China's Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Its Ideological Components

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China's Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Its Ideological Components

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Ana Paula Martínez Barranco

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Introduction

The main objective of this research is to demonstrate how China's ideology impacts its foreign policy and, therefore, its interpretation of international relations. There are two secondary objectives that come as a direct result of the main objective. The first one is that, by demonstrating that the Chinese interpretation of international relations cannot be fully understood using only Western theories and concepts; the necessity to consider the Chinese way of interpreting reality arises, and with it, epistemicide of Eastern knowledge can be prevented. The second one is to highlight that the fact that China has a different view of international relations does not make it good or bad, it just makes it different, which must be valued because that difference may help find solutions to the emerging and changing challenges in the international context.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to verify the hypothesis that China's ideology is reflected in its foreign policy decisions and actions, and this verification will be demonstrated with the analysis of China's 2022 Global Security Initiative (GSI) as an example. The theoretical framework for this work will be the constructivist theory of International Relations. This means examining how China's foreign policy is influenced by the way it has constructed and interpreted reality based on its ideological context; hence, it is important to understand that China does not share the same interpretation of international relations as Western countries.

The value of using this theory lies in its ability to help us understand that every country in the world has a culture that generates its own ideology, which ends up impacting how it has built the meaning of different aspects, in this case, international relations. This difference does not make any country, and in this case China, better or worse; it simply makes them what they are. Understanding this could prevent many international conflicts, as well as reduce misunderstandings and the tendency to assume that others think the same as oneself, which often leads to misinterpretation of others' decisions and actions.

This research is relevant to the discipline of International Relations because the current international context, which has been dominated by Western powers for several

decades, has often marginalized or outright ignored the epistemological contributions from the East. This is concerning, as in the process, valuable interpretations, theories, ideas, proposals, and plans, among many other things, have been lost or undervalued simply because they come from a region that has been stigmatized as inferior by the current hegemons. By recognizing that China's ideology is present in its foreign policy, another recognition is made: its epistemology deserves and needs to be understood since its worldview comes from within; which is also why forcing Eastern countries to fit into a purely Western framework is irrational.

Furthermore, it is evident that the current international context has emerging, changing, and complex needs that are no longer being met by the current regimes, institutions, and international agreements, whose ideas predominantly originate in the West. This is why it is essential to have an open mind into hearing new proposals that might hold the solution to problems that have remained unresolved for decades, or at least get closer to it. Additionally, it is crucial to emphasize that if we aim to achieve a more harmonious and lasting peaceful international scenario, one of the requirements is to end epistemicide and embrace the cultural and ideological richness within it, leaving behind dynamics in which some countries place themselves above others. This would help promote the development of horizontality in international relations.

Likewise, recognizing the influence of China's cultural ideology on its foreign policy decisions and actions is valuable, as it helps clarify misinterpretations about China's true interests and the underlying causes of its worldview, particularly regarding global security. It is common to label China as the new hegemon that will replace the United States, but such a comparison is not ideal, as they do not share the same cultural ideology, and therefore do not have the same interests or goals to achieve in the international arena, nor the same means to achieve them. This would promote more accurate interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of China's proposals, such as the GSI, as they would be made with an understanding of the true context behind them, allowing for a more objective and fair opinion to be formed.

The example that will be analyzed in this work to support the hypothesis, the GSI, is valuable for International Relations because it addresses a fundamental concern

for global stability: security. Through its initiative, China, as one of the most prominent emerging powers, recognizes the importance of actively contributing to international security. By launching this initiative, the country demonstrates its commitment to promoting peace and stability in an increasingly interconnected and complex world. By addressing transnational threats such as terrorism, piracy, cyberattacks, and drug trafficking, China shows its willingness to work with other countries to tackle shared challenges.

Secondly, the GSI is relevant to international dynamics because it offers a platform for multilateral cooperation. At a time when unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise in some countries, China's security initiative underscores the importance of collaboration between nations. By promoting cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, conflict prevention, and crisis management, the GSI fosters a collective approach to addressing the complex security threats facing the international community.

Thirdly, the GSI is interesting for the international arena because it reflects China's growing influence in global affairs. As the Asian country becomes an economic and military power, its role on the international stage is increasing. The Global Security Initiative is an example of how China seeks to play a more active and constructive role in shaping the world order. By leading in areas such as maritime security and combating climate change, China is positioning itself as a key player in promoting stability and sustainable development worldwide.

