

• Article •

Beyond Western Dominance: The Global Development Initiative as China's Normative Contribution to Strengthening UN Development Governance

Yong Chi^{1,*}, Zongxin Yue²

¹ Institute for Globalization and Global Issues, China University of Political Science and Law, Beijing, China

² Institute for Globalization and Global Issues, China University of Political Science and Law, Beijing, China

* Corresponding Authors: Yong Chi. Email: chiyong1212@gmail.com

Received: 8 April 2025 Accepted: 8 May 2025 Published: 25 June 2025

Abstract: China's Global Development Initiative (GDI), introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2021, was a strategic response to global development challenges. China has been proactive in planning the rapid implementation of GDI and allocating substantial resources to transform it from an initiative into a large-scale and practical international action. China's promotion of GDI has substantial practical implications for global development governance in the UN. Despite challenges such as geopolitical tensions and limited experience in multilateral diplomacy, the GDI represents a significant shift in China's role in the UN, offering an alternative path to global development governance. The innovation of this article lies in its linking of the two research fields of GDI and UN development governance, highlighting the Five ways in which China promotes GDI based on the UN, including summit diplomacy, development values and ideas, development governance standards, regime building, and development cooperation projects. This framework could provide a theoretical and analytical foundation for future research on GDI.

Keywords: Global Development Initiative; United Nations; Global Development Governance; China

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in interest in various foreign policies of China, which distinctly reflect the foreign preferences of that country. This interest is particularly notable because current Chinese political leaders have frequently introduced novel concepts or propositions about foreign policy during high-level summit meetings. One such concept is the Global Development Initiative (GDI), which deserves further examination due to its connotations and potential implications. However, despite its proposal and subsequent development nearly three years ago, the GDI has not yet

received sufficient attention from scholars outside of China, and relevant non-Chinese studies on this topic remain scarce in academia.

In fact, GDI requires substantial research focus. This is due to the ongoing importance of global development as a crucial research topic, particularly during the era of rapid globalization, and the pursuit of a prosperous life and fundamental human rights represents the primary objective of humanity (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2014). Furthermore, achieving good governance through the realization of truly global sustainable development constitutes a central agenda in the promotion of global governance (Kardos, 2012).

However, the global development governance system is now experiencing a notable increase in instability and uncertainty, further compounded by the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and regional conflicts, such as the Russian-Ukrainian war. Furthermore, the global economy has also entered a period of decline, resulting in a widespread slowdown in economic growth among emerging market countries. Many countries in the Global South are experiencing significant repercussions, and most global development efforts have faced additional challenges (Pereira et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, global crises, including food security, refugee issues, and climate change, are escalating, and the global development deficit continues to grow. The resolution of the global development dilemma has become the main challenge facing all countries around the world. In this context, China proposed the GDI as a notable response to address the growing challenges to global development. In fact, China also needs to seek an alternative path to expand its global influence, given the frequent condemnations it has faced from western countries, particularly the United States. Engaging in sustained investments in global development presents a more suitable approach. This choice not only avoids causing significant agitation among western countries, but could also demonstrate China's commitment and active participation in global development governance (Hameiri & Jones, 2018). Consequently, the GDI effectively reflects China's efforts to improve its international influence.

The following sections of this article provide a comprehensive analysis of GDI. It begins with an examination of the conceptual framework of the GDI, followed by a discussion of China's efforts to promote the GDI for the development of the Global South. Subsequently, this article will examine the profound impact of GDI on global development governance. In conclusion, this article presents a discussion of the potential challenges that GDI may face.

2. How to Promote Global Development Governance? The GDI and Its Key Elements

2.1 What is the GDI?

Before discussing the relationship between GDI and global development governance, it is necessary to address one preliminary question. What exactly is GDI? Answering this question depends primarily on the content of official documents released by the Chinese government and, more importantly, on a series of speeches delivered by President Xi Jinping regarding GDI.

On 21 September 2021, President Xi Jinping formally introduced the concept of the GDI for the first time during his participation via video from Beijing at the general debate of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2021). The timing of President Xi Jinping's proposal of this significant idea at the UN, on the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and the fiftieth anniversary of the resumption of the legal seat of the People's Republic of China at the UN, is particularly appropriate.

Since then, Xi Jinping has provided further elaborations on the core essence of that initiative on several occasions. For example, in January 2022, during a special address at a virtual session of the World Economic Forum, he highlighted that the initiative was a "public good open to the whole world" (The State Council of the People's Republic of China [SCPRC], 2022a). On 16 October 2022, during the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, a significant document that served as the core of the Congress made reference once again to the GDI. In this statement to the international community, China stated that it would be ready to work with the international community to put these two initiatives into action (SCPRC, 2022b). Furthermore, GDI was highlighted in a joint declaration released by President Xi Jinping and the leaders of five Central Asian countries during the China-Central Asia Summit held in China in May 2023, which emphasized the importance of these countries coordinating with each other to achieve development goals (Xinhuanet 2023).

