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Issue Brief

China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) in Focus

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Summary

China launched the 'Global Security Initiative (GSI)' in February 2022. China's global infrastructure development strategy, the 'Belt & Road Initiative', has been closely associated with the GSI. So far, about 40 countries have declared their support for the GSI but others are still ambiguous about the initiative due to its vagueness.

The Global Security Initiative (GSI) launched in February 2022 is the latest security policy initiative that seeks to guarantee China’s growing stakes globally. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for instance, was launched in 2013. In 2024, the cumulative BRI engagement breached the US\$ 1 trillion mark. Chinese analysts note that a country’s security is a consequence of its power and world view.¹ Similarly, for the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the aspects of security have been changing since its establishment in October 1949.

In its early phase, the PRC under Mao Zedong framed a traditional security concept with political security as the core and military security as the main means. From the reform and opening up in 1978 to the 18th CCP National Congress in 2012, China has gradually formed a ‘non-traditional security concept’ (New Security Concept) based on its judgement to secure ‘peace and development’² that focuses on enhancing trust through dialogue and promoting security through cooperation.

In April 2014, during the first meeting of the Central National Security Commission, China came out with a new security framework called ‘Overall National Security Concept’. It covered a wide range of areas including internal and external security, territorial and national security, traditional and non-traditional security, development and security, and individual and common security. On the basis of ‘Overall National Security Concept’, Xi Jinping proposed the ‘New Asian Security Concept (NASC)’ of “common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable” security at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Shanghai in May 2014.³

GSI and its ‘Six Commitments’

While the NASC was an attempt to quell objections to Chinese assertiveness in the South and East China Sea,⁴ Xi Jinping proposed the GSI at the opening ceremony of Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan, China in April 2022. Beijing claims that the initiative provides a Chinese solution to international security challenges.⁵ A ‘Concept Paper’ on GSI was issued by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 21 February 2023, which stated that:

There should be concerted efforts to explore multiple channels, develop a holistic solution, and improve relevant rules, so as to find sustainable

¹ Jinghao Zhou, [“PRC’s Global Security Initiative Contradicts Actions: Analyzing the Biggest Challenges Behind the Disparity”](#), Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, 1 March 2024.

²Ling Shengli (凌胜利) and Yang Fan (杨帆), [“The Evolution of China's National Security Concept Over the Past 70 Years: Cognition, Connotation and Response”](#) (新中国 70 年国家安全观的演变: 认知、内涵与应对), State Security Research (国家安全研究), Vol. 6, 2019.

³ [“Asian Security Perspective \(亚洲安全观\)”](#), Baidu, 2024.

⁴ Seiichiro Takagi, [“Xi Jinping's New Asian Security Concept”](#), The Japan Institute of International Affairs, 27 August 2014.

⁵ [“Global Security Initiative \(全球安全倡议\)”](#), Baidu, 2024.

solutions, promote global security governance and prevent and resolve security challenges.⁶

The ‘initiative’ is being promoted alongside China’s ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI). For instance, on 19 July 2024, at the launch ceremony of the Centre for Global Security Initiative Studies, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that the initiative is a new path to security that features dialogue over confrontation, partnership over alliance and win-win over zero-sum.⁷

Under the GSI framework, China proposed “six commitments (六个坚持)⁸”. While these concepts already existed in the Chinese foreign policy documents, they were rebranded under the GSI. These commitments include:

- Adhere to the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security (坚持共同、综合、合作、可持续的安全观).
- Adhere to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all (坚持尊重各国主权、领土完整).
- Adhere to the UN Charter (坚持遵守联合国宪章宗旨和原则).
- Uphold the principle of indivisibility of security to achieve universal and common security (坚持重视各国合理安全关切).
- Adhere to resolving disputes through dialogue (坚持通过对话协商以和平方式解决国家间的分歧和争端).
- Maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains (坚持统筹维护传统领域和非传统领域安全).

