



China's Global Security Initiative

Undermining US Alliances or Quest for a New Security Architecture?

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The Global Security Initiative (GSI) is among the key foreign policy propositions put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping. This discussion document examines the process of development of GSI, analysing discourse from Chinese policymakers, analysts and media. It concludes that GSI is fundamentally an attempt to discredit US engagement in the Indo-Pacific, while projecting China as a responsible global power. In addition, although GSI is likely to entail several traditional and non-traditional security measures, the initiative is unlikely to lead to the establishment of a new institutional architecture.

Executive Summary

The Global Security Initiative (GSI), along with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Global Development Initiative (GDI), is often discussed as one of China's three key foreign policy propositions. Since the announcement of GSI by Xi Jinping, thus far, there has been no clear articulation from Beijing of specific measures or projects under the initiative. Nevertheless, Chinese media, analysts and diplomats have sought to flesh out its interpretations and specific actions that could fall under the ambit of GSI. The latter have also sought to win endorsements for GSI from developing countries.

Examining this literature, this document details the objectives, scope and policy implications of the initiative. It concludes that GSI is fundamentally an attempt to discredit US engagement in the Indo-Pacific, while projecting China as a responsible global power. It also concludes that the likely measures under GSI can be classified into the following:

1. measures related to the traditional security domain
2. measures related to developmental and financial security
3. actions to influence global governance norms

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1. Xi's GSI Proposal: Threats & Opportunities

Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the Global Security Initiative (GSI - 全球安全倡议) in his address¹ at the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) in April 2022. The speech outlined six core principles or commitments of GSI. Xi called on countries to stay committed to:

- the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and work together to maintain world peace and security;
- respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, uphold non-interference in internal affairs, and respect the independent choices of development paths and social systems made by people in different countries;
- abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, reject the Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say no to group politics and bloc confrontation;
- taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, uphold the principle of indivisible security, build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and oppose the pursuit of one's own security at the cost of others' security;
- peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation, support all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises, reject double standards, and oppose the wanton use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction;
- maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, and work together on regional disputes and global challenges such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity and biosecurity.

The speech offered no details regarding the implementation of these principles. However, it did shed light on the worldview of the Chinese leadership within which GSI is located.

First, it is evident that the GSI is a response to what Beijing often describes as the profound and turbulent changes that are taking place within the world order. Perceptions of competition with the US lie at the heart of this worldview. For instance, in the speech at BFA, Xi once again emphasised that “it has been proven time and again that the Cold War mentality would only wreck the global peace framework, that hegemonism and power politics would only endanger world peace, and that bloc confrontation would only exacerbate security challenges in the 21st century.” Later, he specifically pushed back against perceived containment efforts by the US. “In today’s world, unilateralism and excessive pursuit of self-interest are doomed to fail; so are the practices of decoupling, supply disruption and maximum pressure; so are the attempts to forge ‘small circles’ or to stoke conflict and confrontation along ideological lines.”

Second, the speech also underscored that while the Chinese leadership might crave self-reliance to reduce strategic vulnerabilities. It recognises that its developmental goals and prosperity are increasingly linked to the outside world. This was evident in Xi’s comments about the need to “stay committed to building an open world economy” and “stay on top of the dominant trend of economic globalization.” From the Chinese leadership’s perspective, since “security is the precondition for development,” the GSI is a pro-active effort to ensure stability in the external environment to secure developmental interests. In that sense, GSI compliments the Global Development Initiative (GDI - 全球发展倡议), which Xi had announced² in September 2021. In addition, it represents the securitisation of China’s economic and development diplomacy.

Third, the above represents a threat prism evident in several of Xi's speeches and articles by Chinese analysts and commentators. However, this coexists with an opportunity prism, which is based on perceptions around the improvement of China's material power, its global influence and its power to shape international discourse, norms and outcomes. Inherent to this sense of opportunity is an acknowledgement of the relative decline in American power and the concurrent enhancement of China's capabilities, which create greater space for Beijing to address the deficits of governance, trust, development and peace plaguing the world. In other words, Beijing believes that the shifting geopolitical sands have created space for more proactive major power diplomacy.

