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China releases Global Security Initiative's Concept Paper

Kashif Anwar

Research Associate, Centre for Air Power Studies

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Background

With the growing strategic competition between the US and China, they continue to blame each other and view each other as a threat and destabilising force to the global order. The push to strengthen their capabilities to have the upper hand and address their respective security concerns has impacted global politics. Therefore, security is close to Chinese policymaking, and securing it is vital. This approach is reflected in President Xi Jinping's vision of a 'Chinese Dream.' Such a Chinese approach, viewed as 'securitisation of everything' under Xi Jinping's leadership, will shape China's behaviour both on the domestic and international fronts beyond Xi's tenure.¹ Echoing the security vision, China released a concept paper on February 21, 2023, on the Global Security Initiative (GSI), which was announced in April 2022.

China believes there is a need to address the growing geopolitical concerns, challenges, and risks the world is facing. China views the US as a declining belligerent power whose actions have emerged as a global security risk to the world. The concept paper, according to China, attempts to address such issues and provide a platform to achieve global security based on a joint approach, shared benefits, and win-win formula.² The concept paper conceives a futuristic vision as a guiding principle to achieve common security. It further advocates UN-centred multilateralism and wants major nations to have positive interactions and greater responsibility to safeguard global peace.

China's Global Security Initiative and its Concept Paper

With the West and China at loggerheads in the Indo-Pacific region, the region continues to be impacted. The region is visible in the region's security architecture as China opposes the rise of new blocs and groups like AUKUS or QUAD. Such circumstances push China to counter the West's Indo-Pacific strategy via GSI and secure its indivisible security, as highlighted by the concept paper to secure the Chinese security vision. As China opposes the wanton use of unilateral sanctions, the US has turned a regional issue into a global crisis. This is reflected in the case of the Russia-Ukraine War.

Xi Jinping envisages a community where nations will have a common security vision, overcome their differences, and restrict themselves from interfering in each other's internal affairs. Further, China believes that nations must respect other nations' sovereignty, territorial integrity, and developmental paths. Therefore, GSI promotes equal access and inclusiveness, which will be based on mutual respect and build a world of universal security at bilateral and multilateral levels.³

Xi Jinping stresses that the GSI will resolve the growing security dilemma by promoting common, comprehensive, and sustainable security to uphold indivisible security principles. On the other hand, such an approach will place China at the centre of agenda-setting and enhance its position and power to dictate the rules of engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴ With the UN at the centre of China's vision of global security under the GSI, the initiative promotes dialogue and the joint pursuit of a political solution to a crisis. Also, it covers non-traditional challenges like pandemics, outer space, cyberspace, maritime security, etc.

It is evident from Chinese actions, policies, and papers that the Chinese approach to regional security policy continues to evolve. In its 2017 White Paper, China's State Council Information Office, emphasised improvements and upgrades to existing mechanisms of the present global order. Under GSI, China shall retain these features as they benefit their strategic and national interests.

Xi Jinping is calling upon nations to pursue the cause of the common good, engage in cooperation, pursue mutual benefits, and live in harmony. China argues that Xi Jinping's vision will ensure sustained prosperity for all and guaranteed security to make the world a safer place.⁵ However, the West argues the initiative will instead provide an alternative to the current regional security architecture as it runs counter to the current US alliance and partnership system in the Indo-Pacific region.

China aims to bring all of China's security-related concerns under the GSI umbrella. Its development could be traced back to former Chinese President Hu Jintao's report to the 2012 Party Congress. The report talks about the 'community of common security.' Since then, China has been working carefully to lay down the fundamental principles for constructing a new Asian and global order.⁶

Under the GSI, Xi Jinping emphasises partnership over alliance. China argues that this will address questions like why the world needs a new security concept and how nations can achieve common security as the world goes through strategic competition.⁷ The concept paper expounds on GIS's core idea and principle and demonstrates China's role and responsibility to safeguard world peace and defend global security. The concept paper further states that the major issues of conflict between nations should be resolved through dialogue to facilitate peace. In this regard, the concept paper wants the UN to play a bigger role in preventing war and ensuring peace instead of encouraging any bullying or domineering practices. The concept paper pushes for cooperation, equality, and the rule of law.

