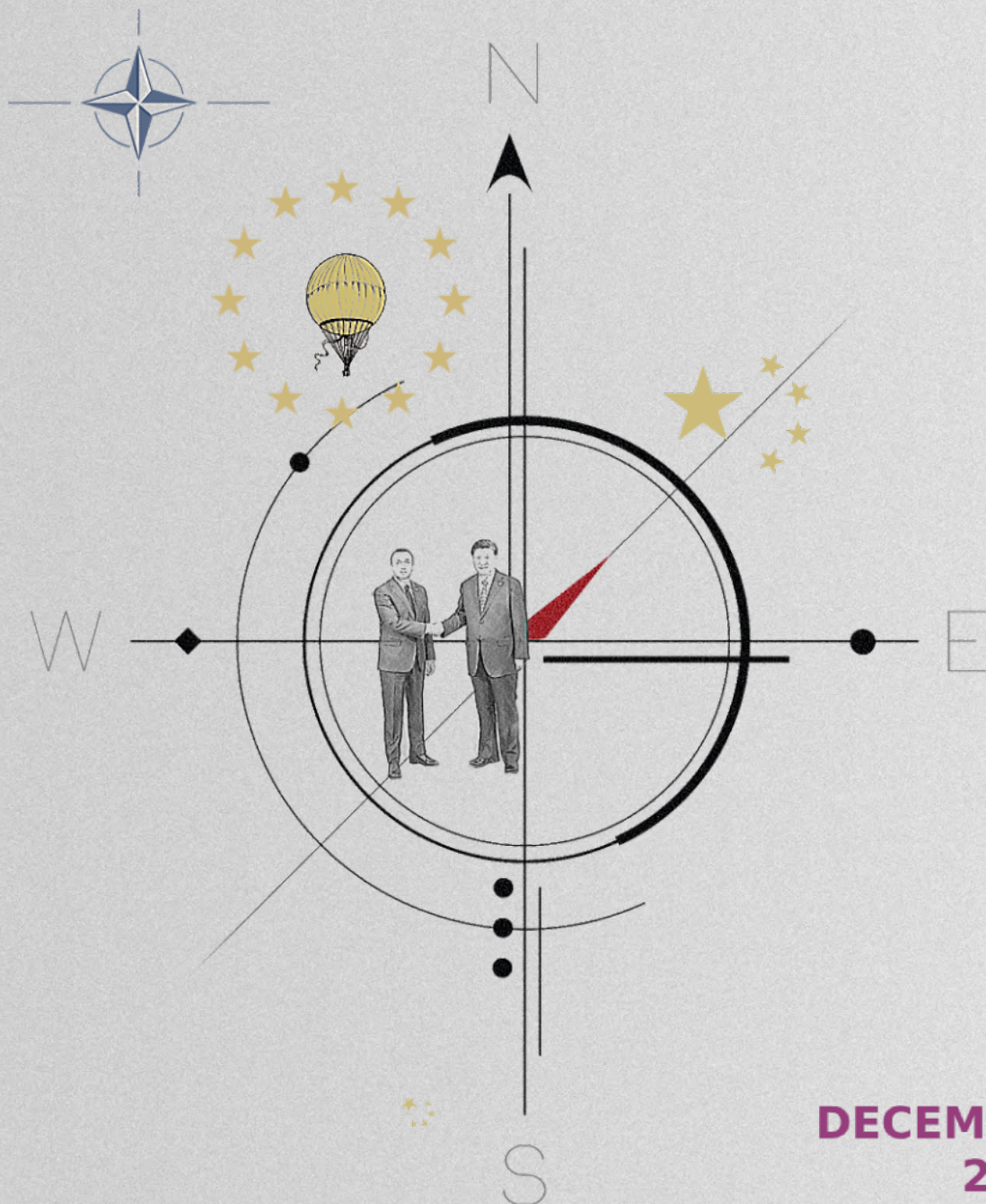




ASSESSMENT OF GEORGIA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT WITH THE PRC



DECEMBER
2023



On July 31, 2023, during the official visit of Georgian PM Irakli Gharibashvili to the People's Republic of China (PRC), a Sino-Georgian strategic partnership agreement was formally established. Under the terms of this agreement, Georgia pledges its full support to all initiatives put forth by Xi Jinping and expresses its readiness to engage actively. This surprising turn of events undermines the nation's ambitions to align with Euro-Atlantic partnerships and could pose long-term security risks. There is no doubt among the Western academia and the security community that in the era of Great Power Competition, the initiatives launched by China are aimed at revising the existing global international order and establishing alternative, Sinocentric foreign policy relations, where China's domestic authoritarianism or aggressive foreign policy will remain immune to the resulting international reactions.

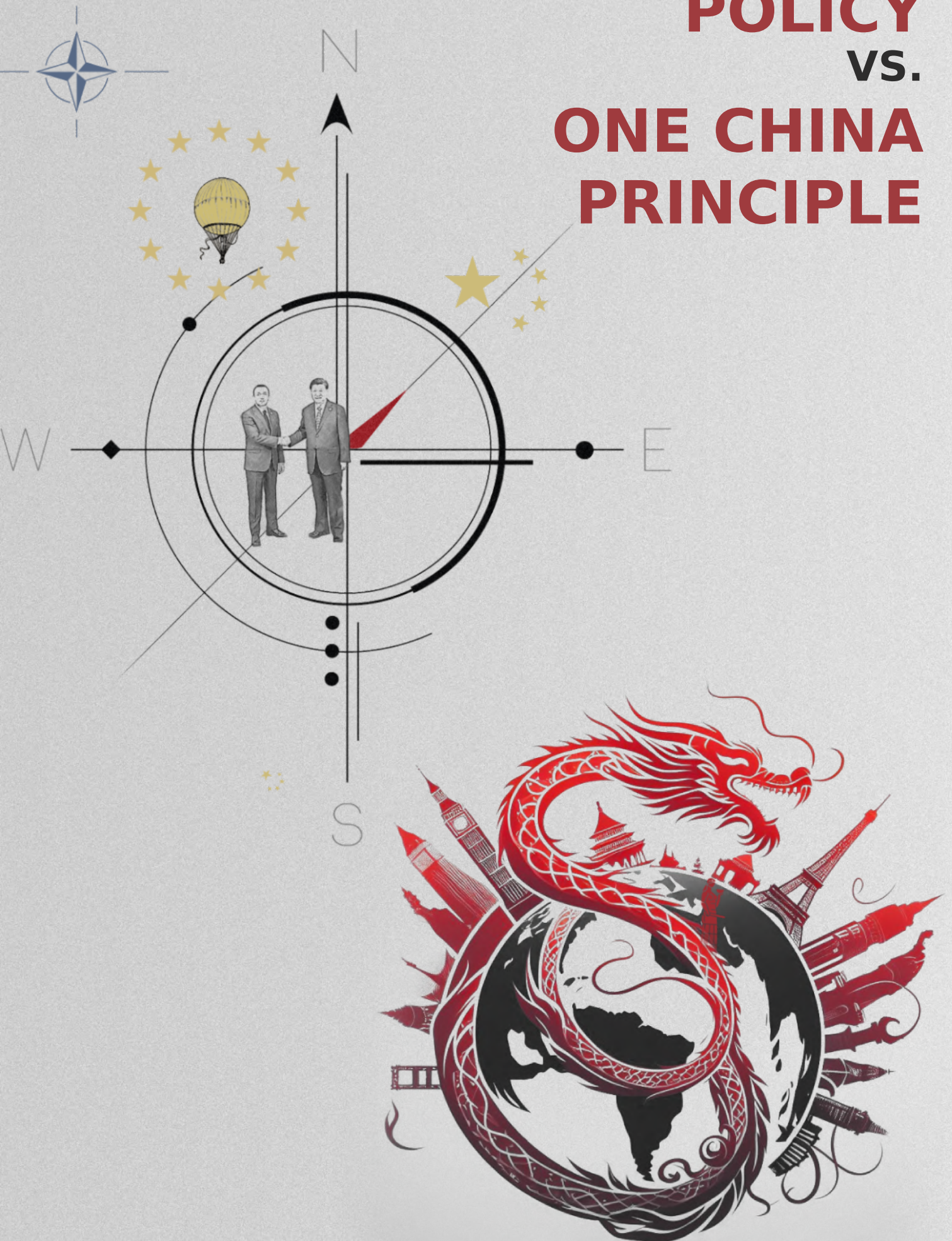
Against this backdrop, it is crucial to understand the role and function of each individual initiative in achieving China's above-mentioned ultimate goals. For this purpose, the "Civic Idea" has prepared a series of analytical blogs where China's initiatives are analyzed.