Further, based on Xi's speech at the BFA and subsequent Chinese outreach, it is evident that the developing world at large and Asia in particular will be the key arena for expanded Chinese security engagement. Since the announcement of GSI, in their engagements with foreign counterparts, Chinese officials, at all levels starting from Xi himself, have sought to generate a buy-in for the initiative. For instance, at the June 2022 BRICS leaders meeting, Xi said³ that "China would like to work with BRICS partners to operationalize the GSI." Likewise, at the SCO summit in September, Xi said⁴ that China welcomes "all stakeholders to get involved in implementing" GSI. These efforts, however, have achieved mixed results. Towards the end of the year, Chinese media reported⁵ that "GSI has been appreciated and supported by more than 70 countries." This is unlike the more purposeful, outcome-oriented engagement that has been witnessed under the GDI framework.

Since the initial announcement of the GDI at the UNGA in September 2021, Beijing claims that it is engaged in dialogue with 100 countries and international organisations and more than 60 countries have joined the Group of Friends of GDI at the UN. GDI has so far yielded two major achievements. First, the High-level Dialogue on Global Development at the sidelines of the June 2022 BRICS summit resulted⁶ in 32 deliverables across areas like digital cooperation, poverty reduction, customs connectivity, agricultural cooperation, skills development, capacity building, etc.

Later, in September 2022, the first ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of GDI led to the release of the first batch⁷ of 50 projects of the GDI project pool in areas like poverty reduction, food security, climate change, healthcare, etc.

In comparison, GSI still remains a vague proposition. The next section of this paper, therefore, explores discussions among Chinese analysts and policymakers. The aim of this exercise is to unpack their interpretation of the objectives, scope and specific policy actions that would likely fall under the ambit of GSI, which will be then discussed in the final section.

The Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative was launched in January 2022. It is a group that China has initiated for "strengthening policy dialogue, sharing best practices and promoting practical cooperation" along with building "greater complementarity between" the GDI and the 2030 SDGs.

2. Views of Chinese Policymakers and Analysts

a. Interpretations by Leading Diplomats

Soon after Xi introduced GSI, Chinese State Councillor and then Foreign Minister Wang Yi published an article in the People's Daily,⁸ discussing the initiative. It is worth examining this article in detail before touching on other analyses. This is because the themes in Wang's piece are generally echoed in the writings of other policymakers and analysts, which are discussed later below.

After the 20th Party Congress, Wang was promoted to the CPC Politburo and the position of the Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission.

In his article, Wang lashed out at the United States, arguing that the world was "facing the danger of division as never before" owing to 'Cold War' thinking of "some countries" that are "keen to create exclusive 'small circles' and 'small groups'." Wang argued that GSI, in contrast, was a "major initiative" aimed at improving global security governance. In doing so, he made the case for China being a responsible actor that will be working more actively to shape its external security environment.

The article outlined four key features of GSI.

First, Wang identified upholding the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries” as the “basic prerequisite for effectively maintaining world peace and tranquillity. The principle of sovereignty is the cornerstone of modern international relations.” A number of analysts tend to view this emphasis on sovereignty and territorial integrity as being a core tenet of Chinese diplomacy. However, the gap between rhetoric and reality is evident from China salami slicing actions in the South China Sea and along the disputed boundary with India. It is, therefore, critical to understand the context within which Chinese policymakers and analysts discuss the ideas of sovereignty and territorial integrity. For instance, in his article, Wang said that “all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community. There is no room for interference in their internal affairs; their sovereignty and dignity must be respected; and their right to independently choose their own social system and development path must be safeguarded.” While saying this, however, he also makes allowances for the “legitimate and reasonable security concerns” of all countries. This emphasis on legitimate security concerns was part of the rhetoric that Beijing had deployed in defending Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Second, the Chinese foreign minister placed GSI within the context of the New Asian Security Concept,⁹ which Xi had articulated at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia in May 2014. Back then, Xi had said that

"it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia." Wang further argued that under the present situation, "a new security architecture commensurate with its economic foundation should be established in Asia." This, he added, must be built keeping in mind the "diversity of Asian countries' development, social systems and cultural values", accommodating the aspirations and interests of all parties. Doing so, Wang said, requires "resolutely opposing the use of the 'Indo-Pacific' strategy to split the region and create a 'new Cold War'," and "opposing the use of military alliances to piece together the 'Asia-Pacific version of NATO'."

During this speech in 2014, Xi had argued that "it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia." He had said that CICA members should "explore the establishment of a regional security cooperation architecture." This hasn't evolved into anything substantial since.

In essence, Wang pitched the GSI as the antithesis to the US' alliance and partnerships network in the region and its emerging Indo-Pacific Strategy. In doing so, he also sought to dissuade countries in the region from bandwagoning with the US.

