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BRI and the Islamic World

Bridging Civilizations

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L



Principles of Publication

At a time when U.S. ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Türkiye has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Türkiye is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Türkiye's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Türkiye through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners –including Türkiye- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.



Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to briq@briqjournal.com. Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA) style, 7th edition, <https://www.apastyle.org> and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles combining reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

EDITORIAL

Belt&Road and Islamic World: The Pathway of Civilizations Converging

Over the past decade, the world has witnessed rapid changes and transformations, largely to humanity's benefit. Thirty years ago, Atlantic imperialism, led by the United States, proclaimed through neoliberal globalization that it would flatten nation-states. In the current era, as hegemonism wanes, nation-states are increasingly asserting themselves. The thesis of neoliberal globalization claimed that we had reached the "end of history," where borders would disappear, and the world would become a global village dominated by Atlantic imperialists. However, anticipating resistance to this view, hegemonism introduced the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis to suppress opposition to the "global village." This theory posited a reactionary resistance from "Eastern civilizations," primarily Islam, against the "Western civilization" poised to usher humanity into its "golden age." This framework has ideologically supported imperialist interventions globally, especially those justified by "human rights violations," for the last three decades. Today, Atlantic imperialism frames global alignments as "Free Western civilization" versus the "authoritarian, nationalist" Eastern civilizations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The ongoing violence in Palestine by Israel exemplifies the stance of "Western civilization." The source of Islamophobia, racism, and all forms of discrimination lies here.

Conversely, the agenda of developing states combating hegemonism focuses on fostering harmony and integration among civilizations, not conflict. The driving force behind increasing cooperation between Iran, Russia, China, and Latin America; between Russia and China and the Arab world, Africa, and Islamic countries; and between Turkey, Russia, China, and Latin America is undoubtedly a collective stance against hegemonism. This cooperation increasingly rests on shared values beyond mere mutual gain. Among these developing states, there is a spirit of integration, sharing, and mutual respect. The developing world is uniting around independence, public welfare, and humanitarian values.

A prime example of inter-civilizational cooperation today is the evolving relationship between Islamic countries and China over the last 40 years. This relationship has strengthened even as the US has led global campaigns accusing China of committing "genocide against its Muslim population," attempting to paint China as an "enemy of Islam." Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, the significance of these relationships has grown, encompassing massive economic investments. According to 2022 official data, investments in Islamic countries under the BRI exceed \$400 billion. More crucially, the BRI, founded on joint development, is shifting the balance of world politics. Islamic countries, previously constrained by the Atlantic system's status quo into internal sectarian and ethnic conflicts, are breaking free from this bind.

The historic Silk Road facilitated cooperation, mutual learning, and tolerance among diverse cultures, propelling the advancement of world civilization. The 21st-century Silk Road, embodied by the Belt and Road Initiative, is forging pathways for the convergence and eventual creation of a new civilization.

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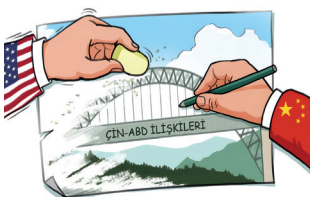


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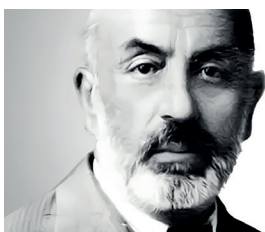


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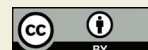
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ABSTRACT

The Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative are the three important initiatives proposed by China in 2021, 2022, and 2023, respectively. These initiatives focus on the three aspects of development, security and civilization, with the fundamental purpose of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and provide Chinese solutions to global challenges. The Global Civilization Initiative is flourishing the garden of world civilizations; as for the Global Development Initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative has become an engine for promoting the common development of all countries; as for the Global Security Initiative, the Saudi-Iran reconciliation is an important attempt by China to build a security governance system in the Middle East. However, it should be noted that although the Middle East has become increasingly important to China, this series of initiatives does not mean that China will engage in strategic competition with the United States in the Middle East. In a word, China will not fall into the trap of great power competition.

Keywords: Global Development initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, China-Middle East Relations.

Introduction

THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative are the three important initiatives proposed by China in 2021, 2022, and 2023, respectively. These initiatives focus on the three aspects of development, security and civilization, with the fundamental purpose of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and provide Chinese solutions to global challenges. There is an old saying in China to describe the mission of Chinese intellectuals: “To ordain conscience

for Heaven and Earth; To secure life and fortune for the people; To continue lost teachings for past sages; To establish peace for all future generations.” This sentence is also in line with the spirit of the three initiatives. Among them, the Global Civilization Initiative aims “to ordain conscience for Heaven and Earth”; the Global Development Initiative aims “to secure life and fortune for the people”; The Global Security Initiative aims “to establish peace for all future generations”, which effectively demonstrates the inclusive, independent and peaceful concept of Chinese global governance (Hui, 2023).

In January 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled “Work Together for a Bright Future of China-Arab Relations” at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo and pointed out that “The Middle East is a land of abundance. Yet we are pained to see it still plagued by war and conflict. Where should the Middle East be headed? This is the question the international community keeps asking” (Ping, 2016). In this regard, China’s answer is “Turmoil in the Middle East stems from the lack of development, and the ultimate solution will depend on development, which bears on everyone’s well-being and dignity” (Ping, 2016).

While China promotes security through development, takes the livelihood and well-being of local people at heart, and tries to solve the root problems of governance in the Middle East.

China’s judgment on the causes and solutions for the turmoil in the Middle East reflects the essential difference between China’s and the West’s views on the Middle East. The West regards the Middle East as an energy source and a battlefield for great power competition, but it has never taken the economic development and people’s livelihood and well-being of Middle Eastern countries seriously. While China promotes security through development, takes the livelihood and well-being of local people at heart, and tries to solve the root problems of governance in the Middle East. China hopes to be a builder of peace in the Middle East, a promoter of development in the

Middle East, a booster of industrialization in the Middle East, a supporter of stability in the Middle East, and a partner that integrates the hearts and minds of the people in the Middle East (Ping, 2016). This understanding is inseparable from the three initiatives and the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The Global Civilization Initiative: Flourishing the Garden of World Civilizations

The Global Civilization Initiative was first proposed by President Xi Jinping at the high-level meeting of the Communist Party of China and world political parties in 2023. The core content is to jointly advocate respect for the diversity of world civilizations; carry forward the common values of all mankind; value the inheritance and innovation of civilizations; strengthen international cultural exchanges and cooperation. In the current world of great changes, exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations are increasingly becoming an important issue.

After the end of the Cold War, American values entered an era of dominance with the theory of the “clash of civilizations”. In 1993, 20 years ago, Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard University proposed “The Clash of Civilizations” in an article published in *Foreign Affairs* (Huntington, 1993). On the one hand, Huntington divided civilizations into eight types, affirming the diversity of world cultures, but on the other hand, the theory of the “clash of civilizations” emphasized the savior role of Western values. This is a typical view of Western civilization, which emphasizes conflicts



China is actively working to implement the Global Civilization Initiative and jointly develop human civilizations
(Figure: Shi Yu/China Daily, 2023).

and confrontations between civilizations, Western dominance and colonization of the world, and discrimination between races.

As a result, the discourse on international affairs has long been controlled by the West, with “democracy and freedom” in name and “proxy and power” in substance. Ultimately, the core of the Western discourse system is to safeguard the national interests of the United States. As far as its practice in the Middle East is concerned, Western values have not only failed to bring fairness (Gürçan, 2019) to the Middle East, but have also caused frequent humanitarian crises.

Take the Iraq War and the Libya Crisis as examples, although their outbreaks were influenced by internal factors, they were mostly fueled by external forces (Gürçan, 2020). After so many years of war, the people of Iraq and Libya have found that their living standards are even worse than when Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi were in power.

In another case, after the new round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict broke out on October 7 last year, the Palestinian issue once again became the focus of international attention, but it also exposed the brutality of the United States and Israel. So far, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, the vast majority of whom are women and children.

Millions of Palestinians are imprisoned in Gaza, the world's largest natural prison, and are starving and facing a serious humanitarian crisis (Jian, 2024). Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant even stated: "We are fighting human animals" (Yu, 2024). What he means is that Hamas and the Palestinians are both "non-humans" and a group of barbaric animals. This is to provide legitimacy for one's own acts of violence and killing by insulting the other party and depriving the other party of their qualifications as a human being.

The Global Civilization Initiative has broken the monopoly of Western international relations theory, and Chinese international relations theories headed by moral realism.

Looking at the Gaza crisis from a civilizational perspective, the right-wing forces in the United States that support Israel and are anti-Palestinian mainly have the following reasons: a) Religion: The Christians/evangelical Christians believe that Judaism is closer to Christianity and is a brother religion, therefore they should protect Judaism, protect Jerusalem, and regard Islam as a threat; b) U.S. national security: They believe that Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorism driven by it are a huge threat to U.S. homeland and overseas security; c) The international status of the United States and Influence: They believe that the United States is the leader of the free world and that Islam is a global threat to the American system, ideology, and order; d) Ra-

cism: they insist the idea of resistance, disgust, and discrimination against Islamic civilization, culture, society, and ethnic groups. Some American right-wingers believe that Jews are more European, more like white people, closer to Western politics and culture, and more civilized. They believe that Islam represents ignorance, backwardness, and barbarism. In sum, the United States and the West all believe that Israel is a friend in terms of political system, political values, political ideology, and political alliance. This view naturally includes Israel as part of Western civilization.

The Global Civilization Initiative has broken the monopoly of Western international relations theory, and Chinese international relations theories headed by moral realism and the Shanghai School have become more influential and persuasive. Different from the theory of "clash of civilizations" and "end of history" proposed by the West, Yan Xuetong, the pioneer of moral realism, proposed the Chinese values of "benevolence, righteousness, and etiquette" in international relations and pointed out that major powers should not strive for hegemony but a fair world order (Tong, 2018). Different from the hegemonic behavior of the United States, China quickly provided humanitarian assistance to the Gaza region when the new round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict broke out. While the United States continues to veto the UN Security Council's draft of a ceasefire proposal between Palestine and Israel, China is pursuing a diplomatic approach to peacefully resolving the conflict. In November 2023, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the "Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on Resolving the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict". The document emphasized



"Compared with the United States "adding fuel to the fire" diplomatic approach, China has always worked for peace and security in the Middle East" (Photo: CGTN, 2023).

that China actively promotes the implementation of the ceasefire agreement by the United Nations Security Council, promotes the de-escalation of the conflict, and achieves cooling of the situation as soon as possible (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2023a). Compared with the United States "adding fuel to the fire" diplomatic approach, China has always worked for peace and security in the Middle East. During its tenure as the rotating president of the Security Council, China successfully pushed the United Nations to form the first resolution on the situation between Palestine and Israel.

On March 7, 2024, Foreign Minister Wang Yi responded to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict at China's Two Sessions, saying that the Pales-

tinian-Israeli conflict cannot be stopped so far, which is a tragedy for mankind and a shame for civilization (Yi, 2024a). Before this round of conflict broke out, Israel used a "high wall" to confine the Gaza area. More than 2 million Palestinians became "prisoners". What they saw when they looked up were the black muzzles of Israeli soldiers' guns, and they could only go to work in the area under Israeli control. People are "searched and interrogated" even when entering and exiting the workplace. Is this kind of behavior normal? It was revealed some time ago that Israeli soldiers asked WHO medical staff to strip naked for examination. This behavior shows that Israel is not simply targeting the Palestinians, but is launching an "attack" on all mankind.

The dialogue of civilizations is a good way to resolve contradictions and conflicts. Against the background of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the world seems to be being torn apart. In this context, every country faces a choice, because supporting a certain party actually represents a choice. How to choose is a test and very important, because it is related to the fate of the country and the destiny of each individual. We all want to make the right choice, and obviously the right choice is on the side of “civilization”. This round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be viewed from the perspective of civilization, lessons and experiences should be learned from it, and more emphasis should be placed on dialogue and mutual learning between civilizations, coexistence between the East and the West, and tolerance among different ethnic groups.

The Global Development Initiative: The Belt and Road Initiative as an Engine for the Common Development of All Countries

On September 21, 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Development Initiative (GDI) at the general debate of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, calling for accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving a stronger, greener and healthier global development (Wei & Da, 2023). The Global Development Initiative particularly emphasizes a development perspective that is different from traditional Western development theories. It does not use Westernization and Americanization as a blueprint for development, it does not rely solely on econo-



In the Global Development Initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative assumes important responsibility as the engine of common development of all countries (Figure: CGTN, 2022).



Global Development Initiative promotes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Aerial photo taken on December 5, 2021 shows a sunrise view of the Yangpu international container port in the Yangpu economic development zone in southern China's Hainan Province (Photo: Xinhua, 2021).

mic growth, and it does not achieve its own development goals at the expense of the development of other countries.

The Global Development Initiative coincides with the Belt and Road Initiative and is a reflection of China's shouldering the heavy responsibility of global development. The two initiatives complement each other. The year 2023 is the tenth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative and the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in October 2023. During this forum, President Xi Jinping summed up the successful experience from ten years of achievements, proposed eight actions to demonstrate China's responsibility, announced that the joint construction of the Belt and Road has entered a new stage of high-quality development, and advocated that all countries work together to realize modernization in the whole world. Tens of

thousands of representatives from 151 countries and 41 international organizations came with expectations for friendship, cooperation, and development, and returned satisfied with a list of 458 important results and the cooperation agreement worth US\$97.2 billion (Yi, 2024b).

Taking the decade from 2013 to 2023 as an example, China brought the "Belt and Road" to the Middle East, while the United States brought the "Bomb and Road" to the Middle East (Peng, 2023). In 2013, when the Syrian government forces, the moderate opposition, the extremist armed forces, Kurdish forces, Türkiye, Israel, the United States, Russia and other forces inside and outside Syria were fighting in Syria, China's Belt and Road Initiative turned out and the first China-Arab Expo was held in Yinchuan, Ningxia. At that time, Arab countries had not yet announced their participation in this initiative.



Kumport in Türkiye, one of the symbolic projects of China-Türkiye's joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, is an important port located in the Ambarlı port area of Istanbul, on the northwestern coast of the Marmara Sea and close to the European part of Istanbul. It has a strategic location (Photo: Belt and Road Portal, 2022).

In 2014, when the “Islamic State” began to conquer cities in the Middle East and became a global public hazard, China and Arab countries officially announced the joint efforts to build the Belt and Road Initiative, forming the so-called “1+2+3” cooperation pattern with energy cooperation as one priority, infrastructure development and trade and investment facilitation as two key areas, and nuclear energy, aviation satellite and new energy as the three high-tech areas for breakthrough.

In 2015, when Europe began to accept refugees and Russia intervened militarily in Syria, China and Türkiye signed a memorandum of understanding on jointly promoting the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. Türkiye became the first country in the Middle East to sign an intergovernmental cooperation agreement with China on this initiative. A Chinese company acquired 65% of the

equity of Port of Kumport in Türkiye and this project has become a landmark project of China- Türkiye jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative.

In 2016, when Donald Trump proposed “Muslim ban”, the Chinese leader embarked on a tour of the Middle East and visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran at the same time. This year, China also issued its first policy document on Arab countries, announcing that it would not seek individual gain, not interfere in internal affairs, and resolve differences peacefully. It would not fall into the quagmire of regional turmoil and would only inject positive energy into the Middle East. China has also installed photovoltaic panels in the Palestinian Gaza Strip. This project has a warm name “Light of Life, Lighting up the Family”.

In 2017, Donald Trump was extremely currying favor with the Israelis, leading to even more chaos in the Middle East. However, China held the first Belt

and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and this initiative has achieved early gains. This year, the trade volume between China and Arab countries reached nearly 200 billion US dollars. The 81-year-old King Salman of Saudi Arabia visited China to further synergize the development strategies between Saudi's "Vision 2030" and the Belt and Road Initiative. Besides, China successfully launched a communications satellite for Algeria. Relatedly, numerous infrastructure projects are being completed.

In 2021, the United States hastily withdrew from Afghanistan, wants to restart the nuclear agreement with Iran, and continues to blindly support Israel.

In 2018, when the United States started a trade war with China and intended to build an "Arab NATO", the Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone jointly built by China and Egypt began to take shape. China successfully opened Chinese courses in 100 schools in the United Arab Emirates. China's Huawei 5G entered Saudi Arabia.

In 2019, when the United States abandoned its allies in the Middle East and concentrated its efforts on containing China, China held the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in April and the Middle East Security Forum in November, which aims to build a new security architecture for the Middle East. As the Belt and Road project is gradually implemented, Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman have all proposed their own economic development plans.

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, the United States banned anti-pandemic supplies. However, China helped those in need and sent doctors and supplies everywhere. As a result, the United

States criticized them for "mask diplomacy" (Gürçan, Kahraman & Yanmaz, 2021). On March 26, doctors from China and 16 countries in the Middle East held the first anti-pandemic video conference. On April 2, Chinese medical supplies arrived in Afghanistan. In mid-April, Chinese masks, medicines, protective clothing, and thermometers arrived in Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and other countries.

In 2021, the United States hastily withdrew from Afghanistan, wants to restart the nuclear agreement with Iran, and continues to blindly support Israel. Meanwhile, China has provided food and anti-pandemic assistance to Afghanistan, and a large number of domestically produced vaccines have arrived in the Middle East. This year, both China and the United States have COVID-19 vaccines. China's vaccines are shipped everywhere, while American vaccines are lying in warehouses. In addition, China also provided aid worth 200 million RMB to Afghanistan, saving a large number of Afghan lives. In October, China opened the China-Afghanistan "Pine Nut Air Corridor". In November, 120,000 bottles of Afghan pine nuts appeared on a live broadcast platform and were instantly bought by Chinese netizens. In December, China once again provided food assistance worth 30 million RMB to Afghanistan.

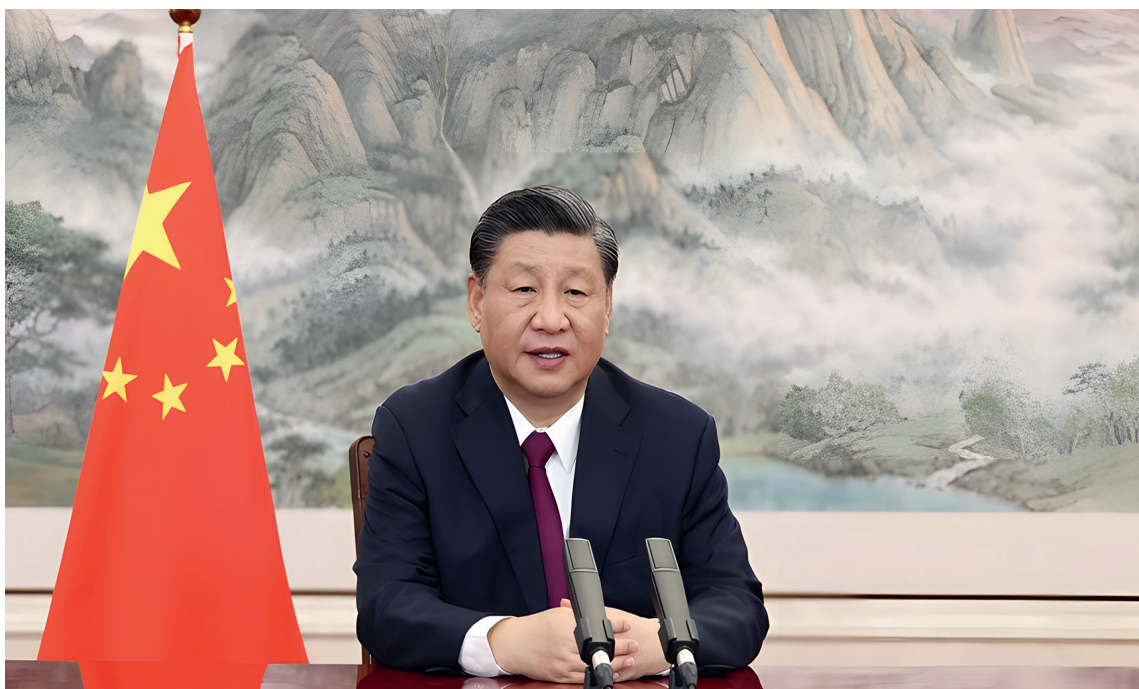
In 2022, the United States was discovered stealing oil in Syria, and the Belt and Road Initiative has achieved fruitful results. The largest and highest-level diplomatic action in the Arab world since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese top leader's visit to Saudi Arabia, attendance at the first China-Arab States Summit, and the first China-Gulf Arab States Cooperation Council Summit was achieved. In addition to the completion of a number of large projects, there are also many "small but beautiful" livelihood projects, which have a greater influence on media than building bridges and roads. For example, China's aid project to build 1,000 schools in Iraq has started.

In 2023, the tragic situation of civilians in Gaza is heartbreaking, the hegemony of American public opinion has been poked into a big hole by TikTok, while China promotes reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and his wife attend the 19th Asian Games Hangzhou. Until this year, the Belt and Road Initiative has proved to be a successful project and thousands of people gathered in Beijing to participate in the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

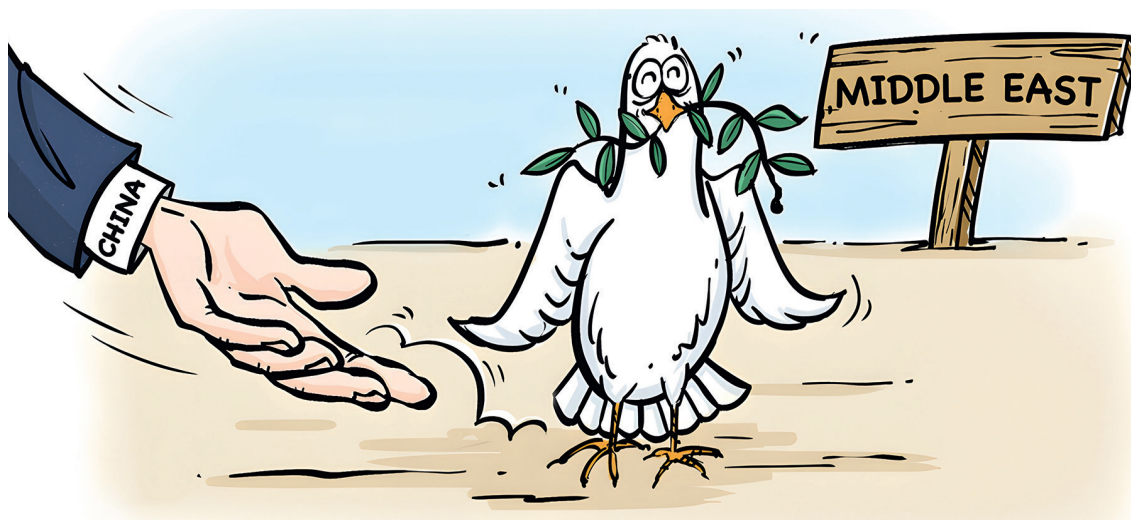
The ten years in the Middle East are like a fable, which tells people a truth: conspiracies such as choosing sides, engaging in proxy wars, and handing over swords may seem unfathomable, but they cannot defeat the upright cause of “peace and development” and “non-interference in internal affairs”.

The Global Security Initiative: Saudi-Iran Reconciliation as an Attempt by China to Build a Security Governance System in the Middle East

In April 2022, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Security Initiative for the first time at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022. In February 2023, the “Global Security Initiative Concept Paper” was officially released, which is an important measure for China to promote the implementation of the initiative. Subsequently, China issued the document “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis”, proposing a comprehensive and feasible plan to resolve the Ukrainian crisis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2023b). In March 2023, with the support of China, Saudi Arabia and Iran held a dialogue in Be-



President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Security Initiative for the first time at the opening ceremony of the 2022 Asia Boao Forum Annual Conference (Photo: Xinhua/Huang Jingwen, 2022).



There is an old saying in China to describe the mission of Chinese intellectuals: “To ordain conscience for Heaven and Earth; To secure life and fortune for the people; To continue lost teachings for past sages; To establish peace for all future generations.” (Figure: Chen Xia/GT, 2023).

ijing. The Saudi-Iranian reconciliation has become a successful practice for China to effectively implement the Global Security Initiative. This also shows that China is not only the initiator of the Global Security Initiative, but also an activist in implementing them.

As the saying goes, “internal factors play a decisive role”. Therefore, the most fundamental reason for this reconciliation is also internal reasons.

First, Saudi Arabia and Iran are tired of geopolitical competition. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War. The 2003 Iraq War changed the geopolitical balance in the Middle East and enabled the establishment of a Shiite regime in Iraq. The Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis in 2011 seriously worsened the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The growth of ISIS allowed Iran to successfully intervene deeply in Iraq’s domestic politics. The Shiite Crescent has gone from imagination to reality, further intensifying the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The 2015 war in Yemen became the climax of Saudi Arabia and Iran’s proxy war. It can be seen that Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Iran all represent different interest groups

in the Middle East. But ten years after the drastic changes in the Middle East, the struggles between each other have been unable to weaken each other. Instead, Israel is hiding behind it and quietly making a fortune.

Second, the domestic development processes of Saudi Arabia and Iran have also changed. After Mohammed bin Salman came to power in 2017, he tried to reconstruct Saudi Arabia’s national identity, try to weaken the influence of Wahhabism in Saudi politics, provide some space for secular reforms, and provide a good social environment for the development of Vision 2030. Iran is also facing a serious domestic economic crisis, and protests are often triggered by some incidents. Therefore, it also needs to ease relations with neighboring countries to provide better external conditions for the recovery of Iran’s economy. Besides, after constant confrontations, Saudi Arabia and Iran have suffered from internal injuries, but they still cannot change the relative balance of power between them. Now it is the time to focus on their own development process, otherwise they will easily be abandoned by the times.

Third, the awareness and capabilities of Saudi Arabia and Iran's strategic autonomy have been significantly improved. For Saudi Arabia, the United States exerts political and economic pressure on it. After the Jamal Khashoggi incident broke out, the United States continued to attack Saudi Arabia and accused Saudi Arabia of human rights violations. When the conflict between Russia and Ukraine happened, the United States continued to pressure Saudi Arabia to increase oil production, suppress oil prices, and harm Saudi Arabia's economic interests. At the same time, the United States is basically self-sufficient in oil, and the strategic importance of the Middle East to it is declining. More importantly, Saudi Arabia also faces difficulties in obtaining security guarantees from the United States, especially the hasty withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, which shocked U.S. allies. It turns out that the U.S.'s strategic contraction from Central Asia and the Middle East is real, lamenting that "it is dangerous to be an enemy of the United States, but it is even more dangerous to be an ally of the United States." For Iran, the threat from the United States is even more serious. It imposes all-round sanctions on Iran, applies "maximum pressure" approach to constantly threaten to use force to solve the Iranian nuclear issue, and publicly assassinates Iranian generals and experts of nuclear weapons. However, after the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, many Middle Eastern countries did not choose sides in the game between the United States and Russia, greatly improving their ability of strategic independence.

Although Saudi and Iran have been negotiating for a long time under the mediation of Iraq and Oman, they finally chose to reach an agreement in China, which shows their trust in China. However, this reconciliation is not a simple reconciliation, but a reconciliation between Sunni and Shia leaders, and it is obvious that both sides are not afraid of the

possible chain reactions that may follow. This also shows that the entire Islamic world is no longer afraid of pressure from Israel and the United States, and heralds the decline of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East.

