

CIIS Report



True Multilateralism

Conceptual Development, Core Essence and China's Practice

China Institute of International Studies

November 2024

A decorative graphic of a globe with a network of lines and dots, symbolizing global connectivity, is positioned in the bottom right corner of the cover.

In April 2021, President Xi Jinping put forward the concept of “true multilateralism” at the opening ceremony of the annual meeting of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference for the first time. Currently, due to the outstanding features of disordered security, imbalanced development, and ineffective governance across the globe, along with increasing hotspot conflicts, major power confrontations, and geopolitical contradictions one after another, people are more concerned about the future of our planet. Against the turbulent and intertwined international situation, true multilateralism is an inevitable choice for all humankind to address global challenges and promote global governance. It has solidified a global consensus on the pursuit of peace and development, aligns with the trends of historical progress, and carries profound significance for the world. It also presents multilateralism in its rightful context, sharply distinguishing it from unilateralism and all varieties of pseudo-multilateralism. Whether to address current global challenges or create a better future for humankind, the international community needs to further join hands in practicing true multilateralism.

CIIS has organized specialized research forces to conduct systematic research on the development, core essences, and China’s practices of true multilateralism to fulfill this report.

We would like to express sincere appreciation to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its strong support in the process of writing and improving this report.



CIIS Report



True Multilateralism

Conceptual Development, Core Essence and China's Practice

China Institute of International Studies

November 2024

Contents |

01	Preface	2
02	The Current Era Demands a Commitment to True Multilateralism	6
	1. Addressing global challenges has become a practical imperative	6
	2. The significant shift in the international balance of power is a deeply entrenched motivator	7
	3. The contest between true and pseudo-multilateralism as a motivating force	9
03	Nature, Characteristics and Dangers of Pseudo-Multilateralism	14
	1. The nature of pseudo-multilateralism	14
	2. Characteristics of pseudo-multilateralism	14
	3. The dangers of pseudo-multilateralism	17
04	Proposal and Development of True Multilateralism	24
	1. In-depth reflection and elaboration of multilateralism	24
	2. Formal proposal and intensive discussion of true multilateralism	27

05	Core Essence of True Multilateralism	38
1.	Upholding fairness and justice is a primary criterion	38
2.	Openness and inclusiveness are essentials	40
3.	Adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN is a fundamental guideline	41
4.	Upholding the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits is the necessary path	44
5.	Keeping pace with the times is an inevitable choice	45
06	China's Practice of True Multilateralism	50
1.	Development of true multilateralism based on the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind	50
2.	Safeguarding the United Nations system and improving multilateral mechanisms	53
3.	Provision of quality international public goods	55
4.	Global governance should be promoted in accordance with the law	61
07	Conclusion	66

**True Multilateralism:
Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China’s Practice**

01

Preface

01 Preface

Multilateralism boasts profound ideological roots and an extensive history of implementation.^① The term multilateralism is defined in numerous ways in the academic community of international relations.. Multilateralism typically refers to the practice of managing relationships among three or more nations through institutions built on widely agreed-upon principles of conduct.^② It has become an essential outcome of the evolving international system, emerging as a method for countries to seek the broadest possible consensus through dialogue, grounded in the core tenets of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs. Multilateral institutions are platforms for practicing multilateralism and the basic framework for its preservation. Since the end of the Cold War, the ongoing globalization and the shift towards multipolarity have established multilateralism as a widely accepted principle within the international community for advancing global governance. At its core, multilateralism involves the coordination and cooperation of various stakeholders working together in the

^① Ma Xinmin, China's Perspective on the International Order in the New Era, *International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2024, pp. 13-14; Wu Zhicheng and Liu Peidong, Promoting Multilateralism and Global Governance from China's Perspective, *World Economy and Politics*, No. 9, 2020, p. 23; Liao Fan, Multilateralism and the International Rule of Law, *Social Sciences in China*, Vol. 8, 2023, pp. 61-62.

^② John Ruggie, *Multilateralism*, translated by Su Changhe et al., Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2003 edition, p. 12.

global governance systems.^① Recently, several nations have crafted various forms of pseudo-multilateralism to protect their self-serving agendas, significantly diminishing the effectiveness of international multilateral institutions' governance. This trend has jeopardized the stability of international relations and presents a significant and tangible threat to world peace and development. As the world confronts a multitude of complex global challenges and grapples with various pseudo-multilateralism, it is more imperative than ever to champion and practise true multilateralism. This commitment will guide us from a state of upheaval and flux toward a path of stable development.

^① Publicity Department of CPC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *Studying Outline of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy*, Beijing: People's Publishing House, Xue Xi Press, 2021 edition, p. 161; Wu Zhicheng and Liu Peidong, *Promoting Multilateralism and Global Governance from China's Perspective*, p. 23; Dong Xiangrong, *Differences in Chinese and American Perceptions of Multilateralism*, China Social Science Net, March 6, 2023, at https://www.cssn.cn/gjgc/gjgc_gld/202303/t20230306_5601535.shtml; Publicity Department of the CPC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *Questions and Answers on the Study of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy*, Beijing: Xue Xi Press, People's Publishing House, 2023 edition, p. 199.

**True Multilateralism:
Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice**

02

The Current Era Demands a Commitment to True Multilateralism

- Addressing global challenges has become a practical imperative
- The significant shift in the international balance of power is a deeply entrenched motivator
- The contest between true and pseudo-multilateralism as a motivating force

02 The Current Era Demands a Commitment to True Multilateralism

1. Addressing global challenges has become a practical imperative

Currently, global governance is confronting escalating challenges that require a sincere commitment to true multilateralism. In recent years, profound changes unseen in a century, the COVID-19 pandemic and growing geopolitical hotspots have become increasingly interwoven. The world is now navigating a new period of volatility and transformation, where emerging challenges and longstanding issues collide and intersect. This complex dynamic has deeply shaken the international system and order, casting a shadow of instability across the globe. The global economy is at risk of recession, with emerging international and regional hotspot issues. The proliferation of extremism and terrorism, coupled with pressing global issues such as significant infectious diseases, cybersecurity threats, climate change, food and energy security, are increasingly pronounced. Simultaneously, global governance lags in its mechanisms, rules, and concepts, increasingly showing its incompatibility with the realities of global challenges. The world's uncertainty and instability are more acute, exacerbating the deficits in peace, development, security, and governance. This situation highlights the insufficient effectiveness in governance of current multilateral cooperation mechanisms.



The village of Bangowa in the Hambou region of Comoros was severely affected by catastrophic rainfall in April 2024.
(Source: Website of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Union of Comoros)

“Global threats and challenges require strong global response.”^① As global challenges grow more pressing, no single nation, regardless of its comprehensive strength, can tackle them alone. The international community must work together in solidarity and cooperation. A divided world cannot meet common challenges, and “Confrontation will lead us to a dead end. Humanity has learned lessons the hard way, and that history is not long gone. We must not return to the path of the past”^②. In service of this, we must promote global governance through true multilateralism.

2. The significant shift in the international balance of power is a deeply entrenched motivator

The gradual equalization in the global balance of power has enabled the furtherance of true multilateralism and transformations in the system of global governance. As the world embarks on a phase of significant development, profound change, and substantial restructuring, the global governance system, along with the evolution

^① Xi Jinping's Speech at the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Summit of the United Nations (full text), qstheory.cn, September 22, 2020, http://www.qstheory.cn/yaowen/2020-09/22/c_1126523612.htm.

^② Xi Jinping, Let the Torch of Multilateralism Shine on the Way Forward for Humanity - Special Message at the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda Dialogue, People's Daily Online, January 26, 2021, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0126/c1024-32011618.html>.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

of multilateralism in both theory and application, is reaching a pivotal moment in history. The unstoppable rise of emerging market countries and developing countries as a group, and the unprecedented increase in their influence and contribution to the world, have led to significant changes in the basis of the international landscape for the practice of multilateralism, and have injected strong momentum and new vitality into the promotion of true multilateralism.

In July 2018, at the BRICS Business Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa, President Xi Jinping highlighted that emerging markets and developing countries have already contributed 80 percent of global economic growth. Based on exchange rate calculation, these countries account for nearly 40 percent of the global economic output. Growing at their current rates, these countries will see their economic output approach half of the global total in a decade.^① Considering purchasing power parity (PPP), by the time of the international financial crisis in 2008, the combined economic output of emerging market and developing countries was approximately equal to that of developed nations. By 2020, the total economic weight of these countries has increased to nearly 60% of the world. In that year, developing economies accounted for two thirds of global FDI, surpassing developed economies for the first time.^② In recent years, while emerging markets and developing countries have faced increased challenges, the overall trajectory of their ascent remains unchanged. The BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and various other cooperative frameworks are moving to broaden their memberships, while the African Union has become a member of the Group of Twenty (G20). Solidarity and cooperation are on the rise among the countries of the Global South.^③

Since the international financial crisis of 2008, the governance inadequacies and ineffectiveness of the West have grown increasingly apparent. The perception of

^① Xi Jinping: Conforming to the Trend of the Times and Achieving Common Development - Speech at the BRICS Business Forum, People's Daily Online, July 26, 2018, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0726/c64094-30170246.html>.

^② China International Development Knowledge Center (CIDK), Global Development Report, pp. 17-18, CIDK website, June 20, 2022, <http://www.cidk.org/detail?docId=1538692405216194562>.