Third, Wang emphasised the need to find "political solutions" to disputes, arguing that "major powers bear special and important responsibilities for resolving international and regional hotspot issues. They should uphold fairness, encourage dialogue, promote peace talks and mediation according to the needs and aspirations of the countries concerned" and "act as a 'stabilisers' prompting peace rather than fanning conflicts."

While Wang didn't clarify what China would be doing to fulfil this responsibility, he did use the opportunity to attack American policies. Wang argued that "unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction" of "some countries" that are insisting on "building 'small yards and high walls' and 'parallel systems,' and generalising the concept of national security, suppressing and containing the economic and technological development of other countries" were not conducive to maintaining peace.

Finally, Wang called for working together on common threats such as terrorism, constructing a "fair, cooperative and win-win international nuclear security system" and improving governance rules in new domains such as the deep seas, polar regions, outer space and cyberspace.

Yang Jiechi, China's top diplomat and the head of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission at the time, concurred with Wang's argument. In a piece on Chinese diplomacy¹⁰ under Xi Jinping in 2022, Yang located GSI as a response to the prevalence of the "Cold War mentality of some countries" and the threats of "hegemonism," "power politics," "unilateralism and protectionism" and "various structural contradictions."

He wrote that it was critical to "oppose all forms of hegemonic bullying, interference in other countries' internal affairs under various pretexts, containment and suppression of other countries by expanding the remit of the concept of national security, and opposing the politicisation and weaponisation of economic and scientific issues." He added that it was important to "persist in pushing all countries to take a new path of exchanges that involves dialogue without confrontation and partnership without alliance." This was a rather frank acknowledgement that one of the key objectives of GSI is to undermine, weaken and potentially unwind the US alliance and partnerships network.

Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng further elaborated on GSI¹¹ during a think tank forum in early May. He said that “the idea is to take the new vision on security as the guiding principle, mutual respect as the fundamental requirement, indivisible security as the important principle, and building a security community as the long-term goal, in order to foster a new type of security that replaces confrontation, alliance and a zero-sum approach with dialogue, partnership and win-win results. This major Initiative carries forward the spirit of the UN Charter, offers a fundamental solution to eliminating ‘the peace deficit’ and contributes Chinese perspectives to meeting international security challenges.” Despite the rhetoric, there was no specific policy initiative that Le detailed. Instead, this too was an exercise in discrediting the US’ Indo-Pacific strategy and dissuading countries from cooperating with the US.

Interestingly, Le has since been shifted out of the foreign affairs apparatus and was demoted to the position of deputy head of the National Radio and Television Administration.

Le argued that the US’ Indo-Pacific strategy was merely an effort to “shape the strategic environment in which China operates.” He added that “we cannot allow bloc-based confrontation to repeat itself in the Asia-Pacific; we cannot allow certain countries to succeed in their self-serving attempt to drag the Asia-Pacific into conflict; we cannot allow small and medium-sized countries in our region to become the tool or victim of hegemony,” Le said.

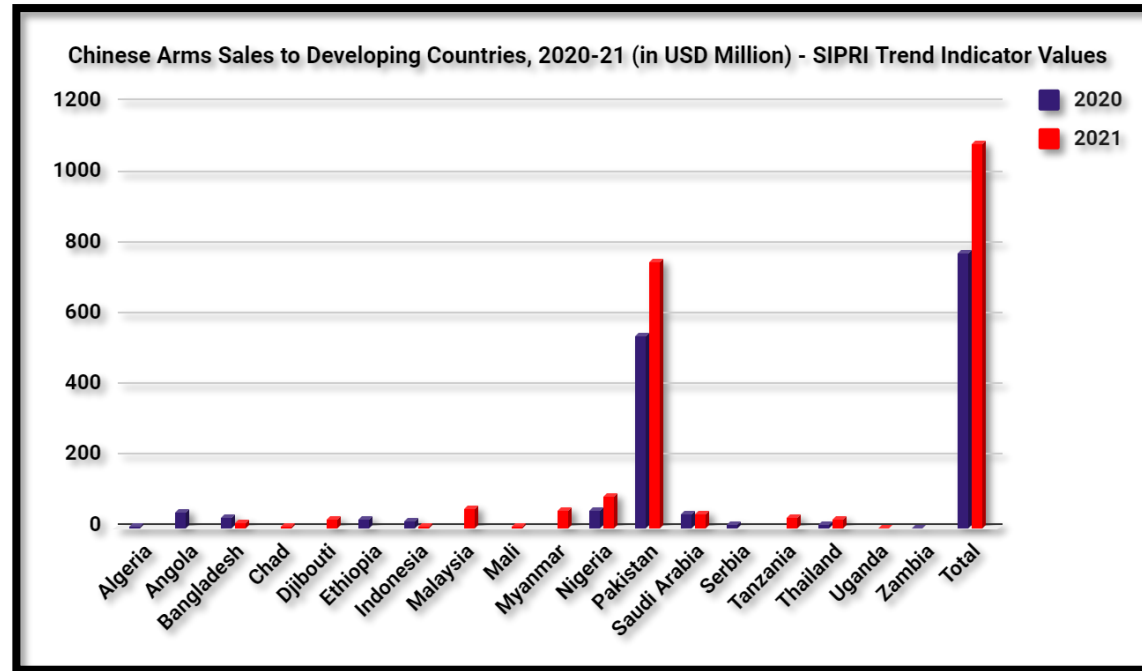
When specifically asked how GSI could help address the situation that led to the war in Ukraine, Le rather caustically said: “they (the Europeans) might be holding in their hands smart phones of the globalized age, but their minds are still operating with last century’s system of Cold War mentality.” This, for him, was the fundamental reason for Europe’s security system experiencing a “downtime.” He, therefore, called for ‘Cold War mentality’ to be replaced by GSI, without providing any specific roadmap of how this would end the conflict.