As the initiative is supported by more than 80 nations, China views it as an important development that will resolve the dispute through dialogue. China continues to push GSI, like the way it promoted and expanded the BRI. This has become a matter of concern for the US. For China, security and development are interlinked with global security. They argue that there is a need for China to enhance its responsibility and its determination to safeguard world peace for China to rise.⁸ Thus, the concept paper has highlighted those international organisations in Asia that are Chinese-led and don't include the US, giving China a dominant position in Asia.⁹

The US and Japan, as they view the GSI as a counter to the rules-based international system and states the Chinese response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict reflects their ambiguity, which runs counter to the GSI.¹⁰ They argue that China is using GSI to weave its worldview into the international security discourse, strengthen its global ambition, and gain a strategic advantage over smaller nations. It will increase China's support base, impacting the rules of engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, which they see as a destabilising force.

Conclusion

The release of the concept paper highlights the fact that the US-China security competition will expand in the coming years. China will continue to elaborate a security vision suited to its interests. However, Qing Gang, the newly appointed Chinese Foreign Minister, argues that the GSI is rooted in traditional Chinese culture, which values peace. Further, Xi Jinping expressed that there is a need for a nation to adapt to the changing international landscape and address the issue with a win-win mindset. On the other hand, the West argues that the concept paper has failed to mention the scope of NATO under multilateralism. With the ambiguous stand and response of China to the Russia-Ukraine war, China intends to secure its vested interests. China's welcoming attitude for all to join the initiative while infusing it with hyperbole like BRI has got West and its allies concerned. The West should strategise its response accordingly to ensure that the current global order is maintained and counter China's stepping up approach to enhance its global role and position and support towards Russia.

Notes:

¹ Katja Drinhausen and Helena Legarda, ““Comprehensive National Security” unleashed: How Xi's approach shapes China's policies at home and abroad”, *MERICs*, September 15, 2022, <https://www.merics.org/en/report/comprehensive-national-security-unleashed-how-xis-approach-shapes-chinas-policies-home-and>. Accessed on March 06, 2023.

² Wang Yunsong and Bao Han, “Global Security Initiative offers China’s solution to safeguarding global security and peace”, *China Daily*, June 07, 2022, <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202206/07/WS629f03d1a310fd2b29e61335.html>. Accessed on March 06, 2023.

³ John S. Van Oudenaren, “The Global Security Initiative: China Outlines a New Security Architecture”, *The Jamestown Foundation*, March 03, 2023, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-global-security-initiative-china-outlines-a-new-security-architecture/>. Accessed on March 13, 2023.

⁴ Shibani Mehta and Saheb Singh Chadha, “China’s Global Security Initiative Is a Bid to Dictate the Rules of Engagement”, *Carnegie India*, June 16, 2022, <https://carnegieindia.org/2022/06/16/china-s-global-security-initiative-is-bid-to-dictate-rules-of-engagement-pub-87340>. Accessed on March 06, 2023.

⁵ Pak Yiu, “China's Global Security Initiative: Xi's wedge in the U.S.-led order”, *Nikkei Asia*, November 01, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/China-s-Global-Security-Initiative-Xi-s-wedge-in-the-U.S.-led-order>. Accessed on March 06, 2023.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Qin Gang Delivers Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Lanting Forum Themed “The Global Security Initiative: China's Proposal for Solving Security Challenges””, *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago*, February 21, 2023, http://tt.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202302/t20230223_11030195.htm. Accessed on March 06, 2023.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Denny Roy, “Global Security rules would bind world, not China”, *Asia Times*, February 24, 2023, <https://asiatimes.com/2023/02/global-security-rules-would-bind-world-not-china/>. Accessed on March 13, 2023.

¹⁰ James Palmer, “Is China Stepping Up Its Support for Russia?”, *Foreign Policy*, February 22, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/22/china-russia-ukraine-support-wang-yi-lethal-aid/>. Accessed on March 13, 2023.