The 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), held in Beijing in early September 2024, issued a joint statement on deepening cooperation within the framework of the GDI (SCPRC, 2024). The statement also mentioned the issue of the Global South, articulating China's hope to establish a global development partnership with African countries and to use development governance issues to improve the representation and voice of each other in global governance.

China's comprehensive national strength and international influence are currently experiencing a period of sustained growth, accompanied by a strengthening of its material foundation, which will allow it to make important contributions to global economic growth and global development governance. The GDI has emerged as a significant foreign policy instrument for China to promote international development cooperation and strengthen global development governance. After more than three years of development, the GDI has entered a critical stage of implementation and promotion, demonstrating its ability to drive collective development in the Global South. It has emerged as a Chinese solution to advance the existing global development governance and represents China's commitment to assume appropriate international development responsibilities and introduce distinctive global development approaches.

2.2 The Six Principles of the GDI

The GDI was based on the notion of global development, with a particular emphasis on poverty alleviation, industrialization, and interconnectivity in key areas. Additionally, the initiative seeks to anticipate and address global, strategic, and directional concerns related to the future advancement of

humanity. According to the official statements and the existing literature on GDI, it was committed to the following six guiding principles.

- **Prioritizing Development:** The GDI called on all countries in international society, including China, to elevate the priority of development issues, integrate development into the global public policy framework, and work to position development, a lasting human concern, at the center of the international agenda. Therefore, the GDI represented a logical extension of the Chinese concept that development is the master key to solving all problems, which holds that addressing development issues is the appropriate time to pay attention to political issues such as human rights and democracy.

- **Promoting People-Centered Policies:** China has consistently emphasized that its development achievements were inseparable from the concept of people-centered development, which has been instrumental in its success. The GDI also prioritized the well-being of individuals by focusing on the protection and advancement of livelihoods and ensuring that development was always driven by and beneficial to people.

- **Fostering International Cooperation:** The GDI has not been an exclusive institutional arrangement; instead, China's objective has been to utilize it as a novel platform for international cooperation. Chinese political leaders were aware that the contemporary world was confronted with many common threats and challenges that no single country could address independently. The achievement of sustainable stability and development depends on the strengthening of solidarity and collaboration. The GDI called on all countries to cultivate mutual trust, collaborate to address global challenges, and advance global economic recovery and development. By the end of 2024, China has organized or plans to organize 11 international conferences with the aim of promoting international cooperation based on GDI, with the aim of enhancing the degree of multilateralism of GDI (China International Development Cooperation Agency, 2024).

- **Advancing Innovation:** Only through innovation-driven development could high-quality and sustainable development be achieved. The world is currently experiencing a new phase of rapid technological and industrial transformation, including, but not limited to, continuous innovation and upgrading of new technologies, which have become important driving forces of the global economy. The GDI placed an emphasis on innovation while taking into account emerging issues such as development gaps and technological divides, which were of particular concern to the Global South. To identify and capitalize on new opportunities for development, the GDI proposed that countries abandon the notion of technological protectionism and technological nationalism. Instead, they should accelerate the sharing of technology and scientific knowledge.

- **Ensuring Harmony between Human and Nature:** This principle of the GDI emphasized the importance of environmental protection in the context of development. Development has been shown to have deleterious effects on the environment, giving rise to significant challenges such as global warming, increased pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Therefore, the GDI acknowledged the equal importance of ecological and environmental protection with economic growth. One of the objectives of

GDI was to protect and restore the ecological environment, striving to achieve green, low-carbon, and circular development while simultaneously addressing the crucial dual objectives of development and environmental protection.

• **Implementing Practical Actions:** The importance of the GDI extends beyond the value system of development, evidenced by the demonstrated commitment of China to practicing what it advocated to promote global development. Documents and news reports from China have indicated the practical actions and contributions of the GDI, which focused on pressing development issues such as poverty reduction, food security, epidemic control, vaccines, development finance, climate change, sustainable development, industrialization, the digital economy and connectivity. The GDI aimed to achieve development goals by facilitating improvements in these critical areas.

3. China's Actions to Achieve the GDI

The GDI is not simply a verbal commitment made by the Chinese government; instead, China has been proactively planning the rapid implementation of GDI and allocating substantial resources to transition it from an initiative into a practical and large-scale international action. Currently, China has been systematically promoting GDI in five main ways.