b. Engagements by Chinese Ambassadors

Also starting from May 2022, Chinese ambassadors began a series of engagements in host countries, discussing the importance of GSI. This was part of a systematic effort to win the endorsement of countries for the GSI and explore the possible domains of cooperation. In their articles and interviews, the Chinese diplomats basically reiterated the key messages from Xi's speech, particularly the criticism of the US – couched in language around the threat of Cold War mentality, hegemonism and unilateralism — and included some tailored messages keeping the target audience in mind. Perhaps, the most noteworthy aspect of these engagements was how swiftly Chinese diplomats framed existing policy measures and initiatives within the framework of GSI.

For instance, Sun Lijie, Chinese Ambassador to Slovakia, pitched¹² GSI as a “global public good” being proposed by China, while calling on Slovakia to join the initiative. Tang Heng, China's Ambassador to Costa Rica, discussed¹³ GSI predominantly in the context of China-US competition and to defend Beijing's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He argued that “unilateral sanctions” were a “tool of hegemony and power,” while claiming that GSI offered a solution for the war in Ukraine. Sun Linjiang, China's Ambassador to Poland, followed a similar line of argument,¹⁴ stating that GSI provides “guidance for addressing the security dilemmas facing mankind.” To make this case, he pointed to the applicability of the six principles outlined by Xi to the war in Ukraine, claiming that the conflict was the product of the “long-term accumulation of European security contradictions” and that instead of engaging in conflict or imposing sanctions, it is important to respect the “legitimate security concerns of all countries” and engage in dialogue. Li Changlin, China's Ambassador to Morocco, talked about¹⁵ the threats of “unilateralism, hegemonism, and power politics” along with “Cold War mentality and camp confrontation.” Staking a claim of moral superiority, he wrote that China had promised to “never seek hegemony, expansion, a sphere of influence or an arms race,” and praised Morocco's security diplomacy while calling for closer China-Morocco security cooperation.

In other African countries, the messaging was largely similar. Writing for Somali media, ambassador Fei Shengchao talked about¹⁶ China's provision of COVID-19-related supplies, military vehicles and equipment, food and humanitarian aid to the country. He added that "China and Somalia will further strengthen pragmatic cooperation in the field of peace and security, implement the outcomes of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC, including the peace and security program, and achieve the goal of 'Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa' to help regional countries in addressing security, development and governance challenges. We believe the proposal of the Global Security Initiative will provide a macro thinking of top-level design as well as methods and pathways for addressing practical issues in all these endeavors." In Kenyan media, Ambassador Zhou Pingjian argued that¹⁷ "unilateral sanctions that violate international law are inflicting an enormous damage, compounding the enormous strain on global food and energy supply, finance and supply chains. The daily lives of Kenyan people have been heavily affected due to negative spillovers brought about by sanctions, from rising oil and wheat prices to Kenyan Shilling devaluation." He warned of the "growing threats posed by unilateralism, hegemony and power politics, and increasing deficits in peace, security, trust and governance." Significantly, Zhou's description of the ambit of GSI included China's mediation efforts in the Horn of Africa and its commitment to "undertake 10 peace and security projects for Africa, continue to deliver military assistance to the AU, support African countries' efforts to independently maintain regional security and fight terrorism, and conduct joint exercises and on-site training between Chinese and African peacekeeping troops and cooperation on small arms and light weapons control".