^③ Research Center on Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, Accurately Understanding the World's Development Trend, in People's Daily, Nov. 28, 2023, p.9



Western omnipotence has been steadily eroding, and its capacity to contribute global governance has been on the decline. Consequently, the concepts of “Western-centrism” and a “Western-centric” perspective are becoming unsustainable. The international community must urgently revise and adapt the global system and order to reflect the evolving international landscape. It is essential to significantly increase the representation and influence of emerging markets and developing countries, foster the democratization of international relations, and advocate for the reform and enhancement of the worldwide governance system.

3. The contest between true and pseudo-multilateralism as a motivating force

In today's global landscape, the competition between multilateralism, unilateralism, and various forms of pseudo-multilateralism is increasingly pronounced. On one hand, given the gradual waning of individual nations' sway, coupled with the surge of radical populism and insular nationalism within their borders and a deepening of political divides, the domestic underpinnings that support the practice of multilateralism have been weakened. This erosion has led to a diminished desire and capacity to engage in and advance global governance. On the other hand, individual countries believe in pragmatism and power politics, and for the sake of maintaining their hegemony and suppressing other countries, they have been giving priority to their own countries and pursuing unilateralism and protectionism. Driven by the above-mentioned factors, the countries concerned have turned their backs on the basic principles of multilateralism and have resorted to unilateral bullying and creating instability in international affairs. Multilateral versus unilateral contests have thus come to the fore.

Simultaneously, to seek “legitimacy” for their own behaviors, proponents of unilateralism and protectionism have devised terms such as “selective multilateralism”, “small-circle multilateralism”, and “club-like multilateralism”, resulting in a complex nomenclature. These concepts have significantly compromised and weakened both multilateralism and global governance. The multilateral cooperation it promotes and engages in is designed to maximize its own national interests and hinges on its complete dominance. Whenever international regulations fail to satisfy their interests, they swiftly oppose or abandon them, effectively establishing a form of pseudo-multilateralism.

These actions of unilateralism and pseudo-multilateralism have worsened the

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

functionality crisis within the multilateral system, ultimately resulting in a phenomenon known as “dysfunction”. The international community has justifiably encountered this practice with vigilance and opposition. Numerous developing nations, among them China, have vigorously championed and practiced the principles of multilateralism. China ardently champions the principles of “true multilateralism”, reaffirming its stance with clarity and conviction. The clash between true and pseudo-multilateralism is at its core a battle that will steer the international order and system of global governance toward either progress or retrogression, equity or control. This pivotal struggle has deep implications for the destiny of humankind and the future of our planet. In view of the fact that pseudo-multilateralism is good at camouflage and highly deceptive to the international community, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of its nature, characteristics and harm.



The Current Era Demands a Commitment to True Multilateralism

03

Nature, Characteristics and Dangers of Pseudo-Multilateralism

- The nature of pseudo-multilateralism
- Characteristics of pseudo-multilateralism
- The dangers of pseudo-multilateralism

03 Nature, Characteristics and Dangers of Pseudo-Multilateralism

1. The nature of pseudo-multilateralism

In real international politics, unilateralism, retrogression and power never show their true colors, but always wear the cloak of morality and righteousness and dress themselves up as “justice”. Unilateralists often seek to mask their coercive tactics under the guise of “multilateral action” by pulling in a handful of “minor participants”, thereby creating a facade of pseudo-multilateralism. Pseudo-multilateralism fosters a “small-circle” governance based on self-interest and self-imposed limitations, champions the zero-sum approach of “I win, you lose”, engages in the hegemony and bullying of coercion, endorses a narcissistic belief in civilizational superiority, and is involved in crafting international commitments that ultimately amount to hollow pledges. Its essence lies in taking unilateral action under the guise of multilateralism, disregarding the legitimate concerns of others, prioritizing “national interests” and seeking exclusive interests of “small circles” across all areas of international relations, all while protecting its own position of hegemony.

2. Characteristics of pseudo-multilateralism

Overall, pseudo-multilateralism manifests itself in six features: Firstly, under the pretext of a “rules-based international order”, the authority of the United Nations



has been compromised by the imposition of exclusive “small-circle rules” within the international community, disregarding fairness and justice. Pseudo-multilateralism disregards the basic norms of international relations that are universally recognized by the international community, and it has been used to create “small circles” and formulate “small-circle rules”. These so-called “rules” only safeguard the interests of the members of their “small circles” and even target and undermine the interests of others. Pseudo-multilateralism strives to present and enforce its own regulations as the norm within the global community, aiming to monopolize the creation of international rules among a handful of countries. This approach ensures that the international rules serve the interests of a singular nation. Pseudo-multilateralism practices selectively adhering to or dismissing the foundational norms of international relations, established by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Additionally, its advocacy of a “small-circle rule” aims to bestow a semblance of “legitimacy” on actions that the United Nations cannot sanction.

Secondly, under the guise of “democracy”, “human rights” and “universal values”, they neglect mutual respect, attempting to impose their own brand of egotism through political systems and development paths, while oppressing diverse civilizations. Pseudo-multilateralism overlooks the fundamental truth of global cultural diversity and the prevailing direction of development, deeming its own political system and growth trajectory the world’s guiding “beacon”. It presents its “democracy model” and “human rights model”—both derived from its exclusive experiences—as “universal values”, assuming that democracy and human rights are akin to Coca-Cola, with a one-size-fits-all recipe that ought to yield a uniform flavor worldwide. Pseudo-multilateralism has polarized international relations along ideological lines, underpinned by the extreme misbelief that those of a different race must inherently think differently. It has masqueraded as a pursuit of peace while escalating attacks on non-Western ideologies and denying the onset of a new Cold War. Such an approach has led to aggressive intervention in the internal affairs of nations under the guise of promoting “democracy” and “human rights”. Western powers have not only interfered but also attempted to impose their political systems on others through coercion or the threat of force. This forceful imposition of “exogenous democracy” has destabilized numerous developing countries, stripping them of their political systems and often causing governance failures due to the incompatibility of these imposed structures. Consequently, these actions have heightened tensions between major world powers and seriously compromised the stability of international relations.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

Thirdly, under the guise of “protecting its own security”, it abandons the notion of mutual benefit, clings to a Cold War mindset, chases a zero-sum approach, and strives for so-called “absolute gains” for itself. Pseudo-multilateralism undermines the core principle of indivisible security by obstinately prioritizing “national interests” and the pursuit of “absolute security” across all aspects of international relations, without hesitation to compromise the security of other nations in the process. In the realms of economics, science, and technology, pseudo-multilateralists prioritize their own growth and engage in pervasive securitization. Invoking “national security”, they advance trade protectionism and create a high-tech “small yard with a high fence”, aimed at stifling entities they see as competitors. They seek to always stand on the side of the “scissors gap” in their favor and harvest the wealth of all countries in the world. In the realm of geopolitical security, certain actors engage in a form of pseudo-multilateralism, seizing upon hot-spot issues as an “opportunity” to further their own geopolitical interests. They tend to escalate tensions, exacerbating security situations across various regions by fanning the flames of conflict, distributing weapons, and meddling in disputes. Such actors ignore the legitimate security concerns of other nations, seeking to construct a fortress of “absolute security” for themselves at the expense of global stability. They pursue this notion of “absolute security” by undermining the security of other countries, demonstrating a blatant disregard for the notion of shared security interests.

Fourthly, under the guise of “collective action”, it eschews dialogue and consultation, instead wielding the “small circle” it commands to inflict political isolation, unilateral sanctions, financial exploitation, and even coercive force upon others. Pseudo-multilateralism has never been concerned with achieving diplomatic objectives through dialogue and consultation. Instead, it has relied on strategic coercion, leveraging control over selective “small circles” and “small groups” to exert comprehensive and relentless pressure and sanctions on what it deems its “strategic rivals”. Its specific practices involve the diplomatic isolation of “strategic rivals” by its allies and partners, coupled with the imposition of economic, financial, scientific, and technological sanctions on other nations without authorization from the United Nations Security Council. Resorting to or threatening the use of force represents the most extreme variant of pseudo-multilateralism. In reality, pseudo-multilateralists routinely band together with “small groups” to engage in such practices, masquerading them as legitimate “multilateral actions”.

Fifthly, under the pretense of “empty words”, they have neglected to concentrate on the action, merely paying lip service to address global challenges and contributing to international public goods. In the realm of global governance within the required multilateral framework, pseudo-multilateralism frequently results in hollow promises.



It not only procrastinates and equivocates on delivering the promised international public goods but also frequently underdelivers on these commitments. Moreover, it falls short of upholding the international responsibilities that major powers are expected to shoulder. Individual countries have long been in arrears in paying their contributions to the United Nations, paying lip service to their financial commitments to address climate change, and writing blank checks on international development cooperation. In essence, it is a matter of looking after one's own national interests and taking advantage of others, not to mention global interests and the long-term interests of humankind.

Sixthly, under the guise of “maintaining international order”, it fails to consider the uniform application of the rules of international order and pursues “double standards” in all areas of international relations. At times, it proclaims “human rights trump sovereignty” and resorts to using force against other nations, violating the territorial integrity of sovereign states. Yet, at other times, it underscores the “respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity”, focusing on its own security while continually compromising the security of others. It calls for other countries to contribute international public goods, yet frequently shirks its international obligations. Its emphasis on personal security protection consistently contravenes the security of other nations, demanding global contributions while neglecting its international duties. “Double standards” have become the standard practice and basic operation of pseudo-multilateralism.