- ✓ One Belt One Road
- ✓ Global Development Initiative
- ✓ Global Security Initiative
- ✓ Global Civilization Initiative

Assessing Georgia's strategic partnership within the context of Chinese global politics requires a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced terminology employed by the Chinese government in delineating its priorities concerning partnerships with other nations. The categorization of a "**comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership**" signifies a substantial level of connection and alignment of interests between China and partner nations, albeit not always guaranteeing preferential treatment. Notably, China designates varying partnership tiers, with its closest allies like Russia and Pakistan characterized by terms such as 'coordination for a new era' and 'all-weather partnership,' respectively. Beyond these highest-level partnerships, China upholds a spectrum of relationships, including Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships and Strategic and Cooperative Partnerships tailored to enhance bilateral ties. For instance, among its 41 Comprehensive Strategic Partners, Kazakhstan (Permanent Comprehensive Strategic Partnership) is a significant partner, emphasizing notably close bilateral relations. Additionally, China maintains strategic partnerships with 23 countries, including Canada, Djibouti, Nigeria, Sudan, and Ukraine, with **the recent addition of Georgia**. While these partnerships signify strategic interests, distinctions emerge when examining bilateral agreements between the listed strategic partners and Georgia, revealing notable differences in their respective dynamics and scope.

The blog series provided by Civic IDEA scrutinizes Georgia's position in the global political landscape through its strategic partnership with the PRC. Our goal is to evaluate and compare Georgia's situation with that of other states aligned with China, seeking to identify prevailing trends. Our research is divided into several parts, starting with an exploration of the political domain. This involves examining the “One China Principle” and assertions regarding territorial integrity made by both China and its partnering nations, contrasting them with Georgia's stance. Following this, the study will delve into global initiatives endorsed by China, assessing Georgia's involvement compared to other nation-states. One separate study will be devoted to the economic domain, with a primary focus on the Belt and Road Initiative. This will provide a closer look at Georgia's participation, contrasting it with other collaborating countries. Overall, our blogs aim to offer a comprehensive understanding of Georgia's strategic alignment within its partnership with China and shed light on its broader implications in global politics.

ONE CHINA POLICY VS. ONE CHINA PRINCIPLE





POLITICAL DOMAIN – ONE CHINA POLICY

VS.

ONE CHINA PRINCIPLE

The "One China Principle" and the "One China Policy" are distinct concepts that hold significant importance in international relations, particularly in the context of cross-strait relations involving China and Taiwan. The "One China Principle" refers to the stance upheld by the People's Republic of China (PRC) that there is only one sovereign state encompassing both the mainland and Taiwan, which is the PRC itself. It asserts that Taiwan is an integral part of China and does not constitute a separate sovereign entity. The PRC considers any notion of Taiwanese independence as a violation of this principle. On the other hand, the "One China Policy," notably recognized by various countries, acknowledges the PRC's position that there is one China but does not explicitly endorse the **specific claim of sovereignty over Taiwan**. Instead, many states, including the United States, maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan without formal diplomatic recognition as a sovereign state.

To delve into the political dynamics of strategic partnerships, a crucial aspect is the stance taken towards the "One China Principle" and the global positioning of Georgia alongside other nations like Denmark and Canada. The expression of each country's stance regarding this principle not only delineates their diplomatic ties but also serves as a barometer of Chinese influence in reinforcing its territorial interests through smart power tactics. Analysis of the language employed in strategic agreements or joint statements concerning the "One China Principle" unveils the power dynamics at play between China and partner nations.

The diverse interpretations of the "One China Principle", varying among different countries, reflect each nation's distinct approach to Taiwan and China while establishing formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Often overlooked, these policies are nuanced and evolve based on historical interactions with both the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC). As China forges deeper bilateral relationships worldwide through mechanisms like "strategic partnerships" and "comprehensive strategic partnerships," countries increasingly align their stances on China and Taiwan with Beijing's perspectives and the "One China Principle."

The contrasting levels of proximity and engagement with China among strategic partners such as Canada and Georgia, as well as comprehensive strategic partners like **Denmark**, highlight alignment in their respective agreements. While Canada "Takes note" of the Chinese Government's assertion that Taiwan is an inseparable part of the People's Republic of China, the Canadian government does not explicitly adhere to or mention its support for the "One China principle". Conversely, Georgia explicitly declares its steadfast "**adherence**" to the "One China Principle" in its agreement. Hence, Georgia has added itself to the list of **51 countries** worldwide

that maintain positions on “One China” that substantively approach or replicate the PRC’s “One China Principle.”

In its commitment to the “One China Principle”, Georgia’s strategic partnership agreement explicitly aligns with China's position, which differs from Denmark's nuanced approach. Denmark acknowledges and respects the People's Republic of China's (PRC) claim that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China but doesn't entirely adhere to the “One China Principle”. This distinction becomes apparent in their respective strategic partnership agreements. Despite Denmark's higher-tier designation as a comprehensive strategic partner compared to Georgia's status as a strategic partner, Georgia explicitly echoes China's stance on the “One China Principle” in its agreements. Conversely, Denmark's potentially greater diplomatic leverage as a European power expresses hope for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question through dialogue. This nuanced approach showcases Denmark's diplomatic finesse in addressing sensitive geopolitical issues while maintaining relations with both sides. It also underscores how Georgia, despite its relatively shorter history of partnership and potentially lower political leverage compared to Denmark, shows explicit commitment to China's stance, underscoring the influence of China's foreign policies on its partnering nations, including Georgia.

While countries like Cyprus, Ukraine, and Austria have opted to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government without explicitly addressing Taiwan's sovereignty, Georgia's choice to overtly adhere to the “One China Principle” in its strategic partnership agreement appears to overlook its own territorial complexities for the sake of aligning with China's preferences. China's agreements often sidestep explicit mentions of a partner country's territorial disputes, as observed in its support for Georgia’s territorial integrity without specific references to Georgia's occupied territories in [Abkhazia and South Ossetia](#). However, Georgia's decision to explicitly endorse the One China Principle, akin to China's stance, disregards the opportunity to maintain a more nuanced position, similar to other countries, and potentially compromises its own territorial concerns. By explicitly aligning with China's “One China Principle”, Georgia seems to have neglected the opportunity to safeguard its own interests and navigate a diplomatic middle ground, thereby potentially limiting its maneuverability in addressing its own territorial complexities while engaging in strategic partnerships.