Graphic by Anushka Saxena

Speaking to local media, Chen Guoyou, China's Ambassador to Ecuador, responded¹⁸ to a question about the implementation of GSI. He called for upholding the "authority and status of the United Nations," "unswervingly safeguarding the international system with the United Nations at its core," "maintaining the international order based on international law," opposing the incitement of ideological confrontation and divisions and opposing clique-formation and the "undermining of the international order in the name of so-called 'rules'." Essentially, the response was critical of perceived US policies but did not entail any specific commitments from China. When further asked what role China would be playing to defend the international order and promote mediation in global hotspots, Chen argued that China's position on the war in Ukraine was based on "objectivity and fairness". He further reiterated long-standing Chinese positions with regard to the Palestinian issue, the Korean Peninsula issue, the Iran nuclear issue, etc.

Finally, writing in the Indian media,¹⁹ Chinese ambassador Sun Weidong, claimed that GDI and GSI were “global public goods offered by China to the world.” The piece is an example of tailored messaging, with Sun writing that “the continuation of the Asian Miracle cannot be achieved without peace and stability in Asia. Today’s Asia faces increasing traditional and non-traditional security threats. What makes people be vigilant is that certain country, with the aim to maintain its own hegemony, attempts to divide the region and wage a ‘new Cold War’ through the so-called ‘Indo-Pacific strategy’, and to piece together an Asia-Pacific version of NATO through military alliances.” Sun further recalled the Bandung Spirit and stated that “China and India have the responsibility to join hands to resolutely safeguard peace, cooperation and unity in Asia.”

| <u>List of Select Bilateral and Multilateral military exercises conducted by China</u> | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Name of Exercise | Countries/ Institution |
| Golden Dragon | Cambodia |
| Hand-in-Hand | India |
| PASSEX (Passage Exercise) | Indonesia |
| Shaheen (Eagle) | Pakistan |
| Sea Guardians | Pakistan |
| ZAPAD/INTERACTION | Russia |
| Joint Sea | Russia |
| Vostok/ East | Russia |
| Sincere Partners | Tanzania |
| Joint Patrol in Beibu Gulf | Vietnam |

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| Peace Rescue | Vietnam |
| Peaceful Mission | Shanghai Cooperation Organisation |
| Peace-21 | China, US, UK, Russia, Pakistan |
| International Army Games | Multinational (hosted by Russia) |
| Vostok | Members of SCO and CSTO |
| Zapad | Multinational (China is an observer) |
| Mosi | South Africa, Russia, China |
| Naval Security Belt Combined Wargame | Iran, China, Russia |
| Shared Destiny | China, Pakistan, Thailand, Mongolia |
| Rim of the Pacific Ocean (RIMPAC) | US, China and many others |
| Cobra Gold | Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, India, United States |
| Pabbi Antiterror | Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, India |

Table by Anushka Saxena

c. Writings of Chinese Scholars & Analysts

The Chinese analytical community has largely echoed the official interpretations of GSI. For them too, Cold War mentality, power politics, unilateralism and hegemonism, along with camp formation, were the fundamental factors driving insecurity. Therefore, one of the central themes of many of the essays from the scholarly community discussing GSI has been to distinguish GSI as a uniquely Chinese proposition that was morally superior to Western security arrangements.

For instance, writing in the journal *Contemporary World*, Tian Wenlin, Professor at the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China, argued that²⁰ “from the perspective of security, the history of the world under Western dominance is one of constant and unrelenting war and conflict...By contrast, East Asia enjoyed 300 years of peace between 1590 and 1894, with only a few relatively small bilateral wars. Obviously, compared with the other regions of the world (at least compared to East Asia), the world dominated by Western powers has been filled with wars and conflicts. In the process of foreign conquest, the Western powers became more aggressive and eager to resort to war and violence, ultimately creating a savage and bloody hierarchical world system with the ‘law of the jungle’ as its underpinning.”

Tian located the current security challenges to the limitations of this system, and the decline of the US coupled with the rise of *emerging economies* represented by China. From his perspective, the US was engaging in intensified efforts to “encircle and contain” Russia and China, and therefore, the conflict in Ukraine was little more than part of this struggle between hegemony and anti-hegemonic forces and “a battle between the old and new systems in the bigger context of an international power transfer.” It is in this context, that he juxtaposed GSI, which he said was based on Chinese civilisational values of inclusiveness, against “the traditional Western security concept with bullying the weak and protecting oneself at the expense of others.”

