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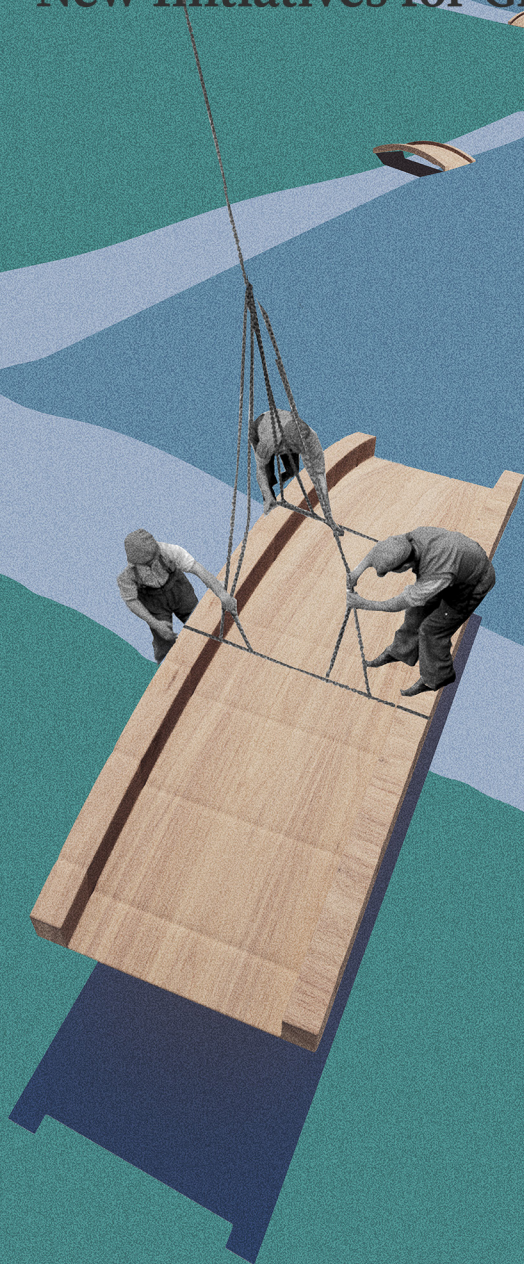
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TI Observer

China's Proactive Diplomacy

New Initiatives for Global Peace



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China's Global Initiatives of Development, Security and Civilization and Its Foreign Policy

Carlos M. Pereira Hernández



Cuban Ambassador to China

The successful implementation of the reform and opening-up process has made it possible for China to open a new chapter of its history, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and comrade Xi Jinping. The efforts to achieve the national rejuvenation and to position itself as a major power within the international system have required the setting up of a comprehensive strategy that connects, assertively, both domestic and external processes.

Since Deng Xiaoping was restored to his position in the leadership of China in 1977, the Asian nation has worked to ensure the existence of a positive external environment that allows China to continue its national development. Its foreign policy has been progressively transformed, in line with its domestic conditions and the international environment, maintaining the realization of the great Chinese dream as its supreme objective.

Xi Jinping's foreign policy has been aimed at guaranteeing those conditions that China considers necessary to make progress on its national development strategy. This policy integrates the ideas of comrade Jiang Zemin, who led China in a period of increasing engagement in world affairs as a comprehensive power, and the "*harmonious world*" from comrade Hu Jintao. At the same time, it incorporates Xi's visions on "*socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era*," which bear a great deal of what is considered a response to the present international environment, shaped at the same time.

Its new potential and its own international actions have made China a threat

in the eyes of the United States. Washington is extremely concerned about the increasingly probable occurrence of a change in the international balance of power, which might be negative for Americans while putting an end to its reign as the global hegemon. Accordingly, the White House has launched a global strategy, more deeply involving its allies and becoming more confrontational, to try to contain the rise of China.

This reality has forced Beijing to take a more active role in international relations. Without abandoning the principles of development and peaceful coexistence, its foreign policy must no longer only confront the forces that oppose its rise, but must try to build a new international system as well.

This is an obvious truth for the Chinese political leadership, despite China's membership in the World Trade Organization, use of US dollar as currency for international trade, and its participation in the international order set up after the end of World War II. The Chinese leadership is aware that those systems were designed to advance US interests and preserve them in the future, therefore a change in the status quo is considered necessary.

Its "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" has progressively moved towards a position where it actively seeks the creation of a multipolar world, and where power is not held by a single state or group of states. Undoubtedly, its growing economic strengths, expressed in turn in the field of defense and security, are a significant support for its actions in the diplomatic sphere, thus expanding its scope and effectiveness.

The careful design and assertive execution of its foreign policy strategy combine skillfully its capabilities, hard and soft power instruments, as well as a well-intentioned media campaign. It has allowed China to establish itself as an alternative pole of power. Beijing promotes relationships and platforms that seek mutual benefit (win-win) for the participants and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. Its actions break up with the West's traditional imperialist dynamics, while moving away from the historical center-periphery model promoted by capitalist society.

The global initiatives launched by China for development, security, and civilization are an expression of both the country's new conditions and its approach to international relations, where values of Confucianism like pragmatism, harmony, and commitment to traditions are active parts of Chinese political practice. Through them, Beijing intends to achieve its foreign policy objectives in different

and strategic spheres.

These three platforms operate akin to an umbrella, under which other global proposals are launched. They constitute a complement to the Belt and Road Initiative, thus giving rise to a comprehensive proposal from China to humankind and international system.

These three programs, although they do not exclude Western developed countries, are fundamentally aimed at the rest of the actors from the international system. Developing countries are valuable political capital for Beijing, who has strengthened its position in Africa, Latin America and Asia over the past decades. Through the construction of bilateral and multilateral partnerships, which include multinational organizations such as ASEAN and the African Union, China intends to build a counterweight against US hegemony and promote a development model different from the existing one.

Likewise, the Chinese proposals restate its commitment to the basic principles of international law and support the central role of the United Nations within the contemporary international order and the undeniable advantages of multilateralism. This is precisely one of the main objectives of China's foreign policy.

The Initiatives launched by China constitute an excellent opportunity for the international community, especially for developing countries, which have been the main victims of US hegemonism for years. In addition to constituting a way to face current global problems (terrorism, hunger and poverty, human trafficking, underdevelopment, climate change, among others), it enables the different actors to participate as peers in solving these challenges and to obtain equal benefits.

The warm reception given by multiple countries to the Chinese proposals, far from abuse, coercion, and imperialist dynamics, is not fortuitous. The recent visits to China by dozens of heads of state and government and leaders following the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) reflected the positive perception that the international community has on China's international engagements, also on these Initiatives, and on the crisis of the model promoted and safeguarded by the U.S.

China is an important partner for Cuba. Links between our two countries are shaped by strong political dialogue and trust, where exchanges between both communist parties play an instrumental role in the broad relationship, including

the exchange of experiences on the respective processes of building socialism according to each country's characteristics. Cuba was the first country in the Western Hemisphere to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Friendship and support in relevant issues for both sides have been high on the agenda. Our ties cover a broad range of areas and have experienced a continuous rise in recent decades. The fact that President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez was the first Latin American head of state to visit China after the 20th National Congress of the CPC is a clear sign of this strong relationship.