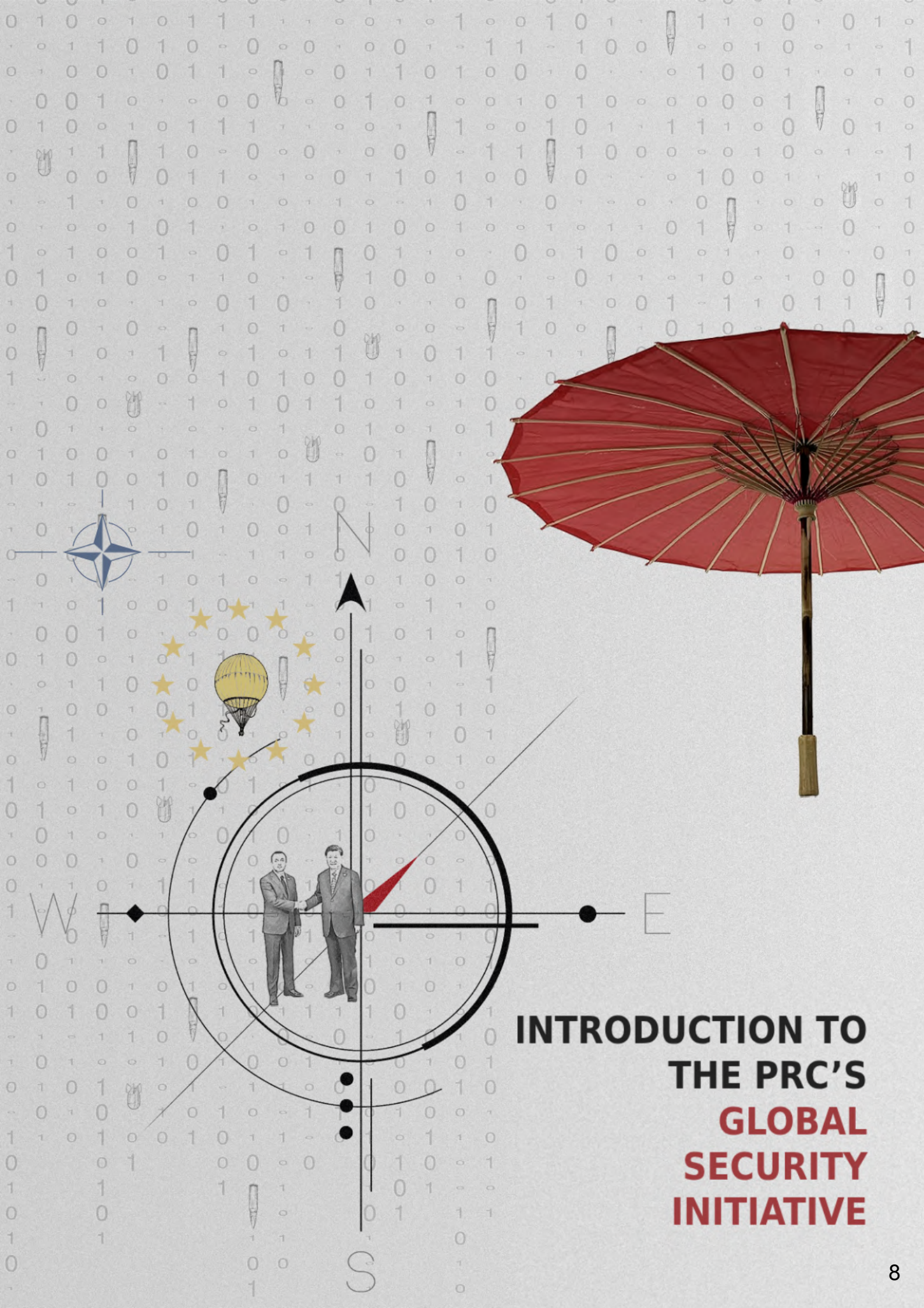
APPENDICES:

1. CHINA'S "PARTNERSHIPS" WITH THE WORLD

CLASSIFICATION OF PARTNERSHIP	COUNTRIES
Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership	Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leon, Gambia, Gabon, Congo, DRC, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia
Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	Greenland, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Micronesia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, France, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Belarus, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, South Africa, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Denmark
Permanent Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	Kazakhstan
Strategic Partnership	Bolivia, Uruguay, Canada, Ukraine, Romania, Austria, Morocco, Sudan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Angola, Oman, Jordan, UAE, Iraq, Kuwait, Cyprus, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Palestine, and Georgia
Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership	Madagascar, Croatia, Uganda, Eq. Guinea, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Timor Leste
Friendly Cooperative Partnership	Armenia, Japan
Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for New Era	Russia
Strategic and Cooperative Partnership	South Korea, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Suriname, Cuba
Future-Oriented Cooperative Partnership	Finland
All-round High-quality Future-oriented Partnership	Singapore
Innovative Comprehensive Partnership	Israel
All-round Friendly Cooperative Partnership	Belgium
Strategic Cooperation	Turkiye
Global Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century	UK
Innovative Strategic Partnership	Switzerland
Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for a new era	Kyrgyzstan
Strategic Partnership for Mutually Beneficial Cooperation	Ireland
All-round Strategic Partnership	Germany
All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership	Pakistan

2. CHART ON POSITION ON ONE CHINA PRINCIPLE/POLICY

CATEGORY	POSITION	STATES	NUMBER
1	Recognize PRC as sole legitimate government of China (or representing all Chinese people) and Taiwan as part of China (province or inalienable part)	Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Estonia, France, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Maldives, Moldova, Montenegro, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Niue, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Vietnam	51
2	Recognize PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and "acknowledge" the PRC's claim that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China (Note: The PRC tends to translate "acknowledge" as "recognize" in Mandarin.)	Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom, Samoa	9
3	Recognizes PRC as sole legitimate government of China and "take note of" PRC's claim that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China	Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Côte D'Ivoire, Ecuador, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela	16
4	Recognizes PRC as sole legitimate government of China and "understands and respects" PRC's claim that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China	Denmark, Hungary, Japan, the Philippines	4
5	Respects and supports the position of the PRC over Taiwan	Russia	1
6	Recognizes PRC as sole legitimate government of China and "respects" PRC's claim that Taiwan is a province of the PRC	The Netherlands, South Korea	2
7	Recognizes PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and "acknowledges" PRC position that Taiwan is part of China	United States	1
8	Recognizes PRC as sole legitimate government of China with no explicit mention of Taiwan's sovereignty	Austria, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Grenada, Equatorial Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Jamaica, Kuwait, Liberia, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mauritius, Micronesia, Norway, Nigeria, Oman, Rwanda, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Togo, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu	41
9	Neither recognizes PRC as sole legitimate government of China nor mentions Taiwan's sovereignty	Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Kiribati, Libya, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Singapore, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Zimbabwe	27
10	Recognizes the ROC	Belize, Eswatini, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Paraguay, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuvalu, Vatican (Holy See)	14



INTRODUCTION TO THE PRC'S GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE



WHY CHINA'S GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE?

Global Security Initiative (GSI, 全球安全倡议) was first announced by Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum on April 21, 2022. The initiative's main goal is to **"restore stability and security in the Asian region."** It is essential to pay attention to the date of announcement and publication of the initiative and its main points.

It has been two months since the start of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The democratic world is mobilizing unprecedented efforts to counter the occupation of sovereign Ukraine, presenting a united front against the aggressor and launching a comprehensive campaign of political, financial, and military support to Ukraine. At this time, the People's Republic of China is becoming discretely active and, by effectively positioning itself in Asia, proposing a new security agenda. **Against the backdrop of Russian aggression, President Xi publishes a plan to declare himself as the "security guarantor in the region".**

President Xi's initiatives, regional engagement, and the introduction of the global security initiative to the world leaders' global agendas, particularly in conjunction with the developments in Ukraine, have sparked a new fruit for thought. Within the democratic world, there is now a growing consideration of the imperative to offer additional security assurances for Taiwan.

The current global order is shaped by the aftermath of World War II, with the sovereignty and security frameworks of nations secured through numerous agreements, conventions, and treaties signed after the end of World War II. This post-World War II arrangement gave rise to the United Nations, an international organization wherein victorious nations, including the People's Republic of China, possess the right to veto crucial matters. However, alongside the United Nations, several regional but global (in terms of mandate and ambition) organizations were established post-World War II. One of the most important among them is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is a union of Western democracies spanning both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

NATO was established with a singular yet principal objective: safeguarding the freedom and security of its member states. To attain this objective, member states committed to leveraging all available resources and means at their disposal to prevent the recurrence of another world war.

The relations between the PRC and NATO have not been particularly friendly and partnership-like for several decades. However, the past ten years have witnessed heightened tensions and contradictions. Since President Xi assumed leadership and solidified his position domestically, Beijing has constantly announced its ambition to become a principal player in global security, be it by declaring various principles or trying to establish new global rules of engagement.