“One is the force of historical progress that wishes for peace and development, and the other is the reactionary force that yearns to wage war and profit from it. If we are to implement the Global Security Initiative and maintain world peace and stability, we must unite all peace-loving countries and peoples in the world to form a united front against hegemony,” Tian argued.

You Nan and Shi Zhiqin from the School of Marxism at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, and the School of International Relations at Tsinghua University, respectively, concurred with Tian²¹ that GSI “transcends the traditional Western concept of geopolitical security.” Their prescription for improving global security governance under GSI entailed pursuing a path of independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, partnerships rather than alliances, sustainable security through sustainable development, and dialogue by starting from domains that are characterised by low sensitivity. In order to achieve this, they also called for “enhancing the voice and representation of developing countries” in order to establish “a sound and fair global security governance system.”

Ambassador Xu Bu, President of the China Institute of International Studies, meanwhile, wrote in the People's Daily²² that GSI evolved after “an examination of issues of global security from a Marxist global outlook and methodology” and “embodies the ideological essence of Chinese excellent traditional culture.” It “transcends the western geopolitical security theory.” He added that despite the rise of the “threats of unilateralism, hegemonism, and power politics,” the “general direction of multi-polarisation, economic globalisation, and democratisation of international relations has not changed.” As per Xu, GSI entails rejecting “zero-sum games” and “upholding international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law, and the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and carrying forward the common values of all mankind.” However, perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of his analysis was pushing back against the formation of “small cliques” in Asia. Xu wrote: “China's peaceful development starts from, relies on and benefits Asia. China will firmly safeguard peace in Asia, actively promote Asian cooperation and jointly promote Asian unity.”

In another article, Xu and Chen Wenbing discussed²³ GSI in the context of intensified competition with the US. Terming NATO “a product of the Cold War,” they argued that instead of disbanding, NATO has “continued to carry out multiple rounds of eastward expansion and engage in bloc politics and camp confrontation, which put European security at risk and brought about imminent conflict” They compared this situation to the US’ engagement in the Asia-Pacific, specifically pointing to the Five-Eyes, Quad, AUKUS, and bilateral alliances. They juxtaposed this and the US’ use of “long-arm jurisdiction” through sanctions to China’s “positive contributions on a series of traditional and non-traditional security issues” in the world. These include Chinese propositions on hotspot issues, its contribution to UN peacekeeping missions, support for countries in dealing with COVID-19, the pledges for carbon peak and neutrality and even the proposed Global Data Security Initiative.

Fu Mengzi, vice president of China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of State Security, offered a slightly different perspective. Concurring with his fellow scholars²⁴ that the world was entering an era of blocs and camps, with China and Russia being placed on one side, he argued that this churn was “less due to changes in world power” and more due to the “inherent thinking patterns of the West.” He also was much more conservative in his estimate of the changing balance of power in the world, arguing that “the West can maintain its dominant position in the global economy for some time.” For Fu, the world was returning to an era of realist politics, and in this context, implementing GSI is an “urgent and imperative” step. Under this, Fu said that China must take an “independent stand and can play a special role in international affairs,” “develop regional or international multilateral mechanisms that consolidate cooperation, openness, inclusivity, reciprocity, and mutual support and fly the flag of unequivocal opposition to group politics as our basic stance,” “engage in constructive exchanges with the United States and Western countries as far as possible,” “promote a new type of globalisation,” and “strive to align with neighbouring countries, expand imports from neighbouring countries, increase investment in neighbouring countries, and enhance the radiation of China’s geo-economic influence.”

Following Xi's speech at the BFA, scholars from the Overall National Security Concept Research Center and CICIR had organised a meeting to deliberate the concept of GSI. In a piece summarising those discussions,²⁵ Chen Xiangyang, Dong Chunling and Han Liquan said that the international security architecture had "lost its balance and effectiveness." This meant that the "reasonable security needs" of others were being ignored. These challenges, they wrote, were not only reflected in "traditional military security and homeland security", but also in "non-traditional security fields such as economics, science and technology, information, culture, and climate." In particular, their paper flags concerns related to "ideological infiltration, subversion, and destruction." From their perspective, the fallout of all of this was that "fields that could have promoted international cooperation such as climate, space, deep sea, polar regions, biology, and anti-terrorism are also being politicised and militarised at an accelerated pace."