Cuba supports the initiatives launched by China, since we share the same challenges that served as motivations for their setting up, especially considering more than six decades of a fierce blockade imposed by the U.S. and being rejected by the international community that has prevented the Cuban people from the right to development. Cuba fully supports the idea of implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a vision of cooperative and sustainable security, with no space for unilateralism. At the same time, Cuba agrees that inclusiveness, coexistence, exchanges, and mutual learning between different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing the process of modernization of humankind.

There is a public commitment between the political leaders of both countries in terms of our support for these platforms. As president of the G77+China this year and an active player in Latin-America and the Caribbean, Cuba will promote the proposals presented by China, understanding that the supreme interests of humankind, and not those of a group of people, will be favored by these Initiatives.

The “Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics” Is a Diplomatic Revolution

Wang Zaibang



Senior Fellow of Taihe Institute

In recent years, the world has been going through an unprecedented state of changes and tumults, compounded by the ravaging global pandemic and ecological disruptions. Amid the ensuing chaos, challenges, and unforeseen events, China’s diplomatic maneuvers since early 2023 have amazed the world and garnered international attention. At a closer look, China’s diplomatic moves are a reasonable result of Beijing’s pursuit of a “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” since the 18th CPC (the Communist Party of China) National Congress in November 2012. It is fair to say that China has succeeded in breaking new ground in distinctive major-country diplomacy within the broader historical contexts of international relations and China’s foreign relations.

I. China’s recent diplomatic breakthroughs are unprecedented in its history

The revolutionary nature of the “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” lies in the unprecedented breakthroughs China has achieved in foreign relations in recent years.

First, many heads of state and government, and political leaders have visited China in close succession, indicating that America’s antagonistic China policy is no longer appealing. In recent months, European leaders, such as German Chancellor

Olaf Scholz, European Council President Charles Michel, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, French President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock have traveled to China. Additionally, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar bin Ibrahim, and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva have also made high-profile visits to China, drawing significant international attention. In the current political climate where the Biden administration carries on with Trump's legacy of engaging in a great power competition with China, vigorously promotes the so-called Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China, and pushes for economic and technological decoupling from China, these visits have signaled varying degrees of resistance to the idea of decoupling from China and underscored China's international standing. The US attempt to safeguard its hegemony by way of containing China in the name of competition is doomed to fail.

Second, the China-brokered restoration of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran has triggered "a wave of reconciliation" in the Middle East and established China as a peacemaker in this new era of global politics. Through China's mediation, Saudi Arabia and Iran, two archrivals in the Islamic world, have decided to shake hands and reestablish diplomatic relations. This move has resonated across the Middle East, easing tensions between the Shia and Sunni sects and within Arabic nations. Turkey and Egypt, who have been at odds for ten years, are planning a summit following the Turkish elections in May, marking a new phase of peace and security in the region. China has also proposed a 12-point peace plan for the political resolution of the Ukraine crisis. During his visit to Russia, President Xi Jinping had candid discussions with President Vladimir Putin on the political resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which drew global attention. All these demonstrate that China, as a major nation, is confidently advancing its own propositions and initiatives for safeguarding international peace and security.

Third, China has effectively defended against the US economic and technological suppression and improved its international economic standing. Despite the U.S. pushing for economic "anti-globalization" and industrial "de-Sinicization" and forcing economic "decoupling" from China, foreign investment into China increased by double digits in 2021. In 2022, China's actual use of foreign investment reached RMB 1.2 trillion yuan, representing a 6.3% increase. High-tech manufacturing and high-tech service sectors saw foreign investment growth of 49.6% and 21.9%, respectively. In foreign trade, China's total import and export value reached RMB 42.07 trillion yuan in 2022, up 7.7% year-on-year. An increasing

number of countries are choosing to use RMB for settlement, which can be regarded as a sign of China's growing influence in global industrial and supply chains despite the challenges.

Lastly, China is committed to safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Our will and power to chart the course of cross-Straits relations have multiplied. Faced with major political provocation from the U.S. to upgrade its official exchanges with Taiwan, and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authority's provocative actions to seek "independence" in collusion with external forces, we stand undeterred and strongly counter the US attempts to use Taiwan to contain China. Following Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, China decisively conducted large-scale naval and air military exercises, strengthening strategic control of the situation around Taiwan. To counter Tsai Ing-wen's illegal meeting with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in the U.S., the PLA (the People's Liberation Army) Eastern Theater Command launched a military exercise code-named "Joint Sword" around the island, fully demonstrating our comprehensive combat capability to secure air, sea, and information control across the Taiwan Strait. Chinese maritime law enforcement vessels have also begun to exercise administrative law enforcement powers through joint cruise and inspection operations. Clearly, the resolve and power of the Chinese government to control the situation in the Taiwan Strait have significantly strengthened.

II. Innovative diplomatic concepts and policies

The revolutionary aspect of the "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" also lies in its innovative concepts and policies that truly capture the needs of the times. In other words, the unprecedented breakthroughs that China has made in diplomacy in recent years are a reasonable result of promoting and advancing the "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" since the 18th CPC National Congress.

China's distinctive major-country diplomacy refers specifically to a series of innovative ideas, policies, and ways of conducting diplomacy put forward by the CPC Central Committee, which has been led by General Secretary Xi Jinping since the 18th National Party Congress based on China's basic principles, objectives and strategies for foreign relations. These new ideas and propositions take shape in the process of conception, refinement, further definition, and testing in practice.

On November 28, 2014, at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, Xi Jinping stressed that China should develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major country. This marked the birth of China's new diplomatic concept. Later, on March 5, 2016, at the Fourth Session of the 12th National People's Congress, this new concept was included in the government's work report, indicating that a new diplomatic approach had taken shape. On October 18, 2017, a report from the 19th CPC National Congress explained that China's distinctive major-country diplomacy seeks to create a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind. The development and implementation of the "Belt and Road Initiative" has also played a significant role in advancing this new diplomatic approach in both theory and practice.

As the Biden administration continues Trump's great-power competition strategy against China, the world has been grappling with an incredibly intricate and complex situation unseen in a century, which was worsened by the devastating COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis. This landscape has been characterized with enormous developmental pressure and serious security threats. In response to these unprecedented complications, China has stepped up its efforts to implement policies revolving around the "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics." Since 2021, President Xi Jinping has successively introduced "The Global Development Initiative," "The Global Security Initiative," and "The Global Civilization Initiative," garnering worldwide attention and strong support from a majority of countries.

