaders of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in which they agreed to work together and make GDI successful for the common development of the world.<sup>38</sup> In Samarkand's 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization SCO took place in which Xi Jinping put forward the GSI and GDI to address global security challenges and achieve common ambitions for development respectively.<sup>39</sup> All member states expressed their willingness to implement this initiative.

While welcoming the GSI, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, the spokesperson of Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "It is a timely call to action in the face of contemporary global realities where the international community encounters traditional and non-traditional threats that necessitate holistic approaches towards international and regional security."<sup>40</sup>

Academia around the world also gave positive statements regarding these initiatives. The Vice-President for External Affairs at the Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies Institute Anna Malindog-Uy stated, "The future of GSI has huge potential, and I think it will gain traction in a matter of time because it is very pragmatic."<sup>41</sup> "Its emphasis on non-interference will soothe countries of various political and governance stripes wary of

external forces intruding into their domestic affairs,"<sup>42</sup> said Lucio Blanco Pitlo III, a research fellow at the Philippine think tank named Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress.

Fahd Almenei, a researcher with the Center for Research and Intercommunication Knowledge of Saudi Arabia said, "The GDI is another major initiative put forward by China after the Belt and Road Initiative. It is a 'remobilization' of world development cooperation and a 'reaffirmation' of the people-oriented concept."<sup>43</sup>

## **Challenges**

China will face multiple challenges and criticism while implementing the initiatives despite all the efforts and the formation of various cooperation centres. The United States perceives these initiatives as the tools for China achieving its national interest by using agenda of peace and development and looking for international order suited to China's interests. For a long time, the West has been criticizing China on the basis of freedom of expression but its exclusion from human rights in GDI is providing them another chance of suspicion. China asserts to implement the initiatives globally, but on the other side, it focuses more on specific regions like Asia, Africa, and Pacific Island countries due to which they are not warmly welcomed by some European countries, Japan, and Australia.

One of the fundamental principles of the GSI is 'indivisible security' but the China-ASEAN conflicts in the South China Sea and China's position on Taiwan contradict it. Likewise, India's absence from these initiatives is also a cause of concern. China is struggling for a multipolar world, but India, as an emerging power

and a strategic ally of the US, has not shown any positive response to these initiatives and this can create hurdles for Beijing in the future given India's expanding economic and diplomatic clout in the world.

There is a lack of policies and an effective framework that either China will impose the initiatives bilaterally or multilaterally. Similarly, no action plan and no timeline of completion will create obstacles in the pace of the initiatives. Moreover, the lack of clarity between the BRI and the GDI is also making developing countries hesitant and China needs to provide them with more detail and explanations. Although China has attempted to disseminate information about the initiatives at every forum, China is lacking in terms of discourse power. There is a lack of awareness among the common public about the initiatives and even experts on US-China do not discuss or debate it while explaining great power competition. Therefore, to make it successful, China needs to strengthen its discourse power strategy to build public opinion about the initiative so that China's voice is heard at all levels.

## **Conclusion**

China is the major power in the world tending to expand its interests and influence in different regions of the world. It wants to weaken America's hold on global politics, replacing it with a multipolar world order in which everyone would be safe and secure. China is continuously working hard to grasp the pulse of time and advance its foreign policy agenda all over the world by going deep into global affairs. For this purpose, China is pursuing different initiatives in which recently the most prominent are the GDI and the GSI. President Xi opened the path for universal peace and

development after which China is ready to work with all the peace-loving countries to put into action the two initiatives. While facing a complex global situation, the prerequisite of development is security for which these initiatives will go side-by-side.

China is giving alternative solutions for all the global challenges such as regional conflicts, climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, and terrorism that pose a threat to humanity. It is also evident from the above discussion that China's rise and the announcement of these initiatives is a new emerging threat to the US-led global world order. It will create space for Xi's activism in terms of growing China's footprints in the region by increasing its geopolitical influence while upholding the UN-based principles. China also made these initiatives part of the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of CCP to make it aligned with the foreign policy of China to promote the 'national rejuvenation of Chinese nation' and 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. China is also offering Chinese Style modernization, based on common prosperity, peaceful development, and cooperation, which varies from the Western style of modernization and particularly poses a threat to US norms and values. Countries from different parts of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Pacific Island countries expressed positive responses. To make it successful on a global level, China needs to incorporate the need and desires of all countries and generate discourse about it, actively respond to criticism and be able to counter negative perspectives.



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