They argued that GSI offered "'Chinese Wisdom, a Chinese Path, and a Chinese Solution' for dealing with the new situation and new challenges in international security, conforms with the common pursuit of the world upholding multilateralism and maintaining international unity." "It demonstrates China's major country spirit and shouldering of responsibility for actively taking the lead in global economic and security governance, and has also become an important theoretical guide and reference guide for countries around the world to solve the current global security problems." A noteworthy aspect of their assessment was the description of GSI as the "World Chapter" of China's overall (comprehensive) national security outlook (concept)." Other Chinese scholars like Feng Weijiang, deputy director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, have also linked²⁶ GSI to the comprehensive national security concept.

This concept was introduced in 2014 and is an overarching framework that unifies internal and external security. In a detailed study of the comprehensive national security concept, analysts at MERICS explained²⁷ that the framework now encompasses 16 domains with political security being the "bedrock." Discussing the linkage between GSI

and the comprehensive national security concept, they wrote that: “While the GSI and its role in the global security architecture is still taking shape, the ‘security’ in its name implies Beijing’s emphasis on state sovereignty, regime stability and collective security. Described as an extension of Xi’s comprehensive national security outlook, it may provide affiliated states with a wide remit to justify almost any action under the banner of security, and heralds a further clash of international norms.” In an essay in *Foreign Affairs*,²⁸ American political scientist, Sheena Chestnut Greitens concurred that through GSI, Xi appeared to be “applying that framework (of the comprehensive national security concept) to foreign policy, attempting to remake regional and global security order to guard against threats to China’s domestic stability and further consolidate the party’s grip on power.”

This notion is captured well in the writings of Chinese analysts and official Party discourse around the dialectical relationship between security and development and the efforts to coordinate the two. In his essay on GSI, Wu Xiaodan wrote that²⁹ “security and stability are the primary prerequisites for national development and are related to the core interests of all countries.” This framework, which has been often referenced in official commentaries³⁰ and by many analysts, might sound rather benign and anodyne. However, it is important to note that in the Chinese context, the Communist Party has repeatedly made it clear that its leadership is the key to the country’s development. Therefore, if GSI is to make the world safer for China’s development, it must first and foremost make the world safer for the Communist Party’s continued rule. Beyond this, in his assessment, Wu makes three important points for China’s implementation of GSI. First, China must remain the “ballast stone” for world peace; second, it must remain the “power source” of the global economy; and third, it must remain the “leading goose” (领头雁) in terms of reforming global governance. In essence, he argues for intense foreign engagement as opposed to isolationism and closing in the face of intensified challenges. What GSI does is emphasise that all of these engagements must be primarily assessed from the prism of security, starting with political security.

3. Objectives, Scope and Policy Implications

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that the ultimate goal of GSI is to enhance regime security for the Communist Party. However, in order to achieve this goal, the initiative aims to be focussed on:

- Undermining the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy as essentially an effort at containing China's rise. The narrative of GSI being the antithesis of Cold War mentality, which Beijing claims is driving the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy, is an effort to dissuade Asian countries from closer security and economic alignment with the US.
- Projecting China as a responsible major power that is invested in upholding the UN-centered international order and is offering a more participatory, multilateral approach to reforming global security governance. This narrative is often accompanied by criticism of the idea of the "rules-based order" being articulated by the US as fundamentally exclusionary.
- Reiterating Beijing's commitment to the principle of inviolability of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. There was much disappointment within the developing world with regard to China's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The reiteration of the principle of the centrality of state sovereignty and territorial integrity is critical for China to mobilise support for its propositions to shape the norms in key domains. It is also likely that in this endeavour, Beijing will seek to explore new regional multilateral institutions or mechanisms.
- Achieving the securitisation of China's economic engagement with the world, particularly with regard to energy, minerals, food, key technologies, finance, foreign trade and market access.
- Intensifying Chinese security engagement in different regions of the world in order. This appears to be the product of a recognition of China's expanded overseas interests in a world that is not a tranquil place and the increasing volatility in China's periphery. Consequently, there seems to be a greater desire to engage in diplomacy to address hotspot issues.

In March 2022, then foreign minister Wang Yi met with diplomats from countries like Algeria, Egypt, Tanzania, Zambia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, Niger, Pakistan, India and Nepal in an effort to rally support and project commonality of positions with regard to the war in Ukraine.