Following the 20th National Party Congress, China has entered a new stage of "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics." On February 21, 2023, China officially released the Global Security Initiative Concept Paper, further deepening, refining, and clarifying the "Global Security Initiative." On February 24, the first anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Beijing released China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis, formally proposing China's solution to the crisis. This paper underscores China's impartial and objective stance, highlights its responsibilities as a major global player, and contributes Chinese insights to world peace and security. Looking back, China's efforts to mediate and foster reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran highlighted its commitment to addressing global turmoil and crises, overcoming challenges, and maintaining world peace and security. This success, perhaps, could be attributed to China's neutral position, as well as the appeal of "the major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" and the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The innovative concept of the “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” derives naturally from China’s economic and social development at a specific stage. It is a response to the complex challenges that the world faces today, a development of China’s traditional cultural traits, and a continuation of China’s diplomatic practices. If we take our vision to a broader scale of human history, we can still argue that China’s new diplomatic approach and practices are groundbreaking and unique in nature, and, therefore, cannot be replicated. Given the complex global landscape after the Cold War, characterized with rapid globalization and deepening interdependence among countries, it is only China, with its rich cultural and historical legacy, which spans over 5,000 years, that can develop its unique approach of the major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, which answers the calls of our times.

III. The sustainable diplomatic trend

To say that the “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” is of a revolutionary nature is also because of the fact that in practice, it represents a watershed in the evolution of the world diplomacy and it is a sustainable rather than a temporary or short-term-based phenomenon.

First, China’s economic foundation will continue to strengthen. Looking forward, the Chinese economy will keep growing, with plenty of resources, a reasonable economic structure, and a strong internal drive for growth. As China continues to achieve new milestones in its economic and social development, it gains new momentum in pursuing its distinctive major-country diplomacy, leading global peace and development efforts, and fostering the realization of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Second, the international community will become more accepting of China’s distinctive approach to diplomacy. We’ve already seen progress with the Belt and Road Initiative, which showcases China’s unique vision for international diplomacy. Additionally, an increasing number of countries are seeking membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and China’s role in mediating peace between Saudi Arabia and Iran has helped ease tensions in the Middle East and has received praise from around the world. As China continues to develop and implement the three global initiatives, the impact and appeal of its distinctive diplomatic approach are expected to grow.

Third, the understanding of China's major-country diplomacy, both in theory and practice, will continue to improve. As its strength and status as well as the global acceptance of its way of conducting diplomacy grow, China will become more confident in its unique approach to the major-country diplomacy. Although challenges, criticism, interference, and even sabotage from external forces are inevitable, particularly from the West, China's commitment to its distinctive diplomacy will not waver. We believe that as long as we keep advancing the idea of building a community with a shared future for mankind, we will be standing together with people worldwide, be on the right side of history, and succeed in our endeavor.

Fourth, China will make greater contributions to the international community. With its increasing national strength and elevated international status, along with its growing confidence in its distinctive diplomatic approach, China will be in a better position to bring into full play its ability to maintain and promote global peace, development, and security. Firstly, China's continued growth will propel worldwide development on an even larger scale. Secondly, with a strong willingness, China's capability, and experience in fostering peace will gradually improve, thus enabling China to further contribute its wisdom in tackling major and difficult global challenges and problems.

TIO Spotlight Talk



China at the Forefront for World Peace

An Interview with Senior Fellow Charles Liu Yangsheng

Charles Liu Yangsheng



Senior Fellow of Taihe Institute
Co-Founder of Impact Asia Capital Ltd
Advisory Board Member, CGN Capital
Partners Infrastructure Fund III

TIO Given that China's recent diplomatic activities attracted the world's attention, how would you describe China's major country role in current world affairs?

Liu Over the past six months, the world has witnessed China's proactive diplomacy. Most notably, The China-organized mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia played a key role in addressing the Yemen issue. When China tabled its peace position paper in February 2023, neither Russia nor Ukraine opposed it. The recent call between President Xi Jinping and President Volodymyr Zelensky built on China's diplomatic effort for a new process of seeking peace. Concrete follow-up actions are beginning. All three diplomatic breakthroughs were proactive and productive. China has now moved to the forefront of global diplomacy to take the helm for the creation of a peaceful world suitable for all countries to pursue economic development beneficial for all.

China's recent diplomatic successes are only the beginning of a larger proactive diplomatic program. During the last six months, President Xi Jinping has met with nearly 60 heads of state and government from all corners of the world. The intense rounds of mutual diplomatic activities have included French President Emmanuel Macron, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The heads of Southeast Asian governments meeting

with President Xi have included Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. Discussions have centered on the Chinese support for certain development initiatives or on addressing conflicts that exist in different corners of the world. China is not alone in its approach. Other countries are proactively seeking its positive participation in diplomacy and development. China's role in settlement of the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the most significant of the recent rounds of major country diplomacy. The negotiations were conducted so secretly, even the CIA was unaware. The Americans, caught by surprise, were certainly unbalanced and upset.

TIO China's initiatives started with the Belt and Road Initiative, and now China has launched the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and more appealingly, the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). These represent an unprecedented vision for shared global prosperity. What are your thoughts on these initiatives?

Liu China's three global initiatives are interlinked. First, global development is not possible without global peace and security. Without peace and security, there is no stability and uncertainty would constrain the global strategic objective of achieving development. To have a working security framework, mutual understanding is a necessity. The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) fosters mutual understanding of each side's history, social, and cultural beliefs, and much more. Thus, a solid foundation is laid for a global security system, which allows effective development programs. As such, the three initiatives are intricately interlinked to generate a common future for mankind. The world cannot continue to have a split between North and South or among the peoples of the world, in terms of ability to generate good income, without a collective effort for mankind as a whole to improve the common livelihood or address big issues like climate change. From this perspective, the GCI is a very well-thought-out plan that addresses key interlocked issues. Instead of greater weapons proliferation, provoking conflict through proxies, hegemonic suppression and bullying, which some countries are doing, the three initiatives promote a shared future for mankind.

TIO China is considered a champion for the UN cause. How do you see the growing Chinese influence in solving pressing humanitarian challenges like in Sudan and Yemen, and in working towards the proper functioning of the UN Security Council?

Liu China has certainly championed the UN cause and the United Nations Charter, and seeks to originate good behavior within the UN. However, the UN has failed to realize the hopes and dreams of much of the world. For example, the humanitarian crises that were created over previous decades, such as the conflicts in Sudan and Yemen and the decade-long civil war in Syria, to name but a few. These are issues that can be addressed more appropriately within the UN context. But the UN has failed to do so. It is quite positive to have a country like China take the initiative. If the UN fails, China can take the initiative with like-minded countries to provide support. The UN has not achieved what it was built for nor what it was meant to do due to big power battles, big power conflicts, and the veto power of the permanent five (P5) members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). That is unfortunate and a result of one country seeking to dominate all others. The UN will not reflect the multipolar world, the common future of mankind, and promote the common heritage that China seeks to promote. The Sudan conflict, which is complicated, has resulted from internal conflicts provoked by major power politics. When UN activity is about one country's agenda, it becomes very difficult to take any action, especially in the UNSC.

TIO It seems that great power rivalry has returned. How do you think China is keeping itself focused on delivering public goods to the world while it faces a strategic challenge from the U.S.?

