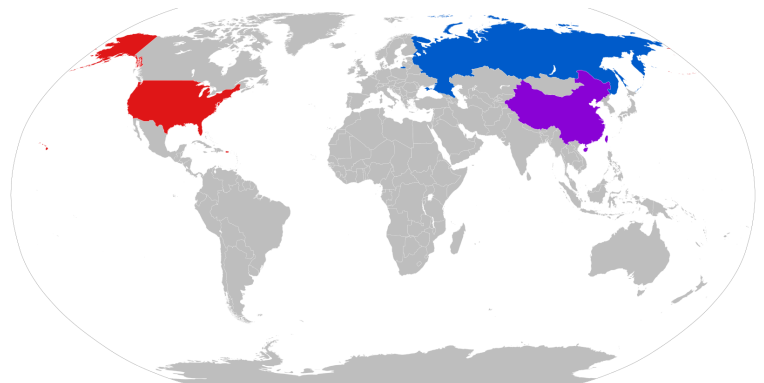




The U.S. is waging a New Cold War, not simply on Russia but also on China

The Editors of Monthly Review

There is no longer any question that the United States is waging a New Cold War, not simply on Russia (via NATO's proxy war in Ukraine), but also on China, which Washington has now defined as its number one security threat. Thus, the United States is taking an increasingly aggressive military position with respect to Taiwan, which under the internationally recognised One China principle is an inalienable part of China, but with a separate government. Along with this, Washington is building up its military alliances and forces in the Indo-Pacific and bolstering its four hundred military bases currently surrounding China, forming what is sometimes referred to as a "giant



A locator map for three major powers of the Second Cold War, America, Russia and China. Halo FC, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Washington claims that its sole strategic goal with China is to defend the "international order," which Beijing is accused of seeking to undermine. But what it means is not the UN system, but the U.S. imperial system.

noose" (Robert Daly, "[China and the U.S.: It's a Cold War, But Don't Panic](#)," Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, March 10, 2022; Arthur R. Ramsey, "[Anthropologist Warns of Growth in U.S. Bases](#)," Investigative Reporting Workshop, September 8, 2020; John Bellamy Foster, "[The New Cold War on China](#)," Monthly Review, July–August 2021; Kari Quinn, "[The Coming War on China: Pilger Says US Is Threat in the Pacific, Not China](#)," Sydney Morning Herald, January 9, 2017).

To be sure, in its official diplomatic posture, the United States, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared a year ago, is "not looking for conflict or a new Cold War" with China. Instead, Washington claims that its sole strategic goal with

respect to People's Republic of China is to defend the existing "rules-based international order," which Beijing is accused of seeking to undermine. However, what the Biden administration's rules-based international order refers to is not the United Nations system, or even international law, but rather the system of economic, political, and military institutions (the IMF and World Bank, various international trade agreements shaped by Washington including the World Trade Organization itself, the dollar-based foreign exchange system, and the network of U.S. military bases and alliances stretching across the globe) that define the U.S. imperial system. These structures originated after the Second World War and were given a further boost in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and with the onset of the U.S. dominated unipolar world order. Today China is accused by Blinken of having "the intent to reshape the [U.S. dominated] international order," while the United States is determined to defend the U.S. imperial order from China at virtually any cost to humanity, raising the threat of global nuclear holocaust (Antony J. Blinken, "[The Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China](#)," speech at George Washington University, May 26, 2022).

Tensions were further exacerbated by the Ukraine War, with Blinken charging China with the "defence" of Russia's role in the conflict. Nevertheless, Beijing has sought to adopt a nonaligned stance, providing humanitarian aid to Kiev and at the same time has strengthened its economic and political connections with Russia—all the time carefully refraining from providing military aid to the latter. Seeing NATO's enlargement as the principal cause of the war, China's emphasis throughout has been on peace negotiations between the various parties, respect for territorial integrity, and noninterference in other nations' affairs, along with recognition of the legitimate security interests of all nations. It has argued for a new European security architecture that would establish a framework for peace in the region.

Although some of these positions may seem inconsistent from Western eyes, Beijing's general response to the war in Ukraine is in fact consistent with its overall approach to global governance, which is now seen by Washington as a dangerous threat to its rules-based international order. Over the last decade under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China has introduced three global initiatives, defining its approach to global governance. One of these is its Belt and Road Initiative, introduced in 2013, which is designed to build physical infrastructures that will foster economic development throughout the world, thereby connecting primarily poor and middle-income countries to the Chinese economy as well as to the world economy as a whole. The second is the Global Development Initiative introduced in 2021, which has six core commitments: (1) prioritising development, (2) adopting a people-centred approach, (3) benefiting all, with no country and no person left behind; (4) innovation-driven development; (5) harmony between humanity and nature; and (6) results-oriented action. This initiative is oriented particularly toward South-South cooperation and facilitating fulfilment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Around 100 countries have either signed on as Friends of the Global Development Initiative or have otherwise indicated support. The third initiative, known as the Global Security Initiative, was introduced in 2022 and is designed to create an approach to global peace and security that involves moving away from military alliances and blocs and respecting the legitimate security interests of all countries.