From the characteristics outlined above, it is clear that pseudo-multilateralism continues to perceive the world through the lens of power politics—a fundamentally flawed worldview. The distinction between true multilateralism and pseudo-multilateralism lies in their worldviews. True multilateralism takes into account the concept of common destiny, recognizing the vastness and diversity of the world. As a result, it calls for the realization of equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal rules for all nations. Under true multilateralism, global affairs are addressed through negotiations involving all countries, presenting ample opportunities for cooperation. Conversely, pseudo-multilateralism adopts a narrow perspective focused on “national priority” and perceives the world as small and crowded. Consequently, its approach centers around seeking national power advantages and emphasizes an environment of constant “fierce competition”. This is where the unilateral bullying behavior of pseudo-multilateralism under heavy disguise comes in.

3. The dangers of pseudo-multilateralism

The first is to undermine the international system with the United Nations at its core.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

Pseudo-multilateralism hinders the effectiveness of UN institutions, as it maintains an unfair position on various international hot-button issues, preventing UN entities from reaching resolutions and fulfilling their mandate. There are instances when the UN is disregarded, and unilateral hegemonic policies are implemented, undermining the UN's role in maintaining international peace and security and posing a risk of marginalizing its relevant functions. The promotion of a so-called “rules-based international order” is accompanied by an arbitrary disregard for international law and norms, selective interpretation and application of international law, and the substitution of universally accepted international principles with self-defined rules, packaging a “hegemonic order” as an alleged “international order”.^① There are serious violations of international law, including the extensive use of long-arm jurisdiction and secondary sanctions, which significantly undermine the fundamental principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.^② The instigation of division and confrontation is observed in nearly all significant international mechanisms, transforming global governance multilateral mechanisms into arenas for big-power rivalry and group confrontations, making it more challenging to effectively address global and regional challenges.

Secondly, it erodes the integrity of the international multilateral trading system and compromises the global development landscape. Pseudo-multilateralism fundamentally negates the core principles of trade liberalization advocated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Certain countries repeatedly veto proposals to initiate the selection process for new judges in the Appellate Body, severely impacting the multilateral trade system based on the WTO as its core, characterized by rules, non-discrimination, openness, fairness, inclusiveness, transparency, and justice. The promotion of economic and technological bullying politicizes, weaponizes, and ideologizes economic issues, obstructing international technological cooperation and human social progress. The utilization of “economic coercion” as a frequent tool for unilateral hegemony has directly resulted in economic and social development challenges for many developing countries.

^① The “Rules-Based International Order” is Pure Hegemonic Discourse (Observatory), People's Daily Online, March 17, 2022, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2022-03/17/content_25907762.htm.

^② *U.S. Indiscriminate Secondary Sanctions Ungrounded in Law-an Unjust Cause Finding Scant Support*, People's Daily Online, July 28, 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2023-07/28/nw.D110000renmrh_20230728_2-17.htm.



Thirdly, it seeks “absolute security” and creates instability and chaos. Pseudo-multilateralism, driven by geopolitical interests, stirs up regional hotspots around the world, disregarding the security interests of other countries, igniting conflicts and creating turmoil, and even intentionally fueling conflicts in regional disputes, leading to prolonged armed conflicts in many parts of the world. The pursuit of unilateral hegemony is apparent, as it prioritizes its own interests over the collective security of nations. Under the guise of “multilateral cooperation”, it continuously strengthens its dominance in military alliances, promoting the militarization of security and using other countries as tools to maintain its hegemonic status. By exaggerating security risks and selling security anxieties, it expands the concept of “risk mitigation” as a tool, causing security conflicts to spread to multiple domains and highly complexify security issues between nations.^① All of this has resulted in a gradual decline of the global and regional security landscape, compromising worldwide strategic stability.

Fourthly, it creates conflicts and value clashes among civilizations.. Pseudo-multilateralism is accustomed to cobbling together a “small circle” of values in the name of democracy, monopolizing the voice of democratic values, abetting “identity politics” featuring ideological struggle in the international community, and dividing countries into "democracies" and "non-democracies" based on the label of “democracy”. Pseudo-multilateralism often exploits human rights issues, claiming the moral high ground based on human rights standards. It politicizes, weaponizes, and leverages human rights as a tool, attracting allies and recklessly meddling in the domestic matters of other nations. These actions can lead to military aggression, significantly impeding the advancement of global human rights and flagrantly violating the norms of international relations. Pseudo-multilateralism also shields sci-tech hegemony under the guise of promoting democracy, entwining cutting-edge technology with specific values, and characterizing it as emblematic of democracy and human rights. This approach politicizes and ideologizes tech-related matters, searching for pretexts to justify the imposition of technology embargoes on certain nations. Such practices not only obstruct international cooperation and advancement in science and technology but also significantly complicate security tensions between countries.

No matter how pseudo-multilateralism is camouflaged, it cannot conceal its essence of

^① De-risking' Hardly Conceals Nature of China Curb, Xinhua, July 17, 2023, http://www.news.cn/mrdx/2023-07/17/c_1310732856.htm.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

unilateral bullying. At present, human society is facing unprecedented challenges, with the recurrence of geopolitical conflicts, sluggish economic growth, global warming, governance deficits in emerging fields, and energy and food crises posing profound and real threats to world peace and development. Unilateralism will only exacerbate these global challenges. Maintaining and fostering multilateralism is not only necessary for the international community to address common challenges and strengthen global governance, but also an answer to the eternal question of what kind of world to build and how to build it. Amid various forms of pseudo-multilateralism, the need to steadfastly uphold the core values and fundamental principles of true multilateralism becomes increasingly paramount. We must endeavor to forge a global consensus among nations to safeguard peace and promote development via tangible multilateral cooperation, steering the world away from turmoil and instability toward a trajectory of stable expansion.



Nature, Characteristics and Dangers of Pseudo-Multilateralism

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

04

Proposal and Development of True Multilateralism

- In-depth reflection and elaboration of multilateralism
- Formal proposal and intensive discussion of true multilateralism

04 Proposal and Development of True Multilateralism

China's major country diplomacy places emphasis on the future and destiny of humanity. It contemplates the key challenges faced by global governance in the context of the significant changes unfolding over the century, as well as the underlying issues affecting the effectiveness of multilateralism. China advocates the pursuit of true multilateralism as the way forward in dealing with the intricate and complex global issues of our time. On the whole, China has gone through two stages of development in putting forward the concept of true multilateralism. The initial phase involves in-depth reflection and elaboration of multilateralism, while the subsequent phase centers on formal proposal and intensive discussion of true multilateralism.

1. In-depth reflection and elaboration of multilateralism

In October 2015, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held its 27th group study session focused on the patterns and systems of global governance. President Xi Jinping emphasized during the study that, nowadays, it is more and more necessary for countries to discuss global matters together, and it has become the consensus for most countries to establish international mechanisms, abide by international rules and pursue international justice. President Xi stressed the importance of driving reforms in the global governance system's inequities and irrationalities. He advocated for international economic and financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-



and the World Bank, to effectively mirror the evolving international landscape. More importantly, he called for augmented representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries, ensuring that all countries engage in international economic cooperation on an equal footing, with uniform rights and opportunities. Additionally, President Xi also underlined the significance of democratizing global governance rules and upholding the rule of law to rebalance the global governance system and more accurately reflect the aspirations and interests of the majority of countries.^① Although the term true multilateralism was not explicitly mentioned in this speech, the importance of upholding fairness and justice, openness and inclusiveness has been fully reflected.

In September 2016, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee conducted the 35th group study on the G20 Leaders' Summit and the transformation of the global governance system. President Xi emphasized that, the existing global governance system has found it increasingly difficult to meet the requirements of the times, and the international community is calling for reform. This is a common cause of all countries and regions, so we must pursue the transformation of the global governance system by following the principles of extensive consultation, joint development, and shared benefits. We must endeavor to reach consensus on the transformation proposals, and turn it into concerted actions.^② In this speech, the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits was explicitly put forward, further highlighting the importance of advancing global governance with the relevant core connotations of true multilateralism.

^① During the 27th collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, President Xi Jinping emphasized the need to promote a global governance system that is fairer and more equitable, creating favorable conditions for China's development and world peace, China.gov.cn, October 13, 2015, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-10/13/content_2946293.htm.

^② The 35th Group Study of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese government website, September 28, 2016, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-09/28/content_5113091.htm.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice



In September 2016, leaders of G20 members and guest countries and heads of relevant international organizations posed for a group photo.
(Source: China.org.cn)

In the speech delivered at the United Nations (UN) Office in Geneva in January 2017, President Xi pointed out that multilateralism is an effective way to preserve peace and promote development. For decades, the United Nations and other international institutions have made a universally recognized contribution to maintaining world peace and sustaining development. He emphasized that China will firmly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, the fundamental norms governing international relations embodied in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, the authority and stature of the UN, and its core role in international affairs.^① In September 2018, during the meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres in Beijing, President Xi pointed out that the world needs multilateralism and a strong UN more than ever. The most basic principle of multilateralism is that international affairs should be handled by all countries through consultation, in accordance with the rules agreed upon by all, and in a manner that takes into account the interests and concerns of all countries.^② In the above-mentioned statement, adherence to the purposes and principles

^① President Xi Jinping's Speech at UN Headquarters in Geneva, Xinhua, January 19, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-01/19/c_1120340081.htm.

^② Xi Jinping Meets with UN Secretary-General Guterres, China.gov.cn, September 2, 2018, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-09/02/content_5318669.htm.



of the Charter of the UN and support for the strengthening of the role of the UN became hallmarks of adherence to true multilateralism.