3.1 Summit Diplomacy

Summit diplomacy is a crucial undertaking that aims to foster international cooperation in various areas, with particular emphasis on international summits organized by the UN. These summits serve as the primary pathway to cultivate global consensus and advance global governance. In recent years, the UN summit diplomacy models have undergone a notable evolution, evolving from mere ceremonial and symbolic diplomatic events to a well-established institutional framework capable of actively addressing a range of global governance issues. Today, China also places great importance on a variety of summit diplomacy activities, especially those within the UN system. These occasions serve as valuable platforms for China to articulate its perspectives and ideas on geopolitical hot spots and global governance to the global society. For instance, President Xi Jinping introduced the concept of GDI during his speech at the general debate of the 76th session of the General Assembly, a high-level meeting attended by leaders and other senior representatives of states (UNGA, 2021).

The GDI has used international summits, particularly the major international summits convened by the UN that focus on global development issues. To accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for instance, the UN had scheduled several significant international summits in 2022, which at least included the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) (Phase II), the UN Conference on Oceans, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Summit on Transforming Education, and the 27th Session of the Climate Change Conference (COP 27). These summits had crucial underlying objectives that align closely with the principles and ideas of the GDI, such as the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was held in China and was chaired by that country,

and successfully ratified the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on 19 December 2022. This remarkable achievement, achieved through extensive and complex negotiations, represented a substantial triumph in the promotion of nature conservation and the Sustainable Development Goals (Xinhuanet, 2022).

Summit diplomacy undoubtedly expands opportunities and channels for dialogue, effectively mitigating disparities and contradictions among countries in the Global South to promote comprehensive cooperation on global development issues. In the next few years, the UN would continue to organize international summits on development issues, including those that serve as a continuation of the 2022 summits. These subsequent summits would address and pursue the unfulfilled objectives of the ongoing phase. During these summits, China, along with representatives of relevant stakeholders, will continue to promote and advance GDI. Specifically, their efforts will focus on achieving significantly more breakthroughs and achievements in global development issues, including expanding active participation of more countries, identifying priority areas and issues for initiative development, harnessing the collective wisdom and resources of the international community, and revitalizing the global partnership for development (Wang, 2022a).

3.2 Developmental Values and Ideas

The GDI also includes the important task of disseminating values within the realm of development. As development continues to be a global challenge and the pursuit of comprehensive and sustainable development remains a priority for key actors, a divergence of development values is emerging among these actors in terms of approaches to achieving development goals. However, the Chinese government and its leaders maintained that development should be viewed as the 'common values of all mankind' that should include peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom (Xin, 2022). They also emphasized that development serves as the master key to solving all problems (China's State Council Information Office [CSCIO], 2023).

The GDI places emphasis on the concept of development, which is regarded as a fundamental shared value among people around the world. China has also historically embraced the view that 'development is the last word' and has persistently faced the challenges inherent in the pursuit of development. Currently, China is one of the few nations to have achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the UN related to poverty reduction, positioning itself as a major influencer on the UN development agenda. Furthermore, China has consistently contributed to the advancement of common development through its commitment to the global development agenda and effective poverty reduction strategies.

The GDI embraces a development philosophy that is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Agenda of the UN. It demonstrates substantial alignment with the objectives of the UN's development governance, encompassing specific governance processes and final action outcomes, and actively promotes international cooperation and global governance within the UN's development

agenda, advocating for deepened cooperation among all human beings based on common development values, minimizing behaviors that hinder global development, and avoiding potential deadlocks in the progress of humanity and society.

3.3 Development Governance Standards

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within the global development governance system of the UN, is widely acknowledged as the action agenda for numerous global development strategies. It also serves as the fundamental governance standard for the implementation of the GDI. According to the governance standards of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global society could collaborate to address a variety of sustainable development issues, such as poverty, hunger, and climate change.

China has always placed great importance on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was embedded in novel development concepts and had been integrated into the overarching strategy of the 14th Five-Year Plan by the Chinese government. In light of these considerations, the GDI was also committed to accelerating the implementation of the UN global development governance system, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as its core. The GDI has sought to align itself with sustainable development strategies, to adhere to consistent norms and standards in development governance, to ensure cooperation with key participants in global development governance, and to serve as a consensus-building foundation, authoritative assurance, and institutional support for other countries and key partners to join and participate in the initiative (Zhao & Zhang, 2022). As illustrated in **Table 1** below, there is a notable degree of overlap between the eight focal points of the GDI and some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the UN. This alignment facilitates the rapid attainment of these important sustainable development objectives in the Global South.

Table 1: The Similarity Between the Global Development Initiative and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The GDI's Areas of Concern	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the UN 2030 Agenda
Poverty Alleviation	SDG 1
Food Security	SDG 2
Covid-19 Response, Vaccines	SDG 3
Climate Change, Green Development	SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15
Industrialization	SDG 9
Digital Economy	SDG 8, SDG 12

Connectivity among other Areas	SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 17
--------------------------------	-----------------------

Source: Zhao and Zhang 2022, 25.