Liu Indeed, great power rivalries have returned. However, the forces that constitute the great powers have altered. Blind adherence, or following, of the United States by Europe is transitioning as the EU strives for "strategic autonomy." The differences of opinion and beliefs become obvious when Europeans, like Macron, are considering opening-up and promoting independent objectives and strategies in international relations rather than being followers of the U.S.

China is demonstrating its different approaches to the U.S. by promoting peace, stability, and development, rather than stirring conflict by shipping weapons and promoting proxy wars.

The strategic challenges posed by the U.S. might cause a delay in China's rise, but it cannot succeed. The U.S. trade war and sanctions against Chinese companies, which have restricted or banned hundreds of enterprises, have not stopped China's growth or the building of closer relations with the countries of the Global South. Nor have U.S. measures stopped the enthusiastic embrace of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by many developing countries - the embrace of better trade and the use of RMB settlement as the primary currency in trade for multiple developing countries.

The adoption of the aforementioned initiatives counters the US objective of suppressing China. Rather, the efforts of China to promote peace and development are now being echoed by many countries of the world. President Lula of Brazil made an interesting observation stating that, he wanted to create a "Peace Club" of countries, which is a promising concept that China will certainly support. Numerous countries are increasingly recognizing that China is a force for peace, a force for development, a force for improvement, and a force for the enhancement of the well-being of people all over the world. This is clearly the opposite of the colonial, imperialist and hegemonic era of recent centuries, in which developing countries were plundered for their resource and wealth, and their stability was subject to interference by major powers. The developing countries increasingly recognize past injustices as do those who share their sense of justice.

TIO You mentioned President Macron's recent visit and the historic Chinese mediated peace settlement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. What new possibilities do these recent developments create for a more peaceful and prosperous world?

Liu The Middle East peace settlement between Saudi Arabia and Iran has ushered in the potential to resolve other regional problems such as in Yemen and Syria. These are being addressed because of China's initiative. Hopefully, the issues of Palestine and Israel can also be resolved.

Last week, the Chinese Foreign Minister called the foreign ministers of both Israel and Palestine in a closed-door session. Details of the discussion remain unknown, however, finding a solution to promote peace was certainly a key topic. As a result of China's initiatives, people can switch their focus from bullying and conflict promotion with the "other," toward coherent and collaborative regional development strategies that are helpful for the entire world. The expression, "the stone age did not end because the world ran out of stones," is particularly relevant for countries heavily reliant on oil and gas. The oil and gas age is declining due to the transition to renewable sources of energy. The energy-exporting countries are seeking greater development and modernization. They seek to enhance the strengths of their economies beyond the supply of natural resources. However, realizing development and modernization is constrained by continuing regional conflict, or viewing brothers as enemies. This recognition has really moved the whole Middle East towards China's global initiatives for security, and towards development, modernization, and civilization.

This interview was conducted by Mahmood Iqbal Chaudhary, Intern of Taihe Institute, Master's student at Tsinghua University.

Youth

Voices



How China Could Advance an Ideal Multipolar World Order

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Much ink has been spilled on the concept of a *multipolar world order*. Championed by thinkers ranging from classical realist theorists who view multipolarity as pivotal to ensuring a continuous and stable balance of power, to Chinese scholars advancing a vision of cooperating yet self-sovereign poles in criticizing what they perceive to be a Western-led unipolar hegemony, this phrase has come to the forefront of discourse concerning where our world stands, and wherefore it is headed.

Indeed, a combination of increasing salience in official statements and propositions advanced by the governments of, to list a few, China, Brazil, and India (all BRICS nations)¹ and the persisting war in Ukraine have contributed towards the rise of talk of ‘multipolarity.’ Yet what, really, is multipolarity? Can multipolarity avoid the pitfalls of slipping into unipolar dominance or bipolar conflict? Is it even desirable, in the first place? More fundamentally, what would an ideal multipolar world order look like, and what role must and can China play here?

Existing Accounts of Multipolarity

The concept of multipolarity can be traced to a number of extant schools of thought. The first constitutes classical realism, which, unlike its more contemporary counterparts and subsequent derivatives, maintains that multipolar systems are more capable of providing

¹ Korybko, Andrew. “BRICS’ Role in the Global Systemic Transition to Multipolarity.” CGTN, June 24, 2022. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2022-06-24/BRICS-role-in-the-global-systemic-transition-to-multipolarity-1b7pApl2CKQ/index.html>.

stability than bipolar systems. Peace is kept by virtue of powers' sensing that the costs of going to war far outweigh the prospective gains - e.g., where and when there exists another power that can check against their aggressive overtures. The more powers there are on the net in the world, the stronger the deterrence accrued through checks and balancing.² More contemporarily, Hans Morgenthau made the case that a fundamental multipolar balance of power - which "will scarcely be found in reality"³ - is more likely to produce peace, even if tenuous, on grounds that there is neither a) a single hegemon that dominates and crowds out competing powers, nor b) a vigorous competition between inimically opposed bi-poles, which must resort to intense competition or confrontation (e.g. the Cold War) to settle their differences.

This vision of international relations, whilst perhaps salient and accurate, appears to miss out on the more normative aspects to global power relations. As argued by prominent scholars on China such as Brantly Womack and Wang Gungwu, modern China's conception of the world order over the past decades had become increasingly defined by the anchor of multipolarity.⁴ Arising out of both a critique of bipolarity between the USSR and the U.S. in the Cold War era, as well as a reaction to American unipolarity in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, China's vision of multipolarity argues that poles with disparate geopolitical interests and cultural values should nevertheless learn to cooperate whilst remaining mindful of one another's national sovereignty. A multipolar world is not one where powers exist in constant domination and constraint over one another (a feature that is of particular interest in classical realism); instead, it is one where powers suspend military conflict and embrace pacifist solutions to mutual disagreements.

More contemporarily, Chinese President Xi Jinping has sought to define a multipolar order through two distinctive prisms. The first is the particular prism, by which the Chinese government seeks a "New Type of Major-Country Relations" for China, in which China holds dominant sway over East Asian affairs as the champion of a prominent pole of economic and strategic interests. Within this framework, China, Europe, Russia, and the U.S. would all be independent poles in possession of their own strategic calculus, and the ideal end-state is one where China need not be in military conflict, and is in fact cooperating with all parties.⁵

2 Howe, Paul. "The Utopian Realism of E. H. Carr." *Review of International Studies* Vol. 20, no. 3 (1994): 277-297.

3 Morgenthau, Hans J. "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace," 1978, 4-15. https://old.tsu.ge/data/file_db/anthim/31.eng.pdf

4 Womack, Brantly. "Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity." *Journal of Contemporary China* Volume 13, no. 2004, Issue 39 (2006): 351-366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1067056042000211942>.

5 The Conversation. "https://Theconversation.Com/President-Xis-Chinese-Dream-Means-a-More-Multi-Polar-World-35706," January 21, 2015. <https://theconversation.com/president-xis-chinese-dream-means-a-more-multi-polar-world-35706>.