The global governance deficit has been further worsened in the wake of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Against this backdrop, President Xi has spoken extensively on strengthening international cooperation against the pandemic, safeguarding multilateralism and improving global governance. He emphasized that, in the face of the unprecedented challenges brought by the pandemic, the international community needed more than ever to unite and cooperate, to safeguard multilateralism and to uphold international justice and morality. Between June and November 2020, President Xi underscored the significance of championing multilateralism and opposing hegemony and unilateralism through a series of digital engagements. His advocacy permeated a written statement to the high-level video conference on the Belt and Road international collaboration, a telephonic exchange with Russian President Vladimir Putin, an address commemorating the United Nations' 75th anniversary, remarks at the 12th BRICS leaders' gathering, and a dedicated address during the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda Dialogue in January 2021. Across these pivotal discourses and dialogues, including the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda Dialogue, President Xi consistently highlighted the need to sustain multilateralism, confront hegemony and unilateralism, and foster the development of a community with a shared future.

2. Formal proposal and intensive discussion of true multilateralism

In April 2021, President Xi Jinping first put forward the concept of “true multilateralism” at the opening ceremony of the annual meeting of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference. He pointed out that global governance should conform to the changing world political and economic landscape, follow the historical trend of peaceful development and win-win cooperation, and meet the practical needs of addressing global challenges. This endows true multilateralism with the characteristics of keeping pace with the times and reflecting the spirit of the era. China also calls for upholding the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, adhering to genuine multilateralism, and promoting the development of the global governance system towards greater fairness and rationality. We should uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law, and the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization as its core. International affairs should be discussed and decided by all

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

countries together, and the future and destiny of the world should be jointly grasped by all countries. Rules should not be imposed by one or a few countries on others, and the pace of the world should not be dictated by unilateralism of individual countries. The world should be fair, not dominated. Major countries should act in a manner befitting their status and demonstrate greater responsibility and dedication.^①



In April 2021, the Boao Forum for Asia was held in Boao, Hainan.
(Source: Boao Forum for Asia website)

President Xi has consistently emphasized the importance of practicing true multilateralism and enhancing global governance during various important meetings. These include the opening ceremony of the Plenary Session of the Sixth Eastern Economic Forum, the 13th BRICS Leaders' Meeting, the 21st Meeting of the SCO Council of the Heads of State, and the 76th general debate of the UN General Assembly in September 2021. Additionally, President Xi discussed these points during the 15th Leaders' Summit of the COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of China's restoration of its legal seat in the UN, and the first phase of the 16th G20 Leaders' Summit in October 2021. Furthermore, President Xi addressed the topic in his keynote speech at the APEC Business Leaders' Summit in November 2021, the opening ceremony of the BFA Annual Conference

^① Xi Jinping's Video Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2021, cn.gov.cn, April 20, 2021, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-04/20/content_5600764.htm.



in April 2022, and the 14th BRICS Leaders' Meeting in June 2022. This further underscored the will and determination of major power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics to uphold and practise true multilateralism. "True multilateralism" has also become the mainstream discourse on global governance on the Chinese side.

In October 2022, the 20th National Congress of the CPC report stated that China actively participates in the reform and construction of the global governance system, upholds the global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, adheres to true multilateralism, promotes the democratization of international relations, and strives for the development of global governance towards greater fairness and rationality. China firmly upholds the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law, and the basic principles and norms of international relations outlined in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. China opposes all forms of unilateralism, opposes the formation of exclusive blocs and exclusive circles targeting specific countries. China works to enhance the effectiveness of multilateral mechanisms such as the World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and expand the influence of cooperation mechanisms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and enhance the representation and voice of emerging market countries and developing countries in global affairs.^① This shows that "true multilateralism" has been elevated to the will and strategy of China's ruling party.

^① Xi Jinping: Holding High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Striving in Unity for the Comprehensive Construction of a Modernized Socialist Country-Report at the Twentieth National Congress of the CPC, china.gov.cn, October 25, 2022, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-10/25/content_5721685.htm?eqid=afd4626e0007882000000003647edae0.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice



In September 2015, President Xi Jinping participated in the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York, where he delivered a significant address titled “Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind”.

(Source: United Nations website)

In September 2023, the Information Office of the State Council of the PRC issued a white paper entitled “A Global Community of Shared Future: China’s Proposals and Actions”. Part IV of the report, which deals with the direction of the goals and path of realization of building a community with a shared future for mankind, devotes a special section to emphasizing the practice of true multilateralism, pointing out that the building of a community with a shared future for mankind must be based on the practice of true multilateralism. The white paper points out that “small-circle multilateralism” is group politics, putting the interest of one’s own country first represents unilateral thinking, and selectively applying multilateralism involves double standards. The world should be fair, not dominated. China opposes all forms of unilateralism, the formation of exclusive blocs and exclusive “small circles” targeting specific countries, and opposes any actions that undermine the international order, create a “new Cold War,” or engage in ideological confrontation under the guise of so-called “rules”.^① This illustrates the importance of “true multilateralism” in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

^① White Paper on Joining Hands to Build a Community with a Shared Future: China’s Initiatives and Actions (full text), Website of the Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, Sept. 26, 2023, http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/zfbps_2279/202309/t20230926_771203.html.



The Law on Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China, which took effect on July 1, 2023, further underscores China's commitment to upholding and implementing multilateralism, as well as engaging in the reform and development of the global governance framework. It highlights China's dedication to preserving the international system anchored by the United Nations, safeguarding an international order grounded in international law, and adhering to the core norms of international relations as established by the UN Charter's aims and principles. The law further prioritizes the idea of inclusive global governance, characterized by extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. It advocates for China's active participation in shaping international rules, advancing the democratization of international relations, and making economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.^① This further clarifies, in the form of law, the core connotation of practicing true multilateralism and its significance in the process of major power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

The Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference held in December 2023 pointed out that in response to a series of major issues and challenges facing the world today, we advocate equal and orderly world multipolarity and inclusive economic globalization. Multipolarization of the world in an equal and orderly manner means insisting on the equality of all countries, large and small, opposing hegemonism and power politics, and effectively promoting the democratization of international relations. In order to ensure the overall stability and constructiveness of the multipolarization process, it is necessary to jointly abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, adhere to the universally agreed basic norms of international relations and practice true multilateralism.^② This means that true multilateralism will continue to be translated into practical action in China's foreign work in the current and future periods.

In January 2024, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, noted in his speech at the 2023 Symposium on

^① Foreign Relations Law of the People's Republic of China, Chinese Government Website, June 29, 2023, https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202306/content_6888929.htm.

^② Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference Held in Beijing Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech, Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, December 28, 2023, http://new.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/202312/t20231228_11214409.shtml.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

the International Situation and Chinese Diplomacy that, China firmly chooses multilateralism over unilateralism. China holds that global governance is the way to surmount global challenges. We are committed to true multilateralism. We firmly uphold the UN-centered international system and the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, championing the principles of planning together, building together, and benefiting together. China has actively provided global public goods and encouraged collective efforts by the international community to pursue development, security and vibrant civilizations.^①

In June, 2024, a conference was held in Beijing to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. President Xi Jinping attended the commemorative meeting and delivered an important speech. He pointed out that, in face of the new developments and challenges, the authority and central role of the United Nations can only be strengthened rather than weakened. The purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter have never been outdated, but more important. China advocates the vision of global governance featuring extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, and China believes in true multilateralism. Our goal is that international rules should be made and observed by all countries. World affairs should be handled through extensive consultation, not dictated by those with more “muscles”.^② In his speech at the luncheon commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Wang Yi also pointed out that multilateralism should not be shaken and must be upheld, calling for fairness and justice to lead the way to the future of global governance, and emphasizing adherence to true multilateralism.^③ All of this continues to demonstrate China's determination and will to promote global governance through true multilateralism.

^① Wang Yi: Confidence and Self-Reliance, Openness and Inclusiveness, Fairness and Justice, and Win-Win Cooperation -- Speech at the Symposium on International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2023, website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, January 9, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjb_673085/zzjg_673183/xws_674681/xgxw_674683/202401/t20240109_11220573.shtml.

^② Xi Jinping's Speech at the Conference Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Publication of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Full Text), cn.gov.cn, June 28, 2024, https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202406/content_6959889.htm.

^③ Wang Yi's Speech at the Luncheon Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Publication of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Website, June 28, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202406/t20240628_11444004.shtml.



In June 2024, a sub-forum to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was held in Beijing.

(Source: China Institute of International Studies website)

In July 2024, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization (hereinafter referred to as Resolution). Wang Yi stated that the Resolution has outlined an expansive blueprint for thoroughly advancing reforms and fostering Chinese modernization. He emphasized that China's diplomatic efforts must excel in seven distinct areas. The fourth facet of the efforts is to champion a balanced and structured multipolar world alongside inclusive economic globalization. Our aim is to foster the transformation and enhancement of the global governance system, which necessitates a steadfast commitment to true multilateralism and a stance against cliques, splintering, and disorder.^① This shows that, in the historical process of further deepening reforms in a comprehensive manner and advancing the grand blueprint for Chinese modernization,

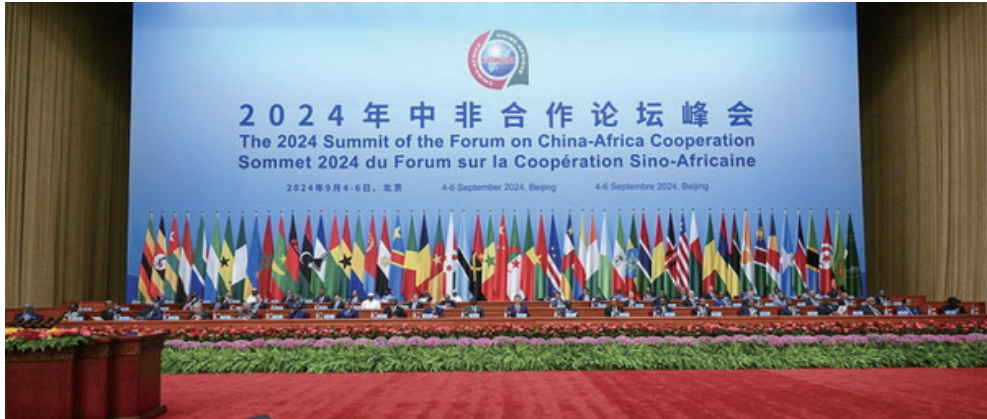
^① Wang Yi: Creating a good external environment for further deepening reform and promoting Chinese-style modernization, in *People's Daily*, August 13, 2024, p. 06.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

China will continue to unswervingly adhere to true multilateralism and contribute to the peaceful development, prosperity and stability of the world.