Significantly, within this thematically comprehensive concept the United States of America is conspicuously absent from mention, with Europe receiving only a single reference, underscoring the notion that it is exactly the PRC, who plays a supportive role for Africa in its

dealings with Europe, particularly in ensuring that decisions regarding the regulation of small arms and light weapons are crafted "with due respect for the will of Africa." As outlined in the document, the global security initiative's mandate encompasses the imperative to "facilitate political solutions to international and regional pressing issues, overcoming disagreements, and instigating genuine dialogue and communication in global hotspots." The ultimate objective is the political settlement of conflicts based on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

According to Beijing's perspective, the Global Security Initiative serves as the conceptual framework that will link various multilateral institutions and organizations. These include but are not limited to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS Cooperation Mechanism, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the "China-Central Asia" Summit Mechanism, Asiana, and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, the Gulf Dialogue Platform, Latin American Cooperation Platforms and many others. Also, the global security initiative is envisioned to become the main theme and binder of the PRC-sponsored multilateral forums and future discussions. Notable among these forums are the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum.

Within the framework of this concept, individual paragraphs are dedicated to each region, outlining the existing international mechanisms, identifying problems, and the PRC's role in addressing and regulating these challenges.

Considering the aforementioned perspectives, we can freely consider the global security initiative as a document of pivotal significance in the context of the People's Republic of China's path toward global dominance. Predictably, upon its release, it was interpreted as an anti-Western message, by both officials and the scholarly community. By the same token, the GSI functions as a declared policy document aimed at amplifying China's global influence. Its overarching objective is to establish a global security framework that competes with agreements, alliances, and institutions led by the United States.



WHAT IS THE PRC'S GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE?

In addition to the declared tasks of world domination, it is important to delve into the content of the initiative, which will show us the possible dangers of Georgia joining it without context and specific conditions.

In terms of norms and principles, the GSI underscores well-known concepts of Chinese foreign policy. These include the principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs of states," aiming to delegitimize criticism of domestic human rights issues. Another key concept is "sovereign equality," referring to equality under international law irrespective of a nation's size or income level. Unsurprisingly, this approach is tailored for developing countries, serving as a countermeasure against Western influences.

The initiative is based on the so-called "**Principle of indivisible Security**", which implies that no state can strengthen its own security at the expense of other nations. In particular, we read in the document that its purpose is:

"Creating a balanced and sustainable security architecture and resisting the creation of a security system that does not take into account threats from other countries."

This sentence says it all. Its ambiguity and the array of possible interpretations are quite striking.

Rather than providing clarity, the Global Security Initiative has generated more questions regarding Beijing's vision for its foreign policy.

- ✓ What does "taking into account the threats of other countries" mean?
- ✓ Who, based on what circumstances and objective criteria, determines the amount or range of such threats?
- ✓ How is the legitimacy of self-identified threats determined by states? and so on.

While Xi Jinping's security vision revealed at the Boao Summit comprised both broad and ambiguous provisions, it is worth noting that in February 2023, the PRC's State Council endorsed the concept of the **Global Security Initiative**—a relatively extensive and detailed document. Given the current crisis in the world security system, the concept outlines various mechanisms aimed at fortifying China's role as a new and alternative global leader.

The concept covers many security issues: terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking, public health, natural disasters, nuclear proliferation, climate change, cyber security, artificial intelligence and biosecurity. Beijing will also play its role as a mediator and peacemaker in various regional conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war.

In response to global challenges, an additional component of the GSI involves providing training to foreign militaries and police forces. The concept calls for "more exchange and collaboration between university-level military and police academies" and pledges to fund about 5,000 training and exercises for developing countries over the next five years, with the goal of "preparing professionals to tackle global security challenges."



WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF DIFFERENT STATES TOWARDS THE GSI?

The general character of the document and the vagueness of the provisions were aimed at attracting the support of the states. It is exactly the inherent vagueness in the provisions that gives the PRC a wide arena for manipulation and enables it to reflect the general principles of the GSI with different interpretations in specific bilateral agreements, considering the power and influence of the partner country. For example, as a result of active

diplomatic efforts, the EU member Cyprus managed to have the following provisions appear in its strategic cooperation agreement with China:

- ✓ Both sides confirm respect for the choice of their own development path, as well as the appropriate pursuit of national objectives in both domestic and foreign policies;
- ✓ The PRC will continue to support Cyprus' efforts to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity and to achieve a comprehensive, equitable, and enduring resolution to the Cyprus issue within the framework of relevant UN resolutions and international law.

Unfortunately, a similar approach is absent in the strategic agreement with Georgia, which should be unequivocally deemed a failure of Georgian diplomacy. Unlike the provisions highlighted earlier, the Sino-Georgian strategic cooperation agreement merely affirms "the respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries". Not a single word is said about the occupation of Georgian territories, support for de-occupation, or respect for sovereign choice when making foreign policy decisions. The example of strategic cooperation between two specific countries, Georgia and Cyprus, with the PRC, clearly shows how much room for interpretation President Xi's initiatives create. The primary concern lies in the potential implications of such interpretations.

ANALYZING THE DANGERS OF CHINA'S **GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (GDI)**





WHAT IS THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (GDI)?

Even though the People's Republic of China (PRC) aimed to convey a more public stance on its development cooperation through several white papers (2011, 2014, 2021), the Global Development initiative firstly was introduced on September 21, 2021, at the main discussion of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, where Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled "*Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties to Build a Better World*". The speech presented the guiding principles for world development, emphasizing the importance of

- ✓ economic growth,
- ✓ international equality, and
- ✓ environmental harmony.

In June 2022, another High-Level Dialogue on Global Development called "*Foster a Global Development Partnership for the New Era to Jointly Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" was chaired by Chinese President Xi Jinping, with an emphasis on building a global alliance for development in the contemporary period. 32 measures were listed in 8 key areas of the GDI for cooperatively implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

According to the concept paper of the Global Development Initiative, the latter represents a strategic framework for tackling the opportunities and difficulties in the current international development process. It was announced in response to the global crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on economies and development objectives.

The initiative seeks to coordinate global efforts to address current development issues, accelerate post-pandemic recovery, and seize new possibilities for environmentally friendly growth.

Considering these factors, the document outlines 8 key areas of focus:

- ✓ reducing poverty,
- ✓ ensuring food security,
- ✓ dealing with pandemics and vaccine distribution,
- ✓ facilitating development financing,
- ✓ battling climate change and advancing eco-friendly growth,
- ✓ promoting industrialization,
- ✓ fostering a digital economy,
- ✓ improving connectivity in the digital age.

In addition, the GDI targets maximization of the synergy between the UN 2030 Development Goals and initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, African Union Agenda 2063, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and the Initiative on Partnership for Africa's Development, as well as China-ASEAN, etc.

Consequently, the GDI is the PRC's effort to intertwine a wide range of global initiatives and place them in one field of action.



MEMBERSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GDI

As of October 2022, the Global Development Initiative has received support from more than 100 countries and international organizations, and 68 countries have joined the UN's Group of Friends of the GDI.

On September 20, 2022, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi chaired the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the GDI in New York. “The UN Secretary-General António Guterres sent a video message. Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, Lao Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith, Thai Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, along with foreign ministers of nearly 40 countries including Mongolia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, and Nicaragua, Permanent Representatives of the Group members to the United Nations, and representatives of international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration, and the International Renewable Energy Agency”, were attending that meeting.

Following six main fronts, the summit presented a comprehensive plan for furthering the GDI. The approach mentioned above emphasized the significance of project-driven endeavors, vigorous policy discourse, enhancement of capabilities, and pragmatic collaboration. The conference also highlighted the importance of using funds like the China-UN Peace and Development Trust Fund and the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund to support the GDI's projects. The summit focused on essential global issues such as food and energy security and underscored the necessity of all-encompassing collaboration in crucial domains to guarantee the achievement of all 17 sustainable development objectives delineated in the 2030 Agenda.

Most importantly, seven practical measures were introduced. These measures included the release of the first round of projects existing under the GDI project pool, the announcement of particular activities on food security, clean energy, and customs cooperation, the foundation of the World Digital Education Alliance under China's initiative, the beginning of building the Bamboo as a Substitute for Plastics Global Action Plan, China's pledge to make available globally the data acquired by the Sustainable Development Science Satellite (SDGSAT-1) launched by the PRC, and the demonstration of six global data products for sustainable development to the UN.

