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The Relational Turn in Chinese Diplomatic Theory and Practice: Towards a *Community with a Shared Future for Mankind*?

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Abstract: This paper departs from the hypothesis that the *Community with a Shared Future for Mankind* represents a relational turn in Chinese diplomatic theory and practice. This relational turn is underpinned by its Global Development, Security, and Civilization Initiatives. The study employs relational theory from the field of international relations, alongside approaches developed within diplomatic studies. The qualitative analysis of the Chinese officials' actions and statements was conducted using *Voyant* software. The findings suggest that China's announcement of the three initiatives, followed by efforts to implement them through transformative and interconnected projects with global partners, reflects its strategic objectives, ambition to institutionalize power, and growing influence in shaping global governance. China holds the stance that, in doing so, it is sharing wisdom to improve global governance, since we all share the same planet. By providing substance to these three initiatives through collaboration with partners worldwide, China creates a new structure of relations, a system of values, rules of behavior, forms of interdependence, and a global community with a shared future. Building such a community requires balanced development, shared security, multilateralism, and intercultural dialogue.

Key words: China, relational turn, relational power, diplomatic power, (de)futurism, true multilateralism.

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Introduction

What does China want? This question sparked vociferous debate, controversy, and contention within the sphere of international relations. Its ascent of the millennia long tradition, China developed not only into distinctive writing system, but political, economic, and system of values. These developments and particularities have propelled China to become the world's leading trading nation. Relying on the concept of *Chineseness*, leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) created Chinese specific contexts, concepts and discourses, or transformed/bettered/enriched the existing ones with the "Chinese characteristics" when communicating with the world. China believes that its strategic guiding thought is [not only] in accordance with broader international developments (Jiemian 2015, 35) but contributes to predictability in the era of unprecedented changes. This belief is followed by China's perception about its movement through history and its capabilities of seizing opportunities (Jiemian 2015, 35).

A pivotal turning point in the trajectory of Chinese history occurred in 1978, when Deng Xiaoping initiated the policy of reform and opening-up. This policy has been transmitted across successive generations of CPC leadership, functioning as a symbolic baton accompanying each stage of the nation's advancement toward the realization of the "Chinese Dream".² President Xi (2023a) Jinping defines the policy of reforms and opening-up as a great awakening for the CPC. This awakening facilitated both theoretical and practical innovations for the Party. Reform and opening-up is a great revolution in the history of the Chinese people and Chinese nation, one that propelled a tremendous transformation in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Chinese official understanding of the commencement of the

² In 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the concept of the "Chinese Dream" as a strategic and diplomatic theory and practice. This concept embodies the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, encompassing the restoration of its strength, prosperity, and global standing. The realization of the "Chinese Dream" is contingent upon the achievement of the "Two Centenary Goals". The first goal, which aims to transform the Chinese nation into a moderately prosperous society in all respects, was accomplished by 2021, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China. The second goal, which seeks to establish China as a modern socialist country by 2049, the 10th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, envisions a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and aesthetically pleasing nation (Xi 2012).

“open-door” policy is that it started to turn dots into lines and lines into fields, gradually amplifying the radiation effect of development (SC PRC 2023). China demonstrates its global influence and applies its experience to shape a world that aligns with its vision of a better place to live.

China adopted a cautious yet experimental approach to establishing partnerships within the Liberal International Order from which it had previously been excluded. The decision to move away from Mao Zedong’s ideological rigidity and to pursue pragmatic, value-neutral engagement was pivotal in enabling both China’s self-empowerment and co-empowerment with other nations. This cooperative approach underpinned that country’s commitment to leaving no one behind. By making this pledge central to its vision of global governance and international relations, China articulated its call for equitable and just global development, a direction informed by a deliberate and future-oriented strategy.

Over the years, China has deepened, widened, and diversified its relations with the partners spanning the globe. Its power has steadily increased, making its influence global in terms of scale, scope, and form. The country was invited to share a burden for global development, security, and modernization, and it did so in its own way, characterized by “Chinese characteristics”. China initiated three transformative, ambitious, controversial and innovative initiatives: Global Security Initiative; Global Development Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative, which mark the hallmark of its relational turn.

As China was pursuing its own model of interstate relations, emancipatory diplomacy (Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2024), and model for global development, international community pointed finger to Chinese responsibility for the shape of the world’s future. This was underlined by the following fact: China’s share of Global GDP in 2024 was 19.4% (*World Economics* 2024). China brought its vision of the shape of the future, when announced one of the ever-changing ideas/idioms/practice known as “A Global Community of Shared Future”.

Chinese Relational Turn

In the field of International Relations, the theoretical relational turn was initiated by sociologist Mustafa Emirbayer in 1997 with the publication of his work *Manifesto for a Relational Sociology*. Emirbayer’s analysis draws upon

insights from John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley's 1949 book, *Knowing and the Known*. Emirbayer (1997, 281) addresses the fundamental question of how to conceptualize the social world: should it be understood primarily as consisting of static substances or as comprising dynamic, evolving processes and relations? Thus, the key question for social scientists is not unpuzzling "material versus ideal," "structure versus agency," "individual versus society," or any of the other dualism so often noted; rather, it is the choice between substantialism and relationalism (Emirbayer 1997, 282).