In September 2024, the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was successfully organized. President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the summit and delivered a keynote speech. He pointed out that “In promoting modernization, we should not only follow the general rules, but also act in light of our national realities. China is ready to increase exchanges of governance experience with Africa, support all countries in exploring modernization paths befitting their national conditions, and help ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for all countries.” This statement profoundly suggests that modernization is the inalienable right of all countries in the world, organically combines the core concept of true multilateralism with the grand vision of modernization in the global South, and sends out a strong message of the times for developing countries to enjoy the right to modernization on an equal footing. During his meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who attended the summit, Xi emphasized that “practicing true multilateralism and supporting the UN to play a central role in international affairs have always been the principles that China’s diplomacy adheres to and will not change. At present, the international situation is characterized by a confluence of changes and turmoil, and the UN has become more prominent in its important role and should act more actively.”^① This statement clearly indicates that the practice of true multilateralism necessarily requires support for the UN as the core platform of multilateralism, and also highlights China's firm position on safeguarding the authority of the UN.

^① President Xi Jinping meets with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, China.gov.cn, September 6, 2024, <http://jhsjk.people.cn/article/40314366>.



In September 2024, the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was successfully held in Beijing. President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote speech.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China website)

**True Multilateralism:
Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China’s Practice**

05

Core Essence of True Multilateralism

- Upholding fairness and justice is a primary criterion
 - Openness and inclusiveness are essentials
- Adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN is a fundamental guideline
- Upholding the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits is the necessary path
 - Keeping pace with the times is an inevitable choice

05 Core Essence of True Multilateralism

True multilateralism arises from profound changes unseen in a century in global governance and is committed to addressing worldwide challenges while opposing unilateralism and pseudo-multilateralism. It upholds the foundational values and principles of multilateralism and advocates for the modernization and enhancement of the global governance system to reflect contemporary realities. True multilateralism is not only an innovative development of the concept of multilateralism worldwide, but also creatively transforms the essence of the fine traditional Chinese culture, forming a theoretical system that is rich in ideas, profound in connotation and rigorous in logic. The primary criterion is an unwavering commitment to fairness and justice, paired with a necessity for openness and inclusiveness. Adherence to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter stands as a foundational guideline. Embracing the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits is the necessary path forward. Furthermore, keeping pace with the times is an inevitable choice.

1. Upholding fairness and justice is a primary criterion

Adherence to fairness and justice demonstrates the moral nature of true multilateralism and reflects the progressive nature of multilateralism in the 21st century. True multilateralism champions mutual respect, equitable participation, and collaborative consultation in advancing global governance. This approach underscores that all



nations are vested with shared governance responsibilities and rights, fostering the democratization of international relations. Firmly opposing any form of hegemony, intimidation, and hegemonic actions, it collectively advocates for world peace and development. Only through steadfastly maintaining fairness and justice and advocating for true multilateralism can we prevent the dominance of hegemony and power politics, along with the law of the jungle.

Since the dawn of the new century, the world has experienced a rapid progression toward multipolarity and a gradually more balanced distribution of international power. No single country or coalition of nations can solely dominate global affairs. International affairs should be addressed collaboratively by the global community, rather than being managed by a single nation or select groups of nations. No country has the right to monopolize international affairs, dominate the destinies of other countries and monopolize the advantages of development, let alone acting in its own way in the world, engaging in hegemony and bullying, and pursuing the sophistry of “might makes right”.^① All nations, irrespective of their size, power, or level of development, are equal members of the international community and possess the right to engage in regional and global affairs on an equitable basis. They ought to honor mutual respect and collaborate in making decisions on multilateral issues as equals. The major powers, in particular, should assume greater responsibility for regional and world peace and development, rather than strengthen greater monopolization of regional and international affairs. “All countries are equal. The large, the strong, and the rich should not abuse the small, the weak, and the poor.”^②

In other words, the principle of fairness and justice must be fully embodied in the promotion of global governance through multilateralism. Despite their varying sizes, strengths, and wealth, all nations are considered equal within the international

^① Xi Jinping's Speech at the Moscow Institute of International Relations (Full Text), People's Daily Online, March 24, 2013, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/0324/c1024-20892661.html>; Xi Jinping's Keynote Speech at the Fifth Meeting of BRICS Leaders, China.gov.cn, March 27, 2013, http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-03/27/content_2364182.htm; Xi Jinping's Speech at the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Summit of the United Nations, qstheory.cn, September 22, 2020, http://www.qstheory.cn/yaowen/2020-09/22/c_1126523612.htm.

^② Xi Jinping, “Joining Hands to Build New Partners for Win-Win Cooperation and Building a Community with a Shared Future Together - Remarks at the General Debate of the 70th UN General Assembly,” People's Daily Online, September 29, 2015, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0929/c1024-27644408.html>.

community. A hierarchical global order rooted in imperialism, hegemonism, and colonialism falls out of step with modern trends. Moreover, the archaic notion that “might makes right”, and the law of the jungle—which dictates that the strong prey upon the weak—is widely regarded as unjust and unfavored.

2. Openness and inclusiveness are essentials

True multilateralism champions the ideals of open and inclusive cooperation, embracing diversity and rebuffing any form of closure or exclusion. Multilateralism and global governance are intrinsically compatible. The two share common ground through their objectives' mutually beneficial nature, the various levels of stakeholders involved, the wide array of issues addressed, and the multitude of possible approaches.^①

The diversity of civilizations is an objective reality of human society and a fundamental feature of today's world. Openness, inclusiveness, pluralism and mutual learning are the common pursuit of the international community. There are more than 200 countries and regions, 2,500 ethnic groups and a host of religions in the world.^② They have created different civilizations in the long history, bringing together the common values of development and progress for all humankind. However, in the world history, there have often been violent conflicts and even large-scale wars between different civilizations, religions, factions within the same religion, political systems and development paths, and ideologies, which have ultimately become disasters for human civilization. At the onset of the Cold War's demise, numerous Western scholars promulgated false theories in terms of “end of history” and “clash of civilizations”, and advocated for the concept of “universal values”. Some Western countries have used this as a pretext to implement “new interventionism” and carry out “color revolutions”, causing severe chaos and lasting harm to many countries and regions. Currently, certain countries are once again drawing ideological lines, forming alliances based on values, and creating a “new Cold War”. They frequently engage in activities such as decoupling as well as imposing unlawful unilateral sanctions, all with the aim of dividing the world and undermining

^① Wu Zhicheng and Liu Peidong, “A Chinese Perspective on Promoting Multilateralism and Global Governance”, p. 23.

^② Xi Jinping: Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind Together - Speech at UN Headquarters in Geneva, People's Daily Online, January 18, 2017, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0120/c64094-29037658.html>.



multilateralism and global governance.

Openness and inclusivity entail championing the vision of global community of shared future. This involves embracing the approach of seeking common ground while shelving differences, forging consensus among diverse stakeholders, and ensuring that cooperation frameworks, philosophies, and policies are as open and inclusive as possible^①. It is through embracing openness and inclusiveness that we can steer and advance the healthy progression of globalization, stimulate global economic growth, and tackle the increasingly significant challenges we face worldwide. To eliminate ideological biases and to nurture a harmonious and mutually supportive international community, we must dedicate ourselves to the principles of openness and inclusivity. It is crucial that we embrace equality, mutual respect, dialogue, and inclusivity, while also championing universal values like peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom for the betterment of all humanity.

3. Adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN is a fundamental guideline

True multilateralism is closely linked to international multilateral institutions and international law. Adherence to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter is an inevitable requirement of “one system, one order and one set of rules”, which embodies the rule-based foundation of true multilateralism and is an important guarantee for the maintenance of a stable and orderly international system and order. China has consistently underscored the existence of a singular global framework, namely the UN-centered international system. There is only one order, and that is the international order based on international law. There is only one set of rules, the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. The confrontations and injustices taking place in the world today are not incurred by the obsolescence of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, but rather to their ineffective implementation.

Multilateral institutions are the key platforms for practicing true multilateralism, while

^① Publicity Department of the CPC and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “Study Outline of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy,” p. 161.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

international law, which has been jointly developed by the international community and is universally recognized, is the norm on which global governance is based. Over the past 400 years, international law has evolved from the public law of Europe in the 17th century, to the international law of the “civilized nations” during the European colonial period in the 18th and 19th centuries, and to the modern international law based on the UN Charter and applicable to all members of the international community in the post-World War II era. During this period, the international order, whether under European public law or the international law of the “civilized nations”, was still colonial or hegemonic in nature, even though it was formally underpinned by a multitude of States. The international order of multilateralism in a truly global sense was not established until the UN Charter was established.^① The United Nations is the most representative and influential international intergovernmental multilateral institution in the world as well as the basic framework for safeguarding true multilateralism. The purposes and principles of the UN Charter are universally acknowledged as the foundational norms directing interactions among nations and provide the essential framework for international conduct, as well as the standards for reconciling national relations and interests. Since its founding, the United Nations has played a pivotal role in promoting world peace and development, as well as achieving equitable global progress. Adherence to the tenets and principles of the UN Charter has, to some degree, safeguarded the world from descending into chaos and turmoil, and decisions made by “simply showing off strong muscles or waving a big fist”^②.

