

China's Multidimensional Foreign Policy Under Xi Jinping: Governance, Security, And Development Perspectives

Mirabbos Mirgiyosov

Researcher, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article explores the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China under Xi Jinping, highlighting its multidimensional approach encompassing global governance, development, security, and civilizational diplomacy. The study analyzes key frameworks such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative. It emphasizes China's emphasis on sovereignty, non-interference, balanced great-power relations, and multilateralism, while outlining Beijing's role as a mediator in international conflicts, particularly in the context of the Ukraine crisis. The paper also examines the institutionalization of China's international aid system, the comprehensive national security strategy, and the ideological and cultural dimensions underpinning Xi Jinping's foreign policy. The findings demonstrate China's proactive diplomacy, its pursuit of an inclusive and balanced global order, and its ambition to establish alternative models of governance and cooperation in the 21st century.

Keywords: China, Xi Jinping, foreign policy, global governance, Belt and Road Initiative, Global South, international security, international development, proactive diplomacy, civilizational diplomacy.

Introduction: The Chinese foreign policy concept is based on the necessity of forming a new type of international relations grounded in the principles of equality, openness, and cooperation. Particular emphasis is placed on respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as recognition of each nation's right to independently determine its development path. A key priority is the establishment of a balanced system of relations among great powers. China underscores the necessity of positive engagement within the framework of the China-U.S. dialogue, based on mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, which is seen as essential for stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Chinese model of modernization can serve as an example and a new choice for developing countries seeking a path to modernization amid global challenges. The idea of synchronizing China's national development with the economic rise of neighboring countries is promoted, emphasizing not competition but the creation of a mutually complementary model of "open, cooperative, and mutually beneficial

development."

A special place is given to the implementation of the principle of joint, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. China consistently rejects Cold War logic, military blocs, and confrontational policies. Instead, it proposes the construction of a "balanced, effective, and sustainable" regional security architecture based on dialogue rather than confrontation; partnership rather than exclusive alliances; cooperation rather than a zero-sum game.

The Chinese concept affirms commitment to a genuine multilateral approach, grounded in the central role of the United Nations and international law. It emphasizes the importance of developing "Asian values," such as peace, cooperation, inclusivity, and integration.

From the outset of the conflict in Ukraine, China's leadership demonstrated a restrained but principled approach, aimed at maintaining its image as a responsible international actor and strengthening its status as a mediator in global processes. Chinese diplomacy consistently emphasizes that Beijing is not a

direct participant in the confrontation and, unlike Western powers, is not involved in military support for either side. This allows China to position itself as a "neutral peacekeeper," capable of offering a "Chinese path" to political resolution.

Key elements of this approach include the issuance of conceptual documents, particularly the "China Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis" (February 2023), as well as institutional initiatives, including joint diplomatic steps with Brazil and participation in forming a "Group of Friends of Peace" within the UN framework. These efforts reflect China's leadership ambition to act not only as a regional player but also as a global actor capable of offering alternative formats for peaceful mediation, emphasizing principles of sovereign equality, rejection of bloc thinking, and comprehensive and sustainable security provision.

Academic and expert discussions within China reveal various perspectives on the country's possible role in the peace process. Some commentators (e.g., Hu Xijin) highlight that China's support for negotiation efforts itself sends an important signal and serves as a positive factor enhancing the prospects for agreement. Other scholars (e.g., Da Wei) are more skeptical, viewing China more as a participant than as a central architect of future peace architecture. At the same time, strategic concepts proposed by some Chinese analysts and political figures (e.g., Wang Huiyao) point to the possibility of a more active and institutionalized role for Beijing in post-conflict settlement and post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, including through international peacekeeping mechanisms and large-scale infrastructure and investment projects.

Special attention is given to policy toward Global South countries. In 2023, China's leadership officially recognized the importance of the "Global South" concept, marking an important milestone in the evolution of China's foreign policy rhetoric and practice. The inclusion of this category in official documents and speeches by Chinese political leaders reflects Beijing's intention to institutionalize its engagement with developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America within a broader paradigm of multilateralism and equitable global governance.

According to Yan Xue, the systematization of the "Global South" conceptual apparatus in Chinese discourse reflects several key orientations. First, China positions itself as an active representative and voice for the interests of the developing world, seeking to promote alternative norms and values of international order, distinct from Western-centric models. Second, the emphasis on the "Global South" demonstrates China's aim to create a more balanced and inclusive

global governance system in which developing countries are not merely objects but full-fledged actors in international relations. Third, this concept legitimizes Beijing's efforts to develop South-South cooperation and strengthen multilateral platforms such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China's national security has seen significant development both theoretically and institutionally. The central leadership, headed by the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, consistently promotes a new comprehensive concept of national security, covering not only traditional domains—defense, military power, and territorial integrity—but also non-traditional dimensions, including cyberspace, information security, ecological sustainability, energy security, and the biomedical sphere. This approach marks a departure from the narrow, predominantly military understanding of security characteristic of previous decades and demonstrates China's effort to adapt to the complex, multidimensional challenges of the 21st century.