The Global Security Initiative was formally kicked off by Xi in his speech in April 2022 at the Boao Forum for Asia. Although this was only two months after the heating up of the Ukraine War in February 2022, the basic principles had already been articulated in his speech on a "New Approach for Asian Security Cooperation" in May 2014, and grew out of the five principles of peaceful coexistence: (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and cooperation for mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence. It also emerged out of a general Marxian-inspired approach (with Chinese characteristics) to issues of national and global security (Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1 [Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2018], 33, 391).

In his April 2022 speech, Xi structured the Global Security Initiative in terms of six commitments:

- We should stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and work together to maintain world peace and security.
- We should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, uphold noninterference in internal affairs, and recognise the independent choices of development paths and social systems made by peoples of different countries.
- We should abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, reject the Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say no to group politics and bloc rivalry.
- We should address the legitimate security concerns of all countries, uphold the principle of indivisible security, build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and oppose any attempt by any country to ensure its own security at the expense of others.
- We should resolve differences and disputes between countries through dialogue, consultation, and other peaceful means, support all efforts for peaceful settlement of crises, reject double standards, and oppose any abuse of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdictions.
- We should maintain security in both traditional and nontraditional domains, and jointly resolve regional disputes and global issues such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity and biosecurity.

(Xi Jinping, “Maintain World Peace and Security (Part of Keynote Speech at Boao Forum for Asia, April 21, 2022)” in Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, vol. 4 [Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2022], 524–25)

“In today’s world,” Xi went on to state, “unilateralism and excessive pursuit of self-interest are doomed to fail.... Instead,

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we need to embrace a global governance philosophy that emphasises extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, promotes the common values of humanity, and advocates exchanges and mutual learning between civilisations. We need to uphold true multilateralism and firmly safeguard the international system with the UN at its core and

the international order underpinned by international law” ([Xi Jinping, full text of speech at Boao Forum for Asia](#), April 21, 2022, news.cgtn.com).

The general response to the Global Security Initiative in the West has been to dismiss it as a direct attack on the U.S. rules-based international order. Condemning unilateralism, Cold War mentalities, bloc confrontations, unilateral imposition of sanctions, interference in the affairs of other nations, and long-arm jurisdiction—while also stipulating that the United Nations is the core of world governance (thereby sidelining the U.S. rules-based international order)—are all seen as aimed at undermining U.S. hegemony within the world system.

In particular, Beijing’s use of the principle of indivisible security, according to which one nation’s (or bloc’s) security is

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not to be promoted by measures designed to undermine the security of others, was immediately criticized by a host of spokespersons for the United States and NATO as “Russian propaganda,” since Russia has made the principle of indivisible security part of its argument that NATO expansion was intended to undermine its security. Consequently, in some subsequent presentations of the six commitments underlying the Global

Security Initiative, the principle of indivisible security has been downplayed. Nevertheless, indivisible security remains

integral to the entire comprehensive, dialectical, conception of the Global Security Initiative. Moreover, the principle of indivisible security is longstanding, arising in the Cold War in deliberations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and repeatedly adopted subsequently by European governments and the United States. It stresses that security can never be conceived in a one-sided way if peace is to be secured (Ovigwe Eguegu, "[Will China's 'Global Security Initiative' Catch on?](#)," The Diplomat, June 8, 2022, [thediplomat.com](#); Chris Cash, "[What Is China's Global Security Initiative?](#)," Geostrategy, Explainer, September 2022, [geostrategy.org.uk](#)).

There can be no doubt that the Global Security Initiative, in its rejection of military blocs, together with its principle of indivisible collective security, offers a startlingly different approach to world peace than that which has existed over the entire stage of imperialism or monopoly capitalism, stretching from the late nineteenth century to the present. In that sense, it represents a socialist and anti-imperialist approach to global governance, one that is rooted in South-South cooperation.

In Can Europe Disarm? in 1893, Frederick Engels warned of "a general war of extermination" if Europe did not reduce its standing armies and armaments and move in the direction of socialism. The First and Second World Wars proved him to be correct. Today, the general war of extermination—a Third World War—if it were to take place, would be planetary in scope and in its devastation. It is precisely the collective security approach offered by China's Global Security Initiative that currently holds out the most hope for world peace through its rejection of the "Cold War mentality" and military blocs. It is thus one of the ironies of history that Washington views the Global Security Initiative not as an overture to world peace, but as a threat to the imperial world order, to be greeted with military force (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, vol. 27, [New York: International Publishers, 1975], 371).

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- ❖ **About the authors: Editors of Monthly Review Magazine:** John Bellamy Foster is the editor of MR and a professor of sociology at the University of Oregon. He has written extensively on political economy, ecology, and Marxism. Brett Clark is the associate editor of MR and a professor of sociology at the University of Utah.
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e-mail: informa@jussemper.org