^① Ma Xinmin, *China's View of International Order in the New Era*, p. 16.

^② *Xi Jinping's Speech at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly*, Xinhua, Sept. 29, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-09/29/c_1116703645.htm; Xi Jinping, “Let the Torch of Multilateralism Shine on the Way Forward for Humanity --Special Address at the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda Dialogue,” *People's Daily Online*, January 26, 2021, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0126/c1024-32011618.html>.



The “Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares” statue in the UN Headquarters garden
(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China website)

True multilateralism has always firmly upheld the international system centered on the UN, the international order based on international law, and the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and supported the UN in playing a greater role in international affairs. In response to the present climate of international politics—wherein a select number of countries establish “house rules” and attempt to impose them—advocates of true multilateralism particularly emphasize the importance of promoting the rule of law in international relations. This includes adhering to universally accepted principles of international law and abiding by internationally agreed-upon treaties.^① In response to the current international politics, in which one or a few countries have set up “double standards” and distorted international law to the detriment of interests of other countries in the name of rule of law and rules, true multilateralism emphasizes that international law should be uniformly applied to international relations, and that all countries should abide by international law and the universally recognized basic principles of international relations, and that uniformly applied rules should be used to clarify what

^① Wang Yi Proposes Four Points for Practicing True Multilateralism, Xinhua, May 8, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2021-05/08/c_1127419158.htm.

is right and wrong. Exceptionalism shall not be excuse for any country.

4. Upholding the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits is the necessary path

The notion of global governance, which embraces the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, epitomizes the essence of true multilateralism. This reflects the confluence of equal rights and responsibilities among all nations, the alignment between processes and outcomes, and the balance of interests among individuals and groups within the framework of global governance. In order to promote global governance and resolve international issues, we should not engage in one-sidedness, zero-sum games or winner-takes-all approaches from the so-called “position of strength”, but should adhere to the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.^①

The principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits means that international affairs are to be handled by all countries through joint consultations, that all countries are to work together for a common cause, that all countries are to benefit from the fruits of cooperation, and that the democratization of global governance is to be actively promoted. This not only highlights once again the qualities of openness and inclusiveness, but also the importance of fairness and justice. “Consultation” means that countries should put their heads together, communicate and consult with each other, and promote fair rights, fair opportunities and fair rules on the basis of sovereign equality. “What kind of international order and governance system best suits the world, and best suits the people of all countries? This is something that should be decided by all countries through consultation, and not by a single country or a minority of countries.”^② “Joint contribution” means joint participation, maximizing benefits through cooperation and making a bigger cake together. In confronting

^① Xi Jinping: Follow the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter and Adhere to Joint Construction and Sharing, China.gov.cn, September 17, 2021, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-09/17/content_5638037.htm.

^② Xi Jinping: Speech at the Conference to Celebrate the 95th Anniversary of the Founding of the CPC China.gov.cn, April 15, 2021, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-04/15/content_5599747.htm.



global challenges, no single country can thrive in isolation. Only by sharing risks and responsibilities, embracing true multilateralism, and collaborating can we effectively navigate a path through these difficulties. “Shared benefits” refer to the equitable distribution of cooperative gains across multiple sectors, ensuring that the rewards of collaboration extend to all nations, the global community, and the wider public. This approach aims to ensure that opportunities and the yields of progress are enjoyed collectively by all stakeholders.

5. Keeping pace with the times is an inevitable choice

Keeping pace with the times reflects the contemporary and innovative nature of true multilateralism. Currently, as the world undergoes its profound changes unseen in a century at an accelerating pace, the dynamics of the globe, the era, and history are unfolding in a manner never seen before. The foundation for implementing multilateralism is undergoing substantial shifts, and global governance is confronted with numerous new challenges. At the same time, the development of multilateral mechanisms is falling behind, and their shortcomings are intensifying.^① True multilateralism requires upholding fundamental principles while breaking new ground in a future-oriented manner in order to continue to revitalize and enhance the effectiveness of governance; otherwise, it will not be able to keep pace with the times or better address emerging issues.

On one hand, the deepening development of global multipolarity continues, with the “Global South” becoming increasingly prominent. Emerging markets and developing countries are increasingly and justifiably advocating for reforms in the global governance system to reflect the evolving international landscape. At the same time, the global challenges facing mankind have become more prominent. In particular, governance challenges in areas such as climate change, terrorism and public health and security have become more acute, and governance gaps in new frontiers such as the deep sea, polar regions, outer space, cyber and digital, and artificial intelligence have become more apparent. Against this backdrop, it has become increasingly difficult for

^① Wu Zhicheng and Liu Peidong, *A Chinese Perspective on Promoting Multilateralism and Global Governance*, p. 35.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

the existing international rules and systems to effectively manage global affairs and address global challenges.

Therefore, true multilateralism requires adherence to keeping abreast of the times and avoiding being stuck in the old rut; not only should we adhere to the core values and basic principles of multilateralism, but should also keep abreast of the times on the basis of the changed world landscape and global governance. Additionally, we should reform and improve the global governance system on the basis of extensive consultations and consensus-building.^① To promote true multilateralism, it is important to go beyond the limitations of the existing approaches and create an expanded version of multilateralism. This entails actively shaping responses to international affairs and global threats, prioritizing proactive measures rather than reactive ones, adopting comprehensive governance approaches that cover the entire spectrum of issues, and transitioning from unsustainable development to sustainable development. Furthermore, advocating preventive diplomacy and preventive actions should be strongly emphasized.^②

^① Publicity Department of the CPC and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC: Study Outline of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, p. 62.

^② Ma Xinmin, China's View of International Order in the New Era, p. 34.



**True Multilateralism:
Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China’s Practice**

06

China's Practice of True Multilateralism

- Development of true multilateralism based on the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind
- Safeguarding the United Nations system and improving multilateral mechanisms
 - Provision of quality international public goods
- Global governance should be promoted in accordance with the law

06 China's Practice of True Multilateralism

China consistently adheres to the principles of multilateralism and has played a significant role in advancing the international order towards greater justice, equality, and progress. Since 2012, President Xi Jinping has put forward the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and advocated that all countries practice true multilateralism, which has helped open up a new realm of theoretical and practical innovation in Chinese diplomacy. China is not only an advocate of the concept of true multilateralism, but also a practitioner, promoter and leader of true multilateralism. China vigorously champions, cultivates, and advocates for true multilateralism. It assumes a leadership position rooted in equality, cooperation, integrity, and adherence to the rule of law, thereby underscoring its status as a responsible major power. Furthermore, it plays a pivotal role in driving the reform and enhancement of the international governance framework.

1. Development of true multilateralism based on the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind

At present, with unilateralism, pseudo-multilateralism, and global challenges emerging, multilateralism and global governance urgently need to be led by new values and concepts. President Xi Jinping proposed the vision of creating a community with a shared future for mankind, championing the establishment of a world characterized by



enduring peace, universal security, collective prosperity, openness, and inclusiveness, as well as environmental sustainability and aesthetic appeal. He called on all nations to collaboratively steer the course of our shared destiny, engage in the framework of global governance, contribute to the formulation of international norms, and partake in the benefits of human advancement. President Xi inspired the international community to form a new consensus on enhancing global governance through true multilateralism.

Proposed in March, 2013, the concept of constructing a community with a shared future for mankind has been featured numerous times in UN documents. It has garnered considerable acclaim and backing from numerous country leaders and international organizations.^① Simultaneously, while fostering the establishment of a global health community for all, a unified future in cyberspace, a joint future in nuclear security, a collaborative maritime future, a symbiotic community for humanity and nature, an earth-wide community of life, a global development community, and a comprehensive human security community across numerous sectors, China has collaborated with multiple stakeholders to advance the reform and progress of global governance towards a positive direction.

The initiative to build a community with a shared future for mankind emerged amidst the profound expansion of economic globalization and the unparalleled intensification of human interdependence, underscoring the novel characteristics of global governance. The community with a shared future for mankind advocates for openness and inclusiveness while opposing exclusive ideological “small circles” targeting specific objects; it advocates fairness and justice and espouses that any country has no right to monopolize international affairs and development advantages, and dominate the destiny of other countries; it advocates harmonious coexistence, in which countries should achieve peaceful coexistence and common development on the premise of seeking common ground while shelving differences; it advocates pluralism and mutual understanding, respecting the different histories and conditions of countries, as well as their different nationalities and customs, and promoting exchanges and mutual understanding of civilizations; and it advocates solidarity and collaboration, opposing

^① Jia Lieying, Theoretical Connotation and Practical Logic of the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind in the Threshold of International Organizations, in *Regional and Global Development* 2022, No. 6.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

“national priority” and advocating shared destinies, as well as cooperation among countries in addressing global challenges.^①

Amidst a new era of upheaval and transformation within the international community, and as disorder and ineffectiveness plague global governance, advocating for a fair and systematic multipolar world alongside inclusive economic globalization has emerged as a cornerstone for implementing true multilateralism. Multipolarization of the world in an equal and orderly manner means insisting on the equality of all countries, large and small, opposing hegemonism and power politics, and effectively promoting the democratization of international relations. In order to ensure the overall stability and constructiveness of the multipolarization process, it is necessary to jointly abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, adhere to the universally agreed basic norms of international relations and practice true multilateralism. Universal and inclusive economic globalization entails addressing the broader needs of all countries, particularly those that are developing, to correct imbalances within and among nations resulting from the global distribution of resources. Moreover, it requires resolving structural challenges that obstruct the vigorous expansion of the world economy and guiding economic globalization toward a path marked by increased openness, inclusivity, mutual benefit, and balance.^②

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind has provided a scientific analysis of the laws governing historical development and has gained a deep understanding of the historical context. This concept epitomizes the pursuit of universal human values, underscores our responsibility to foster world peace and development, and charts the proper course for theoretical advances in international relations in the contemporary era. It has elevated our perspective, offered a wide-ranging vision, and guided the evolution of true multilateralism.^③

^① Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China: *Joining Hands to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind: China's Initiatives and Actions*, September 2023.