The financial support for the GDI-funded initiatives comes from the Chinese contributions to international programs or development assistance from Beijing that is channeled through the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA). Executing the GDI is the responsibility of CIDCA, a vice-ministerial organization created under a State Council agency in 2018. It aims to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's objectives while

strengthening South-South collaboration. To enhance the GDI implementation, CIDCA has established the Global Development Promotion Centre. During 2021-2023, the PRC **provided \$3 billion** to developing countries as foreign aid. President Xi Jinping upgraded the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund by replenishing it with **\$1 billion** and increasing **its support** to the China-UN Peace and Development Fund.

RISKS REGARDING GDI

Although the GDI was and is mostly about general principles, China's advocacy towards development can bring positive changes in developing countries and, most importantly, emphasize the need for international cooperation to implement it. Experts, as well as some countries, still look at this initiative with suspicion. **For example**, after having encountered problems with the BRI cost overruns, delays, and loan issues, some of the significant Indo-Pacific players, like Indonesia, appeared to have reservations regarding the initiative.

Unlike the BRI, the GDI is a new initiative with no track record yet to provide insight into the PRC's goals and motivations. However, past experiences with poor project management, corruption, debt trap, and intentions to spread its strategic interests have played a major role in shaping perceptions about it.

The GDI would probably have gained support from Western and Northern nations 10 years ago if China had launched it. During that period, the emphasis on development cooperation was primarily on establishing communication and collaboration rooted in common goals rather than being significantly influenced by intense soft power rivalry. However, nowadays, given the complicated geopolitical considerations shaping contemporary development cooperation, some see the GDI as a tactic used by China to exercise soft power. The GDI is criticized as an **effort to propagate** Chinese ideology in developing countries. The question about the PRC's intentions arises from its tendency to use its investments and activities as leverage to gain influence on the territory.

Some experts outline how the initiative was purposefully created with flexible and inclusive rules. It provides a roadmap for China's upcoming development ambitions and leaves room for interpretation. This flexibility is crucial for President Xi Jinping's political standing within China, as it provides a framework that local governments, different agencies, and stakeholders can easily align. The initiative is adaptable and subject to change due to its malleability.

The experts also point out that the Global Development Initiative has a rather small budget compared to the BRI, but they also do not forget to **mention the PRC's new, alternative approach**

of doing small but, at first sight, fascinating projects after Covid 19. Even in this case, if the population of a developing country sees any tangible changes and results, China's initiatives, whether be it the BRI or the GDI, will target people's emotions through their goals and interests and accordingly enhance Chinese influence on the territory. A great example of that is **Southeast Asian nations** taking on the GDI because they anticipate financial gains and conceptual alignment around the "right to development" from it. The same tendencies are observed in **African countries**, too.

In addition, the GDI prioritizes a **state-centric** understanding of the right to economic development, prioritizing it as a fundamental human right above all other rights. This contrasts with the US focus on unique human rights and development plans intended to advance personal freedom and democracy.

The idea that the GDI poses a normative challenge to current human rights frameworks and the larger international rules-based system has probably played a significant role in the United States and its allies' (including Australia's) comparatively restrained reaction. The area of cooperation that once existed in the field of development is now seen more as competition. It is a „red flag” alongside China's intentions to forge GDI ahead of SDG that, of course, promotes Beijing's interests and agenda.

GEORGIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE GDI: UNPACKING THE REALITIES AND RISKS

The GDI, in light of its inherent lexical ambiguity—characterized by the use of extremely wide and unspecific terminology—raises serious issues. This ambiguity offers a fundamental challenge since it makes it difficult for us to completely understand the initiative's consequences and the scope of its expansion.

Georgia's enthusiastic support for the project without any apparent misgivings becomes more troublesome in this situation because it agrees to a partnership without being fully aware of its specific responsibilities or goals.

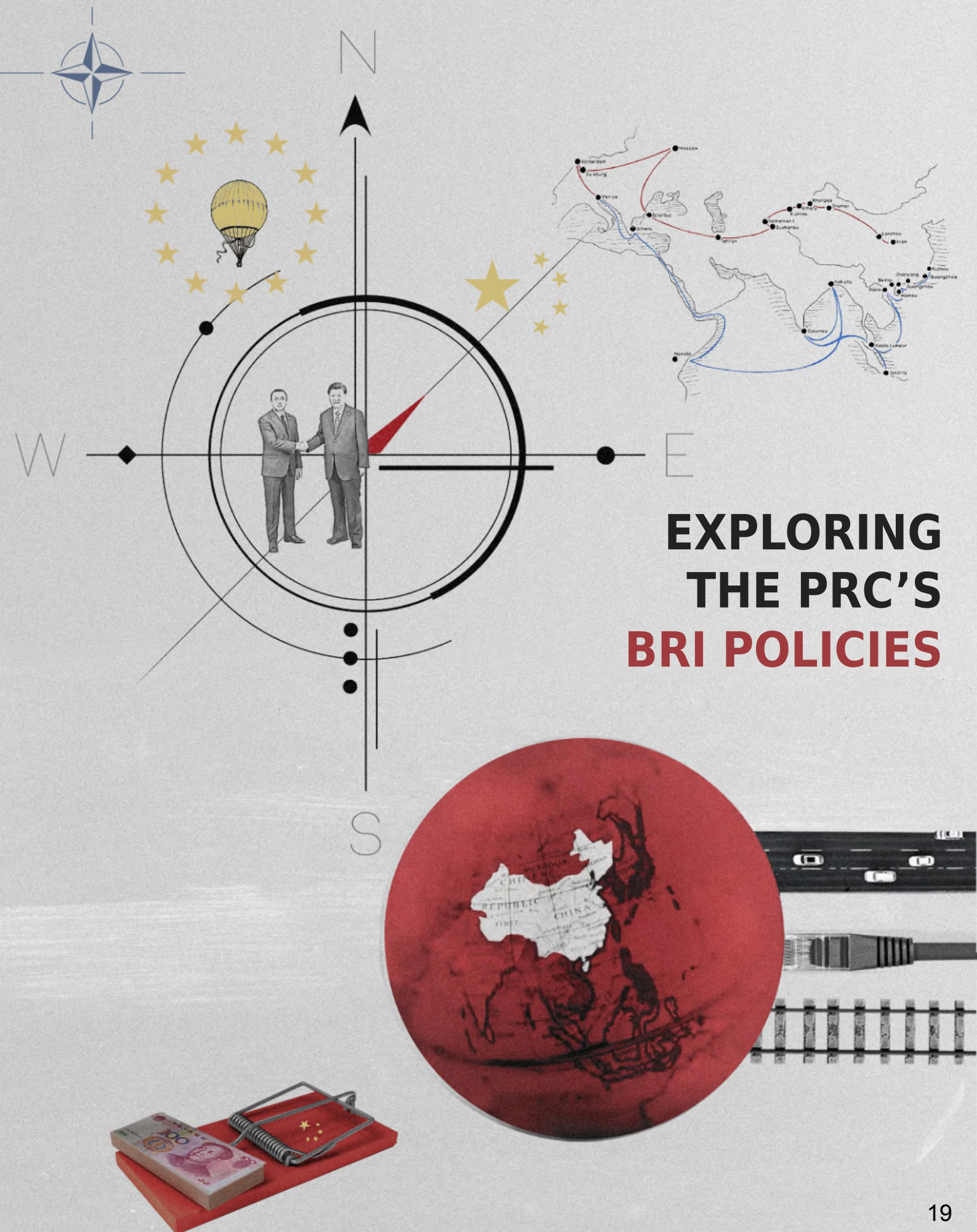
There is also precedent for concerns about debt traps and China's use of such projects to increase its influence. This calls for caution when deciding whether to support efforts that lack openness.