In recent years, an expression has become widely popular among China's international relations academic circles, which is "great changes unseen in a century". Looking at the pattern of the Middle East in the past hundred years, since the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the nations and countries in the Middle East have never become the masters of the Middle East. More specifically, over the past hundred years, the Middle East has always been in the hands of Westerners. After the WWI, Britain and France dominated the regional structure of the Middle East through mandate rule or colonial rule. Under the bipolar structure of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for hegemony in the Middle East. After the Cold War, the United States became the hegemon in the Middle East. In contrast, in today's Middle East situation, on the one hand, external powers still play a major role in shaping the pattern of the Middle East. However, the desire of Western powers to intervene is significantly less than in the past. Currently, no country, not even the United States, can control the Middle East. On the other hand, the status of regional powers has become more prominent. For a hundred years, regional countries in the Middle East could only be pawns on the big chessboard, but now they have become players.

Today, the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran is undoubtedly a blow to the US control of the Middle East. As the world's hegemon, the United States is the least willing to see reconciliation in the Middle East. Once peace is achieved in the Middle East, the United States will lose the leverage to check and balance the Gulf oil countries and



China put forward the Global Security Initiative to pursue peaceful development and advance the building of a community with a common future for humanity (Figure: Jin Ding/China Daily, 2023).

lose the bargaining chip of using the “Iran threat” to create security issues to force the Gulf oil countries to purchase large amounts of American weapons and U.S. bonds. The United States still has a large number of troops stationed in the Middle East and a large number of military bases. Once the security pressure from the oil-producing countries in the Middle East disappears, the United States’ military presence in the Middle East will lose its reason. In addition, Israel’s security guarantee, one of the important pillars of U.S. Middle East policy, will also be weakened.

China will not Fall into the Trap of Great Power Competition in the Middle East

In recent years, China’s diplomacy has become more proactive than “keeping a low profile and concentrating on self-improvement” (Gürçan & Donduran, 2024), and this is even more obvious in the development of relations between China and

the Middle East. This is also related to the United States’ strategic squeeze on China. Since Donald Trump took office, the United States has shifted from a war on terror to a competition between major powers, and has begun to suppress China and Russia. It has determined that China will be the most important strategic opponent that the United States needs to confront in a long-term and systematic manner, and has positioned China as the only country that has the intention to reshape the international order, and says that the next ten years will be the decisive time for China and the United States to win or lose in competition (Bo, 2022).

After taking office, Biden has further intensified competition among major powers and adopted more comprehensive and systematic measures to contain China and Russia on a global scale. The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has raised great power competition to a new level. The Middle East’s status in the global structure has significantly increased.

The Middle East has become an important battlefield for great power competition outside of Europe and the Asia-Pacific. However, China will not fall into the trap of great power competition with the United States in the Middle East, mainly for the following three reasons.

The Gulf countries headed by Saudi Arabia have resisted the pressure of the United States to reduce their oil production, began to apply to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS, and have increased security cooperation with China.

First, the mentality of major powers in the Middle East has changed significantly. In the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the increasingly intensified competition between great powers, the Middle East has gradually become a new intermediate region for strategic competition between great powers, and is no longer the traditional exporter of “Middle East issues”. For the United States, with Biden’s visit to the Middle East in July 2022, the United States has suspended its strategic contraction and returned to the Middle East. This is a significant change in the United States’ Middle East policy and is intended to stabilize the basic foundation of the United States in the Middle East. However, the approach has shifted from traditional military and value-based diplomacy to new energy, large-scale infrastructure and climate change. At the same time, it has vigorously promoted normal relations between Israel and Arab countries, and promoted high-tech cooperation using I2U2 (US, Israel, India and United Arab Emirates) as the starting point

(Chao, 2024). For Russia, after the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it will increase its efforts to move south, using the Middle East as an important breakthrough to break Western containment, especially in the energy field. Therefore, cooperation with Saudi Arabia within the OPEC framework, cooperation with Iran on “de-dollarization (Gürçan, 2023),” and cooperation with Türkiye on natural gas have become a necessity for Russia. This highlights the importance of the Middle East to Russia. In addition, Germany, France, India, Japan, South Korea and other countries have also increased their investment in the Middle East.

Second, the strategic autonomy of Middle Eastern countries has been significantly enhanced. After the Cold War, the United States became the dominant power in the Middle East. To a large extent, the decisions of Middle Eastern countries were not made in Tehran or Riyadh, but in the White House. However, after the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, most Middle Eastern countries withstood the pressure from the United States and did not impose sanctions on Russia. Instead, they maintained a balance between the United States and Russia (Ming, 2024). The Gulf countries headed by Saudi Arabia have resisted the pressure of the United States to reduce their oil production, began to apply to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS, and have increased security cooperation with China. To some extent, this also reflects the United States’ influence in the Middle East is decreasing.

Third, the easing of relations between countries in the Middle East has become a prominent phenomenon. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 has greatly shocked the US allies in the Middle East. They are increasingly aware of the importance of independent security. They also realize that they cannot remain in fierce confrontation and attrition for a long time and must create a security environment that is



The Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and Belt and Road Initiative provide solutions to the security and development problems of the Middle East (Figure: CGTN, 2020).

conducive to the development and coexistence of the region. As a result, the wind of peace gradually came to the Middle East, manifested in the easing of relations among Arab countries, between Arab countries and Israel, Türkiye, and Iran, between Israel and Türkiye, and between Egypt and Iran (Chun, 2023). What needs special attention is that the current Arab-Israeli reconciliation was suspended but not stopped even after the Gaza crisis since October 2023.

In addition, there are also new opportunities and new challenges in the development of China-Middle East relations.

First, in the context of the strategic competition between China and the United States and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the importance of the Middle East to China is increasing day by day. This is reflected in the following aspects:

a) The status of the Middle East in the global structure has significantly increased, and strategic competition among major powers around the Middle East

has become increasingly fierce;

b) The Middle East is an important source of energy for China. The world energy crisis has become more prominent after the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Energy supply security involves China's core interests.

c) The Middle East is an important area for the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, involving China's development interests.

d) There are many middle powers in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Türkiye, etc. The positions of these countries are very important for the balance of the future international structure, especially the balance of power between the East and the West (Cong, 2023).

Second, the current situation in the Middle East also provides new opportunities for China and the Middle East to deepen relations. The core content of China's Middle East policy is to promote peace, development and stability, which truly represents the development direction of the world.

Unlike the United States, Europe and Russia, China has no historical baggage in the Middle East and has advantages in philosophy, morality and development. In particular, the success of the modernization path with Chinese characteristic has provided a typical example for Middle Eastern countries to embark on an independent development path. The Middle Eastern countries' "Look East policy" and their tendency to learn from China are even more obvious.

Third, the current situation in the Middle East has also brought new challenges for China to exert greater influence in the Middle East. This is mainly reflected in six aspects:

- a) The United States still has a huge influence in the Middle East. Although it no longer plays a constructive role, its destructive role is very obvious;
- b) The United States returns to the Middle East and strives to rebuild the alliance system to contain Iran, Russia and China;
- c) The U.S. will continue to pressure Middle Eastern countries on Xinjiang-related issues;
- d) The United States is pursuing an alternative economic strategy to China, especially in the high-tech field, constantly suppressing Israel and the United Arab Emirates to give up cooperation with China;
- e) The United States slanders China and puts Middle Eastern countries into a debt trap in an attempt to damage China's image;
- f) The severe energy and food crisis will have little impact on the oil-producing countries in the Middle East, but it will have a great negative impact on non-oil-producing countries, which is likely to lead to more countries becoming failed states.

Conclusion

Currently, complex and sensitive security issues have a profound impact on global development, mainly in two aspects. On the one hand, traditional security issues

are still prominent, and regional hotspot issues such as the North Korean nuclear issue, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Middle East, and Afghanistan have emerged one after another. The recent Russia-Ukraine conflict has further aggravated the concerns of the international community. On the other hand, threats posed by non-traditional security issues such as climate change, cyber security, and biosecurity have increased significantly. These security challenges threaten the global development environment all the time, and it is urgent and imperative to build a more systematic global governance system. In this context, China has proposed the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative in accordance with the times and circumstances, contributing Chinese solutions to global governance, and providing an important action guide for solving the priorities and problems of global development and global security governance.

China has always advocated the "security-development concept". Development is the foundation of security and security is the condition for development. For most developing countries, development is the greatest security and the key to solving regional security problems. In pursuit of multipolarity and a community with a shared future for mankind, China must first achieve regional peace and stability and pave the way for economic development.

For a long time, security and development have been two major problems plaguing Middle Eastern countries. Without a stable environment, economic development cannot be guaranteed. China's mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran demonstrates China's influence and international credibility, which can create good conditions for future development. From the perspective of Asian development, the energy of the Gulf countries is related to the entire Asia-Pacific and even world economic development. In this sense, the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran con-

tributes to the advancement of Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and the Belt and Road Initiative.

From a larger perspective, the world since 1500 has been dominated by the West. The “offshore balancing strategy” of the United Kingdom and the United States in the past 500 years has created a divided world into conflicting groups, plunging Eurasia into wars to maintain their hegemonic status. However, what China hopes is to integrate a peaceful and prosperous Eurasia through the Belt and Road Initiative and the concept of “Community of a Shared Future for Mankind”. So that all countries, especially developing countries, can gain the right to development, truly build equality and respect among countries, and establish a just international order without hegemonic dominance. In this sense, whether China is willing or not, at a time when the United States increasingly views China as a strategic rival, it is necessary for the Global South to provide a truly equal alternative to the international order that is different from the United States. 🌸

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Chairman of the Senate Defence Committee

Mushahid Hussain Sayed*

**“There is no contradiction between
China’s system, world view and Islam”**



**Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed is a current Pakistani Senator and Chairman of the Senate Defence Committee. A graduate of the Master of Science in Foreign Service (MSFS) program (Class of 1975), Senator Hussain Sayed has a distinguished career in the Pakistan public service as a four-time elected senator from the Islamabad Federal Capital. His public service career also includes positions as the Chairman of the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Central Asia (1992), Leader of Pakistan Delegation to UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva (1993), Special Assistant to Prime Minister (handling relations with U.S. & Central Asia) (1993), and Minister for Information, Culture & Tourism (1997-1999). He also served as Minister-in-Waiting to President Nelson Mandela, President Yasser Arafat, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, President Fidel Ramos & President Muhammad Morsi during their visits to Pakistan. He has career experience in the journalism sector as well. He was the youngest editor at age 29 of The Muslim. He has contributed op-eds and articles to The New York Times, The Washington Post, the LA Times, National Interest, Jane’s Defence Weekly, Middle East International, Inter Press Service, The Times of India, and The Hindustan Times. He has published three works, including Pakistan and the Changing Regional Scenario, Pakistan’s Politics: The Zia Years, and Governance in Pakistan(co-author).*

“Pakistan looks favorably on China’s relations with the Islamic world and Pakistan itself plays a key role in promoting China’s relations with the Islamic world. China has a strong relationship with Muslim countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, supporting their quest for sovereignty and independence. China provides a strategic option for Muslim countries and they do not have to depend on the West or the United States. So China, especially today, is a very important player and offers an alternative worldview, an alternative strategic path to development. In the ten years since the BRI was launched, China has invested over 1 trillion dollars in over 3,000 different projects in different countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. This is a very large number. The BRI is not just about developing trade and investment, it is also an alternative worldview. China today is the leading trading partner, especially for countries in the Global South. Unlike some other countries, such as the United States, China, as a developing country, is building relationships on the basis of common heritage and history and a shared pursuit of a better tomorrow. In this context, China, with its diplomatic power and economic relations, can stabilize our region, especially Afghanistan, along with Central Asia, Türkiye, Iran and Pakistan. There is absolutely no contradiction, no conflict between the Chinese system, worldview and ideology and what Muslims advocate and practice. It is all about connectivity, about cooperation. It is all about working together for a better tomorrow without masters and oppressed.”

Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman of the Pakistan Senate Defence Committee, answered the questions of Ayça Neslihan Örs.

How does/how do you Pakistan view China’s growing engagement with the Islamic world, especially in terms of enhancing strategic autonomy and altering regional cooperations?

Mushahid Hussain Sayed: Pakistan views China’s engagement with the Islamic world in a very positive light and Pakistan itself has played a very key role in promoting China’s engagement with the Islamic world.

If you would remember that at the Islamic foreign minister’s conference, which was held on 24 March 2022 in Islamabad, Pakistan was hosting the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) foreign ministers and we specially invited, and this happened for the first time, the foreign minister of China, his Excellency Wang Yi, to be the keynote speaker at this Islamic foreign minister’s conference in Islamabad in March 2022.

And that was very pivotal moment because China has a good outreach to the Muslim world.

And earlier in the 1970s, when Pakistan played a bridge between Washington and Beijing in 1971 to promote normalization and rapprochement between China and the US. When doctor Kissinger flew from Islamabad to Beijing in July 1971 as special envoy of President Nixon, we were the bridge between the two countries.

And after that, in the late seventies and mid seventies, Pakistan also helped facilitate China's relations with Iran and China's relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, because all these friends of Pakistan and they wanted to normalize relations with China after the US had done so, we played the role of facilitator.

In 1965, China was the first country, after the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to recognize and support the PLO.

I might add that China itself has had a longstanding role in the Islamic world. In 1965, China was the first country, after the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to recognize and support the PLO, and they have supported Muslim liberation movements. And so China has a track record. And plus China has a strong relationship with Muslim countries in Asia and Africa and in the Middle east, supporting their quest for sovereignty, for independence. And we feel that this is very good for regional autonomy because China's role presents a strategic option for Muslim

countries, and they do not have to be dependent on the west or the United States for that. So China, especially now, is a very relevant player and presents an alternative worldview, an alternative strategic path to development.

Success of the BRI against Hegemonism

In light of the emerging shared aspirations among emerging economies facilitated by the Belt and Road Initiative, such as promoting multilateralism and resisting hegemonic agendas, what steps is Pakistan taking to align with or contribute to these broader objectives in global affairs?

Mushahid Hussain Sayed: In the context of this alternative strategies of development, especially in the past ten years, Pakistan was the first country among the first countries to join in on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was launched by President Xi Jinping in Astana in Kazakhstan in September 2013. And later on, in November 2013, the maritime Silk Road was launched in Jakarta and Indonesia. So Pakistan joined in, and we have the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, CPEC, which is a major flagship pivot of the BRI.

I would like to add that the BRI is probably the most important diplomatic and developmental initiative of the 21st century. It includes today over 150 countries, over 30 organizations, and in the last ten years, since the launch of the BRI, China has invested approximately over little over \$1 trillion in 3000 different projects in different countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Middle east. So this is huge. And this is an alternative worldview, because it's not just providing trade and investment. China



With Pakistan's participation, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has become the pivot flagship of the Belt and Road Initiative (Figure: CPEC, 2017).

is today the leading partner of trade for countries, especially in the Global South.

Out of 193 members of the United Nations, 130 have more trade with China than they have with the United States, from Solomon islands to Saudi Arabia, from Panama to Pakistan, and from Azerbaijan to Australia. So this is extremely important. This role and backing up is an institutional mechanism, for example, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank AIIB, which is launched in Beijing. So I think that an alternative worldview is emerging and BRI is leading

that. And this is opposing the hegemony, the domination, the control of Western countries, particularly the United States. And one key element of this engagement is also de-dollarization, because out of 193 members of the United Nations, 68 of them have said that: "We would like to have trade now globally, regionally and bilaterally with different countries with own currencies other than the dollar". So this is a very positive development and this is an outcome of the BRI, of which Pakistan is a key component.

Given the Belt and Road Initiative's significant impact on shaping the dynamics between China and Islamic nations, how does Pakistan position itself within this framework, particularly in relation to shared historical trajectories and development needs?

Mushahid Hussain Sayed: Pakistan has had a longstanding relationship with the People's Republic of China, which is also our great northern neighbor. We have a shared border and we were among the first countries in the world that recognized the People's Republic of China after it emerged internationally on the 1 October 1949. And we were the first Muslim country to recognize China in May 1950. And soon after that, we established diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. And since 1963, when we signed a boundary agreement with China, we have had a strategic relationship with China, which is an all

weather friendship and which President Xi Jinping has termed, very rightly, as "iron brothers". So, in this regard, Pakistan and China have a close camaraderie based on shared interests, a common worldview which is based on resisting any kind of regional or global hegemony, promoting the five principles of peaceful coexistence, especially non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and respecting each other's sovereignty. And this historical relationship has been cemented through different decades, through different eras, because, irrespective of changes in our two countries and irrespective of changes in the region and irrespective of changes in the world, the relationship remains robust and resilient.

I would like to add that in the current context of China's relationship with the Islamic countries, especially Pakistan, there is a notable international transformation taking place. The global balance of



Mao Zedong and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, 1974. China and Pakistan have a strategic relationship of friendship under all circumstances, which Xi Jinping calls "iron brothers" (Photo: China Daily, 2021).

economic and political power is shifting from the West to the East and we are seeing the rise, the resurgence of the ancient century, led by the peaceful rise of China. Here I would like to add, since it is the historical context that is being examined, that 90 years ago, the great poet of the east, whom Pakistanis consider is the philosopher of Pakistan, Doctor Muhammad Iqbal. Doctor Iqbal had predicted two things 90 years ago. Number one, that he says: “See the sun rising from the east, and that was his reference to the emergence of the ancient century”. And then he also mentioned the famous couplet of his poem about the rise of China. He said: “Springs of hope are emerging from the Himalayas and the great Chinese nation is rising from slumber and a new world is emerging”. So this was predicted by doctor Mohammad Iqbal 90 years ago. And today, in our lifetime, we are very fortunate to see their dream coming into our reality.

The Important Difference between China and the USA

With China playing a role in mediating significant regional conflicts, such as the resolution of the Saudi-Iran confrontation, how does Pakistan view China’s capacity and effectiveness as a mediator in the Islamic world?

Mushahid Hussain Said: China has a very important role to play, not just as a global leader, not as a global partner, but also as a great country, which is also a great civilization, that can be a bridge between countries, cultures and continents. And the role that China played in March 2023 to bring about a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is extremely important, because for decades, Iran and Saudi Arabia, two Muslim countries with whom Pakistan has good relations, they were at loggerheads.



Saudi Arabia’s Minister of State Musaad bin Mohammed Al-Aiban (left), Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China Wang Yi (middle), Secretary General of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani (right). The role China played in Beijing in March 2023 to bring about a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is crucial (Photo: CGTN, 2023).

There was a conflict, there was a confrontation, there was a cleavage between the two. And China brought about this rapprochement, which is historic, and that has been a very positive impact on the regional stability and the Muslim countries.

I also feel that China can play a similar role because China is not a hegemon, China is not a country that tries to be acting like a bully. Unlike some other countries, like the United States, China is basing its relationship as a developing country on the basis of partnerships, shared heritage and history, and a common quest for a better tomorrow. So in this context, whether there are issues like Afghanistan, which China has a border, and China can play a very good role in that. So I hope that China, through its diplomatic clout and economic engagement, can stabilize our region close to Central Asia, close to Türkiye, close to Iran and Pakistan, especially in Afghanistan. And also China can play some role, I would say, in cooperation with other countries to diffuse the Middle east situation, the crisis that is currently there in Gaza, as well as, I think, a very important crisis which is still there in Europe in conflict, which is Ukraine, because China has links with both Kiev and Moscow, China has credibility and China is not engaged in a war mongering role. So China is very well placed to play this kind of mediation role.

How do you assess the importance of China's development cooperation with countries across West Asia and North Africa, and what implications do you believe this holds for the future of Pakistan-China relations?

Mushahid Hussain Sayed: Pakistan China relations began in the context of a major global change after the World War II. This was in April 1955 in Bandung in Indonesia. There was the first conference of Asian and African countries hosted by Doctor Sukarno of Indonesia, and this is called the Afro Asian Solidarity Summit. And Pakistan China relations were

cemented because that was the first meeting between leaders of Pakistan, our prime minister and the prime minister of China, then premier Zhou Enlai, that met in Bandung. And the Afro-Asian solidarity spirit permeated that conference and our relationship. And now, in the context of North Africa and the Middle east, when we see two parallel trends, there is the retrenchment of American influence and clout, and there is the concurrent rise of China.

So in that context, China has a very key role to play, because the China role in the region in Middle East or North Africa, or visa vis Pakistan, in Southwest Asia, is neither tactical nor temporary nor transactional. The American approach is very, very transactional. And this linked with a situation that emerges where they need something from other countries, then they reach out for support. Otherwise then they forget about their own friends also. So China has a more strategic perspective, a more enduring and durable perspective, and a perspective that is, as the Chinese say, based on win-win cooperation. In other words, that China gains also and the other countries also gain. So it's mutual and mutuality of interest, especially in trade, in investment, in education, for example, there are 28,000 Pakistani students studying in China. 8000 are doing their PhDs. So that's very positive for Pakistan.

There is an overlap between the CCP's values and socialism and Islamic values

Do you think that there is a contradiction or conflict between the socialist ideology that determines China's regime and Islam? Is Islam anti-communist as preached by Western ideology?

Mushahid Hussain Sayed: In my view, there is no contradiction at the ideological level between the role of the Communist Party of China, which espouses Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong thought,



Nanguan Mosque in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. "Islam does not believe in a caste system or a class system, neither does Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong's thought." (Photo: CGTN, 2020).

and the Islamic ethos, the religious ethos of Muslim countries. In fact, there are commonalities in lot of values that permeate the societies of China and Pakistan and Muslim countries, because the Muslim countries also feel strongly about family values, about societies being knit together by common values that are not just material. And China too is based on Confucianism. The Chinese culture, the Chinese civilization, the Chinese heritage, which talks of family values, harmony, working together, equality, egalitarianism, these are values of Islam as well, because Islam does not believe in a caste system or a class system, and neither does Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong thought. And I feel that these are Asian values, these are Eastern values, and these are common values in the global south. And as far as the issues of anti Islam or anti communism are concerned, the United States, I think, has been the biggest violator of human rights in the Muslim countries.

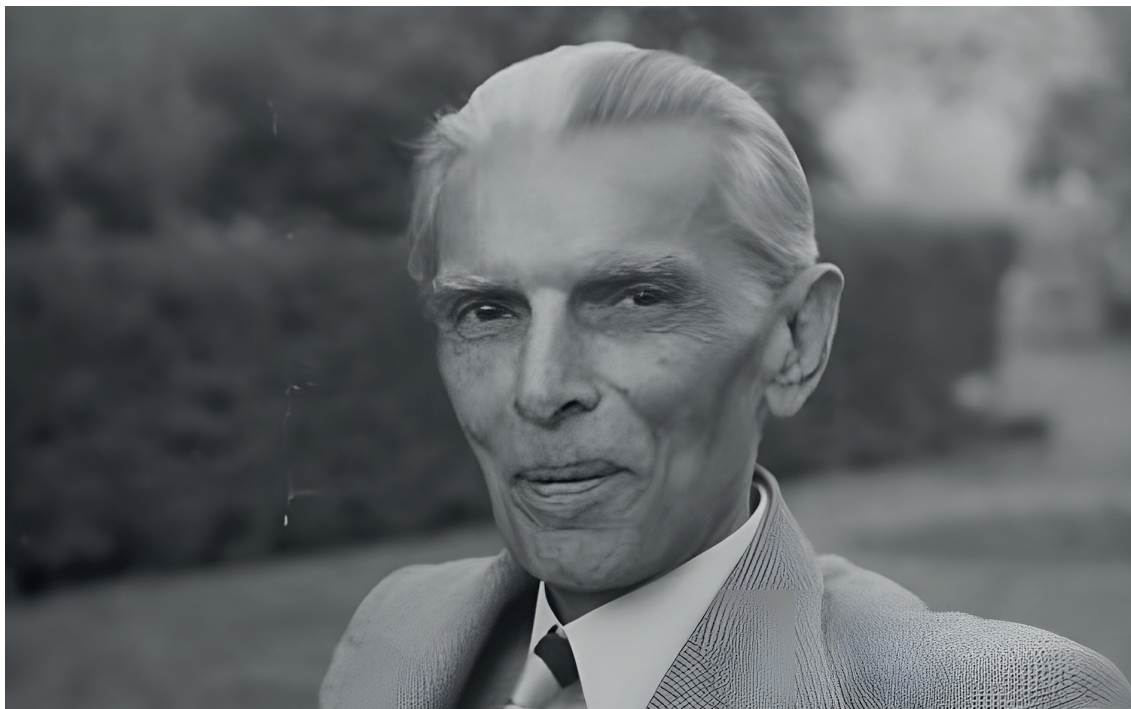
After 9-11, the United States squandered or spent over \$6.5 trillion in the so called war on terror in parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia, killing over 900,000 people, making over 30 million people homeless or displaced persons or refugees, and throwing over 324,000 bombs, missiles and drones on the Muslim countries. So it is the United States which claims to be a Christian power or they say we are also believers of the same God. But the way they have acted as an imperialist power in most of the Muslim countries, I think that shows that unlike China, which strategic culture is based on peace and harmony, while the US is running a permanent war machine, the war economy that is targeting now in at least the last 20 years, Muslim countries. So we can see the interesting contrast. In my view, there is absolutely no contradiction, no conflict between the Chinese system and worldview and ideology and what the Muslims profess and practise.

Pakistan's Historical and Current Role in the Global South

What do you believe is Pakistan's strategic importance in fostering a peaceful, multipolar world order that supports global cooperation and multilateralism?

Mushahid Hussain Sayed: Pakistan is placed on a very important strategic pivot in the world. Our location in the most strategic part of the world and our role historically has been very important. First of all, Pakistan's historic role, the great leader, the father of the nation of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had said that Pakistan is the pivot of the world, placed on the frontier where the geopolitics of the

world revolves. And Pakistan's foreign policy said should be based on peace within and peace without. We emerged on the international map on the 14 August 1947 as an independent country. And we were the first to support liberation movements in North Africa. In Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, they are leaders who were fighting the liberation wars against French imperialism, French colonialism, they used to travel on Pakistani diplomatic passports. The Moroccan freedom fighter, Mohammed al Faraj, the Algerian prime minister of the government in exile, Ferhat Abbas, the leader of Tunisia, Habib Burgiba, they all travelled on Pakistan diplomatic passports and we are in United Nations mission was at the beck and call then.



Muhammad Ali Jinnah (December 25, 1876 - September 11, 1948), lawyer, politician, statesman and founder of Pakistan. He is known in Pakistan as the "Great Leader" and "Father of the Nation" (Photo: PID, 2024).

We also supported the liberation struggle in Libya, in Eritrea and we provided arms to the African National Congress of Nelson Mandela and the ZaNu PF, Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front of Robert Mugabe. So we have been in and plus the the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of Yasser Arafat achieved recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Palestine for the first time in Lahore Islamic summit in 1974. So we have had this track record and I would like to mention that Pakistan is the only non-Arab country that has taken part in two Arab Israeli wars. In 1967, Pakistani pilots were flying for the Jordanian Air Force and we shot down Israeli planes in October 1973 during the Ramazan war, which the Israelis called the Yom Kippur war. Pakistani air force pilots were flying for the Syrian air force and they shot down two Israeli planes. So we have had this track record of supporting liberation movements, supporting the struggles of oppressed peoples.

So Pakistan's role is very key in the coming Asian century. It's all about connectivity. It's all about cooperation. It's all about working together for a better tomorrow with no overlords and no underdogs.

So Pakistan, historically, has that played that role. Now, of course, the cold war is over, things are settling down. What is our role in the current context? In terms of Africa, we are playing a very key role. We are the leaders in United nations peacekeeping operations. And I would like to also mention that I have established the first Pakistani

think tank on Africa. It's called the Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR).

And then in our own region, we are the pivot of regional connectivity. Pakistan is located between South Asia, China, Iran, Afghanistan and the central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. And all these five landlocked countries want to be land linked through the Pakistani port of Gwadar, which has been built by the Chinese and which is part of BRI and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

So our role is now in terms of geo economics, of connectivity through energy economy, ports, pipelines, roads, railways. So this is a very historic role that we are trying to play and we are also trying to promote peace and harmony. We were the first country to support, for example, Sri Lanka, which is a neighbor of Pakistan, when they were fighting terrorism without interfering in the internal affairs, and we gave them full support and they were able to crush the terrorist movement there. And we were the first country to, after 9-11 in the Muslim world, which won the inland war against terrorism through a struggle against indigenous terrorists. So Pakistan has a very clear role, a principal position, and Pakistan maintains an independent foreign policy.

And we are the first Muslim country which has nuclear weapons, which we developed through our own indigenous capability to counter what happened next door in India, because India developed it first and we had to have a matching capability. But we have, of course, shown that we have peaceful intentions. So Pakistan's role is very key in the coming Asian century. It's all about connectivity. It's all about cooperation. It's all about working together for a better tomorrow with no overlords and no underdogs. 🌸

Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization*

Xi Jinping

President of the People's Republic of China

Full text of Chinese President Xi Jinping's keynote speech via video link at the Communist Party of China's World Political Parties High-Level Dialogue Meeting on March 15, 2023, where he first put forward the Global Civilization Initiative.

Leaders of political parties from around the world,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to join all of you for the discussion on "Path Towards Modernization: The Responsibility of Political Parties".

The history of human development is full of twists and turns. Similarly, the journey of each country to explore the path to modernization is also arduous. In today's world, multiple challenges and crises are intertwined. The global economic recovery remains sluggish, the development gap is widening, ecological environment is deteriorating, and the Cold War mentality is lingering. Humanit-

y's modernization process has once again reached a crossroads of history.

Polarization or common prosperity? Pure materialistic pursuit or coordinated material and cultural-ethical advancement? Draining the pond to catch the fish or creating harmony between man and nature? Zero-sum game or win-win cooperation? Copying other countries' development model or achieving independent development in light of national conditions? What kind of modernization do we need and how can we achieve it? Confronted with these questions, political parties as an important force steering and driving the modernization process are duty bound to provide answers. Here, I wish to share some of my observations.

** Subheadings in the text have been added by BRIQ.*

Full text of Chinese President Xi Jinping's keynote speech via video link at the CCP's World Political Parties High-Level Dialogue Meeting on March 15, 2023, where he first put forward the Global Civilization Initiative. Retrieved from http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content_85171478.htm on 1 May 2024.

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People-Centered Modernization

We must put the people first and ensure modernization is people-centered. The people are the creators of history and are the strongest bedrock and force in advancing modernization. The ultimate goal of modernization is people's free and well-rounded development. For a modernization path to work and work well, it must put the people first. Modernization is not only about indicators and statistics on the paper but more about the delivery of a happy and stable life for the people. With a focus on the people's aspirations for a better life and further progress of civilization, political parties should strive to achieve material abundance, political integrity, cultural-ethical enrichment, social stability, and pleasant living environments so that modernization will better address the concerns and meet diversified needs of the people. In this way, modernization will promote the sustainable

development of humanity by not only increasing the wellbeing of this generation but also protecting the rights and interest of future generations.

The Path of Modernization Based on National Conditions, with its Own Unique Characteristics

We must uphold the principle of independence and explore diversified paths towards modernization. Modernization is not "an exclusive patent" of a small handful of countries, nor is it a single answer question. It cannot be realized by a cookie cutter approach or simple "copy and paste". For any country to achieve modernization, it needs not only to follow the general laws governing the process, but more importantly consider its own national conditions and unique features. It is the people of a country that are in the best position to tell what kind of modernization best suits them.

Developing countries have the right and ability to independently explore the modernization path with their distinctive features based on their national realities. We must develop our country and our nation with our own strength, and we must maintain a firm grasp on the future of our country's development and progress. We should respect and support the development paths independently chosen by different peoples to jointly usher in a new prospect for humanity's modernization that is like a garden where a hundred flowers bloom.

We should work together to reform and develop the global governance system and make the international order more just and equitable as we advance humanity's modernization in an environment of equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all.

We must uphold fundamental principles and break new ground and ensure the continuity of the modernization process. In the face of various new issues, conditions and challenges in the modernization process, political parties should boldly take on responsibilities and excel in their work. We should break the shackles of stale thinking, remove institutional barriers, explore new methods and new approaches, and break new ground in theories and practices to instill unceasing dynamism into the modernization process. We should work together to reform and develop the global governance system and make the international order more just and equitable as we advance humanity's modernization in an environment of equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all.

Shared and Common Development

We must help others to succeed while seeking our own success and ensure all can enjoy the outcomes of modernization. Humanity lives in a community with a shared future where we rise and fall together. For any country to achieve modernization, it should pursue common development through solidarity and cooperation and follow the principles of joint contribution, shared benefits and win-win outcome. The frontrunners should sincerely support other countries in their development. One will not be seen in a more favourable light after blowing out others' lamp; nor will they go farther by blocking others' paths. We should share opportunities, create a future together and make the pie of humanity's modernization bigger to ensure more people enjoy the outcomes of modernization in a fairer way. We stand firmly opposed to the practice of preserving one's own development privilege by suppressing and containing other countries' endeavor to achieve modernization.

We must forge ahead with enterprise and ensure firm leadership over modernization. Modernization does not fall into our lap automatically. It is the result of hard work with the strong historical initiative. Political parties are the leading and driving force for modernization. Their values, ability to lead and govern, ethos, willpower and character have a direct bearing on the orientation and future of the modernization process. As an ancient Chinese philosopher said, "He who conquers himself is strong." Political parties should integrate party building with national modernization, forge ahead with enterprise and resolve, and excel themselves. In this way, they will have the confidence, determination and capability to respond to the challenges and questions presented by the times, meet people's expectations, and steer the course and marshal strength for the modernization cause.



Xi Jinping: "We advocate respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries should promote the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations and allow cultural exchanges to overcome alienation; mutual learning to overcome conflict; and coexistence to overcome feelings of superiority"

(Figure: Song Chen/China Daily, 2019).

A Path to Progress for Humanity and Harmony for the Entire World

Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends,

Achieving modernization is a dream that the Chinese people have strived to fulfill since modern times. The journey of over 100 years that the Party has traversed to unite and lead the Chinese people in pursuing national rejuvenation is also an exploration of a path towards modernization. Thanks to the unremitting efforts of generation after generation, we have found our own path to modernization.

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has proposed advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. Chinese modernization is one of a huge population, of common prosperity for all, of material and cultural-ethical advancement, of harmony between humanity

and nature, and of peaceful development. It is rooted in our national conditions and also draws on the experience of other countries. It carries the imprint of history and traditional culture and also contains modern elements. It delivers benefit to the Chinese people and also advances common development of the world. It is a sure path for us to build a stronger nation and realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is also a path we must take to seek progress for humanity and harmony for the entire world. We will stay committed to the right direction, right theories and the right path. We will not veer off course by changing our nature or abandoning our system. As our own future is closely connected with that of other countries and peoples, we will strive to provide new opportunities for world development, add new impetus to humanity's exploration of paths towards modernization and make new contributions to the theory and practice of humanity's modernization as we make new progress in Chinese modernization.

The CPC will continue to pursue high-quality development and promote global growth and prosperity. We will accelerate the building of a new development paradigm that promotes high-standard opening up and steady expansion of market access. China's door will only open wider. As we further modernize our industrial system, we will provide the world with more and better products made and created in China, and with a Chinese market of a larger scale and stronger demand. We will continue to support and help developing countries in their pursuit of faster development, industrialization and modernization and offer Chinese solutions and strength for narrowing the North-South gap and achieving common development. The CPC stands ready to work with political parties of all other countries to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, accelerate the solid implementation of the Global Development Initiative, foster new drivers for global development and build a global community of development.

China will never seek hegemony or expansion

The CPC will continue to safeguard international fairness and justice and promote world peace and stability. In advancing modernization, China will neither tread the old path of colonization and plunder, nor the crooked path taken by some countries to seek hegemony once they grow strong. What China pursues is the right course of peaceful development. We seek to settle differences through dialogue and resolve disputes through cooperation. We firmly oppose hegemony and power politics in all their forms. We advocate solidarity and win-win mentality in handling complex and intertwined security challenges to set up a fair and just security architecture that is built and shared by all. The world does not need a new Cold War. The practice of stoking division and confrontation in the name of democracy is in itself a violation of the spirit of democracy. It will not receive any support. What it brings is only endless harm. A modernized China will

strengthen the force for world peace and international justice. No matter what level of development China achieves, it will never seek hegemony or expansion.

The CPC will continue to promote inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning and advance the progress of human civilizations. Around the world, countries and regions have chosen different paths to modernization, which are rooted in their unique and long civilizations. All civilizations created by human society are splendid. They are where each country's modernization drive draws its strength and where its unique feature comes from. They, transcending time and space, have jointly made important contribution to humanity's modernization process. Chinese modernization, as a new form of human advancement, will draw upon the merits of other civilizations and make the garden of world civilizations more vibrant.

Global Civilization Initiative

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden. As the future of all countries are closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity's modernization process and making the garden of world civilizations flourish. Here, I wish to propose the Global Civilization Initiative.

We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority.

We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and



The Public Forum on China's Global Civilization Initiative was successfully held in Accra on 19 July 2023 by the Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory (ACCPA), a China-Africa research and policy think tank and consulting firm (Photo: Newghana, 2023).

refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.

We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, enrich the contents of exchanges and expand avenues of cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilizations.

We are ready to work together with the international community to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

The CPC is committed to strengthening exchanges

and cooperation with other political parties to pursue the just cause together. We are ready to deepen interactions with political parties and organizations in other countries to expand the convergence of ideas and interests. Let us leverage the strength of a new type of party-to-party relations for the building of a new type of international relations and expand global partnerships by fostering stronger partners with world political parties. The CPC stands ready to share governance experience with political parties and organizations of other countries so that together we can make big strides on the path to modernization toward the goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

There are bound to be setbacks on humanity's journey to modernization, but the future is bright. The CPC is willing to work with all of you to ensure that different modernization drives form a mighty force driving prosperity and progress of the world and forge ahead nonstop in the long river of history!

Thank you. 🌸

Türkiye's Efforts to Combat Islamophobia: Responses, Motivations, and Challenges



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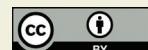
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Türkiye's responses, motivations, and challenges in the process of combating Islamophobia. From the Turkish perspective, Islamophobia has exerted historical and contemporary negative impacts on Türkiye. In response, Türkiye takes steps from two dimensions of reality and perception. At the practical level, Türkiye employs a combination of bilateral diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, and foreign propaganda. At the spiritual level, Türkiye emphasizes its national image and soft power. As a Muslim country, Türkiye's efforts to combat Islamophobia highlight the factors of Türkiye's national interests, the moderate Islamic attributes of the Justice and Development Party, and the historical and cultural traditions of Islam. In the fight against Islamophobia, Türkiye also faces numerous challenges, including the intricacy of Islamophobia, the entrenchment of stereotypes, the obstruction from other Islamic countries, and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe. The Global Civilization Initiative proposed by China may become another potential alternative to addressing Islamophobia.

Keywords: civilization, clash of civilizations, Global Civilization Initiative, Islamophobia, Türkiye.

Introduction

ISLAMOPHOBIA HAS A LONG-STANDING history in the world. Since its inception, the Western Christian world has harbored fear, hatred, and prejudice towards Islam. Over hundreds of years, mutual attacks between the two sides have fueled these sentiments, leading to deep-rooted historical tensions that pose significant threats to contemporary interaction between Christian civilization and Islamic civilization. In the 21st century, a series of international events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the emergence of the terrorist organization ISIS, and the European refugee crisis have reignited anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments in the Western World. This resurgence of Islamophobia has become a critical issue of the international community nowadays.

Türkiye, situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, serves as a convergence point for Western and Eastern cultures, as well as Christian and Islamic civilizations. It has been the target of Islamophobia as early as the Ottoman Empire period, which stems not only from the military fear arising from the expansion of an imperial power, but at a deeper level from the cultural fear brought about by heterogeneous Islamic civilization. In the 21st century, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose Justice and Development Party (AKP) has Islamist roots, Türkiye considers itself the heir to the Ottoman Empire, Islam's last fortress, and the leader of Islamic civilization. Faced with the escalating issue of Islamophobia in recent years, Türkiye, positioning itself as the leader within the Islamic world, has assumed the responsibility of combating Islamophobia and safeguarding Muslims' interests (Tol, 2019; Gürçan, 2019).

Existing literature on Islamophobia predominantly delves into its definition, implications, and manifestation in certain countries or regions. However, Türkiye's efforts to combat Islamophobia remain largely unexplored. Thus, this paper aims to examine Türkiye's responses, motivations, and challenges in confronting Islamophobia. The findings may hopefully contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Türkiye's role in international relations and the interaction of civilization in the contemporary world.

Understanding Islamophobia from the Turkish Perspective

In the English context, the term "Islamophobia" is a compound word made from "Islam" and "phobia". First used in 1923, it mainly refers to the "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). According to the explanation provided by the United Nations (n.d.), Islamophobia is "a fear, prejudice and hatred of Muslims that leads to provocation, hostility and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims, both in the online and offline world". In 1997, the Runnymede Trust, a non-governmental organization focused on racial relations and civil rights, published a report entitled "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All", which marked the emergence of Islamophobia in contemporary discourse. Since then, especially following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the concept of Islamophobia has been commonly employed by the media, citizens, and NGOs, particularly in Western countries (Bleich, 2012). In recent years, with the spread of Islamophobia and the

resulting normalization of hatred, hostility, and violence, some international organizations and sovereign states have gradually become aware of the potential threat of Islamophobia and begun to incorporate it into political agenda.

During the era of Western colonial expansion, prevalent arguments such as Eurocentrism and Orientalism were utilized extensively, demonizing Islam and Muslims through colonial and imperialist discourse.

From the Turkish perspective, the phenomenon of Islamophobia can be traced back to the era of the Ottoman Empire. With the early conquest and expansion of the Islamic Empire, Western Christian civilization experienced frequent military invasions and cultural shocks from a heterogeneous civilization. Such interaction left Westerners, who were still at a disadvantage at that time, feeling vulnerable in the face of both tangible security threat and intangible spiritual menace. Consequently, a sense of intuitive fear and animosity towards Islam and Muslims began to emerge among Western societies. As Western nation-states ascended and the Ottoman Empire declined, the once dominant power spanning Asia, Africa, and Europe was gradually reduced to the "Sick Man of Europe", and Christian civilization and Islamic civilization had since changed their positions in the arena. During the era of Western colonial expansion, prevalent arguments such as Eurocentrism and Orientalism were utilized extensively, demonizing Islam and Muslims through colonial and imperialist discourse.

Figure 1. Countries with the Largest Muslim Populations

	Estimated 2009 Muslim Population	Percentage of Population that is Muslim	Percentage of World Muslim Population
Indonesia	202,867,000	88.2%	12.9%
Pakistan	174,082,000	96.3	11.1
India	160,945,000	13.4	10.3
Bangladesh	145,312,000	89.6	9.3
Egypt	78,513,000	94.6	5.0
Nigeria	78,056,000	50.4	5.0
Iran	73,777,000	99.4	4.7
Türkiye*	73,619,000	~98	4.7
Algeria	34,199,000	98.0	2.2
Morocco*	31,993,000	~99	~2

Türkiye's Muslim population accounts for 4.7% of the world's Muslim population and 98% of Türkiye's population is Muslim, with approximately 73,619,000 people (Figure: Pew Research Center, 2009).

With these ideas in mind, the stereotypical perception of Muslims in the Western world as being ignorant, backward, and barbaric gradually developed. As a result, the previous Christians' fear and hostility towards Muslims, and the contempt and discrimination of the self-proclaimed rational and civilized West towards the ignorant and barbaric East, intertwined over time, eventually entrenching the negative perceptions of Western Christian civilization towards Eastern Islamic civilization (He, 2013).

To this day, despite Türkiye's transition to a secular nation-state, which no longer poses serious military and cultural threats to the West as it once did, lingering prejudices persist in Western societies. According to a report on the global Muslim population released by the Pew Research Center in 2009, Türkiye's Muslim population constitutes 4.7% of the world's Mus-

lim population with approximately 73,619,000 people, and around 98% of Türkiye's population is Muslim (Pew Research Center, 2009). Thus, it is naturally difficult for Türkiye to avoid the growing Islamophobia in the West, while the negative perception of Muslims in the West will also profoundly affect the interaction between the two sides in the international arena. The accession of Türkiye to the European Union, for instance, is one of the typical cases that exemplify the detrimental effects of Islamophobia.

Since 1959, Türkiye has endeavored to establish relations with the European Economic Community, the predecessor of the EU. In 1987, Türkiye formally applied for full membership to the European Economic Community. Subsequently, during the Helsinki meeting in 1999, the European Council granted Türkiye EU candidate status.

Nevertheless, despite the initiation of negotiations in 2005, Türkiye's accession to the EU is still pending. The lengthy process reflects contradictions and differences between the two sides in many aspects, which not only encompass economic and other material elements, but also involve psychological elements such as religion, identity, and so on. According to the materials organized by Li, interviews conducted with Turkish elites in 1999 reveal that the economic issue is regarded as the biggest obstacle to the EU membership, followed by the religious issue (Li, 2008). In fact, as the Turkish economy grows, the "culturally too different" criticism has become a subtle opposition to Turkish membership in the EU, primarily grounded in Türkiye's non-Christian identity, which has come to constitute the major impediment to its accession (Kirişci, 2008). A report released by Eurobarometer in 2006 shows that nearly 60% of respondents totally or tend to agree that "the cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union Member States are too significant to allow it to join the EU" (Eurobarometer, 2006). The phenomenon of Islamophobia, to a certain extent, is a manifestation of cultural conflict. As Islamophobia rages in Western societies, negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims in EU member states will further deteriorate, which is likely to reinforce the idea of "cultural differences". This trend will inevitably hinder Türkiye's accession process.

Türkiye's Responses to Islamophobia

In response to the severe situation of spreading Islamophobia, Türkiye has adopted the strategy of "parallel tracks", incorporating multiple measures. At the practical level, Türkiye employs a

combination of bilateral diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, and foreign propaganda to promote the institutionalization and normalization of the fight against Islamophobia. At the spiritual level, Türkiye emphasizes its national image and soft power in an attempt to change the stereotypes in non-Islamic societies. Focusing on the core objective of anti-Islamophobia, the above two main lines are interconnected and complementary, which would appear to "treat both the symptom and the root cause."

Türkiye actively engages in bilateral diplomatic activities and negotiations with relevant states where incidents of Islamophobia have occurred, urging them to take practical actions to combat Islamophobia.

At the practical level, first and foremost, Türkiye actively engages in bilateral diplomatic activities and negotiations with relevant states where incidents of Islamophobia have occurred, urging them to take practical actions to combat Islamophobia. For instance, Rasmus Paludan, a far-right and anti-Islam activist, burned the Quran near a mosque and outside the Turkish embassy in Denmark in January 2023, which infuriated the Turkish government. Subsequently, the Danish ambassador was summoned to the Turkish foreign ministry, where Turkish officials strongly denounced the authorization granted for such provocative act that constitutes a hate crime and stated that "Denmark's attitude is unacceptable" ("Quran burned," 2023). As a result



In his speech at the 12th Information Ministers Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, President Erdoğan said: "As Türkiye, we attach great importance to the fight against Islamophobia and we are working to establish global solidarity on this issue." (Photo: TCCB, 2022).

of Türkiye's initiatives, Denmark eventually enacted legislation in December, which effectively criminalizes Quran-burning protests grounded in "inappropriate treatment of writings with significant importance for a recognized religious community" (Altun, 2023). Similarly, in response to the Quran-burning incidents in Sweden, Türkiye utilized its NATO membership as a lever to exert pressure on Sweden, promoting the latter to make concessions on relevant issues and take measures to combat Islamophobia. In this regard, President Erdogan once made it clear that Türkiye will not allow Sweden to join the NATO as long as Sweden permits the holy book to be

burned and torn (Fraser & Tanner, 2023).

In addition, in terms of multilateral diplomacy, Türkiye frequently conducts actions on international platforms such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), aiming to institutionalize the efforts against Islamophobia. For example, as a result of Türkiye's effective efforts in consultation with the OIC, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution in 2022 that proclaimed March 15 as the "International Day To Combat Islamophobia" (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

As the OIC Summit Chair, Türkiye swiftly convened an emergency meeting following the tragic Christchurch mosque shootings on 15 March 2019, discussing the escalating violence fueled by Islamophobia, racism, and xenophobia (“Türkiye calls OIC meeting,” 2019). Within the framework of the OSCE, as one of the founding members, Türkiye raised and emphasized the necessity for enhanced cooperation to address the increasing Islamophobia in OSCE region, calling for strengthening the OSCE’s capacity to effectively respond to such challenges (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Last but not least, Türkiye’s efforts to combat Islamophobia through foreign propa-

ganda take on a normalized pattern. Foreign propaganda serves as a potent supplement to diplomatic activities, facilitating the efficient transmission of signals and information to other states. Turkish diplomats, as well as President Erdogan himself, have consistently addressed the issue of Islamophobia at press conferences, international meetings, social media, and other public occasions. In this way, they attempt to underscore the increasing prevalence and severity of Islamophobia, call for global solidarity in the fight against Islamophobia, and assert Türkiye’s leadership in the combat. For instance, President Erdogan has publicly stated that Islamophobia is as dangerous as the virus, which is spreading



On March 15, 2019, flowers are placed in memory of the victims of the attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. March 15 was declared the International Day Combat Islamophobia (Photo: Xinhua, 2020).

rapidly in the so-called liberal democracies and has developed a tendency to disrupt the daily lives of Muslims and threaten the peace of societies, while Türkiye is playing a leading role in the fight against Islamophobia in the international arena (Günerigök, 2021). Through explicit statements and regular propaganda, Türkiye is constantly expanding its influence and representativeness in the Islamic world.

Türkiye employs both counter-terrorism measures and media strategies to improve the international image of Islam and Muslims, seeking to dispel the Islamophobia-related mindsets and stereotypes.

At the spiritual level, firstly, Türkiye employs both counter-terrorism measures and media strategies to improve the international image of Islam and Muslims, seeking to dispel the Islamophobia-related mindsets and stereotypes. In the contemporary international community, the international public opinion, largely shaped and dominated by the hegemony of Western discourse, is filled with Western-centric ideologies that exhibit evident biases. The disparity in discourse power has resulted in limited opportunities for many states to propagate their own views on global issues. Often, they can only respond passively, being “led by the nose”, and Islamophobia is a typical product of this pattern. From the pre-World War II period to the post-Cold War era, Western media have gone through the de-

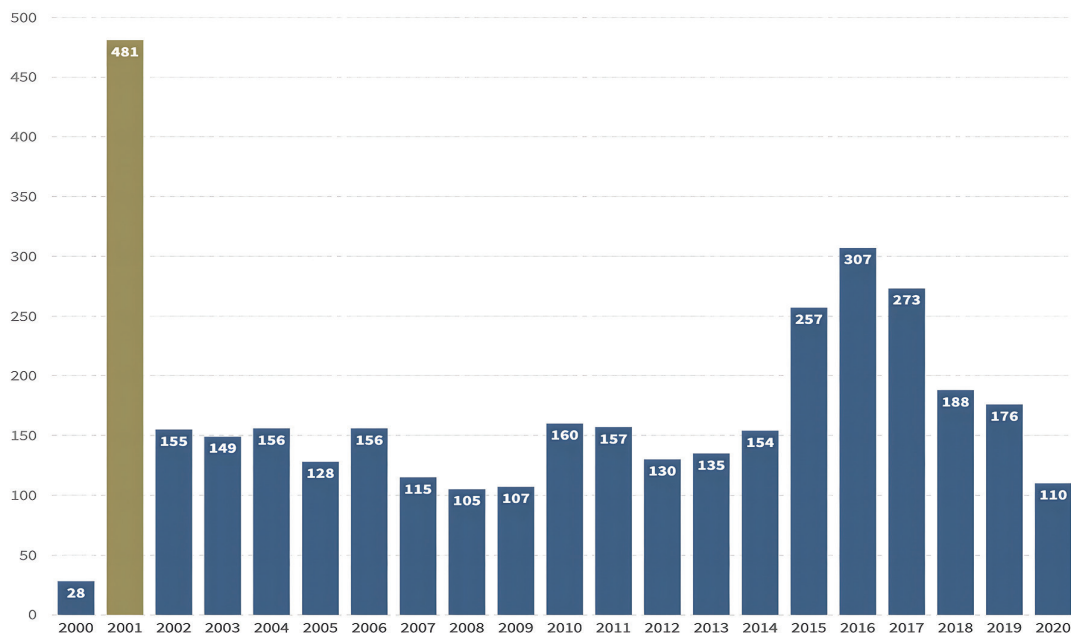
ductive logic of “imaging – typecasting – uglifying – demonizing – terrorizing”, which reshaped and fabricated a negative image of the Islamic world that is far away from its original nature, thereby reinforcing Islamophobia in the Western world (Ma, 2008). In recent years, the frequent occurrence of violent extremism in the name of Islam has heightened concerns among European people regarding the recurrence of violent incidents like the London subway bombings, which has consequently exacerbated intolerance and exclusion against Muslims (Yilmaz, 2016). In response, Türkiye is committed to fighting terrorist organizations in order to refute claims of a link between Islam and extremism, terrorism and separatism. This strategy integrates counter-terrorism with anti-Islamophobia, underscoring the potential link between overlooking Islamophobia and the breeding and spread of terrorist threats (Karaaslan & Guder, 2019). Furthermore, Türkiye has taken proactive steps in establishing institutionalized communication channels, exemplified by the initiation of a joint TV project in collaboration with Pakistan and Malaysia (Latif, 2019). This TV channel project embodies Türkiye’s media strategy in the fight against Islamophobia. It aims to create an English-language media platform similar to the BBC, which can provide a platform to speak out in the international community, eliminate discrimination and prejudice, and promote a more positive image of Islam and Muslims.

Secondly, Türkiye takes advantage of its soft power, with culture and tourism as two significant instruments, to fight against the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Turkish sentiments around the world (Ugurlu & Dikme, 2017).

By presenting the harmonious blend of Islamic tradition and modernization, Türkiye highlights the diversity and inclusiveness of its society. In fact, since the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002, Türkiye has begun to develop a more comprehensive public diplomacy, making greater use of the cultural tool, which in turn has created a new situation of cultural diplomacy (Donelli, 2019). In the past decade, Türkiye has advanced its cultural diplomacy on two complementary levels: high culture and popular cultural. At the level of high culture, the propaganda, education, and exchange of Turkish culture are facilitated through public agencies, such as the Yunus Emre Institute, Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), and Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı

(Presidency of Religious Affairs). At the level of popular culture, based on the Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), Türkiye employs the international broadcasting and TV series production to disseminate the Turkish vision, create a positive Turkish image, and promote Turkish culture (Donelli, 2019). In addition, tourism is another important means of enhancing Türkiye's soft power and combating Islamophobia. During the AKP government's ruling period, there are unprecedented shifts in Turkish foreign policy orientation that include emphasis on soft power especially towards targeted regions, which has been proved effective: data shows that there is a positive correlation between soft power target regions and the number of in-bound tourists from those regions (Şen, 2019).

Figure 2. Anti-Muslim Crimes reported to the FBI in the US



In the US, anti-Muslim movements began to proliferate after September 11 (Figure: CGTN, 2022).

Motivations behind Türkiye's Responses

In essence, Türkiye's efforts in combating Islamophobia extend beyond mere propaganda and practical actions, behind which are various strategic considerations of the Turkish government. Overall, Türkiye's responses are grounded in Türkiye's national interests, the moderate Islamic attributes of the AKP, and the historical and cultural traditions of Islam.

Whether it is based on stabilizing economic relations with Western states or improving domestic economic conditions, the fight against Islamophobia appears to be a pivotal instrument for Türkiye to safeguard its economic interests.

Firstly, Türkiye is motivated by the necessity to safeguard its multiple national interests in politics, economy, and security. In terms of political interests, the main issue at stake is the leadership in the Islamic world. In the framework of the OIC, some powerful states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Türkiye have attempted to shape the organization's agenda in accordance with their respective national interests, and the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Türkiye for the leadership of Islamic world has been an important area of contention (Liu & Zhao, 2019). Türkiye shares similar Islamic religious and cultural traditions with other Muslim states who are victims of Islamophobia. As an important member of the OIC, Türkiye bears the responsibility of pro-

tecting the interests, dignity, and independence of Muslims. Combating Islamophobia globally in a high-profile and visible manner is beneficial for Türkiye to enhance its influence and discourse power among Islamic states and obtain greater support on international issues, thereby creating its leadership in the Islamic world.

In terms of economic interests, combating Islamophobia can help to maintain Türkiye's economic interests to some extent. Several Western states, such as the UK and the US, are main ravaging places of Islamophobia and also serve as important trading partners for Türkiye. According to statistics from the World Bank in 2021, Türkiye's major trading partner countries for exports are Germany (8.57%), the United States (6.54%), the United Kingdom (6.08%), Italy (5.09%), and Iraq (4.94%), four of which are Western states. Among Türkiye's major import partners, the top five also include two Western states: Germany, ranking fourth with 8.00%, and the United States, ranking fifth with 4.84% (World Integrated Trade Solution, 2021). Under the influence of Islamophobia, Western investors will inevitably be concerned about the potential risks of engaging in economic activities with Türkiye, which consequently undermines their willingness to trade with Türkiye. Worse still, the Turkish economy has been losing momentum due to the deteriorating external environment and heterodox monetary policies, and two devastating earthquakes in 2023 have further exacerbated Türkiye's fragile economic situation (The World Bank, 2023). Therefore, whether it is based on stabilizing economic relations with Western states or improving domestic economic conditions, the fight against Islamophobia appears to be a pivotal instrument for Türkiye to safeguard its economic interests.

In terms of security interests, combating terrorism and Islamophobia are interconnected. Simultaneous efforts in addressing both issues are beneficial to mitigate religious antagonism, reduce the breeding ground for terrorism, and eventually maintain Türkiye's national security. The proliferation of Islamophobia may deepen the opposition between Christian and Islamic civilizations and lead to the increase of extreme acts of violence, ultimately ensnaring both sides into the trap of terrorism. Thus, combatting Islamophobia is intrinsically related to combatting terrorism, both of which are manifestations of maintaining security interests. President Erdogan has once "strongly condemned coupling terrorism with Islam" and stressed that Türkiye fights terrorism itself, so too is Islamophobia (General Assembly of the United Nations, 2014).

Secondly, Türkiye's responses to Islamophobia are significantly shaped by the moderate Islamic

attributes of the AKP. Since 2002, the AKP has been in power and has become one of the most influential Islamic political parties in the Middle East. By its very nature, the ideology of the AKP is characterized by a combination of conservatism and moderate Islamism, which constitutes one of the forms of the "Turkish Model", namely "a stable democratic system based on secularism and ruled by moderate Islamic political forces" (Zan, 2012). Under the leadership of the political strongman Erdogan, the AKP, with pan-Islamism as the root of its culture and values, relies on certain successful historical practices of the Ottoman period to realize the domestic and global vision of contemporary Türkiye (Dong, 2022). Consequently, Türkiye's domestic and foreign policies exhibit a distinct Islamic orientation, and the fight against Islamophobia aligns closely with the party's ideology. Moreover, combating Islamophobia could favor the party's popularity. The voter base of the



President Erdoğan "strongly condemned the association of terrorism with Islam" and emphasized that Türkiye is fighting both terrorism and Islamophobia (Photo: TCCB, 2014).

AKP, commonly known as the “Black Turks” as opposed to the “White Turks”, consists mainly of the working class from urban suburbs, emerging conservative elites, and religious extremists within the Kurdish population in the Southeast (Li & Robins, 2016). These conservative and marginalized Islamists see the AKP as a representation for their own interests and give it full support. By combating Islamophobia, the AKP government could demonstrate its determination and ability to protect the interests of Muslims, which aligns with the desires of its voter base. In this way, the party will not only obtain the trust and support of existing supporters, consolidating the foundation of governance, but also attract other voters who fear the repercussions of Islamophobia, thus expanding its support base.

Islamophobia, which associates Islam with terrorism, has been seriously hindering the coexistence of diverse cultures

Thirdly, Türkiye's efforts are based on the preservation of its Islamic historical and cultural heritage. Türkiye boasts a rich Islamic historical and cultural heritage, with the historical legacy of serving as an Islamic empire in Eurasia that possess three holy sites: Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. The supreme ruler of the empire, known as the Sultan, also holds the esteemed position of Caliph, the highest spiritual leader in the Islamic world. Consequently, the Sultan often assumes the role of both ruler and guardian of the Islamic world. Following the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, the Islamic tradition, spanning nearly a millennium, did not vanish in the process of se-

cularization. Instead, it quietly hibernated and returned to the center stage with the process of Islamic revival, still playing an important role in contemporary Turkish society. Nevertheless, under the onslaught of Islamophobia and the propaganda campaign of the Western media, the Islamic traditions are often perceived as a menace to Western values. They are frequently associated with negative connotations such as terror, extremism, and violence, while the positive values of justice, mercy, and tolerance inherent in Islam are selectively ignored. Such discourse that demonizes Islam and Muslims is the very embodiment of cultural racism and hegemonism. Islamophobia, which associates Islam with terrorism, has been seriously hindering the coexistence of diverse cultures (Sevencan & Kazanci, 2021). Therefore, in order to preserve the glorious historical and cultural traditions of Islam, combating Islamophobia is a critical breakthrough point.

Challenges ahead for Türkiye

As mentioned above, Türkiye has consistently emphasized the need to address Islamophobia on international occasions and has implemented specific measures to promote this process. However, Türkiye is likely to encounter numerous challenges in achieving its strategic objective due to several factors.

First of all, the intricate and pervasive nature of Islamophobia poses significant difficulties to its resolution. As a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon with diverse roots, Islamophobia presents different dynamics in different countries or regions, behind which are various influential factors such as politics, economy, culture, religion, and so on. These factors become intertwined as the situation changes, making Islamophobia progressively complicated.

Nowadays, with the continuous evolution of concepts and drastic changes in reality, Islamophobia has become a grand issue encompassing religious discrimination, racism, and cultural racism (Cakmak, 2022). In light of this, while Türkiye has adopted the strategy of “parallel tracks” in an attempt to tackle both the symptoms and the root causes of the issue, it is still unable to comprehensively address all aspects of this intricate social problem.



Western media still holds the international discourse power and continues to utilize the propaganda machine to spread stereotypes and negative images of Islam and Muslims.

In addition, stereotypes caused by Islamophobia are difficult to change. Created by the joint manipulation of Western political circles, academia, and the media, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has a long history, in which the West has shaped an unrealistic positive self-image through denigrating dissenters (Ma, 2008). Tracing its roots, Islamophobia is largely a discourse trap concocted by the West. In order to pursue their own interests, the West presupposes a negative image of Islam and Muslims and reinforces this stereotype in their subsequent practices, eventually falling into the logical trap of self-fulfilling prophecy. As a result, Muslims have become the global “scapegoats”, blamed for various negative social phenomena such as illegality, crime, violence, and so on and so forth (Kaya, 2020). Currently, the Western media still

holds the international discourse power and continues to utilize the propaganda machine to spread stereotypes and negative images of Islam and Muslims. In contrast, Türkiye lacks comparable propaganda capabilities to counterbalance such narrative, thus making it extremely difficult to challenge the Western discourse hegemony and eliminate biases.

Furthermore, in the fight against Islamophobia, Türkiye’s aspiration for leadership in the Islamic world will encounter resistance from certain Islamic states. In the Islamic world, the struggle over regional religious leadership is one of the focal points of the regional leadership struggle between Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, and their competition over ideological and geopolitical interests has been escalating since the Middle East turbulence (Liu & Zhao, 2019). Besides, not all Muslim states have taken practical actions against Islamophobia. Some Muslim states that have codependency relationship with the West may be reluctant to make statements that could disturb the West, and some like the United Arab Emirates even “financially support anti-Muslim circles” (Kizil, 2021). Therefore, challenges from within the Islamic world are ahead for Türkiye.

Lastly, the rise of the right-wing populism in Europe has cast a deep shadow over Türkiye’s efforts. As extreme right-wing ideas started to gain public support in Europe, some center-right parties began to cater to the extreme right so as to retain the loyalty of their fringe voters, while the center-left, which often advocates for anti-racist initiatives, has become more silent for similar reasons (Yinanç, 2017). Against the backdrop of rising right-wing forces, Türkiye’s efforts to combat Islamophobia will struggle to produce the desired results.



Global Civilization Initiative emphasizes the importance of upholding the principles of equality, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations (Figure: Li Min/China Daily, 2022).

China's Response: Global Civilization Initiative

From China's perspective, despite the fact that Islamophobia poses far less of a threat to China than it does to Muslim states like Türkiye, China still upholds the idea of "a community with a shared future for mankind", calling on all states to respect cultural diversity and oppose Islamophobia. The Chinese government has consistently expressed its resolute opposition to Islamophobia through diplomatic channels. For instance, on the first International Day to Combat Islamophobia, Wang Wenbin, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, reiterated China's consistent stand against religious discrimination and hatred, and stressed that the United States, the only

state in the world that had enacted a ban specifically targeting the Muslim community, should take practical actions to eliminate Islamophobia (Le, 2023). In response to the Quran-burning incidents, China has clearly conveyed its strong condemnation and opposition to all forms of Islamophobia, emphasizing China's longstanding advocacy for mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding among civilizations (Xing & Li, 2023). In 2022, China, as one of the co-sponsors, supported the United Nations General Assembly in adopting the resolution to designate March 15 each year as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which vividly demonstrates China's consistent position of insisting on dialogue among civilizations and opposing the so-called clash of civilizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

China's attitude and response to Islamophobia, as described above, coincides with that of Türkiye to a certain degree.

From a broader perspective, the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) can be seen as a Chinese approach to addressing Islamophobia. Proposed by President Xi Jinping on March 15, 2023, the Global Civilization Initiative emphasizes the significance of upholding principles such as equality, dialogue, and inclusiveness among civilizations. It advocates that states around the world should let "cultural exchanges transcend estrangement", "mutual learning transcend clashes", and "coexistence transcend feelings of superiority". These ideas fully embody China's unique perspective on civilization: harmony without uniformity. Every country in the world is a unique mosaic of peoples, beliefs, systems, and so on (Tangen, 2023). Pride and prejudice will only lead to endless conflicts such as Islamophobia. Countries need to keep an open mind to seek common ground while reserving differences. Only in this way can humanity create a bright future.

Conclusion

As a large Muslim state, Türkiye cannot avoid the severe challenges posed by Islamophobia and has been suffering from it in terms of its accession to the EU, national image, and so on. Based on national interests, ideology, Islamic traditions, and other considerations, Türkiye has implemented targeted measures from two dimensions of reality and perception to combat Islamophobia, but these efforts have encountered numerous challenges. So far, Türkiye's strategy has not yielded significant results. While progress has been made in addressing specific incidents of Islamophobia at the practical level, there is still a long way to go at the spiritual le-

vel. As the Chinese saying goes, "It is easy to capture a thief in the mountains, but hard to eliminate the stereotype in the mind." In the foreseeable future, Türkiye will continue its unwavering fight against Islamophobia, and the struggle between the two sides will also continue for a long time with an outcome that is yet to be seen.

Looking at its historical origins, it is not difficult to find out that the dichotomy of West and East, Christian civilization and Islamic civilization embodied in Islamophobia coincides with the theory of "clash of civilizations" put forward by Huntington. These ideas are intertwined and collectively form the theoretical underpinnings of Islamophobia. Under such binary opposition, there seems to be an insurmountable gap between the two civilizations. In its essence, Islamophobia can be understood as a facet of the broader Western discourse of clash of civilizations. To completely solve the problem of Islamophobia from the root, it is necessary to start from the concept and theory of civilization, break the Western discourse hegemony, and construct and promote a more inclusive civilization view. As early as 2005, Türkiye, together with Spain, launched "The Alliance of Civilizations Initiative", which aimed at strengthening mutual respect between different cultures. Likewise, in 2023, China put forward its version of civilization view, namely the Global Civilization Initiative. The practices of the two countries are both positive attempts to smash prejudiced civilization views and build inclusive civilization views. Although the international order is still dominated by the Western-centric view of civilization, these efforts above can hopefully contribute to the change of the status quo to a greater or lesser extent. 

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China's Strategic Involvement in Africa and the New International Mutations: Old Policies, New challenges



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ABSTRACT

Chinese engagement in Africa brought mixed academic commentaries regarding the aims and objectives pursued by this country. Whether referred to as a search for China's empowerment at the expense of African development or as a reliable partnership to enhance the status of the non-Western world, China's immersion in Africa appear unconventional, and innovative compared to the designs pursued by other major powers in their dealings with the African continent. In China's vision, Africa occupies a special place for historic reasons, identity considerations, and a common destiny, beyond sharing strategic and economic interests. Beijing has become in the last decade, Africa's most important partner in terms of political relationships, direct investments, trade exchanges and financial assistance. China is trying to adapt to the world's new underpinnings and seems to take into consideration the changing priorities of Africa in the context of the looming East /West cold war, induced mainly, by the Ukraine-Russia war.

Keywords: Africa, China, cooperation, Ukraine-Russia war, world mutations.

Introduction

FROM BEING AN UNDERDEVELOPED country, only three decades ago, and sharing with African countries many features related to economic weakness and social backwardness, China has rapidly risen to a global status in terms of political credo, industrial potential, commodity exports, overseas financial investments, and military might.

Indeed, after a long period of State control over productive means, China started bold economic

reforms in the late 1970s, that have permitted a speedy transition from a dormant and static agrarian-dominated economy to a highly industrialized power and a technological hub with growing urban spaces, dynamic middle classes, widespread education, technological expertise, and innovations.

Such a rapid transformation or “Chinese miracle” as dubbed at that time, emanated from a voluntary national strategy based on a stable and coherent leadership, economic pragmatism, and a less ideological vision of world politics.

For a long time, China exalted a discourse concerning a foreign policy assumed to reflect five principles related to “the respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence.” Such orientations made China close to the challenges confronted by African countries in the light of the long-standing cold war.

Gradually, China’s ambitions to reach a major power status increased after obtaining a seat in the Security Council of the United Nations, and strengthening its economic capabilities and military might. China has then succeeded in becoming the most serious rival to the US hegemony over world affairs. The Asian power started, then, to call for multilateralism, which appealed to many countries in the world, particularly in Africa.

China’s grand design has symbolic foundations and ancient historical roots, according to the Chinese discourse. It sprung from the belief that Chinese civilization is 5,000 years old, which stresses the glorious past of this country and outlines a legitimate justification for the rise of China to a world-prominent status.

Since coming to power, Xi Jinping has departed from the low-profile doctrine pursued by Deng Xiaoping in the international scene in the early 1990s, based on “keep a low profile, do something,” or “tao guang yang hui, you suo zuo wei”(Chen, n.d). Instead, Xi Jinping went on to impulse a dynamic diplomacy framed in the great renewal of the Chinese nation, or *zhonghua minzu weida fuxing* that aimed at restoring China to the role of a great power (Nantulya, 2019).

Some political scientists considered China’s engagement in the African continent as “a positive development model”(Sheehy, 2022) and as an attempt to use of Africa as “a pivot in China’s efforts

to construct alternate global architectures”(Nantulya, 2023).

China’s encounter with Africa is not new. It dates back to the period when this country considered itself a part of the third world, committed to fighting colonialism and Western domination.

China provided many liberation movements in Africa with diplomatic support, financial assistance, and even arms, as was the case with the Algerian wartime National Liberation Front.

Later, Beijing found a staunch support from African countries, the great bulk of which gained independence in the 1960s, in the efforts to complete territorial integrity and the recovery of international credo and prestige.

Gradually, China diversified its cooperation with African countries, moving from a heavy reliance on the imports of raw materials (mining and energy) to participating in huge development projects and infrastructure, mainly in the sectors of agriculture, hydrocarbons, chemicals, transport, and housing. In return, China exported to its African partners, agrarian products, clothing, spare parts, industrial equipment, and even technology and know-how through joint ventures, implemented largely by Chinese loans and financial inducements.

China integrated Africa into its “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), a global development scheme incepted in 2013 which consisted of a well-resourced programme to increase commercial links with the developing world.

In its partnerships with African countries, economic pragmatism was the driving engine as political issues linked to the nature of political systems, respect for human rights and democracy requirements were not among the perquisites for China’s engagement in the African continent. In this vein, Many African countries resorted to Chinese cooperation to avoid, the somehow harsh conditions

imposed by the Western world, namely political overture, transparency in conducting trade deals, and financial transactions, as well as accountability and control procedures.

In the last few years, China's engagement in Africa upgraded to military and security issues. In addition to selling arms, Beijing sent troops in the framework of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa. Most importantly, it started to mark its military presence in this continent by installing a military base in Djibouti, alongside US and French military posts, and participating in joint operations with some countries of the Horn of Africa in fighting piracy in the Indian Ocean.

China aptly rejected criticisms from US officials and academics, which described China's presence in Africa as a "disguised imperialism," or a means to plunder its resources and a way to fill the gap left by the United States in the African continent (Irat-

ni, 2018). Other critics of China contented that this country sought to replace democracy and liberalism in Africa with authoritarian rule and a kind of "il-liberalism."

In its 'US Africa Strategy' announced in August 2022, US President Biden stated that China views Africa as an "important arena to challenge the rules-based international order, advance its own narrow commercial and geopolitical interests, undermine transparency and openness, and weaken U.S. relations with African peoples and governments" (Sheehy, 2022).

Many years ago, Graham Allison an American prominent political scientist, warned that US-China rivalry resembled the trap of Thucydides in which the famous Greek philosopher referred to the conflict between Athens and Sparta in the 5th century BC, due to Athens's 'imperialism' and the fear of domination felt by its rival Sparta (Allison, 2019).



The construction site of the Nairobi Motorway by Chinese company China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), Kenya, February 10, 2021 (Photo: CGTN, 2021).

Not only has China proved a serious contender to US economic ascendancy, as highlighted by the fierce clash over trade issues, but has emerged, also, as a spoiler to the world order forged by Washington since the Bretton Woods Agreements.

COVID-19 gave China a viable opportunity to be at the forefront of the battle against the disastrous effects of this virus through helping many African countries that lacked hygienic masks, vaccines, drugs, and medical devices. African countries highly praised Chinese assistance, through many messages (Xinhua, 2020). Such a dynamic activism took on a higher significance in the light of the Ukraine-Russia war. Indeed, this war provided China with an impetus to fulfill its desire to lead a pole of powerful countries in an attempt to construct alternate global institutions to challenge the Western world's hegemony over the world's economy.

China tried to show an autonomous stance by refraining from voting against Russia's intervention in Ukraine during the United Nations vote in March 2022 and from taking economic sanctions

on the Euro-Asian power. This posture appealed to the feeling shared by African public opinion, which regarded the Western countries' response to the war in Ukraine as a double standard when compared to US intervention in Iraq, and Afghanistan or to 'Israel's' aggressions against Palestinians in Gaza.

A significant turn appeared when President Xi Jinping visited Moscow in March 2023 and when China broke an unexpected détente between two countries regarded by the United States as hostile (Iran) or becoming less friendly (Saudi Arabia). Would the Iran-Saudi deal result in a new geostrategic configuration of the Asia-Middle East region? Would Russia join a Chinese-led pole distinct from the Western axis? Would this new coalition work for a new financial system, and compensation mechanisms to replace, if not, compete with those dominated by the United States? It may be precocious to answer these questions with perspicacity, but what seems plausible is that a new world



Photo taken on April 26, 2017 shows the China-Russia Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye railway bridge under construction as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (Photo: Xinhua, 2018).

balance of power is on the way. From this perspective, China's long-standing working relationship with Africa would not have been in vain.

This paper attempts to analyze China relations with Africa through the objectives pursued by the Asian country to achieve its grand design, which consists of upgrading to world status, without however, nourishing hegemonic temptations, as stated by the Chinese rhetoric. It encompasses three distinctive but intrinsically linked parts:

- The first part delves into scrutinizing China's grand design to become a world power, and alter the Western-dominated international system through an ambitious development strategy and active multilateral cooperation,

- The second part assesses the nature of the relations China enjoyed with the African continent through two interconnected parameters: the search for raw materials, and foreign market outlets, on the one hand, and the participation in the security concerns of Africa to complete its status as a lea-

ding global player, on the other,

- The third part pertains to the efforts displayed by China to take substantial advantage of the incidences induced by the Ukraine-Russia war, mainly in Africa, a promising continent that remains Beijing's privileged partner for historic reasons, moral commitments, and mutual benefits.

China's World Vision: Beyond Conventional Stereotypes

China's historic evolution stands as unique and paradoxical as it came from civilized empires in the past, to a poor country in modern times, and to a major world power since the beginning of the new millennium. The sequential process this country underwent consisted of strengthening its economic and military capabilities to reach a better international system. In this adventure, China looks towards Africa, with which it shares a many features.



Kenya's largest infrastructure project since independence, the Chinese-built Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway opened on May 30, 2017 (Photo: Global Times, 2022).

Positive empowerment, not bullying hegemony

Alluding perhaps to the United States, a Chinese diplomatic release stated, “A certain big power is reviving the Cold War mentality and stoking confrontation between blocs. It wilfully undermines international rule of law and stirs up antagonism. It gets zealous about decoupling and building walls, and glorifies hegemony and bullying” (Chinese Embassy in Ethiopia, n.d). From the outset, China’s involvement in world affairs was meant to stand utterly different from the United States’ external behavior by building up a strong momentum for the rise “of developing countries” and the implementation of a more balanced world landscape.

China considers itself a developing country by moral virtue and intrinsic feelings, and the Chinese leaders believe that their country remains a part of the developing world even if it has evolved into a great world power.

Before claiming international status and calling for a new world order, China had gone a long way to strengthening its economic and military capabilities. Three decades ago, “China’s annual economic output was about \$ 433 billion in current dollar terms, making its economy roughly the size of the national outcomes of Austria or South Africa today. It is now comfortably “the second-biggest economy in the world, with a gross domestic product of \$ 17.7 trillion and the single biggest contributor to global GDP growth” (Xinhua, 2024).

After succeeding in achieving bold economic and social reforms internally, China attempted to reshape the global order, according to the resolution of the Chinese Communist Party taken at the June 2018 Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference (Xinhua, 2018a).

According to a political analyst, China’s world ambitions were justified by the mentality of being the Middle Kingdom with the natural right to rule the world (Weismann, 2015). These national beliefs sprung from the kind of “exceptionalism” of the Chinese nation boasted by the Chinese leaders. President Xi Jinping once asserted that: “several thousand years ago, the Chinese nation trod a path that was different from other nations’ culture and development”(Rolland, 2020).

The grandiloquence of the Chinese rhetoric stems from the glorification of the history of China as a great empire, Confucius’s teachings of harmony, and the egalitarian values exalted by the socialist mode of development well mixed with the social virtues of a market economy.

China considers itself a developing country by moral virtue and intrinsic feelings, and the Chinese leaders believe that their country remains a part of the developing world even if it has evolved into a great world power. In the September 2013 meeting of the G-77, Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi stated that “Even when China becomes stronger and more prosperous, it will remain a staunch member of the developing world because China and fellow developing countries have similar pasts, common development tasks, and ever-expanding shared strategic interests” (Wang Yi, 2013).

Besides the search for international status, Chinese rhetoric developed a sophisticated diatribe against the Western-dominated international system through the rejection of the universality of liberal democratic values. In parallel to its asserti-



The Port of Tianjin, the largest port in North China, is one of the major hubs through which China contributes to the global economy (Photo: CGTN, 2020).

veness as a world major power, China does not aim to eradicate the mechanisms of the international system as forged by the Western world since the end of World War II. It attempts, rather, to remodel them to reach fairer global governance that would benefit chiefly the developing countries, under its “guidance and wisdom,” according to Chinese rhetoric.

The nature of the international system has not changed profoundly with regard to global governance, despite China’s growing power, the rise of Russia in the international scene, the emergence of a multitude of medium and high -range income countries, and the decline of the Western world. Instead, it has increased inequalities between nations and maintained the great bulk of the world population in a state of economic backwardness and dependency. In a speech addressed to Davos World Economic Forum in 2017, President Xi Jinping observed that: “the global economic landscape has changed profoundly in the past few deca-

des. However, the global governance system has not embraced those new changes and is therefore inadequate in terms of representation and inclusiveness,” (US-China Institute, 2017).

Chinese leaders displayed substantial efforts to dissipate the fears related to the threat their rising country may represent to world peace and stability. Indeed, for a long time, the “yellow peril” has overshadowed China’s world ascension and brought doubt to its design to work for alternate world structures and mechanisms, as perceived in the Western world.

To alleviate these distorted views on China’s world ambitions, President Xi Jinping, declared during a visit to Washington in 2015 that China is “a participant, builder, contributor, and beneficiary of the current international system. Reforming and improving the current international system does not mean starting from scratch but rather promoting its development in a more just and reasonable direction”(MFA/PRC, 2015).

China has created alternate financial organisms like the Asian Infrastructure Bank (AIB), and contributed in setting up a new Development Bank (NDB), seen as the Bank of the BRICS and a competitor for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in order to reinforce its influence on the international scene and pave the way to a fairer global system.

However, China's most resounding international project consisted of the launch of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI). This policy, duplicating the ancient "silk road," aimed at establishing a transport corridor from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea, and a "Maritime Silk Road" from China to India, Africa, and the Mediterranean. This gigantic project, inception in the pure line of the spirit of past Chinese empires, constitutes the linchpin of Xi Jinping's foreign policy.

Africa: a pivot in China's global design

China has entertained African countries with a long-lasting special relationship that dates back to the period when many of them were experiencing a dark and oppressive colonial yoke (Bentebbibel, 2016). From

the late 1950s on, China provided strong support for the African liberation movements to achieve decolonization. It was among the first countries in the world to recognize the Algerian Provisional Government in 1960 and the largest provider of arms to Algerian freedom fighters (Debeche, 1987).

After the political emancipation of the African continent in the early 1960s, China moved to cultivate friendly relations with many African countries and began to share with them their weals and woes. Such links never flat line, despite the limited economic capabilities of China and the vicissitudes of East-West confrontation, in which African countries were entangled. For the two decades stretching from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, China provided aid to African countries that amounted to \$2.5 billion, sent tens of thousands of engineers, doctors, and technicians to assist these countries, and completed huge infrastructure projects such as the 1860-km long Tanzania-Zambia railway (China Policy in Focus, n.d.).

China's relations with Africa waned considerably, because Beijing became heavily involved in implementing important reforms in the late 1970s and was dip-



The Dar Es Salaam station of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway in Tanzania on February 14, 2019
(Photo: Xinhua, 2022).

lomatically isolated because of the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989.

However, as China emerged as a global power in the international arena, Africa became highly useful in Beijing's modernization ambitions and grand design, aiming to challenge Western supremacy and support the economic progress of the developing world. This interest in Africa became tangible with the visits President Jiang Zemin paid to Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Mali, Namibia, and Zimbabwe in May 1996. In a keynote speech entitled "Toward a New Historical Milestone of Sino-African Friendship," he presented a 21-point proposal to enhance China-Africa cooperation in the long term and strengthen friendship, five of which were to become the pillars of Chinese African policy:

- to foster a sincere friendship between the two sides and become each other's reliable "all-weather friends,"
- to treat each other as equals, respect each other's sovereignty, and refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs,
- to seek common development based on mutual benefit,
- to enhance consultation and cooperation in inter-

national affairs, and,

-to look into the future and create a more splendid world (MFA/PRC, 1996)

President Zemin's long-term programme to promote the development of Africa began to evolve with the setting up of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing in 2000. Since then, China has been holding such a forum every three years.

Sino-African trade rose from \$10.5 billion at the start of the new millennium to a record \$106.8 billion in 2008, and China became the second most important trade partner of Africa (China Policy in Focus, 2024).

The Sino-African honeymoon received a boost when President Xi Jinping presented his doctrine, or "China Dream," based on national rejuvenation, prosperity and whose implementation necessitated the recourse to African peoples. He disclosed the contents of this dream during a speech in Tanzania in March 2013: "The Chinese people are currently committed to realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, while African people are striving for the African dream of self-development through unity, and growth.



China's partnership with Africa was highlighted by the 2018 meeting of FOCAC in Beijing and the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on solidarity against COVID-19 (Photo: FOCAC, 2018).

People in China and Africa should strengthen unity, cooperation, and support and help each other to make their respective dreams come true. At the same time, they should also work with the international community to push for the realization of the world dream of lasting peace and common prosperity, so that we can make greater contributions to the peace and development of mankind.” (Foster, 2009).

Amid these feelings of mutual understanding and sincere friendship, China moved to view Africa as an essential partner to implement a common development, regarded as the prerequisite for a better world, and fulfil its global design.

In practice, President Xi Jing became personally involved in articulating China’s policy toward Africa as he toured Africa in March 2013, his first official visit abroad since rising to power. However, his fingerprint on China’s partnership with Africa appeared with great emphasis with the convening of the 2018 FOCAC in Beijing and the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on solidarity against COVID 19. During this FOCAC, he displayed a “five-no-approach” to his country’s relationship with Africa:

- no interference in African countries’ pursuit of development paths
- no interference in the internal affairs of African countries;
- no imposition of our will on African countries;
- no attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa and;
- no seeking of selfish political gains in investment and financing cooperation with Africa.

As it appears, China declares its commitment not to meddle in African domestic affairs, not to attach conditions to its cooperation with Africa, and not to expect cupid interests in return (Xinhua, 2018b). This Chinese approach appealed greatly to African leaders.

President Xi Jinping went on to put forward proposals on building a China-Africa community of a shared future, marked by sincerity, good faith, shared interests, joint responsibility, win-win cooperation, common security, and happiness for all.

Amid these feelings of mutual understanding and sincere friendship, China moved to view Africa as an essential partner to implement a common development, regarded as the prerequisite for a better world, and fulfil its global design. Therefore, China set up the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024) and forged a privileged and strategic partnership with South Africa. It succeeded in gaining African endorsement for its Global Development Initiative (GDI) and Global Security Initiative (GSI), which include non-interference in internal affairs, opposition to unilateral sanctions, and ‘indivisible security,’ meaning that China’s security cannot be delinked from the security of its partners (Nantulya, 2023).

China counted on the diplomatic support of the African countries that hold the largest bloc within the United Nations General Assembly in its efforts to ensure its credibility and redesign global governance and structures. African countries have subscribed to the ‘One China Policy’ except for Eswatini, which continues to recognize Taiwan, and no African country has backed the draft statements criticizing Chinese policies in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong during the different UN debates occurring in 2019-2022. Furthermore, a project resolution condemning alleged violations of human rights by China in the Muslim region of Xinjiang was defeated thanks to the African vote during UN High Commission for Refugees debates that took place in October 2022 (Nantulya, 2023).

Chinese Security-development Nexus in an African Context

The Chinese leaders emphasized the dialectical equation between development tasks and security issues in their arduous search to empower their country both internally and on the world stage. They attempted to translate this equation into the relationship they have established with Africa, a continent close to their perceptions of the outer world, with relative success.

A wide and promising economic partnership:

No other country comes near the depth and breadth of China's engagement in Africa. It is Africa's largest trading partner, a bilateral creditor, and a crucial source of infrastructure investment. Chinese firms account for an estimated one-eighth of

the continent's industrial output (The Economist, 2022).

From the start of the new Millennium, which saw China embarking upon an ambitious development program, trade with the African continent steadily increased as shown in Figure 1.

China's trade with Africa was limited in the 1990s. It started to increase to around \$19 billion in 2005 (Stein, Uddhammar, 2023), and in 2009, China overtook the United States as Africa's largest bilateral trading partner.

China's commercial exchanges with Africa was a little over \$185 billion in 2021, as shown in Figure 1. The volume of trade between the two partners reached a record high of \$ 284 in 2022 and China's exports to Africa increased by 11.2% to \$164.49 billion, while its imports from this region reached \$108 billion, for the same period (Nyabiage, 2023).

Figure 1: China-Africa trade volume

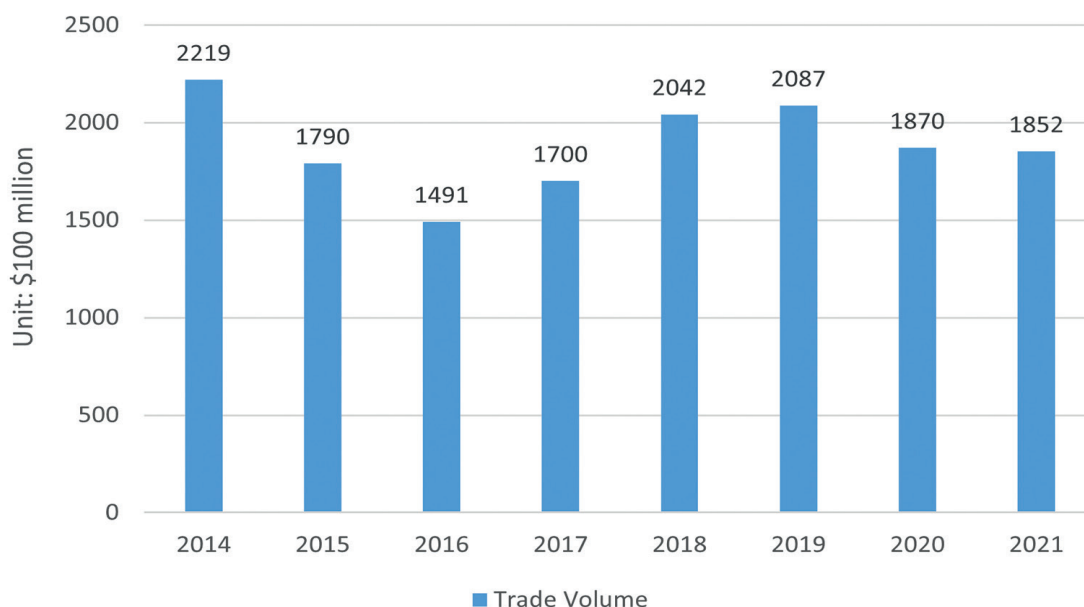


Chart showing China-Africa trade volume between 2014-2021
(Figure: MFA/PRC, 2021).

Africa still badly needs direct investments to set up basic infrastructure, sound utilities, transport facilities, and transforming industries because Africa remains a poor continent with less than 3% of the world trade, despite its abundant natural resources. According to a Chinese diplomatic statement, China's total investments in Africa over 2016-2020, reached \$200 billion, while direct investment by Chinese companies in Africa neared \$42.3 billion by the end of 2020, as shown in Figure 2.

China responded favorably to Africa's expectations to develop infrastructure and the industrial sector. From 2000 to 2020, China helped African countries build more than 13,000 km of roads and railways and more than 80 large-scale power facilities, and funded over 130 medical facilities, 45 sports venues, and over 170 schools. It also trained

more than 160,000 personnel for Africa and built a series of flagship projects, including the AU Conference Centre (MFA/PRC, 2021).

The Asian power has completed several ports in Africa, the latest, a deep-water port expected to be the largest in Africa is under construction near Algiers. The initial cost of this project amounted to around \$3 billion. A Chinese loan covered a part of the expenditures of this project in the framework of BRI. In addition, the most important projects China has undertaken in Africa in the domain of infrastructure and transport since mid-2010s have been the East-West Highway in Algeria, the Foundiougne Bridge in Senegal, the Kribi-Lolabe Highway in Cameroon, the Nairobi Expressway, the first electric railway in Egypt, and the Mombasa-Nairobi Railways, built and operated with Chinese standards, technologies, and equipment.

Figure 2: China's direct investments in Africa

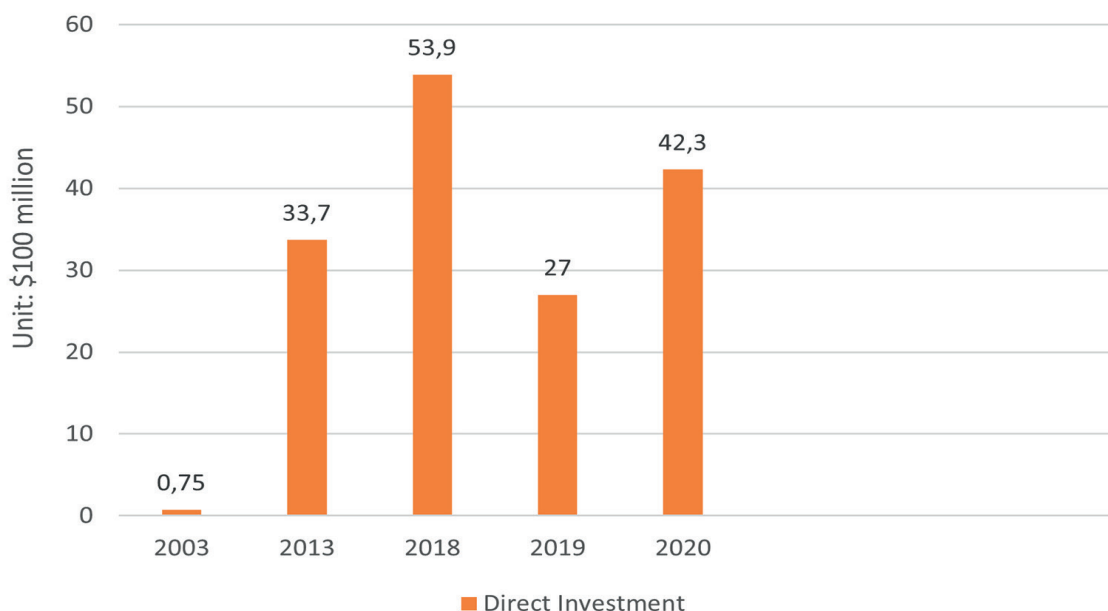


Chart showing China's direct investments in Africa between 2003 and 2020
(Figure: MFA/PRC, 2021).



July 2022, Kribi Lolabe Highway, the fruit of close cooperation between China and Cameroon, built by China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd (CHEC) in southwest Cameroon (Photo: Xinhua, 2022).

Energy supplies from Africa are not vital to Chinese economy, and China intends to escape the maritime control of the United States, especially over the Strait of Malacca. It remains, however, that Africa is of strategic interest as an international development field for Chinese oil companies, which seek to become global players and compete with the biggest international oil majors (Enerdata).

China did not refrain from heavily investing in Africa's hydrocarbon sector because Africa constitutes the largest region to provide oil and gas to China after the Middle East with a share amounting to 25% of China's total energy imports. Around two-thirds of Chinese spending in African upstream went to Nigeria, Angola, Uganda, and Mozambique, and the Chinese State oil company (CNOOC) has taken a majority stake in a project to drill for oil off West Africa's Guinea Bissau and some shares in the Rovuma LNG project in Mozambique. Other Chi-

nese oil companies, such as CNCP, are building a 1.980km pipeline from the Agadem oil field in Niger to the port of Seme in Benin (Africa oil week) and Sinopec Overseas oil and gas company Limited has struck a \$490 million deal with the Algerian oil company, Sonatrach in May 2022 to explore in the Saharan Zarzaitine region (FOCAC).

In the agrarian sector, China invested \$1.11 billion in 35 African countries by the end of 2020, and 7.556 Africans have received agricultural training in China since 2012 (MFA, 2021). In the medical sector, China has sent 23.000 medical team technicians over the past 60 years, while 1.000 Chinese medical staff were working in 45 African countries (et). During the COVID-19 pandemic, China has provided 18 million doses of vaccines to 27 African countries, and setup with African countries a joint production of vaccines amounting to 400 million doses annually (Wang Yi, 2018).

In the cultural and media sectors, China established a China-Africa Institute in Beijing, helped more than 30 African universities set up Chinese language departments, and sent a total of 5,500 Chinese language teachers and volunteers to 48 African nations since 2004. Concerning media cooperation, 45 African countries signed the framework of BRI, a broadcasting project that aims to build trade and infrastructure networks connecting Asia with Europe and Africa (Africa News). In addition, thirty African media outlets have joined the BRI News Alliance in the “People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges,” and 42 African countries have participated in the BRI Media Community Summit Forum (MFA/PRC, 2021).

A cautious military engagement

The second element of the Chinese Security-Development Nexus translated to African Space consisted of the growing Chinese ambitions to become a major military power in the world, not only to protect its territorial integrity but also to participate in ensuring a safe and stable international environment. In this context, security issues in Africa became part of China’s worries, and concerns.

Xi Jinping launched the China-Africa peace and security initiative and decided to set up a China-Africa Peace and Security Fund to increase African capacity building.

Territorially fragmented for a long-time and located in a highly troubled region that encompasses rival nuclear powers, economic competing giants, and foreign military bases, China feels as insecure as

the African continent. Therefore, China continued to expand exchanges and hold dialogues with African countries in the field of peace and security. At the FOCAC Beijing Summit in September 2018, President Xi Jinping launched the China-Africa peace and security initiative and decided to set up a China-Africa Peace and Security Fund to increase African capacity building. Beijing provided financial aid to the African Union’s military operations, and to the G5 to fight terrorism in the Sahel-Sahara region, (MFA/PRC, 2021). China sent over 30,000 Chinese peacekeepers to Africa in the past, to perform tasks in 17 peacekeeping mission areas, and more than 1,800 peacekeepers are currently performing missions in five of these areas, a fact indicating that among the permanent members of the UN Security Council, China has sent the largest number of peacekeepers to the African continent (MFA/PRC, 2021).

China’s growing military stakes in Africa became more tangible, and decisive with the increasing efforts to expand and modernize naval capabilities to better defend the Chinese borders, control naval routes, facilitate the transport of Chinese goods, and secure the channelling of energy supplies.

A part of the fulfilment of these objectives rested on the necessity to acquire naval bases and access to port facilities not only across countries bordering the Indian Ocean but also those enjoying maritime overtures on the Atlantic Ocean. Such a deployment suitably fits China’s basing ambitions in these two oceans based on the need to have a military component to sustain its BRI grand economic design.

China installed a military base in Djibouti in 2017, its first in Africa. It also intends to build bases in Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique to reinforce its military presence in the Indian Ocean, and reports indicated that the Asian power planned to build naval bases in Africa’s Atlantic Ocean, especially in Equatorial Guinea, where it has upgraded port



On August 1, 2017, the opening ceremony of the Chinese military base in Djibouti (Photo: CGTN, 2017).

facilities. The Chinese People's Navy (PLA) has been active in fighting maritime terrorism and piracy in the Pacific Ocean in coordination with countries in the Horn of Africa. It has employed more than 40 naval task forces in Africa, escorted 7.000 Chinese and foreign ships, and conducted port calls, joint military drills, and offshore military education, which have led to improvements in its interoperability, knowledge of foreign forces, surveillance, and intelligence skills at a relatively low cost across Africa (Chaudhry, 2023).

Adapting to Ukraine-Russian war implications on Africa

China may enhance its international status and strengthen its bargaining power over world issues, thanks to the opportunities offered by the war in Ukraine. Thus, it would be more inclined to benefit from the new international mutations and temper 'hot' rivalries over the spheres of influence in Africa.

A subtle benefit from a changing world landscape

China has expressed a cautious stance over the war in Ukraine to preserve its global strategic designs and strengthen its cooperation with Russia. It neither backed up the sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries nor stopped its multifarious cooperation with Moscow.

If China saw positively a possible fracture between the Western World and the East represented by Russia, it has adopted a pragmatic policy towards this country to preserve the image of a responsible and peaceful major power in the world. A political scientist argued, "China has walked a fine line: suspending business when threats to Chinese interests necessitated it, parroting Russian talking points when they aligned with China's criticism of the US, and continuing trade when the environment was conducive" (Li, 2023).

President Xi Jinping revealed in February 2023 a peace plan for the Ukraine conflict which called for respecting the sovereignty of all States, abandoning the cold war mentality, ceasing hostilities, resuming peace-talks, stopping multilateral sanctions and promoting post conflict reconstruction (MFA/PRC, 2023a).

Xi Jinping stressed that “developing the China- Russian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of coordination with ever-lasting good neighbourliness and mutually beneficial cooperation is not an expediency, but a long-term commitment”.

In October 2023, President Putin attended the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and in this occasion, President Xi Jinping stressed that “developing the China- Russian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of coordination with ever-lasting good neighbourliness and mutually beneficial cooperation is not an expediency, but a long-term commitment” (MFA/PRC, 2023b).

China has become the largest importer of Russian oil with a volume of 38.9 million tons imports recorded in January-November 2022. It has struck a new 30-year gas deal with Russia, and President Putin announced in March 2023, the project to build a second gas Power Siberia 2 pipeline to China, with a 50 billion cm/year capacity, expected to start in 2024.

Despite increasing its energy imports from Russia, Beijing has not only diversified its sources of oil and gas supplies, but also its trade relations,

as commercial exchanges of China in 2022, reached \$190.3 billion with Russia, \$681 billion with the United States, and \$673 billion with the European Union (OEC, 2023).

Beyond cyclical options the war in Ukraine may have offered to China with regard its partnership with Russia, it remains that the two countries are “outpacing the US and its allies in military technology,” as an Australian defence official has put it (BRICS Info, 2024).

Europe may be China’s partner that has more to lose in the war in Ukraine, but at the same time, Europe may seek energy sources outside of American and Russian outlets by looking towards Africa and increasing its partnership with China.

French President Macron’s strategic autonomy intending to “reduce Europe’s dependency on the United States and avoid getting dragged into a confrontation between China and the US over Taiwan” (Anderlini, 2023), stands as a sign of a demarcation from an overt alliance with the US and may consolidate Europe’s neutrality that may comfort China’s posture. Alice Akman, a Senior analyst at the European Union Institute for Security, rightly argued that “Chinese see Europe as a gray zone because they consider that this continent cannot truly be trusted, but they also regarded Europeans as potentially useful partners, especially when there exist divergences with the United States” (Ding, Akman, 2024).

If China has a great world design, it remains, however, that it bears no hegemonic ambitions or ‘warmonger’s temptations. A political analyst assumed that China’s ultimate goal consists of the “sinicization” of the institutions inherited from the Bretton Woods Agreements and imposing its standards (Lincot, 2019). However, this assertion seems exaggerated because this country attempts to construct new global architectures that serve its



Yanbu Aramco Sinopec Refining Company (YASREF), a joint venture between Saudi Aramco and China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec), is China's largest investment project in Saudi Arabia (Photo: CGTN, 2023).

interests and those of the developing world, and has refrained from targeting a “Pax China” that would replace the US-led Western hegemony with Chinese perceptions, norms, and standards.

China has shown a tough line in its relations with the United States and initiated a policy of “decoupling” from this country, because of Washington’s declared support to Taiwan, American protectionist policies, efforts to reduce the trade deficit with Beijing, and the restrictions for US companies to invest in China. The outcome that may result from the disagreements between Beijing and Washington may indicate a further impulse of Chinese-African economic relations in the future.

Some new initiatives taken outside the Western bloc and have boosted China’s world power and influence in some parts of the world as well as in Africa. For instance, Saudi Arabia seems to be drifting away from US influence since Riyadh eased

its long-standing conflict with Teheran in March 2023, thanks to Chinese brokerage. Saudi Arabia has also announced its readiness to sell more oil to Beijing in Chinese currency, and its intention to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a rival to the Western economic gatherings.

The Middle East seems to matter a lot for the interests of China, because this region constitutes a huge source for its energy supplies, an important market for its goods and a substantial outlet for its investments. Unlike the US, China stresses “common, cooperative, comprehensive, and sustainable security in the Middle East (Liangxiang, J, 2024). Rather than stirring up feuds between Saudi Arabia and Iran, China has succeeded in stopping the confrontation between these two countries in the troubled region of the Middle East. The next tremendous challenge for China’s diplomacy may rest on its capacity to contribute in ending the aggression waged by ‘Israel’ against Gaza.

Under the impulse of China, the BRICS countries are trying to empower their political alignment and economic cooperation as well as challenging the Western-dominated international financial system through the policy of de-dollarization in trade exchanges, financial compensation and settlements, as well as in the denomination of the currency in which the world's foreign reserves are held (Iratni, 2023a).

Another indication of the disentanglement from the Western-dominated financial and monetary system was the announcement made by the Economic Organization of West Africa (ECOWAS) to consider removing the attachment of its common currency (CFA) from the French Central Bank mechanisms.

Coping with Africa's new challenges

Africa's adjustments to the new international mutations generated by the war in Ukraine may result in a closer relationship between China and the African continent (Iratni 2023b). Globally, African countries prefer to stick to the principles of non-alignment "to avoid being pigeonholed as part of a Western position or an Eastern position, says Alex Vines (African Business, 2022).

There is a belief that a multipolar world would create geopolitical opportunities for Africa, especially under the impulse of a rising China, on the one hand, and an insurgent Russia, on the other.

China enjoys a certain credibility in the eyes of many African leaders who think that, as a fellow developing country, China bears fewer selfish interests than many Western partners. Not surprising was the backing of the African block at the United Nations debates favoring China's standpoints as it rejected the motion related to alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang (Bourke, 2022).

Africa remains underdeveloped and plagued with many ills, such as poverty, illiteracy, pandemics, and drought despite its substantial resources (energy, mining, and fisheries), vibrant youth, and the high growth rates recorded by some African countries in the last few years.

If China cannot solve the problems hindering Africa, it has made, however, more efforts than any other major power to develop basic infrastructure, such as ports, highways, railway transports, and farming as well as huge projects in the African mining and energy sectors.

If China cannot solve the problems hindering Africa, it has made, however, more efforts than any other major power to develop basic infrastructure, such as ports, highways, railway transports, and farming as well as huge projects in the African mining and energy sectors. It has also invested in high-risk projects or in remote regions of this continent that are not attractive to Western companies.

Some Western politicians raised criticism concerning the loans granted by Chinese companies to complete their projects in some African countries. They warned of "debt trap diplomacy" as an instrument used by Beijing to acquire assets in case the borrowing country fails to meet its reimbursement obligations (Africa News, 2023). China firmly denied these allegations through a public statement made by its Foreign Minister Qin Gang on March 7, 2023, in which he retorted that "China should be the last lending



Workers at the construction site of a Chinese geothermal power plant in Nakuru, Kenya, May 20223
(Photo: Xinhua/Wang Guansen, 2023).

country to be accused of using the debt trap” (Africa News, 2023). Furthermore, China has extended debt relief to some African countries, worth over \$ \$2 billion, to develop projects under a G20 framework known as the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (Africa News, 2021).

Africa needs huge foreign investments, joint ventures, technology transfers, and expertise that few Western powers are willing to provide. However, China could contribute to the sustainable development of this continent in the name of solidarity, and a common past. It can help African businesses adapt to new technologies, invest in machinery, and secure reliable supplies.

It seems that China is adjusting its policies to meet Africans’ concerns, and put the Chinese-African relationship on a more balanced footing based on sustainable economic and trade relationships. A new approach developed by China in its dealings with Africa concerns the emphasis on culture and people-to-people exchanges, as exalted by the declarations of Chinese officials these last years. Such a policy seems to respond to the expectations raised by emerging African societies beyond official channels, and seems more attractive to African youth and women associations in particular, as it concerns the management of issues linked with their daily life.

African countries need conducive Chinese military engagement to confront civil wars and terrorism. The objective is not to replace French military interventions that failed to ensure security in the Sahel-Sahara region, but to provide needed military assistance as a complement to existing African continental and regional security mechanisms. In this vein, China seems to respond more effectively to African demands in the security field than imposing its own options. Such an attitude seems to comply with the resentment felt by African countries against the meddling of major powers in their internal affairs.

Probably, the war in Ukraine will boost China's Global Security Initiative, which intends, also, to promote convergent security interests with the African continent. Such an initiative would "build an effective and sustainable security architecture, and create an opening for African countries with fractured relations with the West, who would likely find a security partnership with China attractive" (Mboya, 2022).

Conclusion

In this complex and tumultuous world, it may not be farfetched to underline that China has tried to forge exemplary relations with Africa, a continent with which, it shares a common past, the same concerns and expectations.

Chinese involvement in Africa has been strong, whether in terms of investments, trade exchanges, or military assistance. The 'Belt and Road Initiative' helps not only to empower China's ambitions, but also to strengthen the might of emerging countries in the search of world's stability and prosperity.

While China's engagement has benefited African countries largely, Western powers have regarded the Chinese presence in Africa as detrimental

to their own security and economic ascendancy. Still, China remains a rare case of a great international actor with some underdeveloped features, but a country committed to being the impetus for a fair multipolar world.

If Africa may remain a scramble for major powers because of its natural resources and geostrategic assets, the future of the world seems to lie in the Asia-Pacific, given the increasing power rivalry between China and the United States over the geopolitical and strategic assets of this region. Such a trend may constitute a prelude for a global reconfiguration of the present world order in which China may have a crucial role to assume. In all cases, Chinese-African partnership will not fail to consolidate. 

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The Challenges of Economic Cold-War Thinking for the Belt and Road and Counter Strategies



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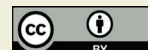
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ABSTRACT

Since its inception, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has achieved fruitful results, but it has also been challenged by economic cold war thinking. The mutually beneficial purpose and participatory content of the BRI have been misinterpreted by the economic Cold-War thinking. This challenge has its roots in the economic interests of international monopoly capital, as well as in biases caused by cultural and ideological differences, and in the systemic gaps caused by the vastly different paths of development. To promote the construction of the BRI in response to the challenges of economic Cold-War thinking, one should strengthen the influence of international communication, make the “cake” of common interests bigger and better, and accelerate the BRI construction. Equally important is to improve the mutual benefit mechanism of the BRI. However, with regard to all the deliberate misinterpretations and provocations of the economic Cold-War mentality, it is also necessary to be bold enough to fight and good enough to engage in dialogue, so as to meet challenges and resolve conflicts.

Keywords: Belt and Road, Cold War thinking, Economic Challenges, China’s Counter Strategies, globalization.

Introduction

AS AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED flagship cooperation initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), encompassing both the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road,” has garnered enthusiastic responses from numerous countries and garnered high praise from the global community since its inception in 2013. By June 2023, China had entered into over 230 cooperation agreements pertaining to BRI construction with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations. These agreements have fostered

comprehensive and cross-disciplinary connectivity among participating nations, furthering the BRI’s objectives. The BRI has become the most popular international public goods project and the largest international cooperation platform in the world, and has been hailed as a “development belt” for the benefit of the world and “a road to happiness” for the people of all countries. However, in the process of promoting the BRI, it has also been challenged by a Cold-War mentality, which has made China a target of suspicion for “setting up a new cooker” and “seeking hegemony”, allegedly provoking economic and ideological confrontation.



November 2022, during inspection work on the China-Russia eastern route natural gas pipeline in Qinhuangdao, northern China's Hebei Province (Photo: CGTN, 2022).

President Xi Jinping once pointed out that “the world is in the midst of a century of changes with accelerated evolution” and the international environment for jointly building the BRI is becoming increasingly complex. “We have to maintain strategic determination and actively respond to challenges” (Xi, 2022, p.496). At the third Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum in 2023, Xi Jinping once again clarified his position and views to the world: “We do not engage in ideological rivalry, geopolitical games, or bloc political confrontation, and we oppose unilateral sanctions, economic coercion or ‘decoupling and breaking the chain’” (FMPRC, 2023). Effectively responding to the challenge of economic Cold War thinking is

important for the smooth progress of the “BRI” construction and the healthy development of the world economy.

Economic Cold-War thinking and its manifestations

Economic Cold-War thinking originated from the stereotypes formed during the confrontation between the two camps of capitalism and socialism, that is, during the Cold War era. At a time when economic globalization and scientific and technological change are rapidly developing and when countries have become closely linked in various fields such as economic trade, investment, and finance, some people in Western countries

are still using the antagonistic concepts of the Cold War era to make ill-intentioned speculations about the development of emerging countries such as China and even to obstruct it, with an extremely negative impact on the economic exchanges and cooperation among countries all over the world.

Cold-War Mentality and its Economic Incarnations

The Cold War was a period from the mid-1940s to the early 1990s in which countries with different ideologies and social systems, namely capitalism and socialism, formed opposing camps that confronted each other politically, economically, militarily, scientifically, technologically, and ideologically without breaking into a world war. The manifestation of the Cold War was that the two camps assisted and co-operated internally in the economic, scientific, technological, and military fields and competed fiercely externally.

The origin and essence of the Cold War was that the Western capitalist camp, based on ideological bias and competing geopolitical interests, joined forces to combat the development of the socialist camp using economic blockades and embargoes, political isolation, and ideological and cultural penetration.

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of the socialist camp using economic blockades and embargoes, political isolation, and ideological and cultural penetration.

With the détente between the United States and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the subsequent dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, it was widely believed in the academic community that the Cold War era had ended. However, in recent years, with the anti-globalization measures of the Western countries, as well as the economic and trade friction between China and the United States and the emergence of the United States of America's full-scale suppression of China, some scholars believe that the Cold War is not over and even tends to warm up. For example, Professor Cheng Enfu believes that the current state of "cool war" between China and the United States (or even "warm war" tendency), as new form of international relations, is a continuation of the Cold War, with military confrontation as the form of struggle, ideological differences as an important cause, and self-control as a way to avoid a hot war. The difference between the two is that the "cool war" did not involve the emergence of two opposing blocs, a large-scale arms race, or a global struggle for hegemony (Cheng & Yang, 2021).

Whether or not the Cold War still exists, the Cold War mentality does. After the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, some Western politicians and strategists have continued their habitual strategic thinking of manipulating the world to maintain their hegemony, which has negatively impacted the peaceful development of the world economy. The term "Cold-War thinking" was first used by Japanese-American linguist and politician Samuel Hayakawa (S.I. Hayakawa) in 1964 in *General Semantics And The Cold War Mentality*.



"In recent years, inspired by the 'clash of civilizations theory', 'China threat theory', 'comprehensive containment of China theory', etc., the Cold War mentality and inter-camp conflict have been revived"
(Figure: Cai Meng/China Daily, 2022).

According to some scholars, the Cold War mentality has the basic features of "hostility to others, zero-sum logic, highlighting ideological contradictions, relying on military deterrence and stressing geopolitical alliance." In the author's view, Cold-War thinking refers to the thinking mode that is contrary to the concept of the community of human destiny, which is characterized by the thinking mode of un-

derstanding the world situation and dealing with international relations that have been carried forward from the Cold-War period and overly emphasizes the differences between the two sides of interests and downplays their homogeneity. It specifically refers to the mindset of some government officials, elites, and media in Western countries, who adhere to dichotomous thinking and hold a distrust-

ful attitude towards the development of emerging countries, especially socialist countries, and even advocate active suppression of such thinking. In recent years, as China's economy, science and technology, military power, and international influence have rapidly increased, the Cold-War mentality and confrontation between camps have resurged based on justifications inspired by "the theory of the clash of civilizations", "the theory of the threat of China", "the theory of comprehensive containment of China", etc.

President Xi Jinping stated at the the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation that "treating the development of others as a threat and economic interdependence as a risk will not make one's life better or development faster"

Economic Cold-War thinking is the manifestation of Cold War thinking in international economic relations. It manifests itself in the way that conservative countries treat developing countries, especially emerging market countries, by using ideological command and attacks on political and economic systems as a means of severing the intricate and interdependent economic ties among countries and attempting to impede each other's economic development. President Xi Jinping stated at the the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation that "treating the development of others as a threat and economic

interdependence as a risk will not make one's life better or development faster" (FMPRC, 2023). Economic globalization is the inevitable result of the expansion of the scope of human interactions and the refinement of the division of labor in society. In turn, economic Cold-War thinking is bound to fail in practice, because it runs counter to the objective laws of economic globalization, artificially restricts the voluntary economic and trade exchanges between peoples, and impedes the natural formation of the international division of labor.

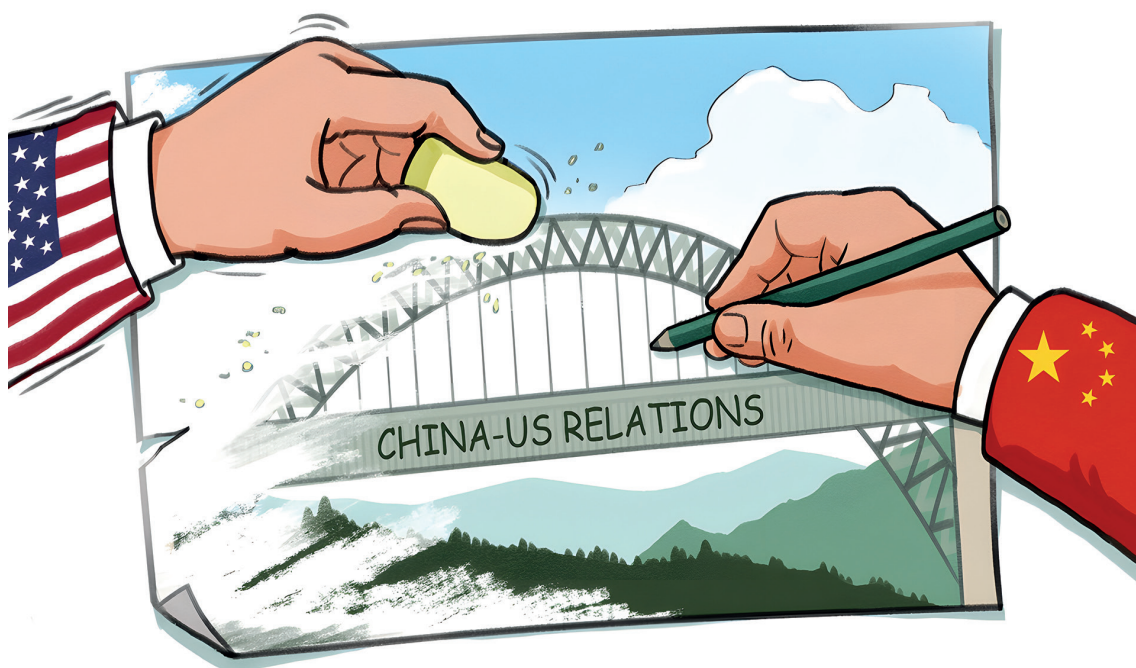
The Chinese government and academics have responded to and criticized the Cold-War mentality. As early as December 1995, Qian Qichen, then Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister of the State Council, pointed out when discussing the characteristics of the international situation that "in international relations, the tendency to adhere to the 'Cold-War mentality' and to promote hegemony and power politics has developed". Nowadays, Foreign Ministry spokespersons have also repeatedly urged the United States and others to abandon the outdated Cold-War zero-sum mentality and ideological prejudices. In the meantime, there is a view that the BRI is a way to break the Cold War mentality. Foreign Ministry spokespersons have highlighted that the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game are no longer in line with the trend of the world's development in the new era. Research on the BRI and the Cold War mentality in the existing literature has shown a clear separation, reflecting the way and attitude of the post-Cold War capitalist camps towards China's role in the transformation of the global order (Niu & Sun, 2019).

Manifestations of Economic Cold-War Thinking

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, some commentators pointed out that the Cold War between the East and the West was over, but the “economic Cold War” between the United States, Japan, and Europe would begin, and that economic competition among the three parties would become more and more intense, and that the contradictions and struggles in the economic relationship would be even more acute than those during the Cold War. Whilst the United States, Japan, and Europe are all capitalist economies, there is no fundamental difference in ideology. the United States and its allies, namely Japan and Europe, have a wide range of common interests. However, when the U.S. government believes its economic interests

are damaged, it will still use tariffs, forcing the other side to “voluntarily restrict exports” and other means to reverse the trade deficit, maintain its dominant position, and safeguard its monopoly interests. For example, the trade friction between the United States and Japan in the twentieth century, which lasted from the 1950s to the 1990s, involved textiles, steel, semiconductors, television, automobiles, and other industries and ended with Japan’s compromise and retreat, plunging its economy into a prolonged slump.

From the historical manifestations of economic Cold-War thinking, such as the exchange rate trap of the Plaza Accord between the United States and Europe in 1985 and the transfer of European debt from the 2008 US subprime mortgage crisis, it can be seen that Western countries are still engaged in internal conflicts,



There is a clear distinction reflecting the attitudes and approaches of the post-Cold War capitalist camps towards China's constructive role in transforming the global order (Figure: Liu Rui/GT, 2020).

and their treatment of countries fundamentally different in ideology and social systems has become even more severe.

After the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, China has become the world's largest socialist country. However, China has always advocated "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries" and "respect for the development path and social system independently chosen by the people of all countries."

After the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, China has become the world's largest socialist country. However, China has always advocated "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries" and "respect for the development path and social system independently chosen by the people of all countries." However, the academic and strategic circles of some capitalist countries, namely academics, strategists, and politicians, regard China's pursuit of a socialist market economy as a threat and try to curb China's economic development by importing the neoliberal paradigm and launching an "economic war". The blockades, embargoes, tax increases, sanctions, and repressive measures against China and other socialist countries, and even the former socialist countries, are prominent manifestations of the economic Cold-War mentality in today's world.

First, the policy of high-tech blockade against China is maintained. In April 1994, the "Paris

Coordinating Committee" (the Coordinating Committee on Export Controls against Communist Countries, set up by the United States in conjunction with a group of capitalist countries in November 1949) was disbanded. However, in July 1996, 33 countries, mainly Western countries, signed the Wassenaar Agreement in Vienna, Austria, and decided to implement the new control lists and information exchange rules. Moreover, China is still excluded from the existing 42 member countries in order to prevent China from obtaining its existing high-precision and cutting-edge technology through normal economic and trade exchanges and scientific and technological exchanges, and to create obstacles for China's scientific and technological progress in high-tech areas. For example, Germany and Japan have imposed a technology embargo on China for high-end CNC machine tools, and the United States and the Netherlands have prevented China from mastering photolithography technology. In December 2021, the Biden administration blocked eight Chinese companies, including Chinese drone maker DJI Innovations. It imposed export controls on 25 entities, including China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and 12 other scientific research organizations. It also imposed export controls on 25 entities, including 12 research institutes, including the Chinese Academy of Military Medical Sciences (CAMS). It considered tougher sanctions on China's largest chip maker, Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC), to limit what it termed "China's access to advanced technology". Subsequently, the United States passed the Chip and Science Act. It brought together Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan to form the "Chip Quadrilateral Alliance" to restrain mainland China and build a "small yard and high wall" in high technology.

In addition, Western countries have also adopted long-term embargoes and blockade measures against socialist countries such as Cuba. Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the Government of the United States has continued to implement a hostile policy against Cuba and has not lifted the embargo against Cuba in its entirety yet.

Secondly, safeguarding unilateral interests in international trade. Statistics released by the Ministry of Commerce's "China Trade Remedy Information Network" show that from 2001 to 2023, the United States initiated 168 anti-dumping and 111 anti-subsidy trade remedy cases against China, while the European Union initiated 118 anti-dumping and 18 anti-subsidy trade remedy cases against China. As the United States and the European Union refused to recognize China's market economy status and imposed high tariffs on China by applying the

"substitute country" system in anti-dumping determinations, Chinese enterprises lost billions of dollars in commodity exports. This shows that Western countries unfairly treat China with double standards in the economic and trade fields. During its tenure, the Trump administration of the United States has bypassed the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, launched investigations, and imposed tariffs on Chinese products based on domestic law, provoking and escalating economic and trade friction between China and the United States. In addition, in October and December 2020, the US launched "301 investigations" into Vietnam's timber, textile and garment, footwear, and exchange rate policies, listed the Vietnamese side as an "exchange rate manipulator" and imposed punitive and high tariffs on Vietnam's exports to the US. Under the guise of "fair trade", developed capitalist countries, represented



"The advanced capitalist countries, led by the US, have resorted to trade protectionism and trade bullying, unilaterally creating trade frictions" (Figure: Ma Xuejing/China Daily, 2024).

by the United States, have resorted to trade protectionism and trade bullying, unilaterally creating trade frictions to safeguard their vested interests, thus posing a serious challenge to the actual fairness of international trade.

Enterprises from socialist and transition countries are targeted on the grounds of generalized national security.

Thirdly, enterprises from socialist and transition countries are targeted on the grounds of generalized national security. In recent years, the United States has generalized the concept of “national security” and abused its national power to suppress Chinese enterprises based on such trumped-up charges as “stealing user information” and “endangering national security”. This has seriously hindered the normal development of their overseas business. The U.S. Department of Commerce has successively put two Chinese communications companies, ZTE and Huawei, on the “Entity List” for export control, interrupted the supply of core components such as chips, banned equipment produced by Chinese companies in the construction of 5G networks, and forced ZTE to pay huge fines and reorganize its board of directors. In 2021, the Trump administration issued an executive order banning U.S. investors from buying from China. In January 2021, the Trump administration issued another executive order banning U.S. investors from investing in dozens of so-called “Chinese military-owned or controlled” companies, including China Mobile, China Unicom, and China

Telecom, and prohibiting Americans from dealing with the developers or controllers of eight Chinese software products, including Alipay, Tencent QQ, and WPS. At the end of 2020, the U.S. Department of Commerce placed 58 Chinese companies on its “Entity List” to restrict exports to them while also placing 45 Russian companies on its “Black List” to suppress them. According to U.S. Commerce Secretary Raymond, more than 700 Chinese companies are now on the U.S. government’s export control list, more than a third of which have been added since the Biden administration took office.

These arbitrary and unreasonable practices are the very embodiment of the economic Cold-War mentality, which has given rise to pessimistic expectations of “decoupling”, “breaking the chain” and even the outbreak of a “new Cold War” between China and the United States. In this regard, China has made it clear that it rejects decoupling and firmly opposes the so-called “new Cold War” artificially created by individual Western government officials, as President Xi Jinping pointed out in a special message at the World Economic Forum’s “Davos Agenda” dialogue: “To engage in a ‘small circle’ and a ‘new cold war’ in the international arena, to exclude, threaten and intimidate others, and to engage in decoupling, cutting off supplies and imposing sanctions at the drop of a hat, and to artificially isolate and even isolate each other, will only push the world towards division and even confrontation.” “In today’s world, if we go down the wrong path of confrontation and antagonism, whether by engaging in a cold war, a hot war, a trade war or a science and technology war, we will ultimately harm the interests of all countries and sacrifice the well-being of our people” (FMPRC, 2021).

Challenges to the economic Cold-War mentality of the BRI

The challenges to the economic Cold-War thinking encountered by the BRI are mainly reflected in the following: first, various misinterpretations of the purpose and content of the BRI; second, attempts to set up a corresponding mechanism to obstruct the BRI process on the basis of economic Cold-War thinking.

Intentional misinterpretation of the purpose of the BRI

The BRI has attracted widespread attention and multiple interpretations by foreign academics. Among the various misinterpretations of the BRI, there are two representative views: the BRI is “China’s version of the Marshall Plan” and the BRI is a response to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The Marshall Plan was a post-World War II plan for the United States to reconstruct Western European countries and provide economic assistance. The

United States became the biggest beneficiary of the plan, through the implementation of which it strengthened its control over Western European countries. The Peterson Institute for Economic Research, the RAND Corporation, and other think tanks have compared the BRI with the Marshall Plan, arguing that China intends to follow the example of the United States in the past, attempting to transform economic power into geopolitical influence, in order to achieve its own will “to be the most influential” in the world. They believe that China intends to follow the example of the United States, attempting to transform its economic power into geopolitical influence to “reshape the international order” according to its wishes (Milton, 2018). According to an article in *The Diplomat*, China’s New Silk Road and the US Marshall Plan are “attempts by a rising global power to use economic power to achieve its foreign policy goals” (Tiezzi, 2014). The promotion of the BRI as China’s version of the Marshall Plan, or “geo-expansionism” is “designed to build momentum to bring in allies against China. It aims to create momentum to draw in allies against China



A China-Europe freight train bound for Budapest, Hungary, leaves a logistics base in Hefei, east China's Anhui Province, on July 29, 2022 (Photo: Xi Jingyu/Xinhua, 2022).

Figure 1. Foreign programs similar to or intended to compete with BRI in recent years

Times	Organizer	Element
2015	Japanese	High Quality Infrastructure Partnership Program
2017	United States of America	Indo-Pacific Strategy (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework 2022)
2017	India	Asian Growth Corridor Program
2019	United States of America	Blue Dot Network Project
2021	EU	“Global Gateway” program
2022	G7, the Group of Seven (G7)	Global Infrastructure and Investment Partnership
2023	Selected G20 countries	The “India-Middle East-Europe” economic corridor program
Programs that are similar to or compete with the Belt and Road Initiative, including the year of inception, organizing country and name table (Figure: Shu, 2024).		

and incite countries and regions along the route to boycott the BRI”.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a multilateral free trade agreement negotiated under the auspices of the United States with Japan, Canada, and 12 other countries. In January 2015, then-US President Obama said in his State of the Union address that the TPP was designed to prevent “China from setting international economic rules in the most dynamic region of the global economy (Asia).” The U.S. has demonstrated its absolute leadership in the Asia-Pacific region by setting high standards for new international trade rules, with a more pronounced coloring of containment of China (Cui, et al., 2018). In October of the same year, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun published an article entitled “China’s BRI counter the TPP” arguing that “China

and the U.S. around the Asian economic circle of the dominance of the fight has been in full swing”. The above views all regard the relationship between TPP and BRI as antagonistic, competitive, and rival, especially regarding “Belt and Road” as “another stove” in order to fight against the TPP, which “excludes China”. After Trump became president of the United States in 2017, he immediately announced his withdrawal from the TPP, changing from “competing with China for the right to make international economic rules” during the Obama era to more directly creating economic and trade friction between China and the United States, which is a result of the further strengthening of the economic Cold-War mentality. This is the result of the further intensification of economic Cold War thinking.

In addition, some conservative think tanks in the United States consider the BRI as a tool for China to pursue an expansionary foreign policy and stimulate its domestic economic development, stressing and even exaggerating the damage that the BRI may cause to the interests of the United States. They predict that the construction of the BRI will face many difficulties and uncertainties and emphasize and even exaggerate the damage that the BRI may cause to US interests. The above views of these think tanks have a greater influence on the decision-making of the United States Government, prompting the United States Government to respond to the BRI in a “cold-shoulder,” boycott or even obstructionist manner.

Obstruction of the BRI construction process

Since China put forward the BRI, the Governments of the United States, Japan, India, and other countries have put forward programs highly similar to the BRI regarding infrastructure construction and

connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region. However, these so-called reconstruction assistance programs are not based on fair competition and benefitting developing countries but rather deliberately obstruct and target the promotion of the BRI. In particular, the “China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Blue Economic Corridor”, which is part of the maritime cooperation under the BRI is facing fierce strategic competition between China, the United States, and other major powers in the region. China, the United States, and other regional big powers are facing the serious challenge of fierce strategic games.

In May 2015, the Japanese government proposed the “Partnership for High-Quality Infrastructure” program, announcing that it would provide \$110 billion in aid to Asian countries over the next five years for the construction of “high quality” infrastructure and increasing its efforts to promote healthcare, Japan’s emphasis on “high quality” has been a major factor in the promotion of exports of healthcare, digital, green and low-carbon infrastructure. Japan’s emphasis on “high quality” refers to the “low quality”



Photo taken on July 29, 2021 shows the Peljesac Bridge being built by China as part of the Belt and Road Initiative in Mali Ston Bay near Komarna in southern Croatia. The 2.4 km bridge over Mali Ston Bay in the Adriatic Sea connects mainland Croatia and the Peljesac Peninsula of the southernmost Dubrovnik-Neretva County, bypassing a short strip of Bosnia and Herzegovina territory (Photo: Xinhua/Gao Lei, 2021).

of China's aid infrastructure. At the same time, the program's construction content, coverage, strategic objectives, and use of funds are all highly similar to the BRI program. "At the same time, the program's construction content, coverage, strategic objectives, and use of funds are all highly similar to those of the BRI, and its real purpose is to compete with the BRI in a tit-for-tat manner (Mei, 2018).

China's foreign ministry refuted this with solid data "The so-called 'One Belt, One Road' creates a debt trap, which is a completely false proposition"

The Government of India proposed the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) program in May 2017, which "focuses on promoting connectivity between Southeast Asia, South Asia and the African continent, with an emphasis on building maritime corridors linking the continents." Emphasis is placed on the program's environmental friendliness and low cost, as well as its "comparative advantage," which is "based on widely recognized international norms, good governance, the rule of law, openness, transparency and equality" (Chaudry, 2017). The "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor" has a high degree of overlap with the BRI in terms of geographic scope and areas of cooperation, which shows the intention of some political forces in India and Japan to join forces to counterbalance China and weaken the influence of the BRI. Some political forces in India and Japan intend to jointly counterbalance China and reduce the influence of the BRI.

The US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) proposed the "Blue Dot Network" program in November 2019, which it claims is designed to promote "market-driven, transparent, and

financially sustainable" infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific region and worldwide. The Blue Dot Network will evaluate and certify construction projects. The program is supported by US government officials, with former Commerce Secretary Ross making it clear that the US was launching a program to support "sustainable" projects in Asia as a counterweight to China's BRI, and former Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, John O'Brien, stating that the "Blue Dot Network" was a "market-driven, transparent and financially sustainable" infrastructure development program in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world. O'Brien, former assistant to the president for national security affairs, said that the "Blue Dot Network" would fight against "low-quality projects that put countries in a debt trap" implying that China's BRI has a so-called "debt trap". China's foreign ministry refuted this with solid data "The so-called 'One Belt, One Road' creates a debt trap, which is a completely false proposition" (Xinhua, 2022).

At the strategic level, the Trump administration proposed the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" in 2017 to form a geopolitical containment posture against the BRI, especially the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road", posing a potential threat militarily and creating an economic hedge. The "Indo-Pacific Strategy" is intended to form a geopolitical containment posture, pose a potential military threat, and create an economic hedge. As it advances in infrastructure, it will compete head-on with the BRI, and the U.S. will use this strategy to join forces with relevant countries to block the BRI. These two geopolitical cooperation agendas mean that the US-China competition is shifting from the level of interest and influence on a higher level of rules and order, and the friction between the two will be long-term and intense (Wang & Zhang, 2021).

In May 2022, US President Biden announced the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which will provide economic support for the Indo-Pacific strategy and promised to provide more than \$50 billion in funding for the Indo-Pacific infrastructure development. Biden announced the launch of the IPEF in May 2022 to provide economic underpinning for the Indo-Pacific Strategy and pledged more than \$50bn for Indo-Pacific infrastructure.

In June 2022, the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) announced the launch of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) program, the PGII program promises to raise \$600 billion over five years to build infrastructure in developing countries and “rebuild a better world” with a “values-driven, high-standard and transparent” global infrastructure initiative “led by leading democracies” to compete with the BRI. European Commission President Von der Leyen declared that the infrastructure plan was designed to “counter China’s ‘Belt and Road’ projects” and to “replace Chinese investment there” (Reuters, 2022). September 2023 On 9 September, the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the European Union signed a memorandum of understanding on the sidelines of the G20 summit announcing the construction of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This ambitious “Modern Spice Route” is one of the key US initiatives to counter China’s growing influence and replace the BRI infrastructure.

Reasons behind the economic Cold War mentality that have challenged the BRI

The challenge to the BRI posed by the economic Cold War mentality is rooted in the maintenance of vested economic interests by international monopoly capital, as well as in the bias in understanding caused by

cultural and ideological differences and the systemic gap caused by the vastly different paths of development. In recent years, the United States Government has unjustifiably adopted a series of containment policies towards China, which is essentially a “dispute over roads and values” based on the Cold-War mentality of the United States side (Cheng & Li, 2021).

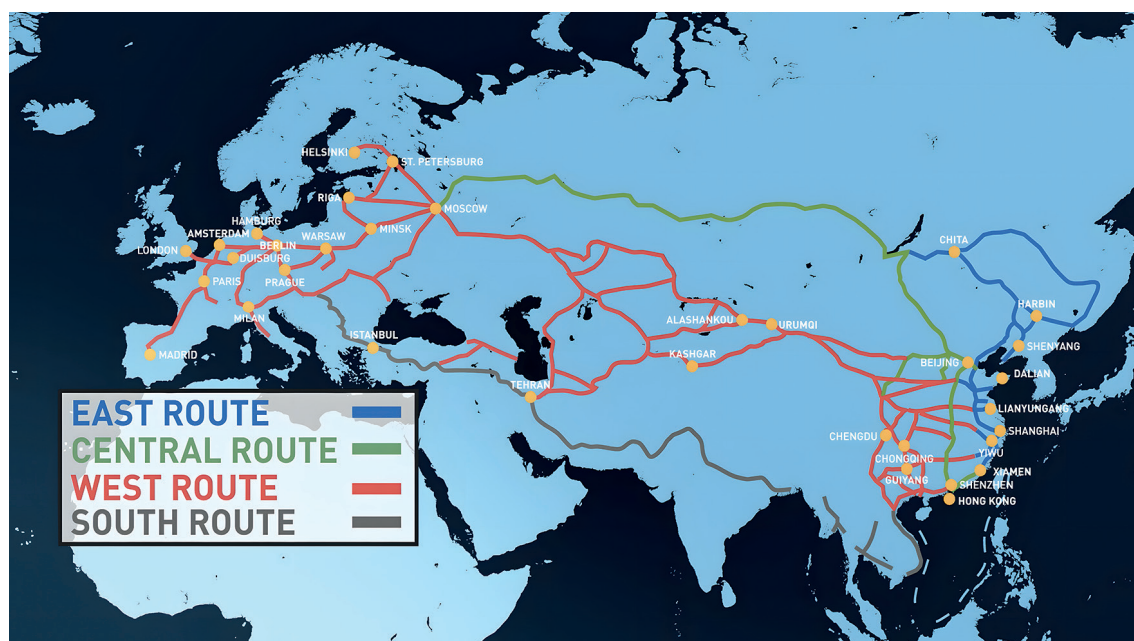
Understanding bias due to cultural and ideological differences

The reason for the challenge of economic Cold-War thinking in the BRI process lies first and foremost in the cultural differences between China and the West. Due to the differences in natural conditions and historical traditions, China and the West have formed different cultural backgrounds. For example, Chinese culture advocates “harmony among nations” and “world unity”, while Western culture firmly believes in the “Thucydides trap” of “the struggle for supremacy”; Chinese culture emphasizes mutual assistance and cooperation, “help the world”, while Western culture advocates competition and “the law of the jungle”. According to German sociologist Max Weber, Chinese culture, dominated by Confucianism, is “pacifist in character”, very different from the expansionist character of Western Protestantism. China was historically ahead of the West for a long time and made important contributions to human civilization. People in the West were once full of yearning for profound Chinese culture. However, in modern times, China suffered from the invasion and bullying of the Western imperialist powers, and the Chinese culture was regarded as backward and inferior. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese nation has re-established itself confidently as one of the peoples of the world, and the combination of the basic principles of Marxism

with the excellent traditional Chinese culture has made Chinese culture shine once again. However, some Western bourgeois elites are unwilling to see the revival of Chinese culture under the socialist system and refuse to engage in multicultural exchanges. Skinner, former director of the Office of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State, believes the U.S.-Soviet Cold War was a “struggle within the Western family”. At the same time, the Sino-American conflict was a “battle of civilizations and races” between two types of “civilizations and races” and the first time in U.S. history that the U.S. had to “battle a genuinely different civilization”. It is the first time in the history of the United States that it is “fighting against a truly different civilization” (Micheal, 2019). Gingrich, the former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, also claimed that the conflict between the US and China is a long-term “clash of civili-

zations”. From this cultural perspective of a “zero-sum game, you lose, I win,” the West will not understand the Chinese wisdom of “tolerance and mutual understanding, harmony and difference”.

The culture of a certain society is reflected in political and economic thought, i.e. ideology. The cultural roots of economic Cold War thinking lie in ideological differences. The difference between ideologies reflecting the interests of different classes creates an obstacle to cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between China and the West. China insists on the guiding position of Marxism in the field of ideology, representing the fundamental interests of the proletariat and the masses of the working people. In contrast, bourgeois ideology justifies the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists and promotes the narrow-minded belief that “the individual is supreme, and self-interest comes first”.



Countries on the BRI route are located in regions such as Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa (Figure: CGTN, 2022).

Therefore, the bourgeois ideology has been fighting with Marxism for the right to speak and dominate in various ways, thus hindering the spread of Marxism. For example, by their “hegemony of public opinion”, certain Western media use “double standards” to make selective reports, and even distort the facts, fabricate lies, vilify the image of China’s Party and government, and ban accounts that express pro-Chinese views, which are still provoking ideological confrontation to this day. They are still stirring up ideological confrontation. For example, Ratcliffe, the former director of the United States national intelligence, published an article in the Wall Street Journal in which he falsely claimed that China was “the greatest threat to democracy and freedom around the world since World War II”. Pompeo, the former secretary of state, made anti-communist and anti-Chinese remarks on occasions such as the Nixon Library, attacking the actions of the Communist Party of China as “the greatest challenge to the free world” and instigating a campaign against the Chinese Communist Party and government. Former Secretary of State Pompeo made anti-communist and anti-China remarks at the Nixon Library and other occasions, attacking “the actions of the Communist Party of China as the greatest challenge to the free world” and instigating “the need for free nations to form a new democratic alliance to deal with the Chinese Communist Party”. After the Biden administration came to power, it cobbled together the so-called “Democracy Summit”, peddling the narrative of “democracy against authoritarianism”, engaged in bloc politics, forced people to choose sides, and instigated division and confrontation to serve its hegemonic designs.

Institutional divides resulting from very different development paths

The different national conditions of countries worldwide dictate that each country has the right to cho-

ose a path of development consistent with its realities and to establish a social system that meets its development requirements. The socialist system with Chinese characteristics is rooted in Chinese soil, has been explored in practice, reflects the will of the Chinese people, and guarantees the nation’s great rejuvenation. In launching the “Belt and Road” and promoting international cooperation on the BRI, China does not intend to transplant the Chinese system, export the Chinese model, or expand its sphere of influence but to fully respect the independent choices of the people of all countries, so that they can enjoy the wealth created by economic development. It is to fully respect the independent choice of the people of all countries so that they can enjoy the wealth created by economic development. On the other hand, those who adhere to the economic Cold-War mentality sanctify the capitalist economic system and set it as a monolithic one, use hard power as a backing to enforce their system model all over the world, export the neoliberal economic paradigm of “privatization, marketization, and liberalization” everywhere, restrict and suppress the elements of the socialist system, and even stage color revolutions “that lead to drastic changes in the system behind the scenes. They even instigated behind the scenes a “color revolution” that led to drastic changes in the system. Francis Fukuyama, a Japanese-American scholar, once declared that human history would “end” with the capitalist “system of freedom and democracy”, but the fact that the socialist system with Chinese characteristics has persisted, been perfected, and developed has declared “the end of history”. However, the fact that the socialist system with Chinese characteristics has persisted, improved and developed has declared “the end of history”, and Fukuyama himself had to admit that his prediction had been inaccurate. In essence, the exclusivity of economic Cold-War thinking is caused by the capitalist private ownership system, in

which “exclusivity” is stronger than “sharing” in the concept of private ownership and private ownership; the competitiveness of economic Cold-War thinking is the result of the “winner-takes-all” principle under the capitalist market economy system. The competitive nature of economic Cold-War thinking is the result of the “winner-takes-all” mentality under the capitalist market economy system, in which competition is based on the principle of “the defeat and death of some, and the victory and domination of others” (Stalin, 1979, p.195). The expansionist nature of economic Cold-War thinking is precisely rooted in the global expansion of the capitalist mode of production, in which the profit-seeking nature of capital has made it transcend the scope of one country to realize value appreciation. The expansionist nature of economic Cold War thinking stems precisely from the global expansion of the capitalist mode of production, in which the profit-seeking nature of capital causes it to go beyond the boundaries of a single country in order to add value and seek to bring the whole world under its influence.

Root causes of the international monopoly capital’s economic interests

The rejection of the BRI by the economic Cold-War mentality is rooted in the defense of the vested economic interests of international monopoly capital, which is twofold. On the one hand, the BRI may touch on the original economic interests of international monopoly capital in the countries along the routes. The countries along the “Belt and Road” are located in Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, etc. The international monopoly capital or the Western developed capitalist countries led by the United States have already controlled some of these regions by their economic, political, cultural, and military

power and even have a substantial influence on the economic lifelines of some countries to ensure the monopoly bourgeoisie’s stable acquisition of surplus value. Suppose China cooperates with the countries along the Belt and Road. In that case, it will inevitably exert economic influence in these regions, which may lead to a profound adjustment of the original pattern of interests, touching the “cheese” of the original beneficiaries, resulting in damage to the vested interests of the international monopoly capital and developed countries, and causing contradictions in the economic interests of the emerging powers and the established powers.

On the other hand, the BRI may create new conflicts of interest with the monopoly capital of Western countries. Through the BRI construction, countries along the route will share the fruits of development, achieve win-win and common prosperity, gradually build a community of interests and a community of destiny, and realize the modernization of “peaceful development, mutually beneficial co-operation and common prosperity”. The moral advantages of the BRI and the fruitful results it has achieved have made it possible for more countries to identify with it, and for countries to strengthen their cooperation with China in areas such as infrastructure construction, trade and investment, so that the commodities, technologies and capital of China and the countries along the route can circulate smoothly along the Belt and Road, and the countries along the route will also have a better understanding of the BRI, and will be able to make better use of it. The smooth flow of commodities, technology, and capital between China and the countries along the BRI, especially the promotion of China’s infrastructure construction projects “going out”, not only lays the foundation for the sustainable development of the host country’s economy and adds strength, but also expands the space for China’s economic development.

In this way, the economic pattern centered on the developed countries, with the developing countries channeling their profit surpluses to the developed countries, which has continued since the colonial era of capitalism, will be completely broken, thus creating a stark contrast between the positive response of the countries along the routes and the passive denigration of the developed countries in the West.

Promoting the construction of the BRI in addressing the challenges of economic Cold-War thinking

To effectively counter the challenge of economic Cold-War thinking and provide theoretical and practical guarantees for the smooth progress of the construction of the BRI, it is necessary to, on the one hand, give a proper name to the BRI in terms of information and increase the degree of symmetry and transparency, to make all countries in the world have a good understanding of the BRI. On the other hand, it is necessary to work with various international cooperation platforms and governments to enlarge and share the “cake” in terms of common interests and to replace vicious competition with benign interaction; it is also necessary to respond to deliberate misinterpretations and provocations with courageous struggles and resolve conflicts and concerns with good dialogue. We should also respond to deliberate misinterpretations and provocations with the courage to fight and resolve conflicts and concerns with good dialogue.

Strengthening the influence of international communication and actively giving the BRI a good reputation

As the developed countries in the West still control the dominant power of international discourse, the situation of China being “scolded” has not yet been fundamentally improved. The publicity work also needs China

to take the initiative to do a good job of “creating a good atmosphere for public opinion, explaining in depth the concept, principles and methods of jointly building the BRI, and telling the story of jointly building the BRI” (Xi, 2022, p.498). Promptly, it is important to show the world what China has done along the BRI, to clarify the facts, and to convey China’s true stance and position. At the same time, we should refute the slander of certain bad media, and politicians in the West take the initiative to expose and actively counter neo-imperialist attacks on the BRI (Cheng & Li, 2021). We should also explore the disclosure of information on the BRI and enhance symmetry and transparency to gradually eliminate the problem of symmetry and transparency in constructing the BRI. It should also explore the disclosure of information on the BRI and enhance symmetry and transparency to gradually eliminate the economic cold war thinking in promoting the construction of the BRI.

First, the BRI is not a Chinese version of the Marshall Plan. BRI is a product of openness and cooperation and a vivid practice of building a community of human destiny, not a geostrategic concept or a geopolitical tool, and it cannot be viewed with outdated Cold War thinking. BRI has enabled China to integrate with the world economy deeply and provided solutions for the world to cope with the current crisis. Ivona Radovac, Director of the Belt and Road Centre for Regional Studies at the Serbian Institute of International Political and Economic Studies, commented on behalf of international objectivity that the BRI is not a new version of the Marshall Plan but has very different goals and methods. BRI is fundamentally different from the Marshall Plan in terms of background, fundamental purpose, participation, and status of the participants. The Marshall Plan was a product of the economic confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and its fundamental purpose was to achieve economic control of the United States over Western Europe and to counterbalance the socialist camp. The United States attached



anti-Soviet and anti-Communist political conditions to the economic assistance provided to Western European countries, and the recipient countries were in a passive and subordinate position. BRI, on the other hand, abandons the Cold-War mentality and does not draw boundaries based on ideology. It is an initiative that conforms to the trend of economic globalization and promotes international cooperation with an open and tolerant mindset, with the fundamental aim of seeking common development and prosperity of the countries along the routes and adding a new impetus to the recovery of the world economy. China respects the social systems and development paths independently chosen by the countries along the BRI and assists without any political conditions, with all participants on an equal footing and a common basis. Clearly distinguishing between the BRI and the Marshall Plan will help countries worldwide break through the Cold-War mindset to view China's initiative and thus more clearly understand the mutually beneficial and contemporary nature of the BRI.

Secondly, BRI is not intended to counter the international economic and trade cooperation mechanisms dominated by Western countries. In response to the economic cold war thinking that sees the BRI as China's

counterweight to the TPP and CPTPP, China's proposal of the BRI is certainly a reflection of its strategic thinking with a long-term perspective. However, it is not competitive thinking with a one-sided battle, and China will not exclude all beneficial international cooperation mechanisms. China does not usually reject all kinds of beneficial international cooperation mechanisms. Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the press conference for the Third Belt and Road Summit on International Cooperation that "China is willing to dovetail with all connectivity initiatives and jointly explore cooperation that is beneficial to develop countries" and hopes that other countries' connectivity initiatives will not "create small circles". China has indicated that it is open to any international economic and trade cooperation mechanism that is conducive to the development of world trade and a fair and open trading environment and formally applied to join the CPTPP agreement in September 2021, which is an important step in expanding openness to the outside world in the new era. The new high-standard international trade rules have commonality with China's reform initiatives to establish pilot free trade zones and trade harbors, and the BRI and the CPTPP can work together rather than having an either/or relationship.

Through the practice of the BRI, China can provide experience for improving and innovating international economic and trade rules. Making clear to the world China's non-confrontational attitude towards the TPP and CPTPP will help all countries, especially the member countries of these cooperation mechanisms, feel the inclusiveness and openness of the BRI.

Exploring the disclosure of information on the BRI is necessary to enhance symmetry and transparency.

Thirdly, exploring the disclosure of information on the BRI is necessary to enhance symmetry and transparency. In the face of concerns and questions from some foreigners and media about the compliance and standardization of the BRI projects, the source and use of funds, the construction process, and the distribution of proceeds, it is necessary to actively explore the disclosure of information related to the BRI projects under the premise of ensuring the safety of information, projects, and funds. It is necessary to actively explore the disclosure of BRI-related information to ensure the safety of information, projects and funds. Drawing on the useful experience of international organizations such as the WTO, we can regularly release to the world, through authoritative channels and using public announcements, information related to the construction of the BRI, such as data, regulatory bases, and professional evaluations, etc. and adopt digital means to publish information that can be queried, supervised, and verified, to respond to concerns and dispel doubts promptly, and to allow the BRI to be implemented promptly. BRI will pass under the sunlight so that the rumors fabricated by certain ill-intentioned people will not be broken in the face of facts. Proactive and extensive public disclosure of the co-construction

status will help enhance the symmetry and transparency of information on the BRI and improve its credibility.

Enlarging the “cake” of common interests and improving the mutually beneficial mechanism of the BRI

Marx pointed out that “everything that people strive for is related to their interests.” The pursuit of interests is the motivation for all social activities of human beings (Marx & Engels, 1956, p.82). To cope with the challenges posed by the economic Cold-War mentality to the BRI, we should fundamentally rely on expanding the common interests with the relevant international organizations, multilateral mechanisms, and foreign governments and finding the largest “covenant” to make the cooperation platforms and countries achieve mutual benefits and win-win results in the construction of the BRI. Cooperation platforms and countries can achieve mutual benefits and win-win results in constructing the BRI.

First, it should be active in international organizations and multilateral mechanisms. BRI is not in opposition to or in competition with various global and regional international economic organizations and multilateral economic cooperation mechanisms, but rather in coexistence and co-prosperity. In order to open up to the outside world and enhance international economic cooperation, China has joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Group of 20 (G20), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the BRICS countries, and signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). After the BRI was put forward, it also triggered a warm response from these international organizations and multilateral mechanisms and was widely praised. For example, Azevedo, the former Director-General of the WTO, believes that the BRI is exactly what the world needs most today, and it will change how it works. What the world needs most, it will change the world” (Hou,



2017). The concept and proposition of the BRI has been written into the documents of international organizations and mechanisms such as APEC and G20. Strengthening multilateral cooperation is a powerful means to deal with the Cold-War mentality, and the willingness of the world's countries to carry out economic cooperation is inversely related to the Cold-War mentality. In proposing the BRI, China is not setting aside existing international organizations and cooperation mechanisms, nor is it overturning the existing global economic governance system. However, it is compatible with and innovative within the existing framework and adheres to the concept of global governance of "co-discussion, co-construction, and sharing". Through international cooperation under the BRI, new impetus will be added to common development, contributing to improving and reforming the existing global economic governance system. According to the functions of various international organizations and multilateral mechanisms, the BRI should be dovetailed with them, such as the doveta-

iling of the WTO and the BRI for trade facilitation, the New Development Bank and the BRI for capital financing, and so on. These organizations and mechanisms should be important platforms for the BRI cooperation and implementing the Belt and Road concept.

Secondly, it has strengthened strategic coordination and economic cooperation with the countries concerned; from 2013 to 2022, China's total imports and exports with the countries concerned will reach a cumulative total of 19.1 trillion United States dollars, with an average annual growth rate of 6.4 percent. Its two-way investment with the countries concerned will exceed 380 billion United States dollars, with China's outward direct investment exceeding 240 billion United States dollars.

The BRI has already been joined with Russia's Eurasian Economic Union, Kazakhstan's Bright Road, Turkmenistan's Revival of the Silk Road, Mongolia's Silk Road and the Eurasian Economic Union to form the BRI, and the Eurasian Economic Union.

China's neighboring countries are the focus of the BRI construction, taking India and Russia as an example: India, as a big country in South Asia and a neighbor of China, has not only held a resistant attitude to the BRI, but also put forward the "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor" with Japan and the United States. The "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor" and "India-Europe Economic Corridor" have been proposed together with Japan and the United States to counterbalance the BRI. China and India, as ancient civilizations, regional powers, and emerging market countries, should abide by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, seek common ground while reserving differences, strengthen unity and collaboration, and closely cooperate economically to form a synergy for promoting development in Asia. Taking into account India's economic development needs, China should provide targeted economic assistance, such as infrastructure assistance, so that the other side can realize the benefits of cooperation through practical measures, generate more sense of gain and trust, thus enhancing the sense of identity with the BRI, and voluntarily participate in the BRI construction. Russia is an important country along the BRI, and when China put forward the BRI, Russia and other countries also established the Eurasian Economic Union. The two cooperation mechanisms overlap in terms of the parties involved, so at first, some people predicted that China and Russia would "inevitably erupt into conflict in the region". However, both China and Russia have adhered to the principle of "no conflict, no confrontation". Through the leadership of the head of state, many rounds of negotiations, and multi-level consultations, they have finally achieved the Silk Road. The successful docking of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union provides an example of policy coordination between different countries. It proves that the China-Russia relationship is based on the principles of "permanent good-neighbourly relations, comprehensive strategic cooperation, and mutually beneficial cooperation and win-win situation" (MFA, 2023), is indeed a mo-

del for the relations between major powers today. Only by adhering to the principle of "keeping good relations with one's neighbours and keeping one's neighbours as one's companions", handling relations with neighbouring countries based on the concepts of "proximity, sincerity, beneficence and tolerance", and giving priority to benefiting neighbouring countries from the fruits of China's development can neighbouring countries become more supportive and willing to participate in the BRI. Only by doing so can neighbouring countries become more supportive of the BRI and more willing to integrate into it.

Dare to fight and dialogue to address challenges and resolve conflicts

With China's growing proximity to the center of the world stage, the United States has gradually changed its orientation towards China from "partner" to "competitor". In response to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's "zero-sum game" of "competition, cooperation and confrontation" trichotomy, Foreign Minister Wang Yi made it clear: "Competition should not offset each other, but rather promote each other", "There is no way out of conflict and confrontation, and neither China nor the United States can change anyone". The challenge of economic cold war thinking encountered by the BRI is mainly from the U.S. Some scholars have summarized the "four kinds of worries" of the U.S. mainstream politics and academia about the BRI. Firstly, China is worried that the BRI will counterbalance the U.S. Asia-Pacific strategy and gradually transform the "U.S. Asia-Pacific" into "China's periphery"; secondly, it is worried that China will gradually expand its economic cooperation with the relevant countries into political, economic and social cooperation. Secondly, it is worried that China and the relevant countries will gradually expand from economic cooperation to political and security cooperation, thus forming a "de-Americanised" regional order; thirdly, it is worried that China will draw in U.S. allies and partners



through the BRI, and “poach” U.S. “interests”. Thirdly, China is worried that through the BRI, it will draw in U.S. allies and partners and “poach” the U.S.; fourthly, it is worried that the BRI will impact the existing international rules led by the U.S., and even pose a deep challenge to the development model of the U.S. and other Western countries (Zhao, 2018).

In recent years, the U.S. government’s policy towards China has undergone more complex changes, still viewing China as its “most serious competitor” and more clearly counterbalancing China on values such as “human rights” and bringing in allies to exert pressure on China. In terms of strategic competition, the U.S. Congress passed the 283-page Strategic Competitiveness Act of 2021 in April 2021 and the Innovation and Competitiveness Act in March 2022, rendering the “China Threat” and advocating strategic competition with China to unite with Western allies to check and balance the BRI with a Cold War mindset. “The U.S. response to the BRI uses a multi-layered strategy, with tactics to unite allies, content of the standards dispute, and actions to attack and discredit, but there

is no ‘engagement’ or a hint of ‘co-operation.” In this regard, China should not be afraid of strong opponents, not be afraid of pressure, calm and cool, not only dare to “show the sword”, the courage to fight, but also “reasonable, advantageous, and temperate”, good at dialogue, in order to respond to the challenges and properly resolve the conflict effectively.

First, we will carry forward the spirit of struggle and resolutely counteract acts that undermine China’s interests. In the face of the sanctions against China introduced by the United States Government, the Chinese side has carried out reciprocal countermeasures, such as the imposition of tariffs on United States commodities exported to China, the banning of United States anti-China politicians such as Pompeo and O’Brien and their families from entering the country and the restriction of their affiliated enterprises and institutions from traveling to and from China, the adoption by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Act, and the imposition of export controls on gallium-germanium-related goods, among other things.

In response to the U.S. strategy of checking and balancing the BRI on the one hand, it has been actively speaking out in the international academic and public opinion circles, revealing the new monopoly of neo-imperialism in the areas of production and circulation, financial capital, the U.S. dollar and intellectual property rights, and international oligarchic alliances, as well as their predatory and transitory economic nature and the general trend, and critiquing the economic coercion and unilateralism of the U.S. and other Western countries (Cheng, et al., 2019). On the other hand, in the actual operation, we can try to transfer our claims against the US to the countries that are co-builders of the BRI, so that the US side may actually provide guarantees for the Belt and Road projects, in order to achieve the goal of “countering the US with the US”.

Secondly, we should insist on dialogue under the premise of good faith to push China-United States relations back on the right track. In dialogue and communication, we should make them aware that the common interests of China and the United States outweigh their differences and that cooperation benefits both sides, while fights are detrimental to both. Strategic dialogue should be carried out to let both sides fully understand each other's strategic intentions, especially to let the U.S. side understand that the BRI is an opportunity rather than a threat to all countries in the world, including the U.S., and that a revived China has no intention of replacing the U.S., but rather to “continue to transcend itself to become a better China”. President Xi Jinping pointed out in his meeting with Biden that “the wide world can fully accommodate China and the United States in their respective development and common prosperity”, China will not challenge or replace the United States, and the United States should not undermine China's legitimate rights and interests. The two sides should respect each other

and not mold each other according to their wishes, let alone deprive each other of their rights to development. Stabilizing and improving China-US relations can only be achieved through frank, substantive, and constructive strategic communication, which can effectively avoid conflicts resulting from strategic miscalculations. The same applies to developed economies such as Japan and the EU. At the Third Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum, China made it clear that the BRI can be dovetailed with the EU's “Global Gateway” program. We will give full play to our respective advantages and make joint efforts to help developing countries speed up infrastructure construction. Only by actively engaging in dialogue on an equal footing while firmly defending the legitimate rights and interests of the country can we effectively address the strategic concerns of developed countries about China.

In short, we should expand the convergence of interests with all countries through active action in multilateral and bilateral relations, highlight the advantages of China's socialist market economic system in practice, avoid taking the old path of Western capitalism's profit-mindedness and hegemony, gradually realize the historic transcendence of the capitalist world system, promote globalization in a fairer and more inclusive direction (Shen, 2019). We should replace the geopolitical game of economic cold war thinking with the win-win cooperation of the community of human destiny, “unity instead of division, cooperation instead of confrontation, openness instead of closure, and win-win instead of zero-sum”, inject new impetus into global economic growth and development, open up new space, set up a new framework for international economic cooperation, and contribute more Chinese wisdom and programs to the construction of an open world economy. 

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Executive Director, Pakistan Research Center for a
Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF)
Khalid Taimur Akram*

**“The concept of “community with a
shared future” is rooted in our ancient
civilizations”**



**Khalid Taimur Akram is a International Expert on the Eurasian region with specializing in Belt & Road Initiative. He is a recipient of the Best Researcher award for three consecutive years from 2021 to 2023. He was also awarded with the prestigious “Otlin Qalam” award by the Union of Journalists of Republic of Uzbekistan for being the best foreign writer in year 2022. Also, the Ministry of Economics of Republic of Azerbaijan awarded him with Best Writer award in year 2023.*

“China’s progress is noteworthy. It serves not only as a model for China itself but for the entire world. The efforts made by China to enhance the livelihoods of its people and reach out to them could be seen as lessons for other nations. It is important for the world to understand that China does not aspire to colonize or confront other nations. Instead, China seeks a peaceful world where every country can progress through initiatives like the BRI, sharing in mutual development. This approach creates a win-win situation for all involved. Looking at the BRI over the past decade, it’s remarkable that it has encountered no major political, economic, or territorial disputes. This initiative has proven to be a successful collaboration not only for China but for all participating nations, making it a standout project in the 75 years following World War II, during which the global political and social order was fundamentally reshaped. In these last 75 years, the BRI stands out as the most effective initiative. China has invested over \$1 trillion, but notably, it has not compelled any country to join; rather, more than 150 countries today voluntarily collaborate with China through this initiative. They participate because they choose to, attracted by the mutual benefits rather than coerced participation. The extensive development across these countries—whether in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, or Central Asia—over the last decade due to this initiative is unparalleled.”

Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), answered Zhao Di’s¹ questions.

We really appreciate you taking the time to share your insights with us on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Mr. Khalid, as far as I know, you have visited China more than 20 times for work reasons. In 2006, you visited China for the first time with a delegation, visiting Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai, and have been to dozens of Chinese cities since then. In the past decade, each visit to China may have offered a unique experience. Could you share some of those experiences with us?

Khalid Taimur Akram: Yes, thank you very much. Firstly, it’s always a pleasure to visit the Communication University of China, which has become my second home here. I’ve been traveling to China since 2006 and have explored various parts, from Kashgar to Urumqi to Hangzhou. My travels have also taken me to Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Changsha, and Nanjing.

Over the past 18 years, I have witnessed China’s rapid development and remarkable progress.

¹ Zhao Di is a graduate student at the School of Marxism, Communication University of China. His research interests include Sinicization of Marxism, political communication and international communication.



Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF) and Zhao Di, a graduate student at the School of Marxism, Communication University of China.

The livelihoods of its people have dramatically improved due to substantial investments in human capital by the Communist Party, particularly in the last 10 to 15 years.

China can now be compared to any leading country in the world. Having visited many European countries, I've seen impressive infrastructure there—from large buildings to motorways. However, China now boasts similar developments. What makes China's progress unique is the speed and uniformity of its development across both large and small cities. In fact, many of its smaller cities rival, if not surpass, those in Europe. This widespread development is a testament to the leadership of President Xi Jinping and the collective effort of the entire community, from ordinary citizens to leaders.

China, Pioneer of the Green Industrial Revolution

At the 20th CPC National Congress held in October 2022, President Xi Jinping stressed that the central task of the CPC is to unite and lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in building a great modern socialist country in all respects, realizing the second centenary goal, and comprehensively promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernization. What do you think of the path of modernization pursued by the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China since the founding of New China, especially since the reform and opening up?

Khalid Taimur Akram: Firstly, China's progress is noteworthy. It serves not only as a model for China itself but for the entire world. The efforts made by China to enhance the livelihoods of its people and reach out to them could be seen as lessons for other nations. I believe the global community could learn from the Communist Party of China, which I find to be quite democratic since it allows anyone, even the common man, to become a leader.

Secondly, the people-centered approach of the Chinese government is particularly impressive. Every policy now formulated for the Chinese populace is highly regarded. There are distinct policies in place for the elderly, the youth, and military personnel. For instance, during a recent visit to a metro station, I noticed that priority is given to fire rescue and military personnel, as well as the elderly. Such people-centered policies

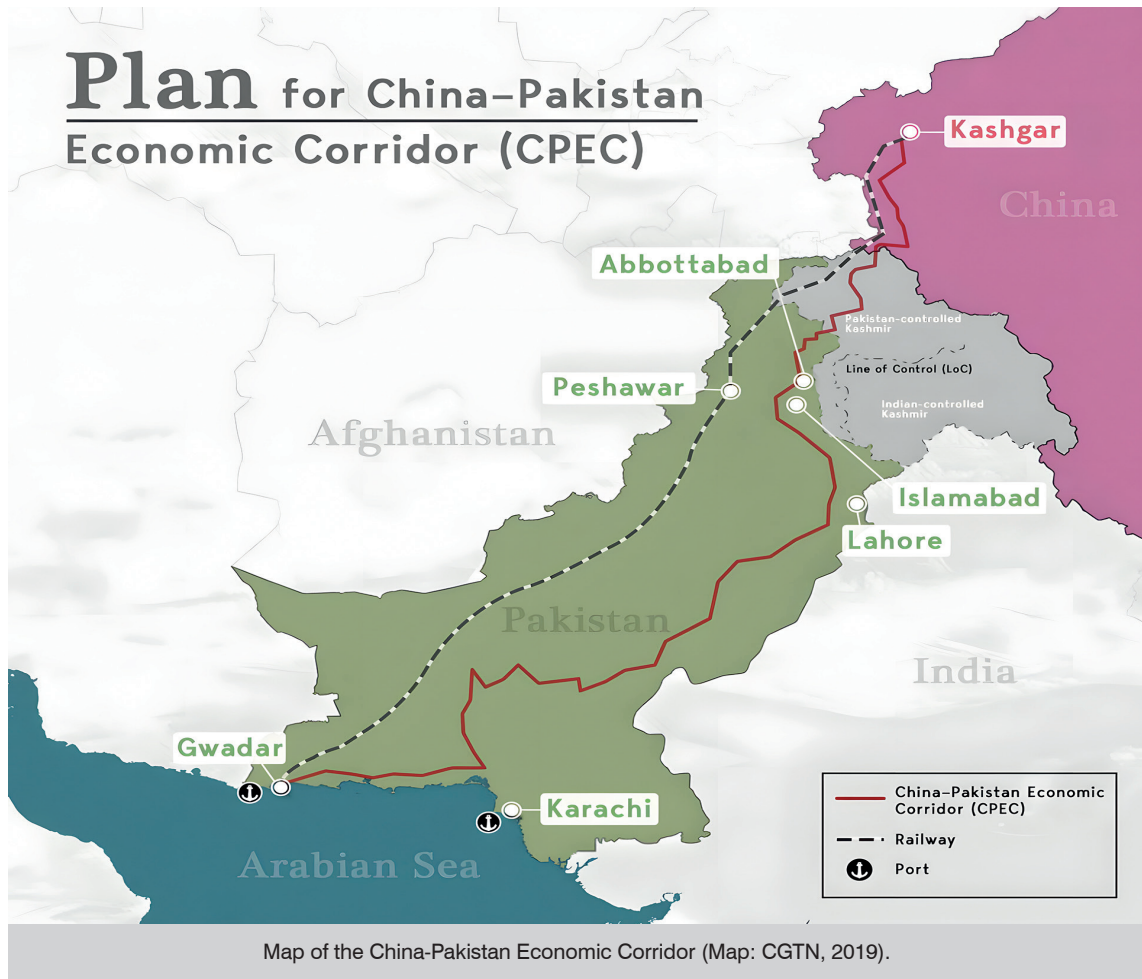
set an exemplary standard.

Thirdly, China's commitment to industrial development and the manifesto of a green industrial revolution highlights its concern for climate change. The country is transitioning towards a clean, green energy system. Nowadays, electric motorbikes and cars are commonplace on the streets, significantly reducing pollution. Where once Beijing was known for its smog, now the skies are clear. By 2030, China aims to substantially reduce its carbon emissions, advancing towards a cleaner, greener environment.

Lastly, it is important for the world to understand that China does not aspire to colonize or confront other nations. Instead, China seeks a peaceful world where every country can progress through initiatives like the BRI, sharing in mutual development. This approach creates a win-win situation for all involved.



A photovoltaic power project in Kazak Autonomous County of Mori, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, December 20, 2023 (Photograph: Xinhua, 2023).



CPEC's Game-Changing Role for Central Asia

The year 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of China's proposal to jointly build the BRI, and it is also the 10th anniversary of the flagship project of the initiative—the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). On July 31st 2023, President Xi Jinping, in his congratulatory message for the tenth anniversary celebration of CPEC, pointed out that CPEC has become a vivid illustration of the all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan, providing

important support for building a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. In October of 2023, Chinese Premier Li Qiang met with Pakistani Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, who attended the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Premier Li warmly congratulated China on the successful hosting of the forum and acknowledged the achievements in the joint construction of the BRI over the past decade. He mentioned that this initiative has brought significant benefits to countries around the world and the global economy. Mr. Khalid,

in your opinion, what tangible changes has the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor brought to the development of infrastructure, energy production, and socio-economic aspects in various regions of Pakistan? How do you evaluate the positive outcomes achieved in the ten years of the CPEC construction?

Khalid Taimur Akram: First and foremost, I'd like to clarify that the friendship between Pakistan and China extends well beyond the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Although CPEC has been in existence for just a decade, the friendship between China and Pakistan dates back to 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded and Pakistan announced its recognition of the New China. In 1951, Pakistan officially established diplomatic relations with China, becoming one of the earliest Asian countries to establish diplomatic ties with China. Now, this friendship spans over 75 years. Prime Minister Kakar recently attended the Third Belt and Road Forum, highlighting the enduring bond between our nations. It's important to note that this relationship is deeply valued by both President Xi Jinping and Pakistan's Prime Minister, not merely because of CPEC, but due to the longstanding ties that have evolved over the last 75 years. Pakistan played a pivotal role in supporting China's membership in the United Nations and was instrumental in facilitating the initial dialogue between China and the United States. Throughout various crises in Pakistan, including the devastating 2005 earthquake and numerous floods, China has consistently been the first to offer assistance, reflecting a friendship founded on trust and solid relations.

Turning to the topic of CPEC, this initiative is incredibly significant as it not only benefits China

but also opens the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea to Central Asian countries for their exports and business activities. CPEC is known as a flagship project because it is unique in its geographic scope; unlike other corridors that span ten or even twenty countries, CPEC exclusively traverses Pakistan. This makes the corridor a potential game-changer, not just for Pakistan but for Central Asia and other regional countries as well.

Distinctive Features of BRI in Multilateral Cooperation

Mr. Khalid, I have read some of your recent articles such as "Connecting civilizations via the community of shared future", "China journeys to sustainable" and "Beijing is fostering shared development through initiatives", in which you speak highly of China's BRI and the initiative to build a "community of shared future for mankind." Many people believe that the BRI is a Chinese plan oriented towards the future and a microcosm of Chinese thinking and Chinese ideas. What do you think is unique about the BRI compared with previous multilateral mechanisms? What lessons do you think these initiatives have for Pakistan or other developing countries?

Khalid Taimur Akram: Discussing multilateral initiatives, we often see participation ranging from four to twenty countries. In contrast, the BRI has expanded to more than 150 countries. This initiative uniquely binds these nations together, facilitated largely by China's efforts. What makes the BRI particularly unique is the post-World War II transformation of the global order—both geographically and politically—which set the stage for such large-scale cooperative projects.



Aerial photo of the Karot Hydropower Project, the first hydropower investment project under the CPEC in Punjab province, eastern Pakistan, April 9, 2022 (Photograph: Xinhua, 2022).

After World War II, the creation of the United Nations marked a significant development, but over time, it has come under the disproportionate influence of a few Western countries. Many global issues remain unresolved by the United Nations, leading to perceptions of it as a failed initiative. Similarly, the European Union, initially a unifying project for Europe, now faces internal challenges and discord, particularly with the Brexit and ongoing tensions between Eastern and Western European nations. These issues diminish the EU's effectiveness as a unifying project.

However, looking at the BRI over the past decade, it's remarkable that it has encountered no major political, economic, or territorial disputes. This initiative has proven to be a

successful collaboration not only for China but for all participating nations, making it a standout project in the 75 years following World War II, during which the global political and social order was fundamentally reshaped.

In these last 75 years, the BRI stands out as the most effective initiative. China has invested over \$1 trillion, but notably, it has not compelled any country to join; rather, more than 150 countries today voluntarily collaborate with China through this initiative. They participate because they choose to, attracted by the mutual benefits rather than coerced participation. The extensive development across these countries—whether in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, or Central Asia—over the last decade due to this initiative is unparalleled.

Regarding the pandemic, which typically occurs once a century with the last major one in 1918, we've seen China's significant role in the global response. China quickly developed and distributed the Sinopharm vaccine free of cost. In Pakistan, I received my first vaccine dose in October 2020, a testament to China's rapid research and generosity. Thus, it's not just the BRI, but also the proactive and supportive approach of the Chinese government toward global welfare that fosters a win-win scenario for all involved.

Roots of the Concept of Building a Shared Future in the Gandhara Civilisation

Civilizations are enriched by exchanges and mutual learning. On September 8th 2023, under the guidance of the People's Government of Gansu Province and the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture of Pakistan, the "Fragrant and Clear - Gandhara Art Exhibition in Pakistan" was launched in the Gansu Provincial Museum. Both China and Pakistan are ancient civilizations along the Silk Road, with a long history of cultural and artistic exchanges between the two countries. This exhibition starts with Gandhara art and touches the surface to describe a diverse and in intuitive Pakistan that is linked with Chinese cultural factors, aiming at remembering the past and reflecting on the present, so that exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations can become a bridge to enhance the friendship between the two peoples, a driving force to promote the progress of human society and a bond to maintain world peace. What is your vision for the future development of China-Pakistan cultural exchanges. mutual learning and friendly relations?

Khalid Taimur Akram: This is a very interesting question, as I am currently conducting research on the Gandhara Civilization. I believe that the Gandhara Civilization was the world's first to be founded on the concept of a community with a shared future. In Pakistan, particularly in my work, I am collecting all available evidence and historical data on the Gandhara Civilization and comparing it to the modern-day concept of a community with a shared future, as proposed by President Xi Jinping.

In the Western media, there's a narrative that through the community of shared future concept, the Chinese are attempting to establish a new world order. However, this is not the case. The concept of a community with a shared future has existed for thousands of years, not only in the Gandhara and Chinese civilizations but in many others as well.

What the Chinese are doing now is reviving these ancient traditions and friendships in a modern context. The world has grown closer due to technological advances such as aircraft, ships, 5G, mobile phones, and virtual connectivity. It now takes just five hours to fly from Islamabad to Beijing, and vice versa, making the world a global village. This concept of a community with a shared future has historical roots in both the Gandhara and Chinese civilizations. Exhibitions on this topic will teach the younger generation two things: first, these concepts are not new but have ancient origins, now being implemented in the modern world; and second, China is not attempting to colonize anyone or introduce any new concepts, but rather, it is bringing old traditions into the modern age with a contemporary vision. 🌸

The innovation of Marxism in China

FOSTER, J. B., ZYUGANOV, G., ANDRÉANI, T., ONISHI, H., FREEMAN, A., HOAN, N. M. (ED). (2023).

Innovative Marxist School in China Comments by International Scholars on Cheng Enfu's Academic Thoughts. Canut International Publishers, Istanbul-Berlin-London-Santiago-Cape Town. ISBN 978-605-4923-74-8.



DR. WERNER RÜGEMER*

Journalist, Author, Consultant

CHINA'S RISE TO BECOME THE LARGEST economic and trading nation is well known - but one systemic fact is usually overlooked: Chinese globalization is completely without the military accompaniment practiced by the leading capitalist state, the USA, with its more than 800 military bases on all continents in 80 countries, combined with global military presences, maneuvers, (proxy) wars, regime changes and US-led alliances such as NATO.

Marxism, which was developed in China, is also unknown in the West. However, there is now

a thick book on the subject in English: *Innovative Marxist School in China*. The book is not only intended to make "Marxism with Chinese characteristics" known, but also invites a worldwide exchange. The book is itself a medium for such an exchange: around 50 authors from all continents report on and comment on the developments and current state of Marxism in the People's Republic.

The main focus is on the work of Professor Cheng Enfu and his staff. Cheng Enfu holds leading positions in China's academic world, for example in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS);



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he is also President of the World Association for Political Economy (WAPE): since 2006, it has organized annual international Marxism forums in China, but above all in other countries such as the USA, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, Mexico, India, Russia, France, Canada, Vietnam and once also in Germany (Berlin 2018); the next forum in August 2024 will take place in Athens/Greece.

Early international cooperation

Greek authors Roula Tsakalidou and Alexandros Dagkas report on the beginnings. The US philosopher Erwin Marquit was a member of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA). As a result, he was banned from practicing his profession in the USA and discriminated against because of his Jewish vote. Marquit founded the Marxist Educational Press (MEP) and the journal *Nature, Society and Thought* (NST) outside of the established universities and also outside of the Stalinist rigid CPUSA.

While the small CPUSA condemned developments in the People's Republic of China, which had opened up to the USA in the 1980s, as unsocialist and capitalist, Marquit was invited to the CASS in China together with a number of Greek Marxists. From 1991 onwards, joint conferences were organized, initially with no more than two dozen participants. Among them were the Marxists critical of Stalinism Domenico Losurdo (Italy) and Andras Gedö (Hungary). The conference in Wuhan in 1999 was entitled "Socialism in the 21st Century"; in Beijing in 2000, the title was "Marxist Philosophy in the 21st Century".

In Vietnam - largely destroyed by the USA, but now under socialist rule - the conference "Globalization and the Nation State" took place in 2003 in exchange with the Portuguese Communist Party under Alvaro Cunhal, with Marquit's NST and the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics. This was followed by conferences in China, organized by NYT with the Academy of Marxism, which Prof. Cheng Enfu had newly founded at CASS.

Laborious exit from previous doctrines

Chinese Marxists not only had to draw the consequences from the experience of the defeated, collapsed Soviet Union and find their way out of the doctrinal edifice of "Stalinism".

They have realized that the development and safeguarding of socialism and the prosperity of the population are only possible with the help of large-scale industrialization. The majority of the peasant masses, completely impoverished by 150 years of colonialism, had to be transferred to industry. Since the early 1980s, Western companies, initially mainly US corporations and US consultants, have been brought to China. Industrialization progressed, but at the same time the great country had the leading anti-communist enemy of the system in its midst, who spread new, typically capitalist injustices.

The initially few Marxists around Marquit and Cheng Enfu began to work on this: One of the findings was that "market economy" and "nation state" need not be opposites of socialism, on the contrary: there can or even must be a "socialist market economy", as a transition. However, contrary to vague talk of globalization, national sovereignty with a strong state is also fundamental. And: the class struggle continues, but under communist leadership, for example against corruption and insider trading, which are part of imported Western capitalism.

Criticism of US-led, imperialist globalization

Confronted with the activities of capitalist corporations from the USA, but also from Europe and the US protectorate of Taiwan, the Chinese Marxists, strengthened in number and with international cooperation, also confronted US neo-imperialism and its sub-imperialists.



The Chinese author Peggy Fuyet summarizes the results: US imperialism has three instruments of power: 1. hard power with a global military presence, NATO, etc.; 2. strong power with transnational corporations/banks, investors, World Bank, WTO, G7, etc.; 3. soft power with media, “culture”, foundations, etc.: They promote selfish individualism and “new values”, thus also weakening and dissolving trade unions and other human rights associations.

Western capitalism uses these instruments to wage all kinds of wars - with the military, trade sanctions, extortionate over-indebtedness, currency manipulation, disinformation, resource theft, regime changes

and via directly and indirectly commissioned third parties. In this way, the imperialists exploit not only their own working population, but even more so those in developing countries. From the EU, this is most directly practiced by France in Africa. In this way, declining imperialism creates extreme super-profits for its dwindling, but also reorganizing and rejuvenating capitalist minorities, becoming even more dangerous and brutal than before. Consequence: good work, development and peace can only be achieved in the struggle against imperialism.

This is why Chinese Marxists are also engaging with “postmodern” Western theories, including tho-

se with left-wing and socialist pretensions, which regard the analysis of imperialism as outdated - for example through “totalitarianism” narratives - and consequently criticize China as the new capitalism. This applies in particular to theorists such as Arendt, Foucault, Habermas, then Harvey, Negri/Hardt, Bobbio, Žižek and the “New Left”. The analyses of Domenico Losurdo, according to the Brazilian authors Diego Pautasso and Tiago Nogara, proved to be an important aid to criticism.

China became great through its own living hard work

The People’s Republic of China did not rise through the exploitation of foreign resources, nor through mass

outsourcing of low-wage supplies from poor countries - nor through Western “development aid”. Both national and international development followed a logic that ran counter to imperialism. China rose through its own hard work, combined with the establishment of its own production chains in an open but sovereign state.

Despite all the technical modernization of the initially simpler industry, living labour is the only source of value. Even the seemingly disembodied and material-free internet, digitalization and AI require an unprecedented amount of material, raw materials, energy for the production and operation of devices, for transatlantic cables and satellites, and also for huge storage farms - and in imperialism also hard physical low-wage work performed by the “invisible” in distant, poor regions.



Workers weld at an automobile manufacturing workshop in Qingzhou City, east China’s Shandong Province. Originally importing Western, capitalist-style industry, China today has the highest proportion of industrial labor among all national economies, especially compared to the United States (Photo: Wang Jilin/Xinhua, 2021).

This opened up the question: what is living labor, and which is necessary, which is unnecessary, which is even harmful?

This is probably the most important part of the book. In particular, the authors Roland Boer (Australia), Alan Freeman (Canada) and the two Frenchmen Jean-Claude Delaunay and Tony Andreani discuss the further development of Marx's theory of value. They refer in particular to the book *The Creation of Value by Living Labor* by Cheng Enfu, Wang Guijin and Zhu Kui.

The difference to a capitalist state is that all work is evaluated according to its contribution to the common good, for the social product of prosperity.

China initially imported Western, capitalist-style industry and today has by far the highest proportion of industrial labor of all national economies, especially compared to the USA. At the same time, however, this work has been regulated by the state in a completely different way than under imperialism, and has been and is being transformed in an emancipatory way that emphasizes work and value. This is a long-term process, with contradictions and new inequalities. Cheng & co-authors, for example, criticized temporary exaggerations in the “liberation of the productive forces”.

The organization and innovation of industrial work in the direction of socialism necessarily includes work that does not traditionally and directly serve the production of material goods, including agricultural goods, but also their organization, administration, distribution and security. Ac-

cording to Cheng & co-authors, necessary living labor is therefore also performed by managers, researchers, doctors, nurses, drivers, teachers, salespeople, technicians, engineers, bankers, foresters, cultural workers and also those employed by the state, authorities, political parties, the military - as well as private owners. Marx did not know “services” - China has 14 service groups.

The difference to a capitalist state is that all work is evaluated according to its contribution to the common good, for the social product of prosperity. This is because economics, especially in Marxism, is political economy: state and civil organization and also military safeguarding of prosperity for all - if necessary by force as opposed to unnecessary or even harmful work such as private and secret self-enrichment and fraudulent lending.

Perspectives

For a long time, this “emancipatory economy” naturally focused initially on China. But the extremely fragmented, variously exploited and impoverished, but also partly privileged dependent workers in the US-led West with their mostly disoriented but growing dissatisfaction: How can they effectively reorganize themselves, nationally, globally, with the perspective of socialism? Alan Freeman from Canada asks this question. Even the more developed forms of organization of the “invisible” hundreds of millions of exploited people in the global production chains of Western digital, armaments, e-mobility, food and platform companies, particularly in India, is not yet an appropriate topic: there are still great opportunities for international scientific cooperation, including innovations, with a view to the whole world. 🌸

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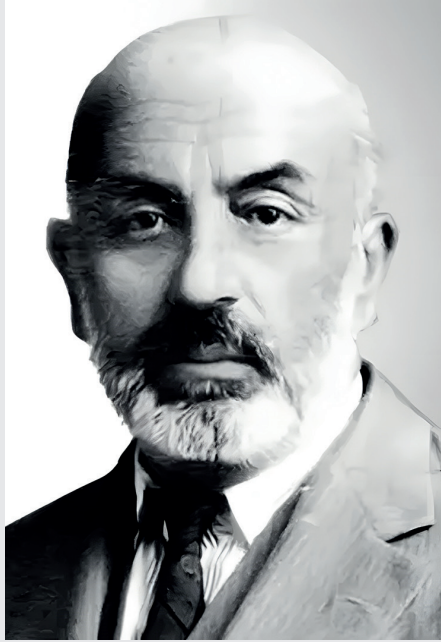
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MEHMET AKİF ERSOY*



**Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the great Turkish poet, was born in Istanbul on December 20, 1873, and passed away in Istanbul on December 27, 1936. He is the author of the Turkish Republic's national anthem, the "İstiklal Marşı". He had a vast and profound knowledge in Arabic and Islamic studies. Additionally, he was proficient in Persian and French. With the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era in 1908, he began writing articles and publishing poems in Eşref Edip's "Sırat-ı Müstakim" and later in "Sebilürreşad" magazines. He also started translating works from contemporary Egyptian Islamic writers. In 1913, he embarked on a two-month trip to Egypt, then visited Medina, where he developed thoughts on the weaknesses of Islamic countries compared to the West in terms of material resources and intellectual level. During World War I, he was sent to Berlin by the Special Organization. He also conducted investigations at the camp set up for Muslims taken captive by the Germans. He endeavored to merge contemporary Islamic societal views with the foundational values of Western civilization. His poems followed a realistic approach.*

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Safahat, TBMM Yayınları, 1. Edition March 2021, p. 79.

Fear not*

Even if Hell itself came, we would extinguish it within our chests.
This is the path of God, there's no turning back, we only advance!
Not a stone shall tremble from our sacred land's domain?
Until the last warrior to war ascends to Heaven's reign.
Even if the apocalypse rages in front of us,
If seas become armies, and clouds rain fleets,
Even if all the volcanoes from beneath us
Erupt and cover the horizons with crimson mists,
Isn't there faith in the hearts of our ranks;
One joy, one sorrow, one purpose, one conscience;
Isn't there an unyielding heart beating in the center;
Even if the world crumbled, be sure this front would not falter!

1915



MUHAMMAD IQBAL*



**Muhammad Iqbal, born on November 9, 1877, in the city of Sialkot in the Punjab province of Pakistan, is a great Islamic scholar and poet. He is renowned for his philosophical and political contributions. His poems are among the most significant examples of modern Urdu and Persian literature. He was the poet who first brought up and fought for the independence struggle of India's Muslim population. After completing his Quranic education in a madrasa, he began to take an interest in Islamic literature. In 1905, he graduated from the philosophy and economics department of Cambridge University in London. He then went to Germany and obtained his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Munich. Upon returning to India in 1908, Iqbal was greatly influenced by Mevlana Jalal ad-Din Rumi. He played a significant role in mobilizing Muslims to resist British colonialism and in the establishment of Pakistan. He made the assessment that "One of the greatest Islamic scholars in history is Atatürk. The Republic revolution is a unique renewal movement of Islam led by him. Therefore, opposition to Atatürk is directly opposition to Islam," which drew parallels between him and Mehmet Akif Ersoy. After a prolonged illness, the great poet passed away in his hometown of Lahore, Pakistan, on April 21, 1938.*

The Mosque of Cordoba (Masjid-e-Qurtaba)**

Oh Qurtaba! Beneath the stars, your ground a celestial dome,
For centuries, awaiting the call to prayer, a sacred home.

Where is the love's army to bring Islam back, fierce and bold,
In which stations, in which inns, has its story been told?

Germany witnessed religious reform, a revolution's blaze,
Sweeping away old eras, as history found a new phase.

The innocence of the Christian pope, his claim refuted clear,
A delicate ship of ideas set sail, beyond doubt or fear.

France too beheld that monumental change, reshaping its view,
Turning the face of Europe, to a world anew.

Italy, evolving, casting off antiquated thought,
Revitalized by innovation's taste, from old ways they sought.

Today, waves of revolution ripple in the Muslim soul,
A secret of Allah, beyond language's control.

Let's see what emerges from the sea's depths, in stormy fray,
Will it change the sky's hue, in its turbulent display?

**This is the final section of Muhammad Iqbal's poem entitled The Mosque of Cordoba. Translation: Onurcan Balci.

Clouds on mountain slopes, drowned by the group's cunning,
The sun lays down flames, red as Bedahşan rubies, stunning.

The peasant girl's song, simple yet profound,
Youth, like a flood, for the heart's ship, unbound.

Oh Kebir River, flowing by Qurtaba's side,
A man, Ikbāl, dreams of another era, in your tranquil tide.

The future, shrouded in destiny's veil, yet to be seen,
Its dawn unveils before my eyes, in hopes serene.

If I lift the veil from my thoughts, what visions shall appear,
Europe could not bear my prophecies, indeed.

Life without revolution, mere existence, not true breath,
Nations thrive on struggle, in revolution's dance of death.

A nation mastering self-control, stands tall, survives the test,
For fate and destiny, like a sharp sword, in hand, they rest.

Every work incomplete, without the blood of heart's deep,
Poetry too, devoid of love's essence, in silence, it would sleep.





VLADIMIR SOKOLAEV*



A Gypsy Girl tending sheep, Gorno-Altai Autonomous Oblast, July 30, 1980**

**Vladimir Sokolaev (1952-2016) was born in Stalinsk, Kemerovo region. Russian photographer and cameraman, engaged in social and landscape photography. Representative of Documentary Photography, Honorary member of the Union of Photographers of Russia. He was an organizer and participant of the photo association "TRIVA". Vladimir Sokolaev passed away in the morning of September 12, 2016 in his studio in Novokuznetsk after a long illness.*

**Moscow Multimedia Art Museum. / Moscow House of Photography. (MMAM/MDF)

JEWAD SELIM*



The Watermelon Seller, 1953.*

**Jewad Selim was an Iraqi painter who is considered to be the founder of modern art in Iraq. As a son of an officer in the Ottoman military, Selim was born in Ankara in 1921, yet he belonged to a family originally from Mosul. Jewad Selim was one of the most influential artists of his time and by his involvement with the Iraqi Baghdad Modern Art Group, which encouraged artists to explore techniques that combined both Arab heritage and modern art forms, he reinforced his efficacy. Having met and adopted Iraq's old artistic traditions, the artist consciously tried to explore the possibilities of combining old motifs with the modern abstract art he observed in Europe. "The Watermelon Seller" is a bright sample of this approach of the artist.*

SATIRIKON – 1908/16



The Birth of the Venus of the New Constitution from the Foam of the Bosphorus*

In the subtitle on the cover of the 16th issue of the Satirikon weekly humor and satirical magazine published in St. Petersburg, the capital of Tsarist Russia, in 1908, the epigram read: “Abdulhamit: Illallah! Here is the only woman I would not want to see in my harem.”

**[Cartoon]. (1908). The Birth of the Venus of the New Constitution from the Foam of the Bosphorus. Satirikon, 16.

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