In recent years, the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 and geopolitical conflict events have had a profound impact on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, resulting in significant setbacks. The advances made in development governance over the years have been largely reversed, with numerous development goals remaining unfulfilled within the designated timeline. The disbursement of aid funds and the implementation of development projects have been delayed. Furthermore, the global wealth disparity and the gap between the North and the South continue to widen, thus exacerbating the deficit in international development cooperation and intensifying the contradiction between supply and demand. In light of the significant challenges currently facing the global development agenda, it is imperative to prioritize the implementation of GDI, which not only aimed to address stagnation and weakness in the field of global development, but also facilitated the successful achievement of the development goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3.4 Regime Building

The promotion of China's GDI has depended on the establishment of relevant international regimes, which have included the global development of stable institutional frameworks, rule systems, implementation methods, and other indispensable components. In view of the existence of numerous international organizations and regimes focused on global development issues, China has established extensive institutional relationships and cooperation with them, drawing on their expertise to foster international regimes for GDI. The UN is of paramount importance, occupying a central and leading position in the governance of global development issues. It is crucial to recognize that the GDI and the UN regimes for development cooperation mutually reinforce and enhance each other, rather than competing. Implementing the GDI will actively leverage and harmonize with the global development governance regimes of the UN, thus promoting the advancement of multilateral development cooperation.

An illustrative example of this is the Group of Friends of the GDI, which was established in January 2022 under the UN. It serves as a crucial regime to facilitate the implementation of the GDI. The Group of Friends has garnered considerable support and participation from nearly 70 countries, emerging as a prominent actor in international solidarity and development cooperation, and will endeavor to further institutionalize itself within the framework of the UN (MFAPRC, 2022B).

However, it is not realistic for the GDI to completely disengage from existing international regimes and build a comprehensive framework for global development governance. The GDI's approach to regime-building should aligning with established multilateral regimes. For example, the Global Infrastructure Forum and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) within the UN have already reached a relatively mature stage of development as governance regimes in their respective areas,

undertaking specialized governance functions. The GDI could engage in a comprehensive collaboration with the aforementioned regimes to address its own regime-building requirements.

Furthermore, multilateral cooperation regimes such as the UN, the G20, BRICS, and various regional and sub-regional platforms, which share similar motivations and objectives with the GDI. These actors could facilitate coordination with the GDI and address affairs within the purview of the GDI. As shown in **Table 2** below, the GDI initially constituted a multilevel institutional network capable of sustaining itself through the utilization of international regimes at the global and major existing regional levels.

Tabel 2: The Global Development Initiative's International Regimes Network

	Existing Regimes	New Regimes
Global level	UN, IMF, World Bank, the G20, UNIDO, BRICS	The Group of Friends of Global Development Initiative, The International Forum on Resilient and Stable Industrial and Supply Chains
East Asia	ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, APEC, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation	RCEP, the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, China-ASEAN Knowledge Network for Development
Central Asia	Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China+Central Asia (C+C5) Foreign Ministers' Meeting, China-Central Asia Cooperation Forum	China-CEEC Dialogue Mechanism on E-Commerce Cooperation, China-Central Asia Industrial and Investment Cooperation Forum, China-Central Asia Health Industry Alliance
South Asia	SAARC, Shanghai Cooperation Organization	China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue,
Middle East	China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, Gulf Cooperation Council	China-Arab States Summit
Africa	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, African Union Agenda 2063, New Partnership for Africa's Development	China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo, Initiative on Partnership for Africa's Development, China-Africa Digital Innovation Partnership Programme
The Pacific	China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum, The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent	China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting
Latin America	China-CELAC Forum, The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States	Dialogue of Foreign Ministers of China and the 'Quartet' of CELAC

Source: Wang 2022b, 43.

3.5 Development Cooperation Projects

The GDI has also facilitated the promotion of China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, with a particular focus on practical development projects that address the immediate development needs of certain countries of the Global South. The GDI places particular emphasis on fostering international collaboration in eight crucial domains (UNGA, 2021).

Since its establishment three years ago, the GDI has successfully implemented numerous projects and continues to expand its international cooperation. For example, during the High-Level Dialogue on Global Development, President Xi Jinping declared China's commitment to increase its investment in the China-UN Peace and Development Fund and promote collaboration in GDI (People's Daily, 2022B). Furthermore, China has been increasing its international development resources by formally initiating the third phase of the South-South Cooperation Trust Fund in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). At the Ministerial Meeting of the GDI Friends Group held on 20 September 2022, 50 practical cooperation projects were started with the objective of addressing critical developmental issues and involving a range of agencies within the UN system, including, but not limited to, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, UNAIDS, UNIDO, UN-Habitat, and UNEP (China International Development Cooperation Agency [CIDCA], 2022).