In the above-mentioned ‘six commitments’, the first commitment is taken from the Asian Security Concept proposed by Xi at the Fourth CICA Summit on 20 May 2014.⁹ Chinese analysts have noted that these refer to jointly creating security guarantees, traditional and non-traditional security, resolving disputes through dialogue and consultations bilaterally, and giving equal importance to ‘development and security’ so as to achieve lasting security.¹⁰

The second commitment, ‘respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all’, is from ‘Panchsheel’, or ‘The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence’ enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India

⁶ Gabriel Wildau, “[China: What is the Global Security Initiative?](#)”, Teneo, 1 May 2023.

⁷ “[Written Remarks by H.E. Wang Yi at the Launching Ceremony of the Center for Global Security Initiative Studies and Release of the Report on the Implementation Progress of the Global Security Initiative](#)”, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of India, 19 July 2024.

⁸ “[The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper](#)”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 21 February 2023.

⁹ “[The Asian Security Concept/亚洲安全观](#)”, Baidu, February 2024.

¹⁰ Shi Yunxia, “[World Peace and Development Requires a New Security Concept/世界和平发展需要新安全观](#)”, *People’s Daily*, 10 December 2015.

signed on 29 April 1954. At present, the Five Principle of Peaceful Coexistence is part of Foreign Relations Law of the People's Republic of China.¹¹

The third commitment denotes that the security of each country does not exist in isolation.¹² The fourth commitment, ‘the Charter of the United Nations’, is the founding document of the United Nations signed and enforced in 1945, which is an instrument of international law. The fifth commitment, ‘resolving disputes through dialogue’, was first proposed in China’s security concept in March 2006.¹³

The sixth commitment, ‘maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains’, comes from the report of the 16th CCP National Congress in 2002 that made the judgement that ‘the factors of traditional security threats and non-traditional security threats are intertwined’. Later, it appeared in the White Paper on China’s Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation Policy issued by China’s State Council Information Office on 11 January 2017.¹⁴ In 2019, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CCP Central Committee clearly emphasised for the first time the need to “coordinate traditional and non-traditional security” that reflects the further sublimation of China’s security concept.

GSI and BRI

Xi Jinping’s pet project, the BRI, launched in 2013 has amplified China’s exposure to vulnerabilities beyond its borders, particularly Southeast Asia, Central Asia and parts of Africa. In these regions, China has been participating in non-traditional security cooperation with regional states, addressing issues such as piracy, illegal trafficking and organised crime.¹⁵ The ‘Qiushi’, official theoretical journal and news magazine of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), published an article in December 2020 that claimed the security environment of the BRI faces multiple and concentrated challenges, including in Afghanistan, the Eastern Mediterranean, the

¹¹ [“Foreign Relations Law of the People's Republic of China \(中华人民共和国对外关系法\)”](#), Xinhua, Beijing, 12 July 2023.

¹² Wu Fan (吴凡), [“Security is indivisible, which is the principle to follow in building a community of human security—China's responsibility from the "Global Security Initiative Concept Paper \(安全不可分割是构建人类安全共同体的原则遵循——从《全球安全倡议概念文件》看中国责任担当\)”](#), *The PLA Daily*, 3 April 2023.

¹³ Zhang Zhijun (张志军), [“China Advocates a New Security Concept to Increase Mutual Trust Through Dialogue and Seek Stability Through Cooperation \(中国提倡新安全观以对话增互信以合作谋求稳定\)”](#), *Chinanews.com*, 20 March 2006.

¹⁴ [“China's Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation Policy \(中国的亚太安全合作政策\)”](#), State Council, 11 January 2017.

¹⁵ Stefanie KAM Li Yee, [“China's Global Security Initiative: A Shift in Non-Traditional Security or Strategic Influence?”](#), *The Korean Times*, 13 November 2024.