Finally, the GSI is based on an innovative proposal for viewing global security that significantly contributes to the discipline of International Relations: indivisible security. This concept advocates for the indivisibility between individual and common security, between traditional and non-traditional security, between security rights and security obligations, and between security and development. Furthermore, it emphasizes that the security of one country is inevitably linked to that of other countries, and therefore, it is important to ensure that the strengthening of one's security does not come at the expense of harming another country's security; on the contrary, they should mutually reinforce each other.

1. Constructivism to understand China's Vision of International Relations

1.1 The Construction of Reality and Social Constructs

Constructivism is one of the most important theories in the discipline of International Relations (IR). It focuses on the idea that key aspects of international politics are socially constructed rather than inherent or predetermined. Unlike realism, which emphasizes power and material factors, and liberalism, which highlights institutions and cooperation, constructivism argues that the identities, beliefs, and norms of States play a crucial role in shaping international outcomes.

Moreover, the constructivist approach has several precepts that give structure to the overall theory. First, constructivism is centrally concerned with the role of ideas in the assembly of different components of social life. Second, it emphasizes the socially constructed nature of agents or subjects. Third, the study of culture and international relations is closely identified with constructivism. Fourth, constructivism breaks down the wall between domestic and international politics. Finally, constructivism states that the way the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world (Erbas, 2022).

Constructivists believe that the international system is not just a given structure but is given a meaning through the interactions, ideas, and shared understandings of States and other actors. For instance, what States consider threats, allies, or legitimate actions are based on epistemic constructions made by society that can change over time as collective ideas and norms evolve. In essence, constructivism emphasizes the importance of ideas, beliefs, and identities in international relations, suggesting that the way States perceive themselves and others can significantly influence global politics (Theys, 2018). This investigation will utilize the constructivist concepts of the *construction of reality* and *social constructs* to explain the origin of a specific Chinese vision of international relations.

Firstly, the concept of the *construction of reality* by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann refers to the idea that reality is socially constructed through the interactions

and shared understandings of individuals within a society. In their seminal work, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), they argue that knowledge and meanings are created through social processes, and what is considered real or true is shaped by cultural and social contexts. This reality is maintained and reinforced through language, institutions, and social practices, making it a product of collective human activity rather than an objective, external fact (Yáñez, 2010).

Moreover, a *social construct* is an idea, concept, or perception that has been created and accepted by people within a society, shaping their understanding of reality. Unlike natural phenomena, these accepted interpretations of reality and its components do not have an inherent existence but are developed through social interactions, cultural norms, and shared beliefs. They exist and hold meaning because people collectively agree on their significance and value. Constructivism emphasizes that these constructs influence behavior, identity, and relationships in international relations and society, demonstrating that much of what is considered real or natural is the result of social processes (Pfefferle, 2014).

Both concepts—*the construction of reality* and *social constructs*—emphasize the importance of ideology when defining or interpreting a concept or situation. Since, according to constructivism, the *construction of reality* and the *social constructs* that are produced are directly affected by the circumstances in which they were produced, it is important to understand that what is categorized as true, real, or normal will vary depending on the variables and factors that influenced the process. In this case, the factor that this investigation will focus on is the ideology shaped by the culture of a country, which will produce an interpretation of a concept that differs from those of other countries with different ideologies and cultures.

1.2 The Chinese Social Construct of International Relations

Typically, the theory used to assess the foreign policy of a particular country would be Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) Theory. However, for the specific objectives of this investigation, this theory is insufficient to explain ideology as a significant influence on foreign policy. This is why a constructivist approach will be used to analyze China's

foreign policy and how its ideology plays an essential role in the process of defining and making decisions. It is important to acknowledge that States' constructed identities, shared understandings, and socio-political situations within the broader international system largely determine their interests and the foreign policy practices to secure them.