Experts have a rationale to believe that the PRC may want to use the GDI to restructure the world order in a way that goes against liberal democratic ideals and beliefs. This entails the potential modification of international legal principles, the reinterpretation of human rights, and the pursuit of objectives and interests frequently at odds with those of Georgia's strategic allies, such as the United States and the EU.

Joining the GDI raises serious difficulties considering Georgia's desire to identify itself with the Western world, like the European Union and NATO. Before committing to an endeavor with ambiguity and the potential for geopolitical repercussions jeopardizing its broader strategic aims in the West, Georgia must exercise caution and thoughtful deliberation.

Additionally, it is believed that China uses the GDI to project soft power and spread its ideology in underdeveloped nations. This raises concerns about Beijing's motivations and propensity to use investments and other actions to gain influence. The initiative's adaptability and inclusivity are viewed as a benefit for taking into account local conditions as well as a possible tool for the PRC to keep control of other countries.

In light of these factors, Georgia's commitment to the GDI must be cautiously assessed not only because of the responsibilities and effects that its future interpretation can have but also due it contradicting the state's overall foreign policy goals and strategic alliances with Western countries.



EXPLORING THE PRC'S BRI POLICIES

WHAT DOES THE BRI STAND FOR?

Belt and Road Initiative, usually referred to as the 21st century “Silk Road,” was first mentioned by the Chinese leader Xi Jinping during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013. The project envisages connecting Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks to foster regional integration and boost trade and economic growth, mainly by attracting **a large number of investments** for financing the critical infrastructure assets (ports, railways, highways, bridges, tunnels, energy pipelines, etc.). Initially, President Xi introduced the idea of the **Silk Road Economic Belt**, emphasizing overland routes, and **the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road**, concerning sea routes. These two concepts were eventually combined into what we now recognize as the BRI. This project brought together 138 countries to strengthen connectivity through infrastructure initiatives, trade networks, and economic collaborations, as depicted by the Chinese government. Beijing likes to describe this initiative as, first and foremost, making the world safer and more prosperous and, secondly, improving China's economy domestically and attracting investments to its poorer provinces.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE BRI?

BRI projects are aimed primarily at **developing countries** and are often followed by corruption schemes established between the PRC and the partner governments. **Over the years, there has been more news about the problems with the projects, corruption risks, environmental damage, massive violation of labor rights, and government officials investigated for shady deals than the actual success of the development agenda.** Since the members of foreign governments are often involved in these fraudulent schemes, they disregard the flows in contracts or corruption risks, usually explained by the personal interests of concrete individuals or simply the weakness of state institutions. One of the media outlets eloquently called it **“China ‘empire’ of ‘bribes’”**. As a result, one can witness the **following outcomes of the BRI projects**:

- Lack of due diligence on the side of state agencies (ignorance of the reputation of those PRC companies winning the state contracts);
- Signing contracts in violation of state laws;
- Continuous changes in the bidding terms and conditions;
- Delayed and low-quality service/equipment;
- Violation of the labor rights;
- Threat to the environment;
- Threat to national security.

Another problem is China's "debt trap" diplomacy, named so by the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.

For the purposes of BRI, the PRC provides a partner state with a loan under the precondition that the state hand the particular project to the Chinese company. The Chinese banks promise the state to promote economic prosperity, make investments, encourage various initiatives, and offer multiple services while, in return, the partner country's government is obliged to make a number of commitments. These obligations are related to the privileges, immunities, and exemptions of the corresponding Chinese bank/financial institution. As a matter of fact, the less developed a country is, the less it is able to pay off its debt due to its economic shortages. Hence, it becomes obliged to concede its strategic assets or land to China, grant the debtor the ability to exploit its natural resources, or simply vote in favor of the Chinese initiatives on international platforms. In his 2018 speech, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo alleged that **China is attempting to construct an "empire" through investment-induced influence over leaders, referred to as the PRC's "debt trap" diplomacy.** Pompeo **pledged** to oppose this effort consistently and resolutely:

"When China shows up with bribes to senior leaders in countries in exchange for infrastructure projects that will harm the people of that nation, then this idea of a treasury-run empire build is something that I think would be bad for each of those countries".

There are numerous countries across the continents already in that very "debt trap," risking their sovereignty and resources to be taken by Chinese firms and, eventually, the state.

- ✓ With the help of the Chinese company "TBEA," the **Tajik** government decided to take a **loan from the Chinese Exim Bank**, fully controlled by the CCP, to build a power plant in Dushanbe. However, it was unable to pay the debt and had to hand its gold and ore mines to TBEA. It has been recently revealed that Tajikistan had to **concede part of its land** to the PRC due to the same reason of inability to pay the debt.
- ✓ In 2018, the **Ghanaian** government signed a Master Project Support Agreement (MPSA) with the Chinese Sinohydro, under which the company was supposed to provide USD 2 billion worth of infrastructure (including roads, bridges, hospitals, affordable housing, and other infrastructure) **in exchange for Ghana's refined aluminum ores (bauxite) mines.** Under this agreement, the Ghana Integrated Aluminum Development Corporation (GIADC) had to set up an offshore account for bauxite sales revenue, from which the accumulated amount would have gone exclusively to Sinohydro.



WESTERN CRITICISM OF THE BRI

Despite its solid promotion and ambitious action plans, the initiative has faced much criticism, as the PRC's growing influence has become a challenge for many Western nations whose political and economic interests do not match Beijing's. With stated objectives, through BRI, China is trying to establish a new world economic order and become a role model for others globally. However, its foreign policy goals go beyond this statement, transforming BRI into a

more significant foreign policy weapon for bringing states under control, gaining loyalty, and becoming a superpower on a global scale. Additionally, Western democracies agree that Beijing is using the BRI to exercise political influence on developing countries. **China applies the initiative as a tool to influence and gain privileges over foreign business and political elites.** Beijing may use these political privileges gained to later influence the foreign state's relations with the Western democracies or exploit the state's voting on international platforms such as the UN Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council, and so on. For instance:

The possibility of Chinese infrastructure loans has influenced **the Philippines and Cambodia** to reconsider their military and diplomatic relationships with the US. In the case of the Philippines, President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr, just like his predecessor Duterte, has launched talks with Beijing on joint oil and gas development in the South China Sea disputed region, **prioritizing economic relations with the PRC** over sovereignty concerns. Marcos's foreign policy is considered a hedging strategy, seeking to balance relations with both China and the US to maximize benefits. This approach may hinder the United States' ability to advance sensitive alliance projects.

The PRC's political and economic leverage over the developing states is the main reason the BRI is under the turmoil of Western criticism. The US is a prominent voice in this regard, assessing the BRI and other initiatives from the perspective of the long-lasting US-China great power competition. The US perceives the threat coming from the PRC as more comprehensive, encompassing various aspects, including the economy, technology, security, politics, ideology, etc. The US government has claimed that the BRI operates as an influence campaign, **luring developing nations towards its "debt-trap diplomacy"**. Therefore, it supports and creates initiatives to counterweight the PRC's initiatives.

- ✓ One of the big initiatives includes Japan, Australia, and the US and is called the **Blue Dot Network**, aiming to establish global infrastructure principles and safeguard the world from the Chinese corrosive capital.

In 2021, during the G7 **summit**, the participating countries decided to launch the **Build Back Better World initiative** (B3W). The latter emphasizes four sectors: climate change, digital technology, health security, and gender equality, and aims to assist the BRI member states by addressing their infrastructure crisis (which exceeds \$40 trillion). Western big democracies like Japan, Australia, and Canada fully share, support, and actively engage in these initiatives.

- ✓ European countries likewise started to perceive the PRC as a rival rather than a partner. Their BRI counterweight action plans include the **Three Seas Initiative** (Baltic, Adriatic, Black) launched by the EU (supported by the US) in 2015 and 17+1 projects (formerly known as 17+1 and currently being shrunk to **14+1**).

The EU stance towards the PRC was indicated in the **speech** of the European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen on March 30, 2023, at the joint event organized by the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Centre. She **highlighted** that **"the Chinese Communist Party's clear goal is a systemic change of the international order with China at its center,"** pointing at the BRI. Currently, 18 EU member states participate in the Chinese BRI, while developed **democracies** such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Denmark, Finland,

Ireland, Sweden and Spain have abstained from participating. The case of Italy (BRI member since 2019) is particularly noteworthy. Under the BRI, Italy signed deals worth 2.5 billion Euros. Italy has become the only G-7 state part of BRI, during overall skepticism of the US, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, and the UK, who've been engaged in active discussions over **countermeasures**. In 2023, Italy also decided to withdraw from this initiative amid serious controversies and unmet expectations. Italian politicians have **complained** about the initiative complementing the PRC more than Italy and recognizing it as utterly destructive to the economic and political stability of the country.

THE CONCEPT OF THE DIGITAL SILK ROAD

With the development of digital technologies, the Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiative was announced in 2015 as an integral part of the BRI, denoting the incorporation of cutting-edge technology within the initiative. By 2017, the DSR had taken center stage in the government's BRI strategy, evolving into a pivotal element of China's foreign policy by 2020. President Xi Jinping has consistently advocated for collaboration on digital connectivity, even engaging with members of the BRI. There is no exact **number** of participating countries publicly available; nonetheless, according to the Eurasia Review, 1/3 of all BRI countries are also becoming an integral part of the DSR. The initiative involves a number of **activities** instigated and orchestrated by the PRC in cyberspace, such as heavily investing in telecommunications - 5G, fiber-optic cables, satellite ground tracking stations, data centers, "smart city," and e-commerce projects, etc. Although this initiative is still in the development phase and the signed memorandums are not binding, in a few years, we will be able to discuss its genuine outcomes since the scope of interest in this initiative is growing in both developing and developed countries worldwide.

GEORGIA, AS A PART OF THE BRI

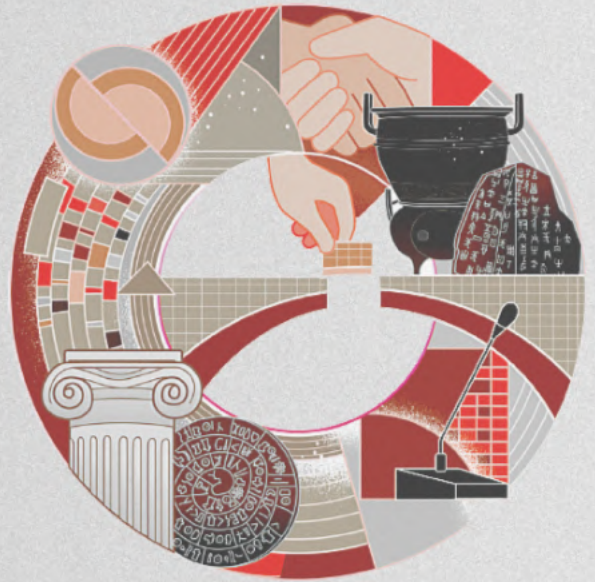
Georgia has gradually increased cooperation with the PRC since 2013 and eventually became part of the Chinese grand strategy, **hosting summits and international forums** dedicated to it. BRI is mainly represented by Chinese companies in Georgia's infrastructure sector. One can find a wide variety of Chinese companies while going through Georgia's major highways. No matter whether private or state, these companies are directly or indirectly controlled by the Chinese government, serving the foreign policy goals of the CCP. Georgian politicians and members of the business elite usually do not back down from corrupt deals and continue to award critical infrastructure projects to Chinese firms. This is because they are enticed by promises from their Chinese counterparts of receiving privileges and frequently high-paying positions once they step down from their roles. For example, while leaving the PM's post for the first time in 2015,

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili worked for the **notorious Chinese company CEFC**. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the same person is trying to change the country's foreign policy by establishing a stronger strategic partnership with China.

Georgia's rapprochement with China, adherence to its security and economic initiatives, and the desire to transfer critical infrastructure to the PRC's hands are in complete contradiction with Georgia's foreign policy direction and go against the constitutional principles of integration into the Western alliances. In the event of the strategic document being effectively put into action, we could witness a profound transformation of the country, where the primary strategic partner across all sectors shifts from the EU or the USA to the PRC.

In conclusion, the Sino-Georgian strategic partnership has raised significant concerns and implications for Georgia's foreign policy and long-term security. As evidenced by the document, the strategic partnership will not only engage Georgia in Xi Jinping's latest initiatives but also enhance the potential of the BRI in Georgia. While China poses as the leading player in promoting global prosperity and cooperation, many Western nations have raised concerns about the PRC's growing malign influence and assertiveness. The Western democracies argue that the BRI serves China's foreign policy objectives, potentially transforming it into a tool for exerting political and economic control and securing strategic assets in partner countries.

EXPLORING THE PRC'S GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE (GCI)





WHAT ARE CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES AND MODUS OPERANDI?

On March 15, 2023, in his address, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, announced the "Global Civilization Initiative". The stated goal of the initiative is to "respect the diversity of the world's civilizations, promote the common values of all humanity, respect the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, strengthen international cultural ties and cooperation, and promote the advance of humanity."² All this, together with other global initiatives of China, should contribute to the creation a "community with a shared future".

The idea of a "community with a shared future" is the main framework of Xi Jinping's foreign policy. Specifically, it represents China's long-term vision and grand strategy for reforming the International Order that shall be preceded by the establishment of a new type of international relations that will promote the "Rise of China," and will be free from the wrong practices of foreign expansion, one-state domination, and colonization. It has to be noted that it was not Xi Jinping who designed the concept of "community with a shared future" – in fact, his predecessor Hu Jintao first used the term in 2007 when describing China's regional and neighborhood policy. Xi Jinping asserted it as a global policy concept in Moscow, during his first international visit as president, in 2013. Later, in 2017, at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party, the party constitution **was amended** to reflect this issue as a defining aspect of Xi Jinping's foreign policy visions.

Opposition to the main features of the International Order, including military alliances created by the US leadership, and the democratic norms, is not new to China's foreign policy. However, before Xi Jinping, all Chinese leaders essentially based their foreign policies on Deng Xiaoping's famous dictum - "**Hide your strength, bide your time, and never claim leadership.**" In this respect, Xi Jinping escalated the rhetoric of his predecessors immediately after assuming the presidency and in 2018, **replaced** the previous phrase - "China should participate in the global governance reform,"– with: "China will take active steps to reform the global governance." It was the first time when China offered an alternative - an authoritarian capitalism that was different from the liberal democracy approach – to solve the current problems of the world, which also implied the Chinese way of modernization.

In order to accomplish the aforementioned proactive and, in some cases, aggressive foreign policy objectives, China has launched global initiatives (see Table 1) that synergistically serve to solve the common task. The oldest and well-studied of these initiatives is the Belt and Road Initiative, with its incongruous results and corresponding reverberations around the world. The other three are relatively new. Here, it is crucial to note that the last three initiatives were launched after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and, most importantly, the war in Ukraine. Perhaps, the three global initiatives launched one after the other are linked, on the one hand, to reducing the reputational damage received by the Covid

² This article was published by the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Georgia http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=11&id_artc=177757

pandemic, and on the other hand, to exploiting the new opportunities that have arisen in terms of strengthening global standings against the backdrop of the growing confrontation between Russia and the West.

Initiative		Means and Methods	Goal	
2013	One Belt One Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase access to the Western market• Debt Diplomacy• Main geography - Eurasia	Create communities with a shared future	Realize the ambitions of a great power by changing the world order and reforming the global governance
2021	Global Development Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain the favor of the elites In the context of the fight against poverty• Main geography: Africa and Latin America• Utilize the United Nations		
2022	Global Security Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actions against international military and political alliances• Actions against NATO and USA• Hard power projection• Military cooperation		
2023	Global Civilization Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soft power projection• Support Confucian institutions		
Projection of China's Influences in an Era of Great Power Competition				



THE GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE AND THE RESULTING RISKS

First of all, one should be aware that of all the other initiatives announced by China, The Global Civilization Initiative chronologically is the most recent and conceptually unsophisticated one. However, this type of ambiguity is characteristic of Chinese foreign policy. At the initial stage, not even the content of the Belt and Road Initiative was entirely clear, and many Western analysts considered it just a loud quote, which contributed to the spreading of false beliefs about the virtuousness of the project. With such ambiguity, China seems to maintain flexibility in free interpretations, which it adjusts according to the state of affairs. It should be noted that if One Belt One Road was at first an economic project and then a geopolitical one, in the case of the three new initiatives, the primary goals are geopolitical. In achieving these unified grand foreign policy objectives, the goal of the Global Civilization Initiative - to increase the world's acceptance of Chinese civilization - represents some kind of acculturation and enhancement of China's soft power influence - and therefore - is directed against universal Western values.