Middle East among other regions which has led to a rapid increase in security risks in key nodes of the BRI.¹⁶

The risk of political instability has increased the resistance to the advancement of the BRI. In some countries, terrorist attacks have increased, resulting in uncertainties. For instance, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) often targets and attacks China’s BRI projects and citizens.¹⁷ Xi Jinping in his speech at the 5th BRI symposium emphasised that China attaches:

great importance to the prevention of overseas risks in the construction of the BRI, improve the security risk prevention system, and comprehensively improve the ability to ensure overseas security and respond to risks.¹⁸

GSI Implementation

Under the GSI framework, China calls on the major countries to bear key responsibilities for global strategic stability.¹⁹ Wang Yi at the 60th Munich Security Conference in 2024 stated that Russia and China are two major powers and that stable relations between the two is conducive to the strategic stability of the Asia-Pacific and the world. He pointed out that China is willing to be a stabilising force in dealing with ‘hot’ issues citing the example of reconciliation of Saudi Arabia and Iran with Chinese mediation. He claimed that China is promoting a political solution to the existing regional hot spots such as Korean peninsula issue, Myanmar crisis and Afghanistan internal crisis. He claimed that China is a stabilising force to strengthen global governance and global economic growth.²⁰

Beijing aims to bring all of China’s security-related concerns²¹ as well as platforms under the GSI umbrella. Analysts note that China is ‘rebrand[ing] its recent diplomatic activism as either reflecting or contributing to the GSI in order to highlight

¹⁶ Wang Yajun, [“Build a solid security barrier for the construction of the "Belt and Road" under the background of great changes/筑牢大变局背景下“一带一路”建设的安全屏障](#)”, Qiushi, 18 December 2020.

¹⁷ Osama Ahmed, [“Pakistan’s Security Challenges Threaten to Undermine Its Relationship with China”](#), STIMSON, South Asia, 20 November 2024.

¹⁸ [“Xi Jinping Attended the Symposium on the 5th Anniversary of the Promotion of the ‘Belt and Road’ Construction and Delivered an Important Speech \(习近平出席推进“一带一路”建设工作5周年座谈会并发表重要讲话\)”](#), Xinhua News Agency, PRC, 27 August 2018.

¹⁹ John S. Van Oudenaren, [“The Global Security Initiative: China Outlines a New Security Architecture”](#), The Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 23, No. 4, 3 March 2023.

²⁰ [“Firmly Be a Stabilizing Force in a Turbulent World—Wang Yi’s Keynote Speech at the ‘China Special’ Session of the 60th Munich Security Conference \(坚定做动荡世界中的稳定力量——王毅在第60届慕尼黑安全会议“中国专场”上的主旨讲话\)”](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 17 February 2024.

²¹ Kashif Anwar, [“China Releases Global Security Initiative’s Concept Paper”](#), CAPS, New Delhi, 1 April 2023.

the initiative’s momentum.”²² The cooperation platforms and mechanisms for the implementation of the GSI as proposed by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs are the following:

- Make use of the UN General Assembly, the UNSC and other relevant international and regional organisations.
- Give full play to the role of the ASEAN, SCO, BRICS, the CICA, ‘China + Central Asian Five Countries’, relevant East Asian cooperation mechanisms, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, multilateral dialogue platform in the Gulf region, Foreign Ministers’ Meeting of Afghanistan’s Neighbouring Countries and the Horn of Africa Peace Conference.
- Hold high-level events of the GSI in a timely manner.
- Support the China–Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Arab League, the Beijing Xiangshan Forum and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum for security cooperation.²³

Chen Xiaodong, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, PRC, claims that the initiative and its core concepts have been written into more than 90 bilateral and multilateral documents, including the first trilateral counter-terrorism security consultation between China, Pakistan and Iran, as well as security exchanges and cooperation under the framework of SCO, the CICA and the East Asia Cooperation Mechanism. The initiative seeks to promote 1.5 track and 2 track platforms to build a broader international security consensus.²⁴ Under the framework of the GSI, the regions specifically targeted to build consensus and cooperation for China to play a role in global security governance are Africa, Middle East, Latin American and Caribbean countries, and Pacific Island countries.

Major initiatives by China to address security challenges overseas are being rebranded under the GSI. These include China’s initiative of joint patrol of Mekong river along with the navies of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar since 2011 to secure the navigation against piracy, China’s assistance to junta regime in Myanmar since the 2011 coup to restore peace in the country,²⁵ China as an international mediator in Saudi–Iran Deal (2023), ASEAN–China non-traditional security cooperation (2002), among others.

²² M. Taylor Fravel, [“China’s Global Security Initiative at Two: A Journey, Not a Destination”](#), MITSSP Security Studies Program, US, 4 June 2024.

²³ [“Global Security Initiative Concept Paper/全球安全倡议概念文件”](#), *China News*, Beijing, 2023.

²⁴ [“Speech by Vice Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong at the Launch Ceremony of the Global Security Initiative Research Center and the Release Ceremony of the Progress Report on the Implementation of the Global Security Initiative \(外交部副部长陈晓东在全球安全倡议研究中心成立暨《全球安全倡议落实进展报告》发布仪式上的致辞\)”](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 19 July 2024.

²⁵ Hoang Thi Ha, [“Why is China’s Global Security Initiative Cautiously Perceived in Southeast Asia?”](#), ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, November 2023.

Limitations

Since it was announced in 2022, China has been advocating for the GSI in interactions with all its diplomatic partners.²⁶ So far, about 40 countries out of 180 diplomatic partners have supported the GSI. It is surprising that only 16 out of 54 African countries have supported the GSI, and many others have merely expressed appreciation for the initiative but did not support it. In Latin America, only 4 out of 33 have supported the initiative namely Cuba,²⁷ Nicaragua,²⁸ Uruguay and Venezuela. In Europe, only 3 out of 44 countries, i.e., Azerbaijan, Belarus, Serbia have expressed support for the GSI. The Asian countries supporting the GSI are Belarus, Cambodia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The GSI is an ‘initiative’ or a ‘campaign’, and it is neither an alliance nor a formal organisation such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).²⁹ This is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and not by the Ministry of Defense. Critics also claim that China-led GSI is an attempt at promoting power politics in a manner beneficial to China, and that it can lead to a bipolar world.³⁰ Analysts such as Taylor Fravel note that:

the most precise aspects of the GSI are its strident criticism of the US and its alliances, as China seeks to discredit and delegitimized US leadership and thus to open up space for Chinese alternatives and leadership.³¹

Other analysts note that China, in cooperation with Russia and a host of like-minded authoritarian partners in the Global South, will seek to weaken the US-led international security order, but may not be able to replace it with a viable alternative. This can lead to bloc politics that Beijing so often rails against.³² Moreover, the GSI is still vague in nature because the roles and kinds of coordination the supporting countries will have to provide to address a security threat in the respective countries is not yet clear.

²⁶ Fu Mengzi (傅梦孜), [“Global Security Initiative: China’s Answer to Challenges \(全球安全倡议：应对挑战的中国答案\)”](#), China Foundation for International Studies, 6 September 2022.

²⁷ [“Xi Jinping Meets with President of Cuba Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez”](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 24 August 2023.

²⁸ YinYeping, [“Changes Brought by BRI to Central America Strategically Important: Presidential Advisor”](#), *The Global Times*, 15 November 2024.

²⁹ Andrew Cainey, [“Time to Get the Measure of China’s Global Security Initiative”](#), RUSI, 21 November 2022.

³⁰ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, [“China’s Xi Proposes Global Security Initiative”](#), ORF, 13 May 2022.

³¹ M. Taylor Fravel, [“China’s Global Security Initiative at Two: A Journey, Not a Destination”](#), no. 22.

³² John S. Van Oudenaren, [“How to Respond to China’s Global Security Initiative”](#), *War on the Rocks*, 1 March 2024.

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