^② Wang Yi, *Deeply Implementing the Spirit of the Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference and Continuously Creating a New Situation for Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, in Seeking Truth*, No. 2, 2024.

^③ Xu Jian, *The Communist Party of China's Theoretical Innovation in International Relations - From the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind*, in *Foreign Affairs Review*, No. 4, 2021, p. 20.



2. Safeguarding the United Nations system and improving multilateral mechanisms

Firstly, the authority and status of the United Nations should be firmly upheld. China has always defended the central position of the UN in global governance and upheld the principled position of UN Member States to jointly formulate international rules, jointly govern global affairs and share the fruits of development.

China holds the position of the second-largest financial contributor to the United Nations and ranks as the second-largest supporter of peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, it surpasses all other permanent members of the Security Council in terms of the peacekeepers it contributes. China has made positive contributions in the areas of climate change, biodiversity, food security and global poverty alleviation, and has been deeply involved in governance processes such as the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and has set up platforms such as the China-United Nations Fund for Peace and Development, the China-FAO Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, the China-UNESCO Trust Fund for Assistance to Africa, and the International Research Center on Big Data for Sustainable Development. Through these dedicated efforts, China reinforces the central role of the United Nations in addressing global challenges. The Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres, commended the People's Republic of China for having become an increasingly important contributor to the work of the UN and a major pillar of international cooperation since the restoration of its legitimate seat in the Organization.^①

^① UN Secretary-General: China Has Become an Increasingly Important Contributor to the UN and a Major Pillar of International Cooperation, chinanews.com, October 25, 2021, <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gj/2021/10-25/9594811.shtml>.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice



In October 2021, the first phase of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Kunming.

(Source: the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the PRC website)

Secondly, we should improve the multilateral mechanism and promote the development of true multilateralism. The key to addressing the democratic and effectiveness deficits of multilateral mechanisms lies in the promotion of true multilateralism. Adhering to the principles of mutual respect, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation, China has contributed Chinese wisdom to the promotion of true multilateralism by improving multilateral cooperation mechanisms. On one hand, we should strive to actively advance the reform of current multilateral mechanisms toward a fairer and more equitable direction. China is committed to increasing the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries in the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank and other international multilateral mechanisms. Thanks to the joint efforts of China and other countries, the share of emerging markets and developing countries in the IMF has been raised. China has presented its “China's Proposals on WTO Reform” to the WTO, endorsing the essential reform of the organization to help resolve its present challenges, protect the multilateral trading system, and foster the development of an open global economy. On the other hand, the solidarity and cooperation of the “Global South” should be strengthened in order to enhance the international voice of developing countries. China has proactively advocated for the African Union’s accession as a full member of the G20. China, in collaboration with various partners, has spearheaded the growth and enlargement of international initiatives like BRICS and the SCO. By advocating for expansion, these organizations have become key platforms for emerging markets and developing nations to protect their interests, increase



their global clout, and drive the transformation and enhancement of the worldwide governance system, welcoming more members in the process.^①



In August 2023, the 15th BRICS Leaders' Meeting was held in Johannesburg.
(Source: people.com.cn)

3. Provision of quality international public goods

Firstly, China has been actively building a platform to foster more inclusive multilateral cooperation. The high-quality joint building of the Belt and Road has become an innovative multilateral mechanism for promoting common development in the world and an important platform for the international practice of true multilateralism. In the 10 years since the Belt and Road Initiative was put forward, China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents on the building of the Belt and Road with more than 150 countries and more than 30 international organizations, which has boosted investment of nearly one trillion dollars, created 420,000 jobs in the countries where the Belt and Road is being built, and lifted nearly 40 million people out of poverty.^②

^① Zhao Weijie and Tao Jiye, General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Discourse on Multilateralism and Its Significance, in TAN QIU, No. 4, 2023, pp. 13-20.

^② China Has Signed Cooperation Documents with 152 Countries and 32 International Organizations to Build the Belt and Road, China.gov.cn, 24 August 2023, https://www.gov.cn/lianbo/bumen/202308/content_6899977.htm.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice



In October 2023, President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Summit Forum for International Cooperation.

(Source: Chinese government website)

Multilateral cooperation frameworks, including the BRICS New Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — all of which China has helped to initiate and launch — are now established and are increasingly influential in their respective spheres. The FOCAC, the China-ASEAN Dialogue, the China-Arab Cooperation Forum, the China-LAC Forum, among other mechanisms and platforms, have proven highly effective in fostering mutual development and progress between China and its diverse global partners.^① China has also actively organized the CIIE, the Global Digital Trade Expo (GDTX), the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTS) Global Trade in Services Summit, the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETEX), and other economic and trade forums, applied for accession to the CPTPP and DEPA, and worked hard to build an open world economy, committing itself to sharing development opportunities with all countries in the world. China is actively implementing the RCEP with high standards, spearheading the creation of the world's largest free trade area by population, boasting the most significant economic and trade scale, and offering unparalleled development potential.

^① Fang Jiongsheng, The Construction of the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind under the Perspective of True Multilateralism, in *Dongyue Tribune*, No. 10, 2022, p. 34.



China Pavilion at the 6th China International Import Expo
(Source: China International Import Expo website)

At the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit in September 2024 in particular, President Xi announced the ten major initiatives aimed at collaboratively advancing modernization efforts with Africa over the next three years. These initiatives encompass establishing a China-African development knowledge network and unilaterally expanding Chinese markets to African nations, and all the least-developed countries that maintain diplomatic ties with the PRC, including 33 African countries, will receive zero-tariff treatment for all taxable products.. Moreover, China is committed to constructing a pilot China-Africa deep economic and trade cooperation zone to bolster trans-regional development in Africa. As part of the effort to improve living standards, China will embark on 1,000 “small but beautiful” livelihood projects. Initiatives include the creation of joint medical centers, the provision of emergency food aid, the establishment of agricultural standardization demonstration zones, the generation of at least 1 million job opportunities, the offering of 60,000 training positions, and the implementation of clean energy projects across the continent. China is also dedicated to constructing 30 clean energy projects, building 30 cooperative laboratories, fostering collaboration in satellite remote sensing, and pioneering lunar and deep space exploration. Additionally, China will provide training for African military and police personnel to further strengthen ties between the regions.^①

^① Wang Yi on the Four Major Achievements of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, September 6, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202409/t20240906_11486163.shtml.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

Secondly, China has put forward the “Three Global Initiatives” to provide public goods for world peace and development. Since 2021, amidst significant challenges to global economic growth, world peace and security, and the exchange and mutual learning among civilizations, President Xi has offered visionary responses to pressing global questions. He has addressed the nature of development the world requires and the means to achieve it, the essential security concepts needed for global stability and the path to collective safety, and the trajectory of human civilization and how to steer it toward a prosperous future. Since the “Three Global Initiatives” have undergone continuous refinement and development within the grand scope of major power diplomacy that bears Chinese characteristics, particularly at the level of the head of state. Consequently, these initiatives have garnered increasing recognition and support from the international community.

Since its inception in 2021, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) has achieved significant initial progress in fostering cooperation, further expanding its influence and bringing benefits to numerous developing nations. Over 100 countries and international organizations have endorsed the GDI. China launched the Group of Friends of the GDI at the UN, which has attracted the participation of more than 70 countries.^① Francis, President of the 78th UN General Assembly, said that the objectives of the GDI were in line with the 2030 Agenda and had great potential to benefit all countries of the world. The vision promoted by the GDI is the embodiment of the spirit of true multilateralism and can be a catalyst for change towards a more equitable and sustainable world for all.^②

Since proposing the Global Security Initiative (GSI) in 2022, China has also released the GSI Concept Paper and the China Position Paper on the Political Settlement of the

^① Seminar on Joining Hands to Promote Global Development and Accelerate the Achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals organized by the Permanent Mission of China in Vienna, National Agency for International Development Cooperation, 29 November 2023, http://www.cidca.gov.cn/2023-11/29/c_1212308183.htm.

^② High-Level Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative Held at the United Nations, in *People's Daily*, April 19, 2024, p. 3.



Ukraine Crisis, the China Position Paper on Afghanistan, the China Position Paper on the Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and the China-Brazil Consensus on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis, and has put forward initiatives such as the Global Data Security Initiative, the Scientists' Tianjin Guidelines for a Biosafety Code of Conduct for Scientists, "Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative" and other initiatives, contributing Chinese wisdom to addressing international security challenges. The GSI, which advocates a new type of security based on dialogue rather than confrontation, partnership rather than alliance, and win-win cooperation rather than zero-sum game, has so far been supported and appreciated by more than 100 countries and international and regional organizations, and has been included in more than 90 bilateral and multilateral documents on China's interaction and cooperation with other countries and international organizations.^① China has actively fulfilled its responsibilities as a major country and assumed its international obligations by participating in UN peacekeeping operations in more than 20 countries and regions, setting up a peacekeeping standby force of 8,000 personnel, and dispatching a total of more than 50,000 peacekeepers to participate in 29 UN peacekeeping operations, thus making Chinese contributions to international peace and security.^② In 2023, under China's mediation, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced the resumption of diplomatic relations, which started a wave of reconciliation in the Middle East, and achieved positive results in practicing global security initiatives.