At this point, it is important to note that there has been some discussion around whether GSI implies a much more aggressive ideological approach by the CCP aimed at making the world safe for authoritarianism. This notion does fit the democracy vs authoritarianism narrative that some in the West, including US President Joe Biden, have espoused. However, this would be a fundamental misreading of the purpose of GSI. While the CCP values political security as the top-most priority, there is little indication that it is willing to underwrite the political security of other authoritarian regimes. This, of course, is not to argue that some of the measures under the GSI framework will not benefit other authoritarian governments. For instance, export of Chinese surveillance technologies and practices and intensified policing cooperation will certainly have an impact. Likewise, at a normative level, the undermining of the universality of basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and expression and the insistence on recognising the particularity of human rights based on national conditions, will invariably benefit authoritarian leaders around the world. However, none of this implies that the GSI is an ideological project aimed at reshaping the world. Rather, it appears to be driven by a pragmatic, self-interest approach at present.

Given that GSI still appears to be a broad idea as opposed to a set of concrete measures, there is a certain amount of ambiguity with regard to its scope. This isn't surprising. Often in the past, major initiatives have undergone a process of discussion, interpretation and exploration before more concrete measures are announced. The BRI and GDI are examples of this. It is highly likely that as and when there is a clearer articulation of the range of measures that comprise GSI, several existing projects and initiatives will be included within its ambit. If, of course, there is no clear articulation of specific measures, then it would mark a failure by Beijing to win the buy-in of the developing world to be formally associated with the initiative, even though they might be willing to work with Beijing on many of the areas that GSI covers. It is worth distilling the different areas that GSI is likely to touch upon in either case. Given the above-

mentioned objectives and the writings of Chinese policymakers and analysts, along with the outcomes of China's diplomatic engagements in 2022, one can classify the likely components of GSI in the following three categories.

- ***First, measures related to the traditional security domain:*** This includes agreements related to defence education and training, joint drills, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism training and cooperation, training of police forces and joint policing operations, transnational crimes and drug trafficking, drug trade, maritime security cooperation, security infrastructure development, equipment development and arms sales, HADR and anti-piracy operations.
- ***Second, measures related to developmental and financial security.*** This includes agreements related to food security – including access to agricultural land in other countries – diversification of energy supplies and access to minerals critical for new energy development, intensified focus on trade in local currencies or de-dollarisation, exploration of the use of the digital Yuan and agreements to reduce the impact of Western sanctions on Chinese firms.
- ***Third, actions to influence global governance norms.*** This includes discussions with regional groupings and individual countries to explore Chinese-proposed governance frameworks, such as the Global Data Security Initiative, and negotiations to arrive at common understandings over norms around digital governance, terrorism, human rights, biological threats, terrorism, etc. This is a critical process by which Beijing can leverage its political and economic clout and the legitimacy of its propositions into authority that will allow it to shape the rules of global security governance.

4. Conclusion

This document examines the process of development of China's GSI since it was announced by President Xi Jinping in April 2022. This was done with the aim of distilling the initiative's objectives and scope and the specific policy actions that would likely be covered under it. In order to do so, we conducted a literature review of the speeches and writings of Chinese analysts and policymakers. Through this assessment, we conclude the following.

First, the GSI is primarily aimed at undermining the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy by dissuading others from partnering with Washington, while mobilising the developing world to support Chinese propositions regarding global governance norms.

Second, the initiative marks an effort towards greater securitisation of China's economic engagement with the world. This is not a new objective. In many ways, it mirrors the policy discourse in the West on de-risking, resilience, and decoupling vis-a-vis China. However, following the West's economic sanctions against Russia in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine, this objective appears to have gained greater urgency for Beijing.

Third, GSI is likely to result in greater Chinese military and security diplomacy across the developing world. It also indicates that Beijing is likely to play a bigger role in addressing hotspot issues around the world, particularly those that impinge directly on Chinese interests. However, given the history of China's conflict resolution diplomacy, whether in the Horn of Africa, between Afghanistan and Pakistan or on the Rohingya issue, it appears unlikely that Beijing will be willing to expend political capital and underwrite peace agreements.

Finally, over the past year, Chinese diplomats and officials have been working to win endorsements for GSI from as many countries as possible. These have been reflected in joint statements and Chinese media reporting of meetings. However, GSI still remains a nebulous concept. Despite remarks about the need for a new security architecture, Beijing does not appear to be pursuing the establishment of a new broad-based security institution, akin to NATO or the Warsaw Pact. On one hand, this is perhaps a product of the Chinese concerns around overreach and bloc-based confrontation. On the other, it is likely a reflection of the anxieties of developing countries over great power competition and not wanting to be forced to choose sides. Given the above, materialising GSI into something more substantial has proven to be a much more tricky proposition than GDI.

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