At the ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi articulated seven key initiatives that China would intend to pursue in collaboration with UN development agencies. These initiatives included the unveiling of the initial list of projects in the portfolio of GDI projects, advocating for the 'Special Initiative for Food Production' and promoting the 'Global Clean Development Initiative'. Furthermore, the meeting highlighted the advancement of the Global Partnership for Clean Energy, the cooperation on Smart Customs, Smart Borders, Smart Connectivity, the launch of the World Alliance for Digital Education, and the initiation of the Global Action Plan on Bamboo instead of Plastic. Meanwhile, China intended to present six sets of global sustainable development data products, including metrics such as global arable land and forest cover, to the UN. This initiative sought to provide countries with invaluable data support in their efforts to achieve food security, land and ecological protection, and other sustainable development objectives (MFAPRC, 2022a).

In the near future, the GDI would continue to pursue the initiation and implementation of additional practical cooperation and capacity building projects and will actively engage in collaborations with the UN and other international organizations with the aim of facilitating policy dialogues, exchange of experiences, and capacity building for development purposes. China's comparative advantages, including production capacity, manpower, technology, and capital, will exert a significant influence on the development and construction of numerous less developed countries in the Global South.

4. The Roles of the GDI: Achieving Better Global Development Governance

The GDI will not only deepen our comprehensive understanding of global development, but will also adopt a series of action-oriented approaches, actively providing realistic and credible guidance and programs for global development cooperation. Implementing GDI will facilitate the achievement of the development goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the UN within the designated timeframe and address the pressing development needs of the international community. In the context of the prevalence of anti-globalization and protectionist ideologies, the promotion of the GDI will undoubtedly have significant and positive effects on global development governance.

4.1 Strengthening the Development Function of the UN

The UN serves as a precursor to contemporary international relations norms and a crucial actor within the global governance system. As an international organization with the greatest potential to achieve efficient and comprehensive global governance, the UN was expected to play a pivotal role in global governance. However, the UN has now been adversely affected by escalating geopolitical conflicts, including ideological confrontations driven by great power rivalries and events such as the Russian-Ukrainian war. Furthermore, the slow or stagnant progress of international cooperation for development, particularly within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is confronted with considerable challenges (Schaefer, 2019). At the same time, the contributions of the major powers to address global development challenges are grossly inadequate, resulting in a weakening and fragmentation of the UN's development function, thereby exacerbating the problem of the global development deficit. However, the UN and its affiliated entities and bodies remain the main international regime for global development governance, playing a fundamental and comprehensive role in addressing global development challenges.

The GDI provides substantial support for the international standing of the UN and its practical efforts to address global development issues. The implementation of the GDI will infuse the UN system with renewed vitality, foster a renewed sense of international consensus, and enhance its capacity to actively contribute to the noble endeavor of promoting global peace and development. For example, the GDI would facilitate coordination and cooperation between agencies of the UN development system and other stakeholders to formulate and improve a universal and inclusive development agenda, which guides sustainable development worldwide in the coming decade. According to the document released by the UN, the numerous South-South Cooperation projects promoted by the GDI will undoubtedly stimulate increased investment by the UN in this area and propel the UN development agenda to prioritize and uphold the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries (The Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies [ACCWS], 2022).

4.2 Challenging the U.S. Foreign Development Assistance Model.

The United States remains the world's largest and most central donor of foreign development assistance, and its foreign development assistance model has been praised and emulated by Western

countries. However, criticisms of U.S. foreign assistance continue to emerge. The most notable of these is that U.S. foreign development assistance often leads to a greater likelihood of organized acts of civilian killings within the borders of the recipient country, thus significantly diminishing the international reputation of U.S. foreign development assistance (Jadoon, 2017). Even more problematic is President Trump, whose foreign aid policy during his first term (2017-21) has been characterized by a lack of coherence and credibility, leading to a significant decline in the international legitimacy of U.S. foreign aid donor (Regilme, 2023). The U.S. administration under Trump's second term, which begins in 2025, has taken an even more negative stance on foreign aid. Immediately after his inauguration on January 20, 2025, President Trump announced that he would immediately halt and comprehensively review all foreign aid programs currently in place, freeze all aid programs, and reevaluate and restructure the entire U.S. foreign aid strategy (White House, 2025). The Trump administration is undoubtedly disrupting the U.S. development assistance system and raising more doubts about the U.S. development assistance model.

In contrast to American pathways for development assistance, the GDI pays more attention to the development system in the UN, repositioning it as the central component of the global development governance system. The GDI has played a pivotal role in enhancing South-South cooperation, encouraging an increasing number of countries in the Global South to actively engage in the UN global development agenda. It facilitates unity among these countries of the Global South, fostering a synergistic environment where they would collectively pursue the rights to participate in rule-making processes and shape shared opinions on matters of global development. Moreover, it advocates for those countries' legitimate and justifiable development rights and interests while promoting a Chinese-style multilateral approach to the UN global development agenda.

The GDI has consistently protected the interests of Global South countries, with the objective of addressing the development challenges that are of the utmost importance for the majority of these countries. For historical and practical reasons, China's global development model places considerable emphasis on strengthening infrastructure development and facilitating the adoption of modern technology in developing countries. This model prioritizes the improvement of self-development capabilities among recipient countries, abstains from imposing political conditions, and refrains from interfering with internal affairs. It is highly probable that the GDI will adopt a similar approach, emphasizing its distinctions from the American tendency to prioritize political systems, which would include providing development assistance with minimal ideological concern and supporting recipient countries in improving and refining their individual development policies.

4.3 Propagandizing the Performance of the China Development Model

The GDI is based on the extensive experience of China in development. China has held a distinctive position globally, serving not only as a recipient of international assistance, but also as a country that has pursued an independent development path for poverty reduction, which is distinct from the

international aid system of western countries. In the 1970s, China represented approximately one fifth of the global poverty rate, with approximately 250 million people living in extreme poverty by 1978 (Xu, 2000). However, China has actively used effective policy instruments to forge its own development path and has persistently addressed its domestic poverty challenge, gradually discovering solutions to its internal development issues. Since 1990, China has succeeded in lifting 439 million people out of poverty, achieving a 94% reduction in extreme poverty and contributing to more than 70% of global development goals (People's Daily, 2015). In 2021, the Chinese government publicly declared its intention to eradicate poverty in the new era and to achieve the poverty reduction targets set by the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda a decade ahead of schedule (SCPRC, 2021).

China's success in overcoming poverty has demonstrated to countries in the Global South a distinctive development experience and trajectory. Despite addressing domestic development challenges, China assimilated and embraced foreign ideas and experiences, explored development models that fit its national conditions, and continuously improved its conceptual framework and pragmatic methods. These efforts include using organizations of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at various levels to ensure effective organization and coordination of poverty alleviation work, using economic development as a means of alleviating poverty, prioritizing infrastructure construction during poverty alleviation initiatives, implementing adaptable regional cooperation strategies, and actively seeking assistance from the international society. China's successful development experience not only has substantially mitigated poverty within the country, but also has attracted considerable interest from international society. Several countries and international organizations are engaged in the active study of China's development model, thereby creating a new trend of seeking inspiration from the East to address development challenges (Zhao, 2010). It is evident that the GDI has underscored China's efforts to alleviate poverty. This has resulted in Chinese narrative, expertise, and solutions to development issues being regarded as intellectual assets for the Global South, thereby enhancing China's position in global development governance.

4.4 Increase Attention to Global Development

The complex and multifaceted nature of global development issues requires the implementation of long-term governance measures to achieve meaningful outcomes. Since the end of the Cold War, global development has faced persistent challenges, including unmet development goals, the postponement of financial and project aid from developed countries, and the stagnation of sustainable development goals established by international society. Most developing countries still face economic backwardness and weak development foundations. Many efforts of contemporary international society to address development challenges have failed. In addition to addressing absolute poverty, the inadequacy of development governance is evident in the uneven effectiveness of governance, as evidenced by the significant economic regression experienced by countries in dire need of development. Furthermore, the prospects of achieving the pre-established sustainable development goals set forth by the UN are

not promising. For example, the 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report published by the UN predicts that the global population living in extreme poverty in 2022 will range from 657 million to 676 million, thus exacerbating the problem of extreme poverty (UN, 2022).

The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the social and economic development of numerous countries, leading to increased vulnerability in developing countries (Wang & Huang, 2021). At the same time, the persistent lack of a sincere focus of international society on development issues contributes significantly to the complexities and challenges of global development. For example, the August 2017 report of the UN Human Rights Council, titled 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development', highlighted the remarkable neglect of the right to development by international society. This neglect manifests itself primarily as the politicization of development issues, in which countries prioritize defining and measuring the right to development. Consequently, this retreat and significant divergences have resulted in delays in subsequent UN actions on development issues (UNHRC 2017).

The GDI is primarily driven by the actual needs of most developing countries, regardless of political objectives. In addition, it strives to involve important global stakeholders in addressing global development issues. With strong support from the UN development system, the GDI has integrated development concepts endorsed by developing countries into its own norms, while also exploring and summarizing alternative development models and concepts that differ from those of developed countries. At the same time, the GDI plays a significant role in strengthening South-South cooperation by guiding an increasing number of developing countries to actively participate in the global development agenda of the UN. The objective of this cooperation is to create a synergy that will enable these countries to contribute to the formulation of development rules, express their opinions on matters of shared development, and advocate for their legitimate rights and interests.

5. Conclusion

Although GDI has attracted considerable attention in global society and its achievements improve the socioeconomic conditions of many developing countries in the Global South, it is crucial to acknowledge that the implementation process involves numerous practical difficulties and challenges.

First, the GDI needs to respond cautiously to address the prevailing dissatisfaction of western countries. Advancement of GDI requires active participation not only of China but also of international society, with particular emphasis on western countries, as they could exert significant influence on the governance of global development. As China's role in the global development governance becomes more prominent, western countries see an opportunity to take advantage of their political and cultural advantages to diminish China's influence in this area (Demarais, 2023). Some Chinese scholars posit that the prevailing deterrent stance of these western countries toward China is unlikely to undergo substantial changes in the short term, which will significantly intensify the strategic competition between these countries in the realm of global development governance (Zhang & Yu, 2022).

In particular, numerous worldwide development resources continue to be predominantly controlled by developed western countries, while many actors, including China, lack sufficient development resources. Competition between China and the West in global development governance will give rise to multiple overlapping regional governance blocs in the future. These blocs will compete with each other to dominate the development governance agenda, resulting in increased complexity and fragmentation of the development governance regimes. Consequently, this would significantly impede and even jeopardize progress toward enhancing the global development governance system and undermine hard-earned gains in global development governance.

Second, China must also acknowledge the constraints it faces in the realm of multilateral diplomacy. Although China has made notable strides in implementing the GDI, it is imperative to recognize that its multilateral diplomacy still lags behind that of developed countries in several key areas, including experience and resources. Despite China's unstoppable rise in international order, it remains a developing country with limited overall capabilities. These limitations will inevitably constrain China's influence in multilateral diplomatic affairs. For example, there is a disparity between China and developed countries in terms of financial and material contributions to the UN, as well as in terms of actively engaged personnel. The quantity and proportion of Chinese personnel in the UN system continue to lag behind those of western countries, and there is a scarcity of Chinese professionals in crucial areas such as UN finance, budgeting, auditing, and personnel management (Zhang, 2016).

Furthermore, multilateral diplomacy does not constitute the core of China's diplomatic endeavors for now; rather, it is subordinate to the overall strategic landscape of Chinese diplomacy and receives a comparatively lower level of domestic attention and resources. Consequently, the agendas and projects central to the GDI invariably require the participation of other partner countries or international organizations. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect China to implement the GDI unilaterally.

Third, the GDI represents China's inaugural global agenda focused on global development issues. However, it will face the challenge of inexperience during its subsequent implementation. Although China has gradually become more involved in a variety of global governance issues and has played an active contributing role, its participation has been characterized mainly by passive participation rather than active participation in shaping global governance agendas. Since the twentieth century, China has made substantial progress in the scope and depth of its participation, gradually changing from simply participating to active promotion. China has actively established certain regional agendas in accordance with the UN. China's participation in a wide range of global governance agendas has experienced a remarkable expansion, with the country actively promoting cooperative initiatives on various crucial global issues (Mao, 2022). However, it is relatively uncommon for China to take global initiatives within a specific area of interest. To advance the GDI, China must continue to learn from the experiences and lessons of other countries, with the aim of compensating for its limited prior experience.

Acknowledgement

None.

Funding Statement

This study is supported by the Major Program of the National Fund of Philosophy and Social Science of China (21&ZD173).

Author Contributions

Yong Chi: Writing, Original draft, Conceptualization. Zongxin Yue: Writing–review & editing. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Availability of Data and Materials

Data availability is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

References

- [1]. China Daily. (2024). Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202407/22/WS669db327a31095c51c50f2f8.html>
- [2]. China International Development Cooperation Agency. (2022). Press Statement on the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative. http://www.cidca.gov.cn/2022-09/22/c_121168....6591.htm
- [3]. China International Development Cooperation Agency. (2024). List of Deliverables for a Shared Future Actions Plan (50 items). <http://www.cidca.gov.cn/20240717/4967ac3bcada4560b0f278e586f9bc95/c.html>
- [4]. China's State Council Information Office. (2023). The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future. http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/zfbps_2279/202310/t20231010_773734.html
- [5]. Demarais, A. (2023). Aid Is the Next Battleground Between China and the West. Foreign Policy, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/22/debt-aid-imf-g20-global-south-development-china-west-us-geopolitics/>
- [6]. Fukuda-Parr, S., Yamin A. E., and Greenstein J. (2014). The Power of Numbers: A Critical Review of Millennium Development Goal Targets for Human Development and Human Rights. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 15(2-3): 105-117.
- [7]. Gore, C. (2022). The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries. *World Development*, 28(5): 789-804.

- [8]. Hameiri, S., & Jones L. (2018). China Challenges Global Governance? Chinese International Development Finance and the AIIB. *International Affairs*, 94(3): 573-593. DOI 10.1093/ia/iiy026.
- [9]. Jadoon, A. (2017). Persuasion and Predation: The Effects of U.S. Military Aid and International Development Aid on Civilian Killings. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 41(10): 776-800.
- [10]. Kardos, M. (2012). The Reflection of Good Governance in Sustainable Development Strategies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, (28): 1166-1173.
- [11]. Mao, R., and, Jiao, Y. (2022). China's Global Development Initiative and the Improvement of the Global Governance System. *Global Review*, (6): 17-31.
- [12]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2022a). Press Statement on the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202209/t20220921_10769134.shtml.
- [13]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2022b). Joining hands to advance global development initiatives and writing a new chapter of common development -- Keynote address at the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of Global Development Initiatives. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/202209/t20220921_10769127.shtml.
- [14]. People's Daily (2015). China's Achievements in Poverty Reduction are Envied by the World. <https://m.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJQC0g?re=nextnews>.
- [15]. People's Daily (2022). Working Together to Meet the Challenges of Our Times and Build a Better Future.
- [16]. Pereira, P., Zhao, W., Symochko, L., Inacio, M., Bogunovic, I., & Barcelo, D. (2022). The Russian-Ukrainian Armed Conflict will Push back the Sustainable Development Goals. *Geography and Sustainability*, 3(3): 277-287.
- [17]. Regilme, S. S. (2023). United States Foreign Aid and Multilateralism Under the Trump Presidency. *New Global Studies*, 17(1): 45-69.
- [18]. Schaefer, B. (2019) How the U.S. Should Address Rising Chinese Influence at the United Nations. The Heritage Foundation, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/how-the-us-should-address-rising-chinese-influence-the-united-nations>.
- [19]. The Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies (ACCWS). (2022). Global Development Initiative: Concepts, Practices and Value.
- [20]. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2021, February 25). Complete Victory in the Fight against Poverty. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-02/25/content_5588879.htm.
- [21]. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2022, January 17). "Xi Jinping's speech at the 2022 World Economic Forum virtual session. =) https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-01/17/content_5668944.htm.
- [22]. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2022, October 25). Xi Jinping: Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern

- Socialist Country in All Respects--Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-10/25/content_5721685.htm.
- [23]. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2024, September 6). Full text: China-Africa joint statement on deepening cooperation within the framework of the Global Development Initiative. https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202409/06/content_WS66dae22fc6d0868f4e8eaadf.html
- [24]. UNHRC. (2017). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development. UN Doc. A/HRC/36/49.
- [25]. United Nations General Assembly. (2021, September 21). Address by Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China. UN Doc. A/76/PV.3.
- [26]. United Nations. (12 July 2022). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>.
- [27]. Wang, M. (2022a). Operationalizing the Global Development and Security Initiatives: An Institutionalized Summitry Perspective. *Global Review*, (6): 18-36.
- [28]. Wang, Mingguo. (2022b). International Institutional Basis for Global Development Initiative. *Pacific Journal*, (9): 35-47.
- [29]. Wang, Q., and Huang, R. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development goals-A survey. *Environmental Research*, (202): 1-16.
- [30]. White House. (2025, January 20). Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/>.
- [31]. Xin, M. (2022a). The Times' Reflection on Common Values of All Mankind. *World Socialism Studies*, (9): 35-44.
- [32]. Xinhuanet. (2022, June 25). Forging High-quality Partnership for a New Era of Global Development: Remarks at the High-level Dialogue on Global Development. <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/m/gn/2022/06-24/9787986.shtml>.
- [33]. Xinhuanet. (2022, December 19). Successful adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. http://www.news.cn/2022-12/19/c_1129219817.htm.
- [34]. Xinhuanet. (2023, May 19). Full text: Xi Jinping's keynote speech at China-Central Asia Summit. <https://english.news.cn/20230519/cc4d7aceacbb4465a71f3c27d728569b/c.html>.
- [35]. Xu, F. (2000). A Research on Poverty in China. *Economic Review*, (1): 105-110.
- [36]. Zhang, G. (2016). The Transformation of China's UN Diplomacy. *China Development Observation*, (11): 19.
- [37]. Zhang, G., & Jiao, Y. (2022). International Organizations and Sino-U.S. Strategic Competition: Evolution, Dynamics, and Implication. *Global Review*, (5): 49-55.

- [38]. Zhao, R., & Zhang, G. (2022). Global Development Initiatives Dovetail with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Implications, Drivers and Pathways. *Hubei Social Science* [湖北社会科学], (6): 19-30.
- [39]. Zhao, S. (2010). The China Model: can it Replace the Western Model of Modernization? *Journal of Contemporary China*, (19): 419-436.
-

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MOSP and/or the editor(s). MOSP and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.