^① China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), Center for Global Security Initiative (GSI) Research, Progress Report on the Implementation of the Global Security Initiative (2024), p. 10, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) website, July 18, 2024, <https://www.ciis.org.cn/xwdt/202407/W020240718528334066314.pdf>; Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian Hosts Regular Press Conference on April 19, 2024, website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, April 19, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjdt_674879/zcjd/202404/t20240419_11285033.shtml.

^② Chinese Military Has Become a Key Factor and Key Force in UN Peacekeeping Operations, website of the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, May 30, 2024, <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/xwfy/16312694.html>.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice



With China's support, Saudi Arabia and Iran held a dialogue from March 6 to 10, 2023 in Beijing.
(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China website)

China adheres to the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and actively builds open and inclusive platforms for civilization dialogue and humanistic exchanges for different countries, regions and organizations. It actively participates in UNESCO and other multilateral mechanisms, and organizes activities such as the Asian Civilization Dialogue Conference, the High-Level Dialogue between the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties, and the Liangzhu Forum. With practical actions, China has demonstrated that “civilization exchange transcends the gap between civilizations, mutual learning among civilizations transcends the clash of civilizations, and coexistence of civilizations transcends the superiority of civilizations”. In June, 2024, the 78th UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution proposed by China to establish the International Day of Dialogue among Civilizations. The resolution centers upon the fundamental principles of the “Four Common Advocacies” of the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping. It affirms that the fruits of all civilizations constitute the shared heritage of humanity and calls for respect for civilizational diversity. The resolution underscores the critical importance of inter-civilizational dialogue in upholding world peace, driving collective development, improving human welfare, and



fostering unified advancement. Moreover, it champions the notion of equitable dialogue and mutual respect among different cultures. Consequently, the resolution establishes June 10 as the International Day of Dialogue among Civilizations. The resolution has received a warm response and broad support from the international community, which fully demonstrates that the Global Civilization Initiative is in line with the trend of the times and meets the needs of the times.^①

4. Global governance should be promoted in accordance with the law

To advance reform in the global governance system and to steer its development towards a fairer and more equitable direction, it is imperative to champion the rule of law within global governance and to establish an international legal framework based on the rule of law. President Xi Jinping stated, “We should create a future of the rule of law, fairness, and justice. It is imperative to enhance the standing and role of international law in global governance, ensure effective observance and implementation of international rules, uphold democracy, equality, and justice, and build international rule of law.”^②

China is a defender, practitioner and contributor to the basic principles of international law. China is actively practicing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. In the seven decades since its introduction, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have been embedded into China’s Constitution, diplomatic communiqués for nearly all established relations, bilateral treaties, and numerous significant international texts. These principles now serve as the foundation of China’s independent peaceful foreign policy and the essential norms governing openness and inclusiveness in global relations. Universally recognized, they have become cardinal tenets of international

^① Spokesperson Lin Jian of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presided over the regular press conference on June 11, 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China website, July 13, 2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/202307/t20230713_11112793.shtml.

^② Xi Jinping, Work Together to Build a Win-Win, Equitable and Balanced Governance Mechanism on Climate Change - Speech at the Opening Ceremony of The Paris Conference on Climate Change, China.gov.cn, Nov. 30, 2015, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-12/01/content_5018478.htm.

True Multilateralism: Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice

law, setting a historic standard for international relations and the rule of law on the global stage. ^① China has strengthened international law enforcement cooperation and practiced the rule of law in global security governance. China has enacted the Law on International Judicial Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Law on Anti-Organized Crime in order to consolidate the legal basis for combating organized crime, and has carried out various forms of fruitful cooperation with other countries within the framework of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In international cooperation on transnational drug trafficking and terrorism enforcement, China upholds the sovereignty of other nations, adheres to pertinent conventions and agreements as guiding principles, defines the law enforcement authority and responsibilities of all involved parties, and enhances joint law enforcement training exercises. ^②



In October 2023, China organized a side event on the theme of climate change at the 78th UN General Assembly during International Law Week.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China website)

^① Xi Jinping, Carrying Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Hand in Hand in Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind - Speech at the 70th Anniversary Commemorative Conference on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, June 28, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/202406/t20240628_11443295.shtml.

^② Liao Fan, Multilateralism and the International Rule of Law, p. 74.



China steadfastly supports the international order grounded in international law, proactively engages in establishing global rules, fosters the rule of law in international affairs, and enhances global governance through the promotion of sound international law. China engages constructively in international rule-making, proactively voicing its perspectives on critical matters concerning the interpretation, application, and evolution of international law. Statistics indicate that China has concluded more than 27,000 bilateral treaties, acceded to more than 600 multilateral treaties and amendments, and ^① participated in almost all intergovernmental international organizations. In the realms of non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament, as well as in economic, cultural, environmental, and human rights sectors, China's exemplary achievements in treaty-making and adherence showcase its dedication to the principle of "one system, one order, and one set of rules". In February 2023, China, together with like-minded countries, initiated the establishment of the International Court of Mediation, which provides a new option for countries to settle international disputes peacefully. In June of the same year, China enacted and promulgated the Law on Foreign Relations, making a solemn commitment, in the form of legislation, to safeguarding the role of the UN and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

^① Dai Ruijun, Progress and Prospects of the Rule of Law in China's Treaty Conclusion Process, in Chinese Review of International Law, No. 6, 2023.

07

Conclusion

07 Conclusion

True multilateralism is an inevitable choice for humankind to address global challenges and enhance global governance. It has solidified a global consensus on the pursuit of peace and development, aligns with the trends of historical progress, and carries profound significance for the world. True multilateralism presents multilateralism in its rightful context, sharply distinguishing it from unilateralism and all varieties of pseudo-multilateralism. Whether it is to address current global challenges or to create a better tomorrow for humankind, the international community needs to further join hands in practicing true multilateralism.

Looking ahead, there are five areas to commit to in practicing true multilateralism. Firstly, we should steadfastly promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. All nations should collaborate through dialogue and consultation, collective building and shared benefits, win-win cooperation, mutual exchanges and learning, as well as embracing green and low-carbon development strategies. Together, we can construct a future marked by enduring peace, global security, shared prosperity, open-mindedness and inclusivity, and environmental cleanliness and beauty. Every nation must assume its share of global responsibility, acting as proactive stewards rather than passive onlookers. We must enhance dialogue, forge consensus, foster peace, drive development, improve governance, and engage in a concerted global effort, response, and cooperation. This will steer the course of multilateral collaboration.

By harmoniously blending the pursuit of building a community with a shared future for mankind with the practice of true multilateralism, we can generate a conducive atmosphere for nations to collaboratively advance true multilateralism and tackle worldwide issues. Together, we should champion equitable and well-ordered global multipolarity and inclusive economic globalization, thereby furthering common values across humankind. The major powers, in particular, should lead by example in global governance and the practice of true multilateralism.

Secondly, it is imperative that we steadfastly uphold the authority of the UN Charter. All nations must consistently support the international system centered around the United Nations, adhere to the international order grounded in international law, and maintain the fundamental norms of international relations as guided by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. We should work together to implement the UN Compact for the Future, to support the UN to be more active and effective, transform the political commitments of the Pact for the Future into concrete actions. We must champion dialogue and cooperation, commit to principles of shared responsibility and common benefit, and resolve disputes through peaceful means.

Thirdly, we should firmly uphold the right of all countries to participate in international affairs on an equal footing. All nations worldwide should collaborate effectively through multilateral governance platforms, broaden pathways for multilateral cooperation, and vigorously advance the creation of innovative multilateral platforms. It's essential to foster ongoing innovation, development, and refinement of multilateral governance mechanisms, further the democratization of international relations, consistently amplify the representation and influence of the numerous developing countries within global governance, and ensure equal rights, opportunities, and rules for every country.

Fourthly, we should focus on our actions firmly. All nations must proactively address issues and collaborate on solutions, aligning their national interests with the broader global agenda. They should balance immediate concerns with long-term objectives, ensuring that short-term needs do not compromise enduring world peace and sustainable development. In particular, major countries should play an exemplary role, take the lead in providing global public goods, practise multilateralism with practical actions, and make their due contribution to the protection of our common homeland and the realization of sustainable human development. As a world power, China has continued to promote the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road and the Three Global Initiatives, as well as other major international initiatives, in order to build a synergy of action for the realization of true multilateralism.

**True Multilateralism:
Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice**

Fifthly, we should firmly oppose unilateral hegemony and pseudo-multilateralism in all its forms and manifestations. Nations worldwide must unite to challenge the concentration of international influence by a select few and redefine multipolarity beyond the traditional dominance of major powers. Together, we should resist the so-called rules-based international order that permits selective adherence and “exceptionalism”. Furthermore, we must reject the divisive narrative of “democracy versus authoritarianism” and thwart the onset of a “new Cold War”. Individual major powers should completely abandon hegemonism and Cold War mentality, discard the narrow thinking of being fixated on an “us versus them” mentality and zero-sum game approach of “what they gain must be at our expense”.



Printing on Recycled Paper



CHINA INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Website: <http://www.ciis.org.cn>

Address: No.3,Toutiao,Taijichang,Beijing, China