

US-China relations

China builds coalition to counter America's 'barbaric and bloody' leadership

Beijing woos nations to join its Global Security Initiative that 'respects each other's sovereignty'



China's president Xi Jinping has refused to condemn his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine © Alexei Druzhinin/Sputnik/AP

Kathrin Hille in Taipei YESTERDAY

Beijing could not have made its displeasure with Joe Biden any clearer. As the US president met leaders of the Quad security grouping in Tokyo, Chinese and Russian nuclear bombers flew over the Sea of Japan.

But China is also employing less crude tactics to counter the US in the form of a diplomatic drive. Just as [Biden embarked on his Asian trip](#), Beijing began promoting its Global Security Initiative (GSI), a proposal for an alternative security order.

Floated by President [Xi Jinping](#) in April, the initiative is a collection of policy principles such as non-interference and grudges against US "hegemonism".

Now Beijing is trying to entice other countries on board. In a video address to foreign ministers from the Brics grouping of big emerging economies on May 19, the Chinese president spoke of the myriad virtues of GSI.

Xi urged fellow Brics members Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa to "strengthen political mutual trust and security co-operation, . . . accommodate each other's core interests and major concerns, respect each other's sovereignty, security and development interests, oppose hegemonism and power politics, reject cold war mentality and bloc confrontation and work together to build a global community of security for all".

Over the following days, Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, extracted declarations of support for GSI from Uruguay, Nicaragua, Cuba and Pakistan. Indonesia and Syria have endorsed it, too.

The initiative is part of Beijing's increasingly frantic efforts to oppose US-led blocs, which it blames for global conflict and tension.



Chinese and Russian bombers fly over the Sea of Japan during Joe Biden's trip to Tokyo © Joint Staff Office of the Defense Ministry of Japan/Reuters

Tian Wenlin, a professor for international relations at Renmin University in Beijing, described the western-led world order as “barbaric and bloody” and accused the US of dragging other nations into wars.

“Countries . . . are urgently clamouring for a new global security paradigm based on equality and mutual trust in the face of the rapid changes in the international landscape,” he wrote in a recent article. “As a result, the Global Security Initiative was designed to protect the security interests of a broader spectrum of people around the world.”

Beijing's focus on security marks a [departure from its traditional approach](#) to international relations.

“Previously, when Chinese officials spoke about how the conflicts and security issues

in the world would be resolved, the front foot was development. The answer was to provide prosperity to those troubled regions. But now there is a reprioritisation,” said Bates Gill, professor of Asia-Pacific security studies at Macquarie University.

This greater role played by security is evident in the Pacific, where [China is rapidly expanding its influence](#) at the expense of the western powers that have dominated the region.

On a tour of eight Pacific island nations over the coming week, Wang is proposing a co-operation deal covering everything from customs to fishing. But the first of the draft agreement's eight articles focuses on security, including joint law enforcement and cyber security.

M Taylor Fravel, director of the Security Studies programme at MIT, said the initiative was part of China's attempts to delegitimise the global role of the US.

“I think their focus would be mainly on states from the developing world,” he said. “This is clearly a huge priority for China, especially in the light of its alienation of most of Europe.”

Chinese diplomats have been promoting the GSI in developing countries including India, the Philippines, Uganda, Somalia and Kenya through articles in local media and on its embassy websites.

Security experts said planning for the GSI predated the [Ukraine war](#). “It is the next step in Xi's efforts to steer the global security order away from cold war thinking, which he has been making since 2014,” said a Chinese scholar who advises the government.

But Russia's invasion has made that endeavour both more urgent and difficult. “Since the war in Ukraine started, China has gone to some lengths to defend Russia's ‘legitimate security interests’,” said Paul Haenle, director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing. “The Global Security Initiative, similarly, borrows from Russian concepts of ‘indivisible security’.”

The initiative also seeks to counter the fallout from China's support for Russia. “GSI is also a corrective for China's Ukraine response, which has left states questioning China's espoused commitment to multilateralism and international order,” said Courtney Fung, an associate professor at Macquarie University.

Analysts believed Beijing could eventually institutionalise the programme, as it has done with its Belt and Road Initiative. But that could take years. The BRI was

gone with its Belt and Road initiative. But that could take years. The BRI was announced in 2013 but many nations did not join until 2016.

“They want to consolidate a large ‘third camp’ of countries that do not want to take sides in what they see as a polarised world,” said Yun Sun, director of the China programme at the Stimson Center think-tank.

“But it will be impossible to implement such a broad and vaguely defined strategy on a global scale.”

Additional reporting by Maiqi Ding in Beijing

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