A key direction of development has been the formulation of the "comprehensive national security" concept, proposed by Xi Jinping in 2014. This concept recognizes the interconnection of domestic and external security dimensions: sustainable socio-economic development, political stability, and cultural identity are considered integral elements of an overall security strategy. At the same time, China emphasizes the need to strengthen national sovereignty and protect against external pressures, including threats from unilateral sanctions, interference in domestic affairs, and attempts to undermine socio-political order.

The ideological dimension of national security also receives particular attention. In the context of increasing global competition, Beijing considers the preservation of cultural identity, protection of historical memory, and strengthening the "Chinese Dream" as essential elements of national security. This ideological aspect aims to reinforce internal unity and social resilience, reducing destabilization risks caused by external information campaigns and the dissemination of alternative political narratives.

Taken together, these factors indicate that China's national security policy under Xi Jinping has gained strategic depth and systematization, becoming a key element of the overall state strategy. It seeks to establish a comprehensive and sustainable model for protecting national interests, in which domestic development and international activity are inextricably linked.

One of the significant directions of China's foreign policy that gained new content during Xi Jinping's tenure is the development of the international aid system. While previous decades saw China's foreign policy initiatives in development assistance as largely pragmatic and regional, since 2013 they have acquired systematic, institutional, and conceptual organization. Beijing views international aid not only as a tool to expand trade and economic interaction and promote infrastructure projects but also as an important element in building its image as a responsible global power, capable of offering its own models of global governance and "Chinese solutions" to crises.

The development of the international aid system under Xi Jinping is closely linked to the concept of a "Community of Shared Future for Mankind," through which China seeks to emphasize the universal character of its foreign policy initiatives. In this context, assistance in the form of investments, credit lines, humanitarian supplies, and infrastructure programs is seen not as one-sided "giving," but as mutually beneficial cooperation aimed at long-term development. A notable example of this approach is the integration of the Belt and Road Initiative with assistance programs for African, Southeast Asian, and Latin American countries, where Chinese aid supports transportation and energy projects, industrial modernization, and human capital development.

Global security and health assistance also occupy a special place in Beijing's international agenda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China emerged as one of the largest suppliers of medical equipment, supplies, and vaccines to developing countries, demonstrating its ability to provide global public goods. Similarly, in the area of food security, China initiated new bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms, including the International Cooperation Program on Food and Agriculture, strengthening its authority among Global South countries.

Institutionally, the development of the international aid system was formalized with the creation of the China International Development Agency in 2018, serving as the key coordinating body. Its establishment indicates a shift from fragmented, departmentally scattered aid formats to a centralized, strategically oriented policy aligned with the foreign policy objectives of the Xi Jinping era.

A landmark stage in the evolution of Chinese diplomatic thought under Xi Jinping was the formulation of the so-called "six mandatory conditions," officially presented at the CPC Central Committee meeting in December 2023. These guidelines were intended to complement the previously developed "ten foreign policy principles"

established in 2018, marking a transition from a declarative level to a more comprehensive and systematic conceptualization of China's diplomatic strategy. While the "ten principles" may be considered the ideological foundation of Chinese foreign policy identity, the "six mandatory conditions" serve as a kind of "methodological framework," defining the forms and mechanisms for the practical implementation of China's foreign policy goals amid global transformation.

The first condition emphasizes continuity and strict adherence to previously established principles (the "ten principles"). This highlights the importance of the concept of "continuity with innovation," fundamental to modern Chinese state governance. Despite increasing flexibility and adaptability, China's foreign policy relies on principles enshrined in Party doctrine, such as independent foreign policy, commitment to peaceful development, mutual benefit, and non-interference. Maintaining continuity serves not only as a tool for internal consolidation of the political elite but also as a factor enhancing the predictability of China's diplomatic behavior on the world stage.

The second condition stresses the need to assume responsibilities commensurate with the status of a great power. China's leadership consistently emphasizes that the growth of national power is accompanied by increased international obligations, requiring more active participation in global governance and crisis resolution. This aligns with the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" concept and signals China's intention to position itself not only as a beneficiary of the existing world order but also as an active reformer. Theoretically, this represents a shift from "reactive diplomacy" to "proactive diplomacy," involving agenda-setting at the global level.

The third condition relates to the need for systemic conceptualization of foreign policy. It underscores the importance of not just individual diplomatic initiatives, but their integration into a single ideological and strategic framework, ensuring coherence and long-term sustainability. China thus aims to move beyond situational responses to develop a stable theoretical paradigm, reflecting Beijing's ambitions in shaping new norms and rules of global governance.

The fourth condition addresses the challenge of combining ideological integrity with necessary innovation. It refers to Chinese diplomacy's capacity to balance traditional Marxist-Leninist and Maoist ideological principles with the need to adapt to changing international realities. China's diplomatic doctrine is hybrid: deeply rooted in Party theory, yet open to new conceptual approaches, including global security, climate, and digital economy issues.

