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Xi Jinping's Global Civilisation Initiative

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President Xi Jinping secured his third term as the Chinese President at the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2022. This will boost his policies and initiatives that are aimed at increasing the power and prestige of China to fulfil his Chinese Dream vision and counter the Western hegemony. With this ambition in mind, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, the Community of Shared Future of Mankind in 2015, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) in 2021, and the Global Security Initiative (GSI) in 2022. Furthermore, in light of US President Joe Biden's 'Democracy vs. Authoritarianism' narrative and ahead of the second Summit for Democracy, Xi Jinping announced the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI). At the Communist Party of China's 'Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting,' Xi Jinping argued that the initiative will allow nations worldwide to adopt a new type of modernisation and development and assist them in having a firm hold on their future development and progress.¹

What is China's Global Civilisation Initiative?

With the growing strategic competition between the US and China, the bilateral relationship has become more competitive than ever. Thus, the need to address the growing challenges has led to the rise of an ideological debate between the US and China to project and reflect on which governance model is better for the world. While addressing the Munich Security Conference in 2021, US President Joe Biden emphasised that the primary challenge for global politics is ideology (democracy vs. authoritarian) that needs to be addressed as it has become a serious threat to the world.² According to Biden, the current international politics are at an inflexion point, and China has emerged as the US's leading competitor and intends to impose its model of governance and economic development worldwide through various initiatives. On the other hand, Xi argues that China is pursuing freedom, democracy, and human rights and doesn't view ideological debate as a defining part of global politics as both nations have their own style of democracy and are working towards the betterment of the world.³

With 'The Road to Modernisation: The Responsibilities of Political Parties' as the theme of the high-level meeting, more than 150 nations participated virtually in the launch of the GCI. In his speech, Xi Jinping argued that there is a need to address the issue of humanity's modernisation process, which has reached at a crossroad and requires changes to promote common prosperity and drive the global modernisation process, which benefits all.⁴ Furthermore, Xi argues that modernisation isn't the exclusive patent of a handful of countries, and one size doesn't fit all to modernise a country; thus, one should consider their national conditions and abilities to modernise themselves.

Meanwhile, China argues that the Chinese government is working to ensure the expansion of market access to others, support others' development and industrialisation processes under the BRI cooperation and new drivers of global development under GDI to have a global community of development.⁵ For China to modernise itself, it doesn't want its model to adopt a civilisation model based on colonisation and plunder. Unlike others, China doesn't seek hegemony and power and considers its model of growth to be the right course of peaceful development.

Xi Jinping argues China respects the diversity of civilisation and is ready to work with others to expand the global partnership.⁶ To promote the Chinese model of growth, Xi states that China is ready to share its experience and help enhance exchanges and understanding among the global community to make the 'garden of world civilisation colourful and vibrant.'⁷ Under the initiative, China wants other nations to uphold the principle of equality, have an open mindset, refrain from imposing its values and models, and build a global network for inter-civilisational dialogue and cooperation.⁸

To promote modernisation, the GCI highlights the role and responsibilities of political parties. It views them as a vital force in driving the modernisation process, ensuring happy, stable, and better lives for people.⁹ Further, the GCI presents China as a willing partner to work with others to promote its modernisation while securing the world peace and prosperity. GCI aims to reduce the gap between the North and South and establish a safe development pattern based on sharing, justice, fairness, and co-construction by giving people more independent choices.

Furthermore, China is using GCI to promote its style of modernisation and wants others to adopt the Chinese development model. The initiative emphasises strong leadership as one of the primary requirements and further promotes the accurate policies of a political party.¹⁰ Xi Jinping maintains a fraternal relationship with political parties worldwide and promotes China as vital to maintaining global peace and stability. Under the initiative, China wants others to take advantage of a new form of party-to-party relationship to build new international relations and expand the global partnership. Xi stresses that nations need to be tolerant, entertain freedom, address chaotic conditions worldwide, and further work towards achieving people's free and comprehensive development.¹¹

Conclusion

With China not being invited to the first Summit for Democracy held by the US in December 2021, the Chinese Foreign Ministry argues that the US is using democracy as a weapon of mass destruction that draws ideological lines between nations, creating division and confrontation worldwide.¹² However, Xi Jinping argues that to make the present better, countries worldwide need

to harness the relevance of their histories and cultures and push for creative transformation and innovative development. China argues that GCI isn't only viewed as a time requirement. It promotes Xi's stand to respect reality and different civilisations. It allows all to co-exist, exchange ideas, and learn from one another while respecting the diversity of civilisation to steer the modernisation process of human society. The development of Chinese-led initiatives shows China is no longer willing to abide by the US-led global order and is working on expanding its global network, power, and influence.¹³ Thus, GCI has become the latest entry in US-China strategic competition and rivalry. The US views China as creating a new space for its rise, for which they're working to redefine and undermine the West-led global governance system.

Notes:

¹ "Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting", *Xinhua*, March 16, 2023,

https://english.news.cn/20230316/31e80d5da3cd48bea63694cee5156d47/c.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email. Accessed on March 17, 2023.

² Sam Roggeveen, "Democracy vs autocracy: Biden's "inflection point"", *Lowy Institute*, February 23, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/democracy-vs-autocracy-biden-s-inflection-point>. Accessed on March 17, 2023.

³ "Xi to Biden: Knock off the democracy vs. autocracy talk", *Reuters*, November 15, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/xi-biden-knock-off-democracy-vs-autocracy-talk-2022-11-14/>. Accessed on March 17, 2023.

⁴ "Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting", n. 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Work together to paint a new picture of the modernization of human society", *Xinhua*, March 16, 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/16/nw.D110000renmrb_20230316_2-02.htm?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email. Accessed on March 17, 2023.

⁷ "Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting", n. 1

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Work together to paint a new picture of the modernization of human society", n. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Xi proposes Global Civilization Initiative, stressing inclusiveness", *Global Times*, March 15, 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202303/1287326.shtml>. Accessed on March 17, 2023.

¹² "President Xi moots Global Civilisation Initiative at world political parties meet held by CPC", *Telegraph*, March 15, 2023, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/world/president-xi-moots-global-civilisation-initiative-at-world-political-parties-meet-held-by-communist-party-of-china/cid/1922765>. Accessed on March 17, 2023.

¹³ Jonathan Cheng, "China Is Starting to Act Like a Global Power: Beijing grows bolder in challenging the U.S.-led global order", *The Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-has-a-new-vision-for-itself-global-power-da8dc559>. Accessed on March 29, 2023.