The second prism is more general and normative in kind, and has been articulated gradually through China's policy stances and reactions to crises such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S., the rise of extreme Islamic terrorism in the Levant, and the ongoing war in Ukraine. It holds that peace ought to be the overarching objective of international relations,⁶ and that all countries deserve the right to develop in accordance with their own internal demands and needs.

Both propositions in turn point to the case of a world where there are multiple great powers, each catering to overlapping and interlinked, yet fundamentally autonomously separate groups of people. What these poles constitute exactly remains a somewhat open question, yet the key point lies not with the identities of these poles, but that they are evenly matched and balanced against one another. In short, multipolarity is viewed as the prerequisite for genuinely long-lasting and sustainable global peace - as opposed to inter-power rivalry and conflict.

On the Ideal Vision of Multipolarity: A Proposal

A key question thus pops up: given the disparate definitions outlined above, what should an ideal world, per principles of multipolarity, fundamentally look like? In my view, there are several features that collectively comprise a multipolar world:

First, there should exist a number of regional powers with sizeable strategic presence in their respective spheres of influence and potentially global economic reach, and yet amongst which no single power is dominant. Let us unpack this further - for multipolarity to stand, each of the 'poles' must possess the political resolve and unity to enforce a broadly coherent and stability-enabling order within proximity. Consider, for one, Germany and France's roles as leading anchors within the European Union (EU), and the EU's role in safeguarding peace in Eastern (non-EU) Europe, Northern Africa, and the Mediterranean. Such military and political wherewithal may grant poles a degree of global economic reach, yet such reach does not - unlike perhaps past decades of American hegemony - dominate and sway decision-making in distant corners of the world. In short, there is no pole that can trump or override the volition of all other poles, which

6 Yeo, George. "Charm and China in a Multipolar World." National University of Singapore, December 6, 2021. <https://nus.edu.sg/thought-leadership/charm-and-china-in-a-multipolar-world>.

can easily bandwagon and collectivize against disruptors to the order.

Second, the primary modus operandi and means of resolving disputes must be via peaceful, multilateral negotiations.⁷ All violent military incursions and conflicts, unless fought with the intention of self-defense or in protecting hapless others, should be ruled out as fundamentally inimical to the balance of power embodied by multipolarity. Not only should the poles check against behaviors of encroachment and expansion, but they must also seek to redress differences in ways that satisfy the mutual interests of all parties. Multipolarity requires governments to eschew sanctions and counter-sanctions, as well as the weaponization of commodities, core goods, and currencies of transaction. Multilateralism allows poles to resolve their disagreements in a tenable and constrained manner: such was the rationale for the founding of the United Nations, in the aftermath of World War II.

Thirdly, a multipolar world calls for **pluralism in ideals of legitimacy and justice**. Far too many wars have been fought in history over the purportedly appropriate system or method of governing a particular country, as well as the identity of the government that comes to preside over it. Interventionism and interference justified in the name of democracy have contributed to decades of civil strife, infighting, and political instability across the Middle East and Latin America. A failure to accept that political and cultural differences can and should in fact manifest through different institutional arrangements. It is not only myopic and naïve - it could also be dangerous, in providing excuses to gung-ho militarists bent on instigating and prosecuting war against others. Multipolarity requires us to be substantially more open-minded and less uncritically judgmental towards different systems of governance.

How Can China Constructively Facilitate this Multipolar World Order?

China has a crucial role to play in facilitating the establishment of the aforementioned vision of an ideal multipolar world order.

Firstly, it should demonstrate an even-handed, judicious, and

⁷ Wang, Orange. "China Opposes 'Illegal' Sanctions against Russia by United States and Its Allies." SCMP, May 2, 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3168972/china-opposes-illegal-sanctions-against-russia-united-states>.

consistent commitment to principles of peace and peace-brokering, in determining both its own actions and how it opts to interact with other powers. Contrary to many other leading world powers, Beijing has not fought a single hot war in the past forty years. It has a vastly restrained overseas military presence. Its primary modus vivendi for settling disputes and managing disagreements with neighboring states and beyond, constitutes identifying shared economic interests and pursuing deeper strategic ties, in an attempt to defuse tensions prior to their full outbreak. In practice, this looks like stepping up to serving as a neutral and good-faith mediator in a larger number of regional, perhaps even international, conflicts.

The Iran-Saudi Arabia resumption of diplomatic relations in March was a historic moment for China, epitomizing its largesse and credibility as a facilitator of peace talks and eventual peace. Yet there remain many fault-lines that urgently require Beijing's attention, including the Israel-Palestine conflict, the ongoing instability and insurgency within Afghanistan, and tensions between Central Asian states and Russia. A multipolar world order calls for rules enforcement not via force, but through complex interdependence and mutual constraints. China must step in to provide counsel and backing for reconciliation across historically antagonistic parties, including diametrically opposed countries, such as Eritrea and Ethiopia,⁸ or Armenia and Azerbaijan, where necessary. Incidentally, there already are signs that Beijing takes conflict resolution over the Tigray War most seriously, and is open to working with regional and local partners in facilitating the peace process.⁹

Secondly, in its seeking to provide countries in the Global South with complementary alternatives to West-led and Western-centric multilateral institutions, China should be equally mindful of the need for its institutions to be fair, inclusive, and transparently governed. Undertakings such as the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035¹⁰ have been flagged as cornerstones for China to engage and partner with like-minded states across the world in improving development, kickstarting growth and innovation, and advancing infrastructural reforms and refinement within these economies.

Such reforms are not only benign, but necessary in order to equip

8 BBC News Tigrinya. "Eritrea's Mass Mobilisation amid Ethiopia Civil War." BBC, September 16, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62927781>.

9 Tiezzi, Shannon. "China Looks to Play More Active Role in Horn of Africa Conflicts." *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/china-looks-to-play-more-active-role-in-horn-of-africa-conflicts/>.

10 Sun, Yun. "An Examination of the 2035 Vision for China-Africa Cooperation." *Brookings*, December 21, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/12/27/an-examination-of-the-2035-vision-for-china-africa-cooperation/>.

citizens residing within these countries with the opportunities to start their businesses, ascend the economic ladders, and lift themselves out of poverty. Yet going forward, it would be in the interests of both China and the other involved countries alike for more consistency and scrutiny in accordance with established standards in governing domains such as credit and loan repayment, choice of location, and the anticipated rates of return of the building and construction procedures. Only through improving the quality and strength of regulations and accountability binding these institutions, can China successfully ensure that the development taking place can cater to the interests of all parties instead of the few. A truly multipolar world requires an empowered and respected Global South; with a few minor tweaks to its approach to policymaking and commercial decisions abroad, China is by far in the best position to lend a voice and an ear to the millions residing in economically developing countries. Improved accountability not only bolsters China's returns to investment in these states, but also the country's credibility to cultivate long-lasting relationships with promising, up-and-coming "poles" within this world order.

Thirdly, China should acknowledge and embrace the innate heterogeneity within the Global South. The members of the Global South are no monolith. Whilst it could be tempting to lump them all together as one, exhibiting shared and homogenous preferences and foreign policies, it would also be a mistake to do so. The needs and interests of countries in ASEAN alone vary from country to country, and Beijing would do well in noting the even subtler differentials within the Global South.

Such electricity is a strength, not a weakness. A multipolar world order should be one where different voices and belief systems are accommodated and celebrated, as opposed to where a single political or religious ideology dominates. China has long served as a friend to Asian (ASEAN), African, and Latin American countries - thanks to its ability to remain politically neutral and refrain from interfering with the domestic affairs of other states. It is precisely because of this that Beijing should not assume that all non-Western, non-Chinese "third-party" states within this multipolar world must thus be non-aligned. Some countries are understandably more sympathetic towards the U.S. and the EU on grounds of historical sympathies, whilst others are keener on resuming functional trade and economic ties with China.

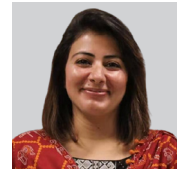
Assuming that they all think and act in the same way would be a grossly erroneous misjudgment.

The dearth of quality research and theorization concerning multipolarity, and China's role within this hypothetical world order, call upon us to take seriously the task of finding a guiding compass for Beijing's move towards a more multipolar world. The path ahead is rough, tendentious, and inevitably fraught with barriers. Yet the above has hopefully demonstrated that China remains well-positioned to advance, and uphold, the new zeitgeist of multipolarity.

China's Soft Power Success

Reshaping and Reconnecting the World

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Over the last few years, the world has experienced an unforeseen pandemic, war in Ukraine, economic recession, and sustained unrest and turbulence. At this juncture in world affairs there are two opposite trends: (i) to adopt a Cold War attitude in order to heighten hostility and animosity and ignite conflict amongst blocs; (ii) to act in ways that advance equality and respect, encourage openness and win-win outcomes, and build solidarity and cooperation. In the search for viable solutions to extraordinary challenges, the countries of the world have proposed multiple innovative ideas. However, China's diplomatic efforts have been concentrated on pursuing major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in an all-round way and building a community with a shared future for mankind. China has made significant contributions to world peace and development guided by its diplomatic principles and vision of a shared future.

Being on the right side of the history, China is adopting a multifaceted approach to international governance. China supports international agreements including the Paris Agreement and organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It has always supported international equality and justice, human growth, and the interests of the vast majority of nations. For example, by choosing cooperation over confrontation, openness over isolation, mutual benefit over zero-sum game, and equality over power politics and bullying, China substantiates its role as a sincere and reliable partner for other developing countries, supports them in building capacity for self-generated development, and defends their legitimate rights to development. In a complex world, China has endeavored to keep the wheels of human

development rolling toward a brighter future together with like-minded countries. Undoubtedly, China has adopted a global perspective, opened up new vistas amid global changes, and assiduously grown through struggle and cooperation. China's great and varied endeavors include the following four:

(i)The Success Story of BRI

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was launched in 2013, is now in its 10th year. It aims to strengthen physical infrastructure and financial, political, and security linkages across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. A worldwide platform for collaboration, the BRI offers solutions to complex issues including the reform of the international governance system. Substantial evidence supports both its significance and success despite Western opposition and smear campaigns. The data shows that as of 2021, China had signed MOUs with 140 nations and 32 international organizations, of which 46 were in Africa, 37 in Asia, 27 in Europe, 11 in North America, 11 in the Pacific, and 8 in Latin America. Concurrently, China's outbound foreign direct investment (FDI) increased from US\$82 billion in 2012 to US\$154 billion in 2020, making it the world's top foreign investor. Chinese investment in BRI countries has also recorded impressive growth. Moreover, China's leadership is piloting the BRI green and sustainable development program into action. China has outlined three key BRI objectives moving forward:

- Sharing China's development experience and collaborating with other economies for long-term global development;
- Striving for re-globalization against the Western-centric mindset, constructing a more inclusive and equitable global economy;
- Starting a new regional cooperation mode of economic belts and corridors that supersedes traditional polarized economic unions and zones.

Given the BRI is a successful model with Chinese characteristics, China is likely to dominate the global economy in coming years.

(ii) China's Global Vision on Development, Security, and Civilization

Another feather in China's cap is its three global initiatives on development, security, and civilization. In order to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched by the UN, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Development Initiative (GDI) at the General Debate of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2021. The initiative upholds people-led, inclusive beneficial for all, innovation-driven and results-oriented development as a priority. The High-Level Dialogue on Global Development, presided over by President Xi Jinping in June 2022, enhanced the general agreement on the subject of global development. The GDI is currently backed by more than one hundred countries and international organizations, and almost 70 countries have joined the Group of Friends of GDI, which was officially launched at the UN Headquarters in New York in January 2022. Another initiative in this direction is the South-South Cooperation Fund that China developed for cooperation with its international partners. The fund has increased investment in the implementation of the GDI to address issues including pandemics, hunger, and poverty. China is fostering communication and coordination with other countries that make up the Group of Friends of the GDI to uphold the values of comprehensive consultation, joint participation, and shared benefits, and continues to multiply the GDI project pool. China also advocates for development programs such as the Food Production Enhancement Action and the Global Clean Energy Cooperation Partnership.

China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) promotes a secure and peaceful environment as the prerequisite and guarantee for development. Globally, the majority of countries confront a variety of unexpected risks and security challenges. To avoid these challenges, history was made by the over 80 countries and regional organizations who praised and supported the GSI, which President Xi Jinping proposed last year in response to the ongoing, complex changes in the global security situation.

Additionally, China published the *Global Security Initiative Concept Paper*, which not only outlines the initiative's fundamental ideas and guiding principles, but also identifies its priorities, platforms, and mechanisms for collaboration to convey China's sense of responsibility for preserving international harmony and unwavering commitment to defending global security. China has facilitated countries to resume bilateral dialogues and released its position on the political resolution of the Ukraine crisis. China's combination of words and actions demonstrates the development momentum of the global security initiative implementation. China will continue to uphold the UN's central position in

security governance, encourage coordination and responsible interactions among major countries, facilitate the peaceful resolution of hotspot issues through dialogue, address conventional and non-conventional security challenges, and strengthen the system and capacity for global security governance.

Several roads to modernization are being taken by the countries and regions of the world, each of which suits its own distinctive civilization. However, civilizations grow with adaptation and modernity. China is one of the four oldest civilizations in the world, and the only one with traditions that have continuously adapted to novel trends. China is constructing a new culture and examining a Chinese modernization path for the new era, which broadens the opportunities for emerging nations to modernize and provides them with new options for growth acceleration while retaining their independence. The future and destinies of all nations are intertwined; thus, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), which advocates respect for the diversity of civilizations, advances universal human values, places a premium on the transmission and innovation of civilizations, fosters international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation, and offers fundamental guidelines and pathways for various civilizations to exchange, coexist, and coexist peacefully.

China not only values its traditions, but also pledges to pursue integrated development with its neighbors and deepen its convergence of interests and people-to-people affinity to jointly build a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful, and amicable world.

(iii)Brokering Saudi Arabia-Iran Peace Deal

While the West is determined to create exclusive blocs under the guise of multilateralism, China acknowledges only one set of international laws that apply in today's world: the fundamental principles of international relations supported by the UN Charter. The notion of extensive engagement, collaborative contribution, and shared benefits is supported by China's effort to reform and improve global governance. With its unique characteristics, China has taken new strides toward democratizing international relations and played a constructive role to actively mediate hotspot issues. Previously, little global effort was made to understand differing views or to foster negotiation. As a responsible major country, China took the initiative and exerted a positive influence by advocating the launch of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Afghan Issue among the

neighboring countries of Afghanistan, a new mechanism that harnesses the strengths and unique roles of the neighboring countries. China has actively explored and facilitated the establishment of a framework of major-country interactions that provides general stability and balanced development to create a new type of international relations.

At a time, when the U.S. has alienated two major players in the Gulf - Saudi Arabia and Iran - China, through bilateral discussions and global venues, has demonstrated alternative and viable options. The recent reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran was not only about restoring diplomatic ties between traditional rivals, but established a clarion call for more and more countries to end their ideological division of the world. More recently, the Iranian government invited Saudi King Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud to visit Iran. No Saudi King has visited Iran in the last 57 years. China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, described the deal as a victory for dialogue and peace, adding that Beijing would continue to play a constructive role in addressing complex global issues. Many countries, as well as the EU, acknowledged the diplomatic efforts leading to this historic milestone. Some countries also welcomed the resumption of diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran without mentioning China. Policymakers can better comprehend how exceptional such a development is by keeping in mind that the two countries have been involved in a proxy war, known as the Middle East Cold War, and that their relations have been affected by a terrible history. Undoubtedly, the negotiation road map was the outcome of intense rounds of negotiation mediated by China.

(iv)Resolving International Disputes Through IOMed

In its effort to promote peace, China has focused on global cooperation to cement the foundations of friendship. Despite the international community's rising demand for mediation, there is currently no worldwide intergovernmental organization specialized in mediation. Thus, in February of 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region established the Preparatory Office of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) in Hong Kong. The IOMed is the second institute for resolving international disputes that China established. In 2020, China established the International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Settlement Organization (ICDPASO), which has its headquarters in Beijing. In order to advance concrete improvements in bilateral and multilateral relations, both the IOMed and

ICDPASO will keep negotiating and settling disputes among countries.

Conclusion

Facts demonstrate how China's diplomacy has improved in the volatile international climate of the past few years. It has maintained composure and confidence in major-country interactions, and triumphed over a succession of challenges. Being a responsible member of the developing world, China has advanced efforts to strengthen global governance on global, regional, and bilateral levels in accordance with the principles of extensive consultation, collaborative participation, and shared benefits, and has made new strides towards democratizing international relations. This has been made possible by President Xi Jinping's strong leadership and clear understanding of the diplomatic process. China is the world's largest provider of development financing, accounting for one-quarter of all worldwide bank lending to emerging nations, which easily surpasses the World Bank or IMF. Since the beginning of the era of reform and opening up, China's achievements have been phenomenal. China's achievements in COVID-19 prevention and control have been highly appreciated. In fact, China has gained considerable clout in international organizations traditionally dominated by Western countries. Around the world, China is recognized as a political and economic power. By pursuing major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in an all-round way, China is regaining its centrality in the international system and over global governance institutions. China's leadership has reiterated its ambition to lead reform of the global governance system underpinned by the concepts of fairness and justice. Policymakers worldwide laud China's milestone achievements under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and foresee that China's diplomacy and soft power, with Chinese characteristics, would ensure consensus-driven modification of international rules and amelioration of the norms of global governance.

China's Pivot to the West

Christian John Hayward



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In the Manichean world of “hawks and doves,” China’s foreign policy has become more visible and recognizable to observers of Chinese ambitions. However, China’s Western focus is not simply an automatic policy of going where the U.S. and EU won’t tread, but builds on long historical connections.

History provides a relevant lens to conduct two case studies on China’s recent diplomatic achievements where the U.S. has previously failed: the successful peace deal between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran and Chinese involvement in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

While the West has increasingly turned its attention to the Pacific, China has looked westwards. The AUKUS (Australia, UK, and the U.S.) alliance is moving Western military assets into the southern seas, leaving a vacuum in the Middle East after decades of conflict. Concurrently, China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has created fruitful conditions in the Middle East for the development of a more peaceful regional architecture.

2023 marks the 20th anniversary of the disastrous U.S.-led War on Iraq, which toppled Saddam Hussein and plunged the oil-rich nation of Iraq into a state of near constant war and a level of violence that mirrored the punishments of antiquity. Iraq was ripped apart by sectarian violence between followers of the Shia and Sunni branches of Islam. The Shia-Sunni struggle to become the successor to the Prophet Muhammad has persisted for almost 1,400 years.

The fall of the original Caliphate, most recently manifested in the Ottoman Empire, gave rise to a jigsaw of regional nation states. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran catalyzed a small-scale cold war across the Middle East between the oil giants of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both nations maintained uneasy relationships with the power blocs of the East and the West. Saudi Arabia owes much of its success to the West in the form of oil exports, but shares few cultural similarities with its allies - something highlighted during the US War on Terror. However, Iran and China also seem unlikely partners at first glance. What has brought them together?

After the brutal Sassanid-Roman wars of late antiquity, Sassanid Persia (sited loosely in modern-day Iran) was considerably weakened, and after numerous battles with the Rashidun Caliphate, Persia collapsed. The child emperor Yazdegerd III, who had risen to power and ruled during the turmoil, his son Peroz III, and their court fled to Tang China and served in the Tang court.¹ After the Abbasid Caliphate reached Central Asia, the Tang waged a war with the Arabs, and the exiled Sassanid court was alongside the Tang as late as 729 A.D.

Even as the region's power equations changed, Iran's strategic position made trade with China essential. Trade continued during the Islamic Golden Age and Chinese art and culture exerted a noticeable influence on Iranian Islamic art and culture. In the modern era and the rise of the nation state, Iran established diplomatic links with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1971, and the two countries maintained diplomatic ties despite the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

China's shared historical exchanges with the Middle East predate Western interest in the region and the rise of oil and the notorious Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, in which the French and British dismembered the stricken Ottoman Empire. The recent U.S.-led invasions of the Middle East, and the demonization of Muslim communities by former US President Donald Trump and his MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), and British right-wing press, fostered resentment in Arab countries, and thus considerably weakened Western influence across the region.

Thus, secular China, with its long historical reach, has been able to

¹ Matteo Compareti, "CHINESE-IRANIAN RELATIONS xv. THE LAST SASANIANS IN CHINA," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, July 20, 2009. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/china-xv-the-last-sasanians-in-china>

successfully bridge the deep ethno-religious conflicts to provide a powerful new approach to realizing regional peace. With the continuing and bloody Yemen conflict in its sights, the House of Saud recognized that Beijing could provide peace mediation where the United States had failed.² Saudi Arabia's willingness to split from established US policy on the region and pursue an independent path in international affairs also severed the US security yoke and established new confidence in its role as a regional power. President Trump's "America first" policy helped to dismantle the US regional presence and allowed the region's countries to engage with other major poles to broker a multipolar peace framework. China has approached its mediation role with careful diplomacy rather than saber-rattling. US President Biden had declared that he would end the Yemen war within two years, but it was China that delivered peace.³ China's historical legacy and careful diplomacy promise a new regional framework for peace and an end to more than two decades of internecine conflicts.

China's regional policy successes, however, have been accompanied by various setbacks. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has exposed Western reluctance to recognize China as a peace mediator. The West claims that China's warm relationship with Russia means its position is "too biased."⁴ However, history, recent diplomatic outcomes, and on-the-ground facts do not resonate with Western assertions.

Mirroring the case of Iran, Sino-Russian interaction also has a long history. Russian expansion into the former lands of the Mongols, the building of Harbin, the Trans-Manchurian railway, and immediately prior to the Sino-Soviet Split, the two countries had managed fluctuating interests.

Recent Sino-Russian activities include President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow and the support from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China for investigations into certain aspects of the early stages of Russia's "special military operation," such as the Nord Stream 2 sabotage, which significantly impacted the price of natural gas and cost of living in Europe.⁵ While China and Russia have jointly shown their willingness to solve the conflict via political methods and called for the cessation of actions that increase tensions, decisions on war and peace remain in the hands of Russian President Vladimir Putin. China has showcased its peace determination in its 12-point position paper, but NATO members

2 Maria Fantappie and Vali Nasr, "A New Order in the Middle East?" *Foreign Affairs*, March 22, 2023. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/iran-saudi-arabia-middle-east-relations>

3 Ryan Grim, "To Help End the Yemen War, All China Had to Do Was Be Reasonable." *The Intercept*, April 7, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2023/04/07/yemen-war-ceasefire-china-saudi-arabia-iran/>

4 Latona, "China could facilitate, not mediate, peace in Ukraine -EU's Borrell," *Reuters*, March 31, 2023. <https://apple.news/A5JW24REtSMENd8mPB5hWQg>

5 Jacob Dick, "Nord Stream Pipe Damage Sparks European Natural Gas Price Surge," *Natural Gas Intelligence*, September 27, 2022. <https://www.naturalgasintel.com/nord-stream-pipe-damage-sparks-european-natural-gas-price-surge/>

must agree to work with China and bring all parties to the table to establish peace and a lasting framework for European security. The rebuilding of Ukraine's destroyed infrastructure was recently estimated at US\$411 billion.⁶ Although some Ukrainians may assume insincerity, from a realistic and interest-based perspective, there is both space and an incentive for China to participate in the peace process.

Some observers suggest that a weakened Russia is seen in Beijing as a sign the West would adopt a more militaristic approach toward China in the future.⁷ While the EU has also resisted Chinese involvement in the peace process, it continues to promote trade despite US objections.⁸ Moreover, the EU rejected criticism by ousted UK Prime Minister and China hawk Liz Truss,⁹ choosing not to be swayed by AUKUS voices.¹⁰ It has not been forgotten that the AUKUS alliance caused Australia to abruptly cancel a €35 billion deal for French submarines.

The chief EU diplomat Jose Borrell has said, "China should use its influence to pressure Russia for peace in Ukraine." His comment may have kicked the EU position on Ukraine into the long grass while it waits for London and Washington to consider China's role in the drafting of a future peace plan. A counter argument to the so-called "biased position" of China is that the Sino-Russia relationship is traditionally not as close as Anglo-American, Commonwealth, or EU relations in the West. Rather, warm Sino-Russia relations support the argument that China's deep understanding of the Russian perspective will further the peace process. China's success in bringing Iran and Saudi Arabia together demonstrates its neutrality and diplomatic acumen. Policy makers should remember that China has three millennia of diplomacy experience to draw upon.

China, the new sheriff in town as the "global policeman"?

The self-appointed role of the United States as the "global policeman" is considered problematic and increasingly reduced the popularity of Washington on the world stage. Not only has China focused on establishing foreign delegations across the world, but also ensured a presence in parts of the world that were forgotten or ignored by Western powers. While there are many examples, both Port Moresby

6 Editors at the World Bank, "Updated Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Assessment", March 23 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/03/23/updated-ukraine-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-assessment>

7 Leahy, Hille, Lin and Pooler, "'Dare to fight': Xi Jinping unveils China's new world order." Financial Times, March 31, 2023. <https://www.ft.com/content/0f0b558b-3ca8-4156-82c8-e1825539ee20?>

8 Anderlini and Caulcutt, "Europe must resist pressure to become 'America's followers,' says Macron," Politico, April 9, 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-china-america-pressure-interview/>

9 Allegretti, "Liz Truss to say Macron trip to China was sign of weakness," The Guardian, April 11, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/apr/11/liz-truss-to-say-macron-trip-to-china-was-sign-of-weakness>

10 Camut, "China hawks tell Macron: You don't speak for Europe," Politico, April 11, 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-skeptic-mps-emmanuel-macron-speak-europe/>

in Papua New Guinea¹¹ and the construction of a new port in Solomon Islands¹² provoked a reaction from Australia. China cannot currently project the same power as the U.S. or NATO, and takes a cautious approach to its diplomacy. Importantly, the U.S.-led diplomatic bloc is losing momentum. The distancing of France and the EU from the Chinese policy of the U.S. was amply exhibited in the recent joint Xi-Macron declaration and renewed statements on EU “strategic autonomy.”¹³

Also to be considered is the noticeable swing across African states toward Russia and China in the period from the end of the Cold War to the present. However, the bolstering of Western military partnerships since the advent of the AUKUS pact indicates that China must carefully balance caution with boldness as it navigates the current historical turn in international relations. Furthermore, the increasingly aggressive approach of the U.S. toward cross-strait relations and Taiwan, which is a red line for China and geographically closer to the U.S. than the Middle East or Ukraine, has confirmed the need for Beijing to project greater diplomatic power on the world stage. China was able to redress negative international public opinion by successfully bringing a measure of peace to the long-troubled Middle East. Only time will tell if Wang Yi’s intensive diplomacy can foster lasting peace and whether China’s foreign policy initiatives can avoid the traps, into which the U.S. and UK fell during the previous century.

11 Chinese MFA, “President Xi Jinping Meets with Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea James Marape.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 18, 2022. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221119_10977904.html

12 Needham, “China firm wins Solomon Islands port project as Australia watches on,” Reuters, March 22, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/chinese-company-wins-tender-redevelop-solomon-islands-port-official-2023-03-22/>

13 Xinhua, “中华人民共和国和法兰西共和国联合声明 (全文),” State Council of the People’s Republic of China. http://www.gov.cn/yaowen/2023-04/07/content_5750444.htm

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