The value of employing a constructivist approach for this research lies in its ability to illuminate how each country, including China, develops a unique worldview influenced by its cultural and ideological foundations. These foundational elements shape how nations understand and engage with various aspects of international relations. It is crucial to recognize that these differences do not imply superiority or inferiority between nations; rather, they underline the diversity of perspectives that exist in the global arena. By acknowledging and respecting these differences, the international community can potentially mitigate conflicts that arise from misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Based on the orthodox/Western dominated toolkit to analyze the international system and its dynamics—which assumes a realist vision of anarchy, self-help, and competing national interests—conflicts are inherent to international relations. Often, conflicts are exacerbated by the assumption that all nations perceive and react to global issues in the same way, leading to erroneous judgments about their motives and actions.

Furthermore, the current international context is characterized by emerging, complex, and evolving challenges that the existing global regimes, institutions, and agreements—predominantly shaped by Western ideas—prove to have a poor capability to address. Considering this, it is imperative to remain open to new proposals that may offer innovative solutions to long-standing global problems or at least provide new approaches that bring us closer to resolving them. Embracing such diversity in thought and practice is not only beneficial but necessary for achieving a more harmonious and sustainable global order. A crucial step toward this goal is the eradication of epistemicide, which involves the suppression or devaluation of non-Western knowledge systems. By embracing the cultural and ideological richness that different nations bring to the table, the international community can move away from hierarchical power dynamics, promoting more horizontal relations among states.

Additionally, recognizing the influence of China's cultural ideology on its foreign policy decisions and actions provides valuable insights into the motivations and interests shaping its approach to global security. This perspective is particularly relevant in challenging the prevailing narrative that frames China as the next global hegemon. Such comparisons are overly simplistic and often misleading, as they overlook the fundamental differences in cultural ideologies, priorities, and objectives that distinguish China from the Western powers that have historically dominated the international system. By examining China's 2022 Global Security Initiative (GSI) through the lens of its cultural ideology, this research seeks to offer a more accurate and nuanced interpretation of its proposals. Such an approach enables more objective and balanced evaluations of China's initiatives, fostering a deeper understanding of their broader context and underlying intentions.

According to Maysam Behravesh (2011), "various cognitive processes impact upon foreign policy construction" (p. 1). Therefore, "if traditional Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) is understood to exogenize interests (to take them as given) then a constructivist FPA would endogenize them: exploring how interests are constructed through a process of social interaction" (Checkel in Dunne, Hatfield, et al, 2008, p. 74). This highlights that in social interaction, a *social construct* is formed, and this product that is formed is significantly impacted by the ideology practiced within the society in question.

As thoroughly explained in the previous section (1.1), the meanings given to different concepts that came because of a social consensus—in this case, the concept of international relations—have a direct impact on the understanding of reality. In the case of China, its ideology has always played a crucial role in the process of *constructing reality* and *social constructs* throughout its history. They give ideology a special and holistic place that impacts many, if not all, aspects of life. As a result, their perception of international relations, and therefore their foreign policy actions and decisions, have been significantly impacted by this ideology.

Consequently, the Chinese interpretation of international relations, often referred to as the *Chinese School of International Relations*, is rooted in China's unique historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions. It reflects a distinctive perspective on

global order, diplomacy, and State behavior, influenced by Confucianism, historical experiences, and China's evolving role in the world. To have a better understanding of what this particular perception involves, the following are some selected key aspects of the Chinese *social construct* of international relations:

1. **Harmony and Hierarchy:** Influenced by Confucian philosophy, the Chinese understanding of international relations places a strong emphasis on the principles of harmony, balance, and order. Confucian thought advocates for a world where peace and social order are maintained through moral virtues rather than through force or coercion. Central to this worldview is the concept of "Tianxia" (All-Under-Heaven), a notion that historically positioned China as the preeminent civilization in a hierarchical international system. In this system, China was seen as the moral and cultural center, guiding other States and societies by example rather than through military or economic domination. The idea of "Tianxia" suggests that international relations should be governed by a sense of shared humanity and moral responsibility, with China assuming a leadership role in fostering global harmony. This emphasis on moral authority over coercive power reflects China's historical self-image as a benevolent leader in the international community, where the maintenance of order is achieved through ethical governance and the promotion of harmony among nations (Qin, 2011).

2. **Relationality:** Chinese international relations theory places a significant emphasis on the concept of relationality, which contrasts with the Western notion of States as independent, self-contained entities operating in an anarchic international system. In the Chinese worldview, the identity and behavior of States are understood to be deeply interconnected, shaped by their relationships with other States and the broader international community. This perspective draws from a broader Chinese cultural emphasis on social networks and the importance of relationships in shaping individual and collective identities. In practice, this means that Chinese foreign policy often prioritizes building and maintaining strong, cooperative relationships with other States, viewing

diplomacy as a continuous process of negotiation and mutual adjustment. Rather than focusing only on the pursuit of national interests in isolation, Chinese IR theory recognizes the fluid and dynamic nature of international relations, where the actions of one State inevitably affect and are affected by the actions of others. This relational approach fosters a sense of interdependence and encourages a more collaborative and holistic approach to global governance (Qin, 2011).

3. **Pragmatism and Realpolitik:** While the Chinese interpretation of international relations emphasizes moral authority, harmony, and relationality, it also incorporates a pragmatic and strategic dimension. China's foreign policy is characterized by a careful balance between idealism and realism, guided by a long tradition of the management of States and realpolitik. This pragmatic approach recognizes the importance of power and national interest in shaping international relations, and it reflects China's historical experiences as a State that has had to navigate a complex and often hostile global environment. In practice, this means that while China may advocate for moral principles and global harmony, it is also acutely aware of the need to protect its national interests and assert its influence in the international arena. This pragmatic realism is evident in China's strategic decisions, where it often seeks to maximize its geopolitical advantages and secure its position as a major global power. This dual approach—balancing moral authority with pragmatic considerations—allows China to navigate the complexities of international relations in a way that is both principled and effective (Feng, 2015).

4. **Community of Common Destiny:** In recent years, China has increasingly promoted the concept of a "Community of Common Destiny," which reflects its vision for a more inclusive and equitable global order. This concept advocates for a world in which nations are bound together by shared goals of development, mutual respect, and cooperation. The idea of a Community of Common Destiny is rooted in the belief that the challenges facing the world today—such as economic inequality, climate change, and global security threats—can only be

effectively addressed through collective action and shared responsibility. China's promotion of this concept aligns with its broader vision of a multipolar world, where global governance is not dominated by any single power but is instead characterized by a more balanced and just distribution of influence and resources. By calling for a Community of Common Destiny, China seeks to foster a sense of global solidarity and encourage all nations to work together in pursuit of common interests, creating a more harmonious and stable international environment (Feng, 2015).

5. **Historical Sensitivity:** China's approach to international relations is profoundly shaped by its historical experiences, particularly the Century of Humiliation, which was a period of foreign intervention and subjugation that deeply impacted China's national consciousness. This historical sensitivity influences China's contemporary views on key issues such as sovereignty, non-interference, and territorial integrity. The memory of the Century of Humiliation has provoked in China a strong commitment to protecting its sovereignty and resisting any forms of external interference. This historical perspective also explains China's insistence on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, as well as its emphasis on the inviolability of its territorial borders. China seeks to ensure that it never again experiences the vulnerabilities and indignities it faced during that period. This historical consciousness also shapes China's interactions with other nations, as it approaches international relations with a deep awareness of the importance of respecting the sovereignty and dignity of all States, while also being vigilant in safeguarding its own national interests (Yan, 2011).

Overall, the Chinese socially agreed interpretation of international relations offers a perspective that is distinct from Western IR theories, since this one emphasizes relational dynamics, cultural values, and historical continuity. On the other hand, it is common for the Western perspective of IR to be an anarchical one, where change is seen as a threat, cultural differences as an obstacle and international regimes that state the rules of the game in stone are desirable, the latter without an interest in evolving

with the needs of the current international context, but rather adapting the needs to the rules of the game that have been at work for ages.

The following self-elaborated table presents a visual contrast of key aspects of the international relations construct between China and the West:

Table: Contrast of the international relations concept perspective between China and the West

Key Aspect	Chinese perspective	Western perspective
Relational Dynamics vs. Anarchy	Focuses on relationships and interdependence between States, with an emphasis on harmony, cooperation, and mutual benefit.	Sees the international system as anarchic, where States are primarily concerned with self-interest, power, and survival, leading to a focus on competition and rivalry (Hobson, 2012).
Cultural Values vs. Universalism	Integrates cultural and historical values, such as Confucian ideas of order and balance, into its IR framework. These values guide State behavior and promote a more adaptive approach to international cooperation.	Often views cultural differences as obstacles, preferring universal norms and principles, such as democracy and human rights, that may not always align with non-Western cultures (Hobson, 2012).
Historical Continuity vs. Fixed Regimes	Emphasizes continuity, and an active learning from its long history of diplomacy and governance. It values flexibility and evolution in international systems, adapting to the current context and its specific demands or needs.	Tends to favor established international regimes with fixed rules, such as those from institutions like the United Nations or the World Trade Organization, which can be slow or negligent to evolve with the changing global needs (Schmidtke, Schirmer, et al., 2024).
Adaptation vs. Resistance to Change	Sees change as a natural, inevitable and necessary	Often perceives change as a threat to stability,

	process, which puts the focus on evolving norms and adjusting global governance to meet modern challenges.	preferring to maintain existing rules and structures, even if they become outdated or misaligned with contemporary international dynamics, and/or if they end up excluding the needs and perspectives of non-Western nations (Young, 2014).

In summary, the Chinese view is more fluid, relational, and rooted in historical context, while the Western approach is more rigid, rule-based, and anarchical, reflecting a divide in how each culture views order and stability in international relations, and therefore, affecting directly the way in which each one has constructed its own interpretation of the international relations concept.

2. Chinese Ideology that sustains its Foreign Policy

2.1 Chinese Relationality Theory for International Relations

2.1.1 The Philosophy of the Chinese Classic Book *I Ching* as the base of Relationality

China's definition of international relations can be better analyzed when parting from an example of its materialization. As explained before in section 1.2, there is a Chinese School of International Relations that has developed several approaches and theories to study the subject in question and that has a direct impact in its decision-making process in foreign policy. The specific theory that will be analyzed for the sake of the objectives of this investigation is the Chinese Relationality Theory of International Relations that has been established from a

> dialogue between Western international theories and Chinese cultural thoughts. It is a cross-cultural dialogue, with more critical reflections, inspired by Western theories and relating them to Chinese culture, practices and worldview. Applying this method, we have developed a theory of relationality to understand dynamic international relations (Qin, 2013, p. 7).

Relationality itself is a Chinese cultural concept that has been present throughout the country's history since its very beginnings. It is a concept that was born in one of the Chinese Classic Books that were rescued in the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC - 256 BC): the *I Ching*. This book relies on the philosophy of change, duality and balance. It highlights the dialectical relationship of opposites and sustains that changes follow one another in a cyclical and inevitable manner, like the seasons of the year, which clearly shows the Taoist concept of *yin and yang* (which will be explained later). What is crucial to acknowledge about the former concepts is that all of them add up to a worldview that sees life as a dynamic process, where wisdom lies in adapting to and flowing with the inevitable transformations of existence (Wilhelm and Wilhelm, 2022).

In order to deeply grasp the Chinese Relationality Theory of International Relations, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the core concepts that are intricately woven throughout the theory. At the heart of this theory lies the concept of relationality, which explains the significance of relationships and interconnectedness in shaping the behavior and identities of States within the international system. This concept is not isolated but is immersed in the broader philosophical and cultural traditions of China, which are reflected in the key propositions of the theory. A detailed examination of these propositions taken from Fung (1953) reveals how the theory draws on ancient Chinese wisdom to provide a unique perspective on international relations.

The first proposition central to the Relationality Theory is the *notion of change* and transformation, a concept deeply rooted in the *I Ching* (The Book of Changes), one of the oldest Chinese classical texts. The *I Ching* teaches that the universe is in a perpetual state of fluctuation, where everything is continuously evolving and nothing remains static. This principle is encapsulated in the term "Yi" (易), which signifies "change" or "transformation." The *I Ching* provides a philosophical framework for understanding and navigating the inevitable changes that occur in life, emphasizing that adaptability is essential for survival and success. In the context of International Relations, this proposition suggests that States must remain flexible and responsive to the ever-changing dynamics of the global environment. Rather than clinging to rigid policies or fixed alliances, the Relationality Theory advocates for an open-minded approach, where States continuously adjust their strategies in response to new circumstances and opportunities.

The second proposition inside the theory is the philosophy of *Yin and Yang*, which represents the dual forces that permeate all aspects of life. *Yin and Yang* are opposite yet complementary forces, with Yin symbolizing qualities such as darkness, passivity, and receptivity, while Yang represents light, activity, and creativity. The interaction and balance between these forces are fundamental for all the changes in the universe, where neither can exist without the other. In the context of International Relations, this philosophy spots the importance of balancing opposing forces, such as

cooperation and competition, or peace and conflict. The Relationality Theory, drawing on the *Yin and Yang* principle, suggests that the stability of the international system depends on maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between these forces. States are encouraged to recognize and respect the dualities present in global interactions, understanding that harmony arises not from eliminating conflict but from managing and balancing it effectively.

The third proposition emphasizes the critical importance of *harmony and balance* in all aspects of life, as highlighted in the *I Ching.* The text advises individuals to align their actions with the natural flow of events, rather than resist or work against it. This alignment with the principles of the universe is seen as the key to achieving harmony and avoiding conflict or misfortune. In the context of International Relations, the Relationality Theory applies this principle by supporting the creation of policies and actions that promote global harmony and balance. It suggests that States should seek to harmonize their interests with those of others, avoiding zero-sum games and instead pursuing strategies that contribute to the overall stability and well-being of the international community. This proposition also implies that conflict in international relations often arises from a failure to maintain balance, either through excessive aggression or passive submission, and that true peace is achieved when States act in favor of the natural order of global interactions.

The fourth proposition addresses the use of the *I Ching* as a tool for divination and the *acquisition of wisdom*. Traditionally, the *I Ching* has been employed as a means for offering guidance in decision-making, encouraging reflection and introspection. Through the interpretation of hexagrams and their associated meanings, individuals can explore different possibilities and outcomes, gaining deeper insight into the patterns of life and the universe. In the context of International Relations, this proposition suggests that States should engage in thoughtful analysis and strategic anticipation, using wisdom derived from historical experiences and cultural knowledge to guide their decisions, and avoid making the same mistakes. The Relationality Theory advocates for a reflective approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, where States carefully consider the potential consequences of their actions and seek to understand the deeper currents

shaping global affairs. This wisdom-oriented approach helps States navigate the complexities of international relations with greater clarity and purpose.

The fifth and final proposition emphasizes the ethical dimensions of the *I Ching*, which, while not being an explicitly moral text, does carry implicit guidance on *proper conduct and behavior*. The *I Ching* suggests that individuals should act with integrity, humility, and a sharp awareness of the larger forces at play in the universe. In the field of International Relations, the Relationality Theory emphasizes this ethical foundation to promote a vision of global governance based on moral principles and ethical behavior. States are encouraged to conduct themselves with a sense of responsibility and fairness, recognizing the impact of their actions on the broader international community. Proper conduct and timing, as advised by the *I Ching*, are seen as crucial to successfully navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the ever-changing global landscape. This proposition shows the importance of ethical leadership and principled diplomacy in building a more just and peaceful world.

2.1.2 Meta-relations

The relational approach in China's foreign policy emphasizes that State interactions are not isolated but part of an intricate web of relationships, shaped by mutual dependencies, historical ties, cultural affinities, and evolving power dynamics. This perspective departs significantly from the Western State-centric view of international relations, which tends to focus on individual actors and static concepts of power. Instead, the Chinese approach is dynamic, fluid and relational, offering important insights into understanding China's foreign policy behavior. Central to this framework is the Chinese Theory of Relationality in International Relations, which highlights the significance of relationships as fundamental elements of international engagement.

At the core of this theory, introduced by Qin (2013), is the concept of meta-relations, which elevates relationships beyond mere interactions between isolated States. The concept of meta-relations recognizes the deeply intertwined nature of global actors, where the relationship itself becomes a defining feature of international dynamics. In this view, relationships are not simply a product of historical or cultural

factors but are central to how power, influence, and diplomacy unfold over time. This notion of meta-relations draws on Chinese philosophical traditions, particularly the concept of *Yin and Yang*, to emphasize the co-evolution of opposites.

Unlike the Hegelian dialectic, which is structured around conflict and resolution, the Chinese concept of meta-relations rejects the premise that opposites must exist in perpetual conflict. Instead, it proposes that opposing forces, such as *Yin and Yang*, are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The interaction between these forces does not culminate in the negation of one or the triumph of the other, as is often emphasized in the Western tradition of synthesis. Rather, the Chinese approach suggests that the interaction between them leads to a continuous process of harmonization, where both forces evolve together into a higher synthesis. This synthesis is not about dominance or hierarchy but about mutual enhancement, creating something greater that incorporates elements from both poles without reducing them to a singular outcome.

In this way, the Chinese relational worldview places great emphasis on interconnectivity and interdependence. It rejects the notion of isolated entities acting independently in the international system. Instead, it recognizes that all actors are embedded in a complex, dynamic web of relationships that are constantly shifting and evolving. A change in one part of the system inevitably affects the whole, making relationality a central aspect of any understanding of global affairs. This interconnectedness is exemplified in the relationship between *Yin and Yang*, which serves as a metaphor for the dynamic interactions that govern the universe, including international relations.

The key to understanding these interactions lies in the principle of harmony. While Western models often focus on the resolution of conflict through competition and domination, Chinese dialectics places harmony at the center of its worldview. Harmony, in this sense, is not a static end state to be achieved but an ongoing process of balance and integration. Opposing forces, rather than being in constant conflict, coexist in a dynamic equilibrium where their interaction leads to a greater balance. This continuous process of harmonization reflects the traditional Chinese understanding of the world as

interconnected and ever-evolving, where balance is sought through cooperation rather than through the elimination of opposition (Grachikov, 2019).

This process of harmonization is guided by the principle of Zhongyong, often translated as the "mutually inclusive way". Zhongyong represents the idea of balance, moderation, and finding a middle way that reconciles opposing forces without diminishing their distinctiveness. It is not about compromise in the Western sense of giving up part of one's position, but about an inclusive approach where both poles, such as *Yin and Yang*, are integrated into a greater whole. This holistic process allows for the flourishing of the entire system, as each element retains its integrity while contributing to the balance and harmony of the whole (Guzzini, 2024). In this sense, the principle of Zhongyong represents a unique Chinese perspective on managing differences, one that seeks integration rather than domination.

Moreover, the concept of meta-relations underlines the importance of understanding international dynamics as evolving and fluid rather than static and fixed. The relationships between States are constantly shifting, and the Chinese approach suggests that success in foreign policy comes not from dominating others but from recognizing and adapting to these shifts in a way that maintains balance and promotes collective well-being. The interaction between *Yin and Yang*, with its emphasis on balance and harmony, serves as a guiding metaphor for how China seeks to navigate the complexities of international politics (Feng, 2015).

Thus, the Chinese approach to relationality offers a more holistic and integrative vision of international relations. It suggests that conflict and opposition, when approached through the lens of harmony and balance, can be productive rather than destructive. This relational framework is central to China's contemporary foreign policy, offering an alternative to conflict-driven models of international engagement. By applying this concept to its foreign relations, China seeks to build a global order that prioritizes complementarity, cooperation, and the mutual flourishing of all actors.

2.1.3 Relational Governance

Qin's theory provides one alternative for the Western concept of global governance: relational governance. This is defined by the former author, its creator, as

> a process of negotiating socio-political agreements that manage complex relationships in a community in order to generate order so that members behave in a reciprocal and cooperative manner on the basis of mutual trust, which develops from a shared understanding of social norms and human morality (2011, p. 10).

The key words in this definition are process, relationships, reciprocal, cooperative, trust and morality.

The current global context is full of uncertainty, constant change and emerging challenges, therefore, it is crucial to see governance as an evolving *process*, not as a static means to control others into following rules that may no longer be functional for the current needs demanded by the international scenario. The former statement implies in itself the relevance of maintaining *reciprocal and cooperative relationships* that aim to reach a harmonized environment. This will eventually build up the *trust*, because the actors involved in these relationships will feel included, listened to and therefore, eager to participate. Finally, *morality* will be the base that holds all the other aspects mentioned before together, giving relational governance the sufficient strength to survive and evolve.

Relationality theory provides an alternative framework for comprehending governance, both in its broader sense and within the specific context of global governance. Over recent decades, the concept of global governance has become a cornerstone of academic discourse in International Relations. However, much of the attention has been disproportionately directed toward the study of international regimes and institutions, often overlooking the relational dynamics that underpin governance on a global scale. Originating largely from regime studies that gained popularity in the United States during the mid-1980s, the tradition of neoliberal institutionalism has been

dominating the field, with rules-based governance solidifying as the primary, and often singular, model explored within the International Relations discipline (Qin, 2011).

This dominant approach places a strong emphasis on the role of international rules, particularly their formulation, functions, and enforcement. Within this paradigm, non-cooperation or conflict is typically understood as a failure to adhere to established rules, with violations often positioned as the central explanation for breakdowns in global governance. While it is undeniable that international rules play a critical role in maintaining order and facilitating cooperation on a global scale, the nearly exclusive focus on rules-based governance leaves out other governance models. History and various international systems demonstrate that alternative forms of governance have existed, and continue to exist, outside the boundaries of rigid, rule-bound structures (Weiss, 2000).

As a result, the dominance of neoliberal institutionalism has led mainstream International Relations theorists to advocate for rules-based governance, often at the expense of failing to explore and acknowledge alternative models of governance. The emphasis on rules has overshadowed more relational approaches that could provide valuable and innovative understandings of how global governance might function beyond the implementation and enforcement of formal regulations. Thus, while rules-based governance has its merits and has contributed significantly to the study of International Relations, its nearly hegemonic position in the field has limited broader explorations into governance models that emphasize relationships, mutuality, and contextualized practices (Wang and Zhao, 2020).

Consequently, while rules are undoubtedly essential in shaping and sustaining international governance, they are not omnipresent, nor are they the only viable governance framework. The Relationality Theory challenges this singular focus and opens the door for a more comprehensive understanding of global governance, one that accounts for the complexity and diversity of international interactions beyond the limits placed by rules and formal institutions: relational governance. Therefore, relational governance promotes that instead of aiming to stick to atemporal rules, States should

be in constant reunion and critical debate in order to frequently update and adapt the international agreements to properly address the needs of the current international context. These reunions must have a horizontal focus with trust and cooperation as the main pillars; where all State's participation, opinions and concerns have an equal value and equal consideration in the making of a resolution.

2.2 Strong Nation Diplomacy: a way to protect Chinese Ideology when engaging with the Western World

The Strong Nation Diplomacy represents an updated approach that serves a dual purpose: reinforcing China's global positioning while safeguarding its national sovereignty. By actively engaging in global governance, China aims not only to participate but also to play a leading role in shaping international norms and systems. This includes advocating for reforms in international institutions to better reflect the shifting balance of power and ensuring that global governance structures are more inclusive of non-Western perspectives (International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2022). Central to this approach is the integration of Chinese ideology, which highlights the importance of the Chinese School of International Relations, acknowledges its unique social constructs in international relations, and promotes the visibility of the Relational Theory of International Relations. These elements collectively shape China's distinct perspective and behavior in foreign policy.

Furthermore, this approach emphasizes China's growing confidence on the world stage, reflecting its desire to contribute to shaping the global order while simultaneously safeguarding its own core values and ideology. A central feature of this diplomacy is the protection and promotion of Chinese ideology, particularly the political system of the Communist Party of China, socialism with Chinese characteristics, and a unique blend of its cultural values. Through a combination of assertive foreign policy, global institution-building, and the promotion of alternative narratives to Western liberalism, China seeks not only to strengthen its international influence but also to protect and project its domestic ideological framework.

As stated before, the concept of Strong Nation Diplomacy in China is significantly worried about the preservation of the country's ideology even when having the openness to interact with other cultures in the international context. While the primary function of this ideology is to legitimize the authority of the current administration, there is a palpable sense of insecurity within the leadership of the Communist Party concerning the long-term survival of its governance system. This internal concern is evident in China's heightened focus on security in both domestic and international arenas. Even if the Chinese country is not closed to interacting with the Western world, which is a must when wanting to increase engagement with the international system, it wants to define clear boundaries to prevent its culture from becoming vulnerable to Western intervention, specially when it comes to liberalization.

Despite the absence of an active military conflict, the Xi administration perceives China's security environment as increasingly precarious. Xi Jinping has frequently emphasized that hostile Western forces are engaging in ideological penetration, posing a significant threat to China's sovereignty, security, and development interests. Furthermore, Xi points to the risks presented to internal political and social stability by external pressures. This rhetoric reflects a deep awareness within the Chinese leadership of the ideological difference between China and Western nations. In particular, the notion of peaceful evolution—a concept popular among some Western circles that advocates for the gradual transformation of socialist States into liberal democracies through non-violent means—has become a source of significant concern for China (Aoyama, 2021).

In response to the perceