



The Desired Global Order from Beijing's Perspective

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By Yan Xuetong and Sun Xuefeng

SYNOPSIS

Beijing advocates a global security order without military alliances. It aims to promote a global political order that applies varying standards in evaluating the legitimacy of governing models. Meanwhile, it seeks to return to an open global economic order, opposing the policies aimed at decoupling and breaking chains.

COMMENTARY

Since the 2020s, Beijing's view of the global order has shifted from optimism to pessimism. In 2024, Beijing publicly acknowledged that China was being harmed by the changing global order, in which ["regional conflicts and disturbances keep cropping up, global issues are becoming more acute, and external attempts to suppress and contain China are escalating."](#)

The report at the [4th Plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee](#) in October 2025 reaffirmed this view. It also argued that China's development presents both strategic opportunities and risks and challenges, while uncertainties and unforeseeable circumstances continue to rise. Beijing's growing disappointment with the counter-globalisation trend of recent years has motivated its leadership to foster a more favourable global order.

The aim of this essay is to present Beijing's views on the desired global order, as set out in its four initiatives – *the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilisation Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative* – which suggests that Beijing envisions a global order comprising three key aspects: security, politics, and the economy.

A Security Order Without Alliances

Beijing advocates a global security order without military alliances and opposes one in which the US dominates over security issues through its alliance system. Before the war in Ukraine, Beijing focused on resisting Washington's efforts to establish multilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific region, such as AUKUS with Australia and the UK in 2021 and the QUAD with Japan, Australia, and India in 2022.

As NATO's hostility towards China increased with the escalation of the war in Ukraine, Beijing's efforts shifted towards opposing its policy. Beijing was especially enraged in 2023 by NATO's Vilnius Summit Communiqué, which stated: "[The People's Republic of China's stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values.](#)" In response, Beijing accused NATO of having a [Cold War mentality](#) and urged it to stop its groundless accusations and provocative rhetoric against China.

At the same time, Beijing promoted non-alliance partnerships among major powers as a new model for global security. It stated, "[The China-Russia relationship is based on no alliance, no-confrontation, and no-targeting of any third party...This is fundamentally different from the exclusive groupings and bloc confrontation practised by some NATO countries.](#)"

Besides the new approach for relations among big countries, Beijing also recognises the importance of the United Nations – particularly, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and relevant UN committees – as well as regional security institutions – such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the "China + Central Asia" mechanism, and East Asia cooperation mechanisms, among others – in establishing a favourable and stable security order. Within these global and regional frameworks, Beijing is committed to maintaining global peace through its active involvement in both traditional and non-traditional security cooperation.

A Political Order of Diversification

Beijing intends to promote a global political order that uses varying standards rather than universal ones when evaluating the legitimacy of political institutions or governing models. According to Beijing, there is no common criterion by which to judge the worth of political systems and governing models, as universal values have never existed. With China's achievements in modernisation and development, Beijing now positions itself as the global advocate for non-Western modernisation. It seeks to legitimise alternative approaches to modernisation across different countries, believing that its modernisation model is appealing to most states in the Global South.

Although there are doubts, both foreign and domestic, about whether the Chinese model can be applied to other developing countries, especially those that gained independence from European colonial rule, Beijing believes that its own proven success will attract followers. Consequently, it has a strong ambition to lead global governance. To this end, China has sought to secure the support of both developed and developing countries. In December 2025, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met

his German counterpart and said, [“Both China and Germany support, champion, and practise multilateralism; the two sides should strengthen solidarity and cooperation to make the global governance system more just and equitable.”](#)

Additionally, Beijing aims to reshape the global understanding of human rights. Frequently criticised by Western governments, Beijing’s stance emphasises that developing countries should prioritise the right to economic development over civil and political liberties. It argues that civil and political liberties are secondary to the right to essential resources. A citizen’s priority is to achieve freedom from poverty, such as reliable access to food and shelter. Developing countries should first focus on lifting their citizens out of poverty before worrying about civil liberties. [There is considerable overlap between Beijing’s view of human rights and that of many developing countries.](#)

An Economic Order of Re-globalisation

Beijing seeks to restore the global economic order of the post-Cold War era, during which China was one of its main beneficiaries. However, Beijing believes that technological decoupling and trade protectionism by major Western economies, such as the US, Japan, and the EU, are hurting the open global economic order.

Beijing, therefore, opposes Washington’s “small yards and high fences” policy, the EU’s derisking policy, and the policies of other major economies aimed at decoupling and breaking supply chains. In April 2024, [Wang Yi criticised Washington for its efforts to contain and suppress China.](#)

Beijing also emphasises the importance of taking concrete action to maintain an open global economic order. As Chinese Premier Li Qiang emphasised in July 2023, [“China will not close the door of its opening-up policy but will open it wider. This is our own strategic selection, which also conforms to the historical laws of economic globalisation.”](#) Even if US President Donald Trump adopts a tougher stance on China by imposing higher tariffs, China will still adhere to its opening-up policy. This is evident in the expansion of unilateral visa-free travel policies. Li Qiang reiterated that [“China is willing to work with the US in undertaking their responsibilities as major countries, jointly upholding international trade rules, and ensuring the stability of global industry and supply chains.”](#)

In multilateral economic cooperation, Beijing is considering discussing free trade agreements with more countries of the Global South, supporting the WTO’s Aid for Trade initiative, and renewing its contributions to the WTO’s China Programme. Beijing also aims to reinforce the G20’s collaborative framework to counter economic decoupling attempts by major Western economic entities as much as possible, while promoting the view that consensus should be a prerequisite for collective action to tackle global economic and financial challenges. This approach is intended to counteract unilateral US financial policies that could harm other members.

Conclusion

Frustrated by the counter-globalisation trend of recent years, Beijing is set on creating a more favourable global order, as illustrated by the “four initiatives”: *the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Culture Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative*. However, Beijing does not intend to replace Washington as a global leader in the foreseeable future, given the substantial gap in material capabilities between China and the US.

Unlike Moscow during the Cold War, which sought to change the international system established by the US, Beijing is concerned only with reforming the order it shares with the US. Beijing remains committed to the principle of multipolarity and refuses to accept a G2 model comprising China and the United States.

In March 2026, Wang Yi stated that "[China will never take the beaten path of seeking hegemony as its strength grows, nor do we subscribe to the logic that the world can be run by major countries.](#)" Beijing's impact on the global order will therefore be new and unfamiliar to Washington. This does not mean that Beijing will have a larger impact on the world than Washington in the coming decade. Neither does it mean that Beijing's growing influence is guaranteed to mould the global order to fit its desires.

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