More specifically, as can be seen from the public speeches of the political leaders of the People's Republic of China, and the main messages of the state media, as well as the

comments of various experts close to the state, the goal of the Global Civilization Initiative will be the creation and proper dissemination of a new "story" about China, as a narrative, especially in the countries of the Global South, as well as in International Organizations, for example, in the United Nations. **"Better tell China's stories" to the world, including by creating a China-friendly media environment, Xi Jinping said at the 20th National Party Congress.** This statement indicates that, along with legitimate cultural cooperation and exchange platforms, the Global Civilization Initiative will also serve as a platform for **information and influence operations**, mainly by recruiting local political and intellectual elites in the Global South countries. Especially, where it has been spotted multiple times in espionage, recruitment, and spy activities under the guise of China's cultural exchange projects.

The following theses, developed by the Party and personally by Xi Jinping, will be used to establish the aforementioned new narrative about China and a positive image of China in global public discourse:

Chinese-style modernization - this concept is mentioned eleven times in the Communist Party 20th National Congress **report**. This issue reappeared in the appeal **text** of the Global Civilization Initiative, where it is said that the people themselves should decide what type of modernization is acceptable to them, and most importantly, it is mentioned that China will develop a model of modernization that will be free from colonization and hegemony. In doing so, in parallel with the criticism of the Western liberal-democratic development model, China offers to the world its own alternative development model, which in turn should lead to the creation of a "community with a shared future".



CHINESE WAY TO UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY

When discussing the "community with a shared future", Xi Jinping constantly emphasizes the importance of two political issues: *democracy and partnership*. Both of these issues clearly reveal connections to China's domestic policy needs and his vision of reforming the international system. Democracy is a key principle that Xi Jinping believes is equally important in both domestic politics and global governance. In his speech at the United Nations in 2015, he noted that consultation is an important part of democracy that should also be used as a tool for global governance. It is clear that, as a format of relations between equals, the "consultative democracy" for Xi Jinping represents a tool against Western domination. However, the issue also has a domestic political dimension. Chinese state propaganda constantly **talks** about the dawn of the West and the crisis in Western democracy. According to them, despite the one-party rule China has created a more developed form of democracy which is based on the internal mechanisms of party democracy and the participation of external observers in the "Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference", which they believe is a better form of governance than Western electoral democracy. It is on this

understanding of democracy that the above-mentioned concept of Chinese-style modernization stands. In the Strategic Agreement [document](#) signed by Georgia with China, the mentioned issue is formulated with the following wording: „Georgia believes that Chinese modernization offers a new path and a new option for mankind to achieve modernization. Both sides expressed their readiness to exchange experience in governance to achieve common development and prosperity.“ Without knowing the context described above, the phrase – „exchange experience in governance“ leaves the impression that we are talking about sharing technocratic or technological knowledge, but in fact, for China, all this has, first of all, a value-based, or a normative meaning.



PARTNERSHIPS INSTEAD OF ALLIANCES

Partnership, dialogue, non-confrontation and non-alliance, according to China, are the defining principles of its international relations - an alternative to alliances created under the leadership of America. For China, partnerships rather than alliances are a beneficial form of relationship because they allow parties to cooperate regardless of different values, political ideologies, or foreign policy preferences, and are not constrained by alliance commitments. It is important to highlight that for China the partnership as a tool of foreign policy actions is both a part of a new narrative about China, i.e. a message, and a method of spreading this very message. China currently has such [partnership relations with up to 100 countries](#) and organizations and intends to continue to widen its network of partners.

It is worth mentioning that practically all the theses described above are accumulated in the document of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between Georgia and China. Immediately after the signing of the document, the "Civic Idea" prepared a [study](#) of the agreement. However, the academic and political circles in Georgia had limited knowledge of certain global initiatives which the government expressed unconditional support for by signing the document on partnership with China (it is fair to note that this knowledge is still scarce even in the Western academic realm). This document confirms that the initial worries and fears about the strategic partnership with China were well-founded. The noble titles of China's global initiatives disguise the country's long-term foreign policy objective, the spirit of which is to revise the rules-based International Order and realign it with China's interests. The existing international order and normative foreign policy, despite its many shortcomings, is the only model in which the national interests of a small state like Georgia can be realized, especially against the backdrop of territorial problems and occupation. The form of global governance that China is imposing on the world allows authoritarian regimes unlimited political, economic and military expansion, mostly at the expense of small states like Georgia. It is clear that by supporting (among other initiatives) the Global Civilization Initiative, Georgia acted to the detriment of its own national interests.

CONCLUSION

In the highly complex global security landscape, along with many problems, new opportunities appear for such a small country with crucial geopolitical roles as Georgia. Through correct and cohesive efforts from both the government and citizens of Georgia, the country holds the potential to achieve a significant breakthrough in the international arena — an objective set as a decades-long task just a few years ago.

Given this context, the Georgian government's pursuit of the "Chinese dream" appears increasingly dangerous and confusing, as it fundamentally diverges from the vision and political objectives of our strategic allies, namely the USA and the European Union. It is crucial to note that, unlike a decade ago when Western democracies actively participated in initiatives proposed by the PRC, such as the "Belt and Road Initiative," the current trend is unequivocally moving towards distancing themselves from these initiatives. The recent withdrawal from the BRI initiated by Italy is just one example of this evolving dynamic.

The strategic cooperation between Georgia and China announced by Beijing serves as a double-edged sword on Georgia's head in this extremely tense international security environment. To fulfill the constitutional obligation of integration in the Western alliances (NATO and EU), the country not only has to implement a democratic agenda with fundamental reforms but also has to correct a foreign policy trajectory. According to the 2023 report of the Council of the European Union, the compatibility of Georgia's foreign and security policy with the European Union has declined even further. It has **dropped** from the already low 48% (based on 2022 results) to a mere 31%, which is naturally an obstacle on the path to accession.

Nowadays, Georgia's main problem is that the balance between its national economic interests and security concerns is fundamentally disrupted in formulating and implementing its foreign policy decisions. The country is confronted with three primary objectives:

- ✓ To safeguard its sovereignty and enhance resilience against external pressures and interventions;
- ✓ To protect the country's critical infrastructure in accordance with national security interests and objectives;
- ✓ To address the most acute economic challenges without harming strategic interests.

To achieve these three objectives, relations and partnerships with the US and the EU should be the defining factor and starting point. Therefore, continuing a targeted policy to bring Georgia closer to the European Union and NATO is extremely important. This approach should not only facilitate membership but also dictate any other advancements in the international arena in the frame of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Georgia definitely needs stable and friendly relations with the PRC, especially in the trade and economic spheres. However, it is imperative to refrain from giving the impression of engaging in a dual strategy. For example, Georgia should either develop on the example of Western, liberal-democratic states or, as indicated in the strategic document announced in Beijing, adopt the PRC's one-party governance system. An official application for the authoritarian state management model would align accordingly in the latter scenario.

Therefore, balancing economic prospects with national interests, democratic governance, and international standards will be crucial for the country. That is why the process of the strategic partnership signed with China requires continuous scrutiny and assessment so that Georgia's long-term security and foreign policy goals, which include integration into Western alliances, remain safeguarded and unharmed.

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Ani Kintsurashvili - "EXPLORING THE PRC'S BRI POLICIES"

Giorgi Shaishmelashvili - "EXPLORING THE PRC'S GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE (GCI)"

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