

Global Governance and the Importance of Strategic Translators

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GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR TRANSFORMING CHAOS INTO ORDERLY MULTIPOLARITY

The current global geopolitical situation, marked by instability, the erosion of the post-WWII international order and the weakening of US unipolar dominance, requires joint efforts by major international actors and the wider international community to establish a functional international order for the twenty-first century.

The world has irreversibly entered a multipolar phase. There is little serious dispute today that the international system is multipolar rather than unipolar and even Marco Rubio, at the beginning of his term as the US secretary of state, emphasized that multipolarity is an objective condition, noting that the United States should not aspire to rule the world alone, since “it is not normal for the world to simply have a unipolar power.” He further stressed that every nation has a legitimate right to pursue its national interests and that “the job of diplomacy is to prevent conflict.”

However, the present form of multipolarity remains fundamentally chaotic, characterized by uncoordinated national interests among global and regional powers. The central

question of our century is therefore how to transform this chaotic multipolarity into an orderly one, and how to prevent direct confrontations among the dominant poles.

It is evident that such a transformation requires a model of global governance. While there is broad agreement on this need within the international community, the major powers, as key architects of the global order, advance differing visions of how global governance should be structured. The following sections will examine the most relevant global governance proposals put forward by major powers and international organizations and offer a concise comparative analysis.

CHINA'S VISION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: MULTILATERALISM AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

China articulated its vision of global governance through the Global Governance Initiative (GGI), proposed by President Xi Jinping on September 1, 2025 at the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus” meeting in Tianjin. In his address, President Xi Jinping outlined the key principles of the GGI:

First, sovereign equality. According to President Xi, it means to “maintain that all countries, regardless of

size, strength and wealth, are equal participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in global governance,” with an emphasis on promoting greater democracy in international relations and increasing the representation and voice of developing countries.

Second, international rule of law. It highlights that “the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and other universally recognized basic norms of international relations must be observed comprehensively, fully and in their entirety,” and applied “equally and uniformly” with “no double standards.”

Third, multilateralism. As an opposition to unilateralism, it implies that “we should firmly safeguard the status and authority of the UN, and ensure its irreplaceable and key role in global governance.”

Fourth, a people-centered approach. It primarily means that “we should reform and improve the global governance system to ensure that the people of every nation are the actors in and beneficiaries of global governance.”

Fifth, taking real actions. It indicates that “we should adopt a systematic and holistic approach, coordinate global actions, fully mobilize various resources, and strive for more visible outcomes.”

This speech was subsequently

formalized in the Concept Paper on the Global Governance Initiative, while the concept of GGI was further clarified by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in his responses to journalists. The GGI represents a conceptual and narrative synthesis of earlier global initiatives promoted by China—the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) — initiatives that constitute thematic pillars placed by the GGI within a broader systemic framework for operationalization.

However, China has not designated GGI as a formal “umbrella document,” deliberately preserving conceptual flexibility so that different initiatives may be acceptable to different states, selectively adopted where appropriate, and so as to avoid the appearance of a rigid ideology. This approach also seeks to prevent the impression of forming a “Chinese bloc,” instead projecting an image of universalism. Such a method reflects a Confucian, network-based strategic logic

compatible with a multipolar world, aiming to reform the international order from within, respecting existing institutions, especially the UN.

THE AMERICAN VISION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: DIVISION OF SPHERES OF INTEREST AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

In contrast to China’s patient and cautious strategic Confucianism, the United States approaches the problem of global governance in line with its own strategic culture in a more direct and assertive manner, particularly during the administration of Donald Trump. While the Biden administration promoted global concepts such as the “Summit for Democracy,” which were overly abstract, or initiatives such as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), intended to compete with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a strategic developmental alternative, the Trump administration turns toward the concept of coherent hard power.

It is therefore not surprising that the American vision of the future world and global governance is articulated in the new National Security Strategy (NSS) of the Trump administration. Recognizing the reality of a multipolar world and abandoning the liberal universalist internationalism of previous administrations, the NSS promotes the idea of so-called competitive multipolarity, in which the legitimate national interests of different actors (primarily those of the strongest actors, as legitimacy in this vision derives from real power) serve as the driving force of future global governance. Such global governance is envisioned as a kind of global governing board with shareholders whose influence is proportional to their actual power.

In an effort to restore priorities in US foreign policy, clearly visible in the order in which attention is devoted to specific geographic regions in both the table of contents and the substance of the new NSS, the Trump administration moves away from the concept of



On January 24, 2026, the Global Governance Forum (2026) was held at Renmin University of China.

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global dominance of the United States and returns to the classical diplomatic concept of the division of spheres of interest and the balance of power among great powers. The NSS explicitly refers to the concept of the Balance of Power, indicating that, in the context of global relations and governance, the optimal outcome for the United States would be the establishment of a global balance of power without the dominance of any single force, calling for corporate global governance through a kind of consortium of different global and regional powers.

This demonstrates America's openness to a form of geopolitical bargaining with other powers, primarily China and Russia, in order to achieve a global balance of power. However, Trump is a realist and does not intend to give more than necessary in any future geopolitical bargaining over spheres of interest. He therefore seeks to enter such a "trade" from a position of strength, which explains the concept of Peace Through Strength, also explicitly advocated in the NSS.

The NSS represents the American version of "how to govern the world," but unlike the GGI, it rejects the universality of international law and traditional multilateralism, seeking global stability through a global balance of power. What the GGI and the NSS

share is the recognition of multipolarity as the real structure of today's world, which constitute solid foundations for effective communication between these strategies and states.

THE EUROPEAN VISION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: GEOECONOMICS AND SOFT POWER

The European Union (EU), through whose prism Europe will primarily be observed here, unlike China or the United States, is not a sovereign state but a union of states that has succeeded in establishing itself as a global economic power lacking a truly unified dimension in security, diplomacy and military action. It is therefore entirely natural that Europe or the EU articulates its vision of global governance through initiatives that are essentially geoeconomic investment initiatives, of which the most important is the Global Gateway initiative.

Unlike the GGI and the NSS, which address the problem of the global order and global governance directly, the EU's Global Gateway is a more practical and limited strategy for mobilizing more than €400 billion in investments (roughly US\$471.60 billion) worldwide with the aim of connecting states and partners

through smart, clean, and secure infrastructure in the digital sector, energy, and transportation, as well as through stimulating the strengthening of health, education and research systems globally. Through this initiative, the EU presents the key principles of democratic values and high standards, good governance and transparency, equal partnerships, green and clean, security focused, and catalysing private sector investment. Also, the key areas in which this strategy and its principles will be applied are likewise areas of so-called soft power: the digital sector, climate and energy, transportation, health, education and research.

Through Global Gateway, the EU offers a practical, unpretentious, and limited, primarily geoeconomic, vision of global governance through infrastructure, digital transformation, energy transition, and insistence on environmental standards, rules, and sustainability. In fact, through this initiative, the EU offers a technical-regulatory model of global governance that is less geopolitical and more geoeconomic and normative, with the central idea of sustainable "green" development.

Like the GGI, Global Gateway relies on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But unlike the GGI, it remains within the discourse of liberal universalism, further reinforcing it through the discourse of "green" sustainable policies, which results in this initiative having a stronger normative emphasis in comparison with the GGI and the NSS. Global Gateway, although in terms of instruments a practical geoeconomic initiative, is in its entirety a rather ambitious normative initiative from which it derives its legitimacy.

Global Gateway is thus an operational geoeconomic strategy that culminates in highly articulated normative goals and seeks to impose



On September 5, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order restoring the historical designation of the U.S. Department of Defence by renaming it the Department of War.

technical, environmental, fiscal, and legal standards, creating long-term dependency through regulations, interoperability, and public procurement rules. This is the concept of soft power, the only form of power effectively available to the European Union.

INTERNATIONAL VISIONS AND INSTRUMENTS OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: THE UN AND THE G20

The UN, by its very definition, is expected to offer a coherent vision of global governance. Its vision of global governance is presented in the strategic report of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, published in September 2021 under the title *Our Common Agenda*, which addresses the crises of multilateralism, geopolitical fragmentation, as well as climate, pandemic, technological and social shocks as key challenges facing humanity. In order to confront these challenges, *Our Common Agenda* proposes reform of the UN systems, such as strengthening the role of the General Assembly and reforming the Security Council. It also calls for reforming the global financial architecture with greater inclusion of the Global South and the reduction of global inequalities. This document also proposes normative frameworks for improving global functioning, such as global rules for digital technologies, AI governance, and the concept of data as a global public good, but it is not legally binding and, like *Global Gateway*, derives its legitimacy from highly articulated normative principles.

Unlike the previous normative UN vision, there are also global formats that are more practical and represent the most realistic existing framework of global governance. Here we primarily refer to the G20 platform, which is closest to what

today functions as “global governance in practice.” The G20 is a kind of global crisis-management platform that brings together the most influential countries and organizations in the world, evenly distributed across continents and regions, since it includes China, the United States, Russia, the EU, India, and the Global South, and is not an ideological platform but rather a form of global crisis management that reacts in times of crisis more than in ideal circumstances.

Thus, the G20 played an important role in harmonizing the world during the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, the COVID-19 pandemic, debt issues of the Global South and general questions of global economic stability. While the GGI, the NSS, *Global Gateway* and *Our Common Agenda* are more or less realistic visions, the G20 represents ad hoc management of the world as it is. Therefore, it can be stated that in practice global governance today exists more as crisis management than as a coherent order.

THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC TRANSLATORS AMONG DIFFERENT VISIONS OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

If we are to attempt, in the future, to achieve a coherent international order rather than remaining at the level of mere global crisis management, it will sooner or later be necessary to move toward a practical synthesis of the previously mentioned visions of global governance, since it is difficult to assume that any one of them could fully absorb the others. However, such a synthesis will be difficult to design if the narratives of these visions are not first brought closer together, and this rapprochement of narratives will require so-called strategic translators, namely those capable of identifying and synthesizing the points of contact among these strategies in a coherent manner, which can be more or less

operationalized through concrete global bodies and instruments.

These strategic translators may take various forms—from influential public intellectuals, influential think tanks and institutes, to specific states and international organizations that have access to the relevant centers which formulated the aforementioned strategies. These centers of power should be assisted in their mutual communication whenever “noise in the channels” or limited communication blockages arise as a result of specific strategic and diplomatic disagreements. Strategic translators are not present in such situations to deliver moralistic lectures to anyone. Rather, their function is to act as “messengers” and envoys who, in a pragmatic manner, remind dominant centers of power that all actors lose if the trenches among global powers and players become insurmountable, and that all actors gain if visions are brought closer together and synthesized, accompanied by their realistic joint operationalization. The role of strategic translators is simply to facilitate dialogue, reduce misunderstandings, and increase predictability, with the responsible capacity to mitigate the risk of misinterpretation between competing paradigms. In a world without a unified vision of global governance, stability does not depend on the victory of one paradigm, but on their mutual intelligibility. It is where the role of so-called strategic translators becomes important. For this role, middle powers such as the EU, or states located at geopolitical crossroads such as South Korea or Serbia, are particularly well suited. ■

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