After Emirbayer (1997, 286) provided explanation of substantialism which understands agents – individuals, societies, states, to name few of them - as independent, unchangeable and units with predestined characteristics and put them as the main topic of analysis, this scholar focused his attention to relationalism. For Emirbayer, relationalism offers fresh perspective, because it puts relations as such in the core of the analysis. Relationalism requires us to change our point of view and see the world as a space or context composed of various relations. Hence, relationality is a key concept abstracted from the world of interconnections (Qin 2018, 207). From the prism of relationalism, things "are not assumed as independent existences present anterior to any relation, but . . . gain their whole being . . . first in and with the relations that are predicated of them. Such 'things' are terms of relations, and, as such, can never be 'given' in isolation but only in ideal community with each other" (Cassirer 1953, 36, cited in Emirbayer 1997, 287).

When it comes to the concept of community, in Chinese philosophy it is closely linked to the concept of harmony. In traditional Chinese philosophy, harmony of relations is superior to the harmony of interests (Qin 2018, 233). In Confucianism there is a principle that virtuous persons seek harmony, not sameness (*君子和而不同*) (Qin 2018, 233). In a community where harmony of relations exists, its members maintain good relations despite the existence of different ideas, opinions, and interests. Furthermore, it is exactly the different ideas, opinions, and interests that come together and make a good society and an energetic living habitat (Qin 2018, 233). This kind of harmony in community differs from Keohane's harmony, which refers to a situation in which actors' policy (pursued in their own self-interest without regard for others) automatically facilitates the attainment of others' goals (Keohane 1984, 51). Furthermore, relationalism denies that persons or society can be the starting points or the core of doing analysis, because they emerged from social contexts which they are immersed in. Hence, the classification

of an actor divorced from analytic relationality is neither ontologically intelligible nor meaningful (Emirbayer 1997, 288).

Relationality operates according to an inherent logic. This underlying logic of relationality encompasses the following principles: (1) Relators who are aware of the reality of coexistence, knowing that their existence depends on their connectivity with others; (2) Relational circles; (3) Relational context (Qin 2018, 208).

For making the whole system of relationalism, Mustafa Emirbayer borrowed some of the insights of Karl Marx. For example, in the 2nd edition of *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, Karl Marx (1978, 247) argues that society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand. But, before publishing this Reader, in his capital work titled *Capital*, Karl Marx observed that “*capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things*” (Marx 1977, 932). Besides inclusion of Marx’s, Dewey’s and Bentley’s (1949) work, Mustafa Emirbayer in his work included ideas brought by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), particularly when it comes to the concept of power. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, 220-230), stated the following:

“By field of power I mean the relations of force that obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggles over the monopoly of power”.

Thus, according to the relational point of view, instead of taking power as an attribute or property of actors, power is unthinkable to exist outside matrices of relations (Emirbayer 1997, 292). Qin (2018, 242) in his analysis obtained similar findings: “*power is the primary factor to indicate the importance of a relations. Power emerges from relations.*”

Qin (2018, 242) provides his definition of relational power. He explains that this type of power is neither possessed by individual actors nor embedded within the systemic structure. It is established and developed through, via, and by relations. It is a power that resides within the relations among actors rather than within an independent and discrete entity (Qin 2018). The strength and depth of relationships, coupled with the degree of interconnectedness among actors, directly enhance relational power. Thus, relational power is directly linked to trust and the transcending of conflicting interests, aligning with the reconciliation of diverse viewpoint.

Relational power has some distinct features, beginning from the feature that is *sharable* (Qin 2018, 241). Since it comes from relations among actors, it is shared. Once a relationship is established, power is no longer private. It resides within the relations between actors. Next, relational power is also *exchangeable*. In other words, it reflects an exchange relationship, in which actors take turns being the power holders and power recipients. Furthermore, relational power may well constitute a *co-empowering process*. For power, western scholars are advocating that is an unilaterally commanding system. But, for Qin (2018, 242) relational power means mutual empowering, making both actors engaged in a power relationship more powerful. This is the basis of the Chinese dialectics.

China believes that its actions of diplomatization of international relations (Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2022) are bringing a shared future, relational power. From that perspective, balanced development and cooperative security are alternatives to defuturism (Fry 2020). In doing so, leaders of China demonstrate that diplomacy is still sustainable. In Chinese understanding, diplomatization embraces communication, deepening relations and co-empowering and sharing the power. For that purpose, China developed its particular type of emancipatory diplomacy for a peaceful, democratic, and sustainable global community (Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2024).

When it comes to the theorization about China's diplomacy, Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović (2024, 405) observe two clearly defined theoretical concepts: *Confucian improvement* and *Mencius optimality*. Improvement of self-interest is possible if and only if the interest of other is simultaneously improved (Qin 2020b, 165). In the case of the optimality – self-interest is best achieved if and only a community maintains optimally harmonious relations among its members (Qin 2020b, 165).

When reading definitions of these two concepts, we understand that for some scholars diplomacy is a relational practice. It is a practice of making, managing and building relations, and, ideally, positive and friendly relations among international actors (Qin 2020b, 165). Considering the aforementioned, we can see that such a definition of diplomacy brings several implications, beginning from the fact that diplomacy is a practice (Qin 2020b; Sending and Neumann 2011). Second, the making (maintenance, development of) form the cornerstone of diplomatic practice. Third, the nature of a relationship is convertible, and the crucial converting factor is human agency (Qin 2020b). It is always a people-centered practice. In this case, today's diplomacy, just like yesterday's, remains

primarily concerned with the ways in which states [individuals] deal with the external world (Sending, Pouliot, and Neumann 2011, 528).

Three Global Initiatives and China's Relational Turn towards a Shared Future

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and particularly since the launch of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, the leaders of the CPC, together with Chinese academia, have been striving to develop a unique Chinese theory of diplomacy and international relations. These efforts orbit around two core principles. Firstly, no one can stop the wheels of history (SC PRC 2024b). Secondly, the achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics have inevitable repercussions for the world (Jiemian 2018, 7).

Providing new theoretical insights with Chinese characteristics, will not only confirm the prowess of *Four Confidences* - in the path, theory, system and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics (NPC PRC 2021), *Four Consciousnesses* – keep in line with the Central Committee in thinking, action and political orientation, uphold the authority of the Central Committee and its centralized, unified leadership, resolutely implement the Central Committee's decisions and plans in all their work, and not engage in political maneuverings (NPC PRC 2021), and *Two Upholds* – upholding General Secretary Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and upholding the Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership (NPC PRC 2021), but it will encourage other developing countries of Global South to embark on the ship of modernization and one shared future (Jiemian 2018, 13).

China offers the “Chinese wisdom” and the “Chinese approach” to solving the problems facing mankind (Jiemian 2018, 16) when entering the era of unprecedented changes. Undoubtedly, leaders of the CPC create the context of thinking that Chinese expertise is what countries need if they want to speed up their development and modernization while preserving their independence. As noted by the scholar Su (2014, 28-30) Changhe, while leaders of the CPC were strengthening the diplomatic materials, they simultaneously laid an ideological foundation, enhanced self-confidence of the Chinese people, and encouraged China to participate in international exchanges with self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-respect.

By promoting Chinese expertise as globally shared, rather than imposed as universal wisdom, China puts effort to formulate a new pattern of international relations based on mutual respect, fairness, justice, inclusivity, democratization, openness, and win-win cooperation (Jiemian 2018, 20). This type of the international relations is the fertile soil in building a global community with a shared future for mankind (Jiemian 2018) and harmony between men and nature, because clear waters and green mountains are invaluable.

China is using its diplomacy and its diplomatic power to offer its vision of progress to the globe (Stefanović-Štambuk 2024). China must take advantage of opportunities, create conditions and tackle challenges if it wants to envelope the world and protect it from further disturbances (Jiemian 2015, 25). Exploration and innovation have become the focus of China's diplomatic thoughts (Jiemian 2015, 25). Hence, it is mandatory for China to create:

- 1) diplomatic thoughts that are more comprehensive;
- 2) a diplomatic strategy that is more relevant to the times and changes;
- 3) diplomatic practices that are more mature;
- 4) diplomatic approaches that strives for the overall modernization, and
- 5) a solid basis of public understanding and support inside and outside China (Jiemian 2015, 25).

The great leap towards this was done when Xi Jinping's diplomatic thought came into being and part of the Constitution of the PR China. This diplomatic thought is understood as a scientific theoretical system with rich connotations, profound thinking and a complete system. It clarifies the historic mission, general objectives and a series of guidelines and principles that must be adhered to in the new era of China's work relating to foreign affairs (Jiemian 2018, 24). Besides this, this diplomatic thought profoundly reveals the essential requirements, inherent laws and directions of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era (Jiemian 2018, 24).

Significant transformations are taking place in China's diplomatic approach. This evolution is guided by the principles of major power diplomacy, emancipatory diplomacy, and an open, inclusive strategy aimed at building a global community with a shared future for humanity, supported by three key initiatives: Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative.

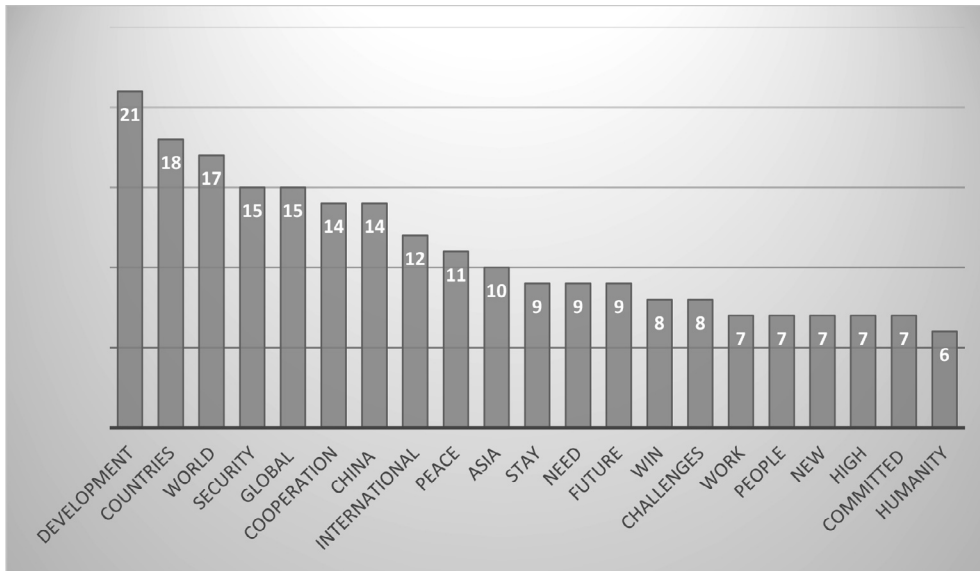
Global Security Initiative

Giving the keynote speech *Rising to Challenges and Building a Bright Future through Cooperation* at the BOAO Forum held on April 21st, 2022, Chinese President introduced to the international community the *Global Security Initiative* (GSI 2023). In the speech, he relied on Chinese understanding that stability brings a country prosperity while instability leads a country to poverty (Xi 2022). Furthermore, Xi Jinping, underlined notable Chinese strategic thought according to which security is the precondition for development (Xi 2022). Having in mind that mankind has only one earth to live on (Hu 2012) and that countries around the world are like passengers on the same ship who share the same destiny (Xi 2022), consequently, humanity is living in an indivisible security community (Xi 2022). Living in such a community, humanity must abide by the practice that promotes common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security (Xi 2022). Only by making inclusivity through joint efforts world peace and security can be maintained and ship be navigated towards a bright future (Xi 2022).

Since togetherness is one of the principles in China's diplomacy and foreign policy practice, the idea of throwing anyone overboard is simply not acceptable (Xi 2022). The non-feasibility of the practice of exclusion is also visible from the fact that the international community has become integrated to the level of sophistication that exclusion of any single part will cause serious problems to its operation, stability, and sustainability. When that happens, both the victims and the initiators of such acts will stand to lose (Xi 2022). In the same speech, he proposed the type of global governance that humanity should adopt. It is a global governance which operations will be based on extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. Such a global governance will promote the common values of humanity, and advocate exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations (Xi 2022). It is relational global governance. Such global governance will be based on diplomatization like the manner of resolving both regional and global security challenges. Diplomatization is a distinct process of containing grave security problems by making them a matter of diplomacy (Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2022, 7; Neumann 2020).

The content analysis of the GSI that was done by using *Voyant* software program. The results are presented on the chart below:

Figure 1. Content analysis of Global Security Initiative (self-made)



By reading the chart, we notice that the most used term is development. This can be understood in different ways, beginning from the fact of continuation of underlining the importance of development which was also the crucial word of the Global Development Initiative, as it will be explained in the following part. Second, it can be understood as that development was highly prioritized than security at that very moment. Analyzing the speech, we notice that Xi Jinping strongly advocates the problem-oriented approach in both practice and theory (Jiemian 2018). His approach is aligned with the Marxist approach. Marxists have always attached importance to asking questions and solving problems because the problem is the slogan of the times and represents the most practical voice of an era to express its own state of mind (Marx and Engels 2006, 289).

Xi (2021) Jinping elevated development to the pinnacle of the agenda, recognizing it as a cornerstone of human well-being and an enduring aspiration of society (MFA PRC 2023). Development in China's practice is based on a people-centered approach. Unsurprisingly, this paradigm influenced the nature of China's diplomacy. Hence, the concepts of "people first" and "diplomatic work for the people" are important features of today's diplomacy in China. "People first" diplomacy is a manifestation of changes within the governance model and

creed in China and reflects the strategic shift of China's diplomatic philosophy from state-centrism to concern for the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens. But under the auspices of the state apparatus. "People first" diplomacy has been proposed in the context of the changes occurring within China's state and civil society relationship, the restructuring of national interests, and global trends. Its basic principles are recognizing the value of the people, safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the people, and relying on the power of the people. Under the guidance of "people first" diplomacy, China's government has stipulated a great number of policies, which not only safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese legal entities and citizens abroad but greatly promote the modernization of China's foreign policy making (Jin and Liu 2013, 73; Brødsgaard 2017).

Global development must be more holistic, greener, and more balanced (Xi 2021). For China, this kind of development can be achieved only by employing new quality productive forces (新质生产力). As the new added value in the Chinese characteristics, Xi Jinping presented them during his visit to Heilongjiang in 2023. New quality productive forces refer to advanced productivity freed from the traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths. It features high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and comes in line with the new development philosophy (SC PRC 2024a). For this purpose, Chinese institutions led by Ministry of Industry and Information Technology issued a list of "future industries" (未来产业) which are implied to be the major sectoral targets of the "new quality productive forces" (Kroeber 2024).

Global Development Initiative

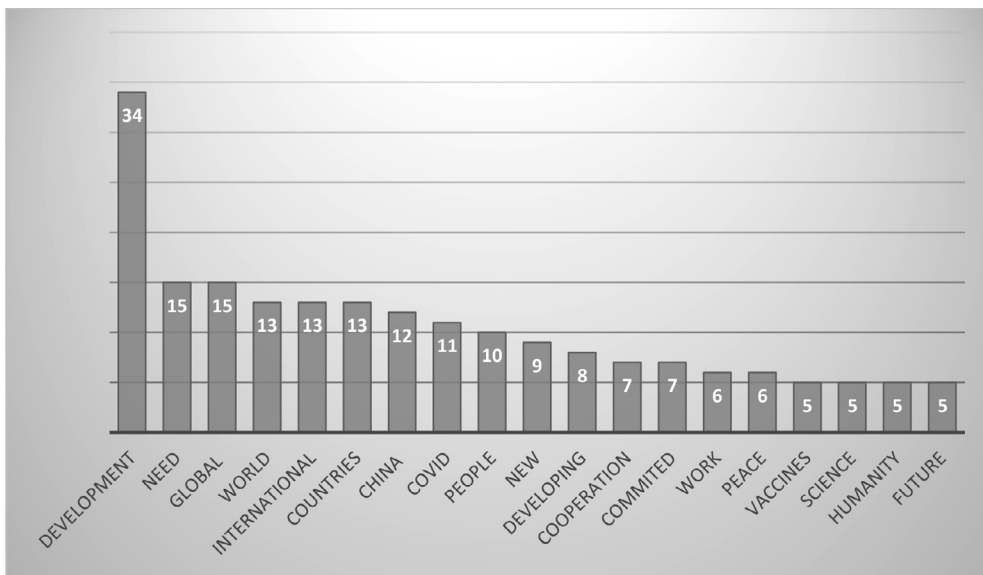
During the General Debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly held on September 21, 2021, Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled *Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties to Build a Better World*. This speech was introduction of the Global Development Initiative. The GDI, was also in service of improving global governance and practicing true multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core. This is particularly important when it comes to achieving Sustainable Development Goals and further Pact for the Future.

In China's understanding, UN must hold high the banner of true multilateralism and serve as the central platform for countries to jointly safeguard universal security, share development achievements and chart the course for the future of the world. In the world, there is only one international

system. There is only one international order underpinned by one system of the international law. And there is only one set of rules, i.e. the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter (Xi 2021). For China, the United Nations serves as the most effective platform for facilitating global dialogue, consultations, and the exchange of ideas.

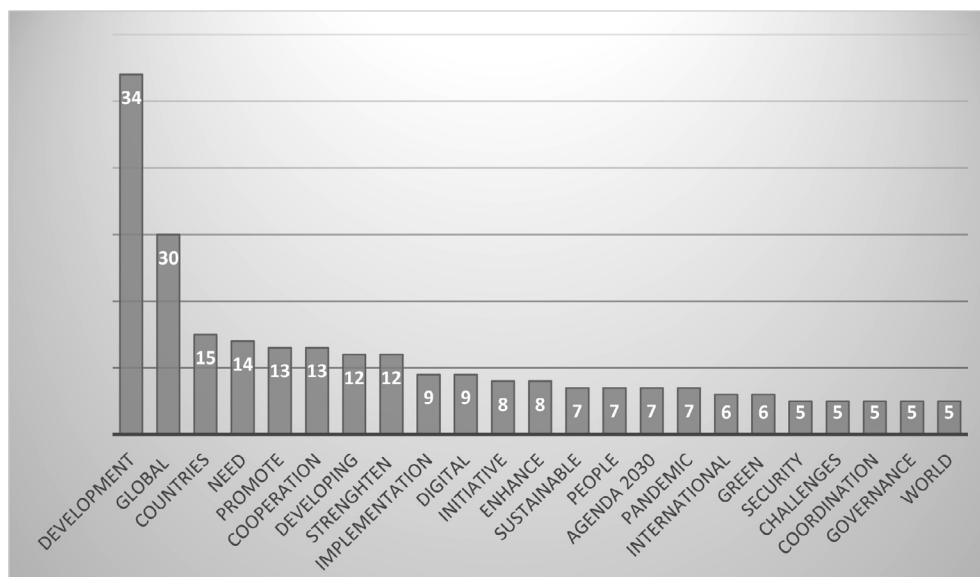
We used the same software, *Voyant*, on doing the content analysis on China's GDI.

Figure 2. Content analysis of Global Development Initiative (self-made)



Similar results were obtained when doing content analysis of the concept paper titled *Global Development Initiative — Building on 2030 SDGs for Stronger, Greener and Healthier Global Development*.

Figure 3. Development Initiative — Building on 2030 SDGs for Stronger, Greener and Healthier Global Development Concept Paper (self-made)



Chinese perspective holds that global development should be both inclusive and balanced, ensuring that all countries can benefit. By launching the GDI, China's leadership exemplifies its commitment to leaving no country or individual behind that is a core element of China's diplomatic approach that emphasizes inclusion, mutual development, genuine multilateralism, and shared security (MFA PRC 2023).

Only when international community jointly creates balanced and inclusive development, the focus can be put on addressing the uneven and inadequate development on national level. In this process, the particular attention will be given to developing countries, the least developed countries, small island developing states, and landlocked developing countries. This is the prerequisite to make that development benefits are shared fairly by all countries and all peoples (MFA PRC 2023). Once when development is shared by all, harmony between human and nature will be inextricably established. Human and nature will together create the community of life (MFA PRC 2023).

Global Civilization Initiative

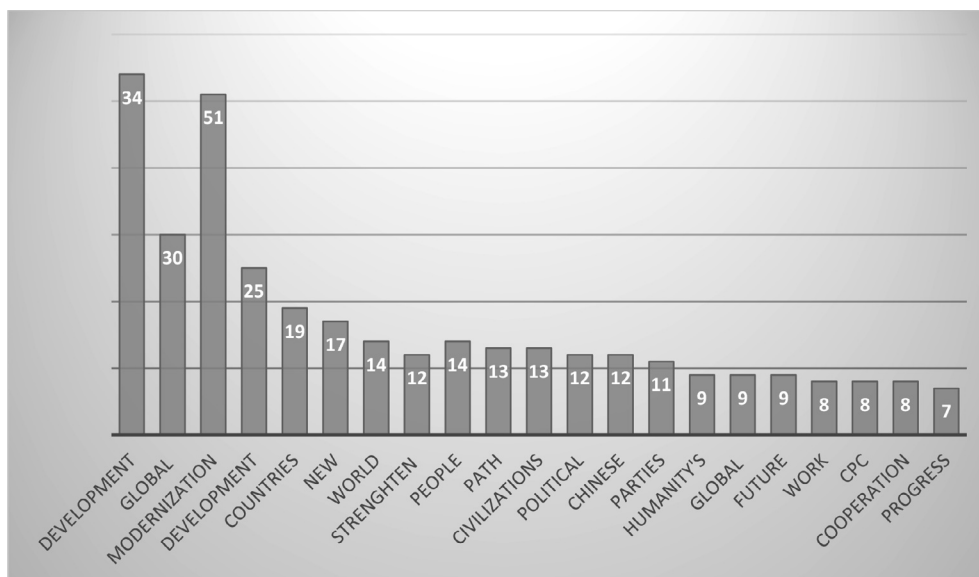
The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) represents the third pillar of the Chinese relational approach to constructing a global network, which is referred to as a global community with a shared future for humanity. Xi Jinping introduced GCI on 15th of March 2023 when he delivered a keynote speech, *Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization*, for the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting. In this speech, he declared that modernization is and always must be people-centered. The people are the creators of history and are the strongest bedrock and force in advancing modernization. The goal of modernization is people's free and well-rounded development (Xi 2023b). The strategic importance of the people-centered approach lays in the fact that humanity lives in a community with a shared future where we rise and fall together (Xi 2023b). Moreover, 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 (Xi 2023b). From this, we can understand that a global community of a shared future is a people centered. In the center of such kind of community is a human being made of relations.

By announcing this initiative, Xi Jinping, once again, underlined that the practice of stoking division and confrontation in the name of democracy is a violation of the spirit of democracy. It will not receive any support. What it brings is only endless harm. A modernized China will employ its capacities for advancing the global governance and making the world a space of peace, common development, and international justice. No matter what level of development China achieves, it will never seek hegemony or expansion (Xi 2023b). He also pointed that "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" (Xi 2023b).

Thus, the diversity, equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations must be upheld, because cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority (Xi 2023b). People around the globe are invited to thread global dialogue as a platform for preventing clash of civilization or any kind of the end of history.

For doing the content analysis of the speech of announcing this initiative, the same software (*Voyant*) was used.

Figure 4. Content analysis of Global Civilization Initiative (self-made)



However, advocating civilization diversity and the richness it brings to the global progress, development, stability, and modernization is not a novice in China's diplomatic theory and practice and manner in threading its global relations. For example, former Chinese President, Jiang (2012) Zemin, declared that: "The affairs of each country must be managed by its people, while international affairs should be decided through discussion".

Chinese Mutuality in Humanity – A Global Community of a Shared Future

The concept of Chinese "mutuality in humanity" reflects a philosophical perspective that integrates human relationships into a harmonious whole. A holistic, people-centered approach forms its foundation. Scholars employ various analytical approaches to this global community, resulting in diverse interpretations and understandings.

Fu (2017) Ying states that a global community of a shared future for a mankind is China's new vision for the world. Accordingly, it is founded on the

principles of cooperative security, shared development, and political inclusivity. For Zhao Xiaochun (2018) this global community is demonstration of Chinese global activism in a new era. Wang (2016) Fan holds the view that a global community of a shared future embraces both: theory and a practice. According to him, GCSF reflects China's worldview and its desire to be involved when the crucial issues of globalization and international security are addressed. The same author advocates that strengthening respect, equality, communication, and cooperation is an essential prerequisite for establishing such a community.

Some scholars analyze the global community of a shared future for a mankind from the global governance perspective. Wu (2018) states that a global community of a shared future for a mankind embodies a civilization world order, which transcends the logic of modernity and is a new model for global governance. This model of global governance upholds wide consultation, daily communication, joint contribution, and shared benefits. In terms of economy, diplomacy, military and normative power, China is transforming itself from a participant to a leader and architect of global governance. China actively participates in the reform and construction of the global governance system. Simultaneously, China believes that it continuously contributes to advancing global governance by investing its wisdom, resources, and strength. China's in-depth interaction with the world and active participation and leadership in global governance are also effective ways to safeguard and expand its own interests in the new era (Zongze 2018, 13).

Wang and Zhang (2021) note that a global community of a shared future for a mankind has emerged from the wish for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Furthermore, it represents the China's answer to the questions of our times while promoting human progress echoing the current developments. This new world view has significant implications for the international community. Likewise, some academics find that global community of a shared future for a mankind depicts a bright future for progress of international relations and represents a major innovation in the theory of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics (Wang 2016).

China is moving to the center of the world stage. In doing so, it changes not only the form of the Global South and political and economic North-South relations, but the context in which the "Chinese Dream" will be pursued and achieved. According to Xi (2017), the dream of the Chinese people is closely connected with the dreams of the peoples of other countries. This is due to the fact that China believes that a global community of a shared future for a mankind

demonstrates an old Chinese saying: *Great truth meets the aspiration of all* (Wang 2016a). According to Chinese scholar Zongze (2018, 10) Ruan, China's increasingly close ties with the international community reflect a dynamic in which all nations are interconnected. Zongze Ruan asserts that constructing a global community with a shared future for humanity essentially represents the Chinese Dream within an international framework, underpinned by principles of Chinese cosmology. Thus, leaders of the CPC are insisting on thorough implementation of a global community with a shared future for mankind through continuous creation of new horizons for China's diplomacy and togetherness in building a better world and a shared future (Yang 2017).

Based on the explanation above, it is evident that the concept of a global community with a shared future for humanity is inherently future-looking. This proposal emphasizes our collective responsibility toward the one planet we all inhabit. It is China's proposal for building a green and sustainable world, seeking global dynamic consensus in the coming technological changes, and global balanced development (Wang and Zhang 2021). The proposed shared future is an advance of independent future, connected future, and finally the integrated and shared future. In this course, common targets, common responsibilities, and a common identity should be framed (Wang and Zhang 2021). Connected future means shared security and inter-civilization exchange grounded on dialogue, consultation, and mutual learning. In this context there is a great strategic importance of mutual learning in Chinese diplomatic practice.

Nonetheless, some scholars express more cautious expectations and sceptical perspectives regarding Chinese diplomatic theory and the practice a global community of a shared future for a mankind. Mardell (2017) asserts that this concept and its implementation primarily serve China's interests by promoting its autocratic values and expanding its normative influence, particularly within non-democratic nations and the Global South. Other researchers highlight that a significant challenge lies in the lack of a clear definition for this idiom, resulting in ongoing ambiguity regarding its structure, scope, and content (Zhang 2018).

However, a global community of a shared future for a mankind did not come out of blue. It was gradually introduced and announced through discourse and activities of Chinese officials. It was publically revealed on October 15th 2007 in Report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Namely, in this Report it was written that historic changes have occurred in the relations between contemporary China and the rest of the world, resulting in

ever closer interconnection between China's future and destiny and those of the world (Hu 2007). After that, it appeared in 2011 in White Paper on Peaceful Development. In this document, it was translated as a "Community of common destiny". The world became a community of common destiny because, countries of different systems and different types and at various development stages are in a state of mutual dependence, with their interests intertwined (SC PRC 2011). In such a world where we are making a community of common destiny harmony between man and nature must be secured. In that kind of context, another world war would be disastrous for the whole of mankind, and no one would emerge victorious in an all-out conflict between big powers (SC PRC 2011).

The relationalism of a community was emphasized once again in another Xi Jinping's speech delivered in 2013. Xi (2013) emphasized the following: "In this world, the level interconnectedness and interdependence among countries has risen to an unprecedented level. Human beings are living in common global village, in one time and space in which history and present are meeting. Thus, it is more and more becoming the community of common destiny..."

The first replacement of "common destiny" with "shared future for mankind" (available in English language) occurred in 2015. This occurred when Xi Jinping delivered the speech *Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind* at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. His speech was relied on ancient Chinese adage: *The greatest ideal is to create a world truly shared by all* (Xi 2015). In the speech he defined peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom as common values of all mankind and the lofty goals of the United Nations (Xi 2015). As the biggest commitment he underlined building a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation and creating a community of shared future for mankind (Xi 2015). All these values are rooted in the time-honored Chinese civilization and the great conduct of China's diplomacy (Wang 2016a). China is making great strides in its diplomacy to uphold world peace and promote common development (Wang 2016a). China has invested tremendous efforts toward this goal through these three global initiatives.

For Wang (2016) Yi, a starting point and a major pathway for achieving the goals of a global community of a shared future for a mankind is threading new and widening the existing partnerships. Only the network of global and regional partnerships can bring humanity and state-to-state interactions into dialogue and consultations. Otherwise, world is entering deeper in confrontation, which is reinforcing the alliance system and deficiencies of the Post-Cold War

international order (Wang 2016). In the same context, Qin (2020a, 37), advocates that the common interests serve as the foundation, and cooperation as the iron law for a community with a shared future. Only through cooperation, dialogues, and consultations win-win outcomes can be achieved.

The history of human evolution is a history of cooperation. This was recognized in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.³

For Wang (2016b), a global community embraces the following features since it goes beyond traditional theories of international relations and boasts new profound theoretical and realistic significance. It is a vision of justice, peace and inclusivity; it is an integrated vision, developed through three stages: a community of shared interests, a community of shared responsibilities and a community of shared future; and a scientific vision, reflecting the approaches of dialectical materialism and historical materialism (Wang 2016b).

China considers that is obliged to share and offer its wisdom to the international community as it is crucial missing factor in resolving major issues and formulating important rules (Mission PRC EU 2019). But, on the other hand, China requires reciprocity from the international community when making fair, democratic, and just international order. Reciprocity is one of the strategic aspects of mutual learning. For example, in Xiamen BRICS (2017) declaration released in 2017, leaders of the BRICS states agreed that we all together must build a brighter shared future for the global community (BRICS 2017).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the evidence presented supports the confirmation of our hypothesis. The concept of a global community of a shared future for a mankind represents a significant shift in Chinese diplomatic theory and practice. The three global initiatives (Security, Development, and Civilization) proposed by China to its international partners serve as foundational pillars for this relational approach and reflect the evolution of China's diplomatic influence.

Likewise, China demonstrated to the global audience that it possesses the "wisdom" (expertise), capability, and experience to address the global

³ The Preamble of the Chinese Constitution states, among other things, that the future of the country is closely bound up with the future of the world. See: Constitution PRC 2019.

development deficit and make greater contribution to solving the development challenges facing the international community. When making global development balanced, China believes that it is pioneering the global context in which security will be common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable. When inclusion is made, development of true multilateralism is secured. Offering true instead of contested multilateralism is necessary step in creating the atmosphere of inter-civilizational dialogue which will be grounded on dialogue and consultations.

Strategically, China is threading new relations. From newly threaded relations new type of relational power emerges. China as an architect and practitioner of this new network of relations can manage the dynamic, structure, and content of the relational power emerged from them. Hence, China is demonstrating that its diplomatic power, theories and practice will be focused on bringing new future which China believes to be upgraded global governance and fair, just, and inclusive international order. For China, this new future should be shared by all, because the humanity only has one planet. China supports and spreads its beliefs by its financial capital.

The shift from post-cold war unilateralism towards Chinese global relational may already be underway, but it remains to be seen whether it will be widely accepted-and, if so, by which international actors.

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Slobodan POPOVIĆ

**RELACIONI ZAOKRET U KINESKOJ DIPLOMATSKOJ TEORIJI I PRAKSI:
U SUSRET ZAJEDNICI ZAJEDNIČKE BUDUĆNOSTI ZA ČOVEČANSTVO?**

Apstrakt: Ovaj rad polazi od hipoteze da *Zajednica zajedničke budućnosti za čovečanstvo* predstavlja relacioni zaokret u kineskoj diplomatskoj teoriji i praksi. Autor analizira tri globalne inicijative – Globalnu razvojnu, Globalnu bezbednosnu i Globalnu civilizacijsku inicijativu. U istraživanju se autor oslanja na relacione teorije iz oblasti međunarodnih odnosa, kao i na pristupe i saznanja razvijena u okviru nauke o diplomatiji. Od metoda je korišćena kvalitativna analiza sadržaja izjava kineskih zvaničnika i ključnih strateških dokumenata, pri čemu je za obradu podataka korišćen softver *Voyant*. Zaključak ovog rada jeste da objavljivanje i sprovođenje ove tri inicijative – kroz transformativne i međusobno povezane projekte sa globalnim partnerima – odražava kineske strateške ciljeve, nastojanje ka institucionalizaciji sopstvene moći, kao i rastući diplomatski uticaj Kine u oblikovanju globalnog upravljanja. Kina ove inicijative predstavlja kao upotrebu sopstvene mudrosti radi unapređenja globalnog upravljanja i podsticanja održivog globalnog suživota. Realizacijom ovih inicijativa kroz saradnju sa partnerima širom sveta, Kina nastoji da izgradi nove strukture odnosa, vrednosne sisteme, norme ponašanja i obrasce međuzavisnosti, čime promovira globalnu zajednicu budućnosti za čovečanstvo.

Ključne reči: Kina, relacioni zaokret, odnosna moć, diplomatska moć, (de)futurizacija, istinski multilateralizam.