The fifth condition emphasizes strengthening the "spirit of struggle" as a characteristic feature of Chinese diplomatic behavior. This term has special significance in contemporary Chinese political rhetoric, denoting readiness to actively defend national interests, even amid international pressure and strategic competition with the West. Practically, it means China's diplomacy increasingly focuses not only on compromise but also on demonstrating firmness and persistence in protecting sovereignty and security.

The sixth condition highlights the need to fully leverage the institutional advantages of China's political system. It refers to the Party-state mechanism's ability to ensure high coordination between different levels of government and agencies, and to mobilize resources for large-scale foreign policy initiatives. Unlike democracies, where diplomacy often depends on domestic political competition and government changes, China's system enables long-term strategies, ensuring institutional stability and predictability in foreign policy.

These six conditions are not merely declarative slogans but constitute a systemic tool ensuring the coherence and practical applicability of China's foreign policy strategy. Their emergence reflects a new stage in the institutionalization of Chinese diplomacy under Xi Jinping, as foreign policy increasingly becomes a multi-layered strategy aimed at adapting to a changing international environment while maintaining ideological continuity.

Special attention is also given to implementing Xi Jinping's ideas internationally. The concept of "first-person diplomacy," reflecting Xi Jinping's personal leadership in international affairs, has further developed in Chinese foreign policy discourse. In December 2024, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi again emphasized the importance of this approach in "writing a new chapter" of Chinese diplomacy, highlighting strategic priorities: peace, development, and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Under Xi Jinping, China's diplomacy has acquired a proactive character. Unlike the cautious strategy dominant under Deng Xiaoping and his successors, 21st-century Chinese foreign policy emphasizes initiative, agenda-setting, and the formation of international institutions and norms reflecting Chinese interests and approaches. This style of foreign policy behavior has been described in some expert publications as "initiative diplomacy," highlighting China's new global positioning as an actor capable not only of responding to challenges but also of shaping the rules of the game on the world stage. This is particularly evident in the development and promotion of global

initiatives aimed at coordinating international efforts to address transnational challenges, from sustainable development and climate issues to global governance and civilizational dialogue.

Between 2021 and 2023, China's foreign policy doctrine was significantly expanded through the introduction of three new conceptual frameworks, collectively termed Xi Jinping's Global Initiatives. These initiatives—the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative—serve not only as programmatic documents but also as "ideological platforms" to shape China's international image as a state aspiring to be one of the key architects of the 21st-century world order. Each initiative was publicly presented by President Xi Jinping at major international forums, underscoring their global and universalist orientation.

The Global Development Initiative was first announced by Xi Jinping during the 76th UN General Assembly session in September 2021. Its core content focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable development, strengthening multilateral cooperation, and achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals. Drawing on China's experience in poverty alleviation and rapid modernization, it seeks to offer the world an alternative development model emphasizing joint growth and overcoming structural imbalances rather than competition and conflict. This initiative serves as a diplomatic tool integrating China's economic agenda into global discussions on the future of the world economy.

The Global Security Initiative was presented in April 2022 at the Boao Forum for Asia. This initiative reinforces the need to transition to the concept of "common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security." Essentially, it represents China's attempt to propose a new paradigm of international security, as an alternative to traditional Western models based on military alliances and bloc logic. China's security concept emphasizes equality among all states, mutual respect for sovereignty, rejection of Cold War schemes, and inadmissibility of strengthening one's security at the expense of others. In this context, the initiative has both regional and global significance, particularly amid escalating tensions between the United States, Russia, and Europe.

The Global Civilization Initiative was announced by Xi Jinping in March 2023 at a High-Level Dialogue between the Communist Party of China and global political parties. It focuses on cultural diversity, dialogue among civilizations, and the inadmissibility of imposing universalist models of political and social organization. Chinese leadership emphasizes the value

of "equal coexistence and mutual enrichment of civilizations" as a foundation for a fair international order. The initiative has a pronounced humanitarian component, allowing it to be viewed as China's "ideological response" to Western criticism of the allegedly "authoritarian nature" of the Chinese model.

These initiatives form a new triad of China's foreign policy thinking, in which development (economic sphere), security (political-strategic sphere), and civilization (cultural-value sphere) are mutually complementary dimensions. Their emergence indicates that Chinese diplomacy is entering a phase of systemic expansion, aiming to address not only traditional interstate relations but also broader global governance issues, including humanitarian, civilizational, and value-based dimensions. In this sense, Xi Jinping's initiatives can be seen as the institutionalization of the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" concept, which takes concrete form in economic, security, and cultural spheres.

In conclusion, China's foreign policy under Xi Jinping demonstrates a strategic evolution toward proactive, multidimensional diplomacy. Through initiatives encompassing development, security, and civilization, Beijing seeks to redefine global governance and enhance its international influence while promoting an inclusive and balanced order. The country emphasizes sovereignty, non-interference, and multilateralism, aiming to offer alternative models of cooperation and conflict resolution. Institutional developments, including international aid coordination and comprehensive national security strategies, reinforce China's global role. Xi Jinping's diplomacy reflects a combination of ideological continuity and innovative approaches, allowing China to position itself as a mediator, global actor, and architect of 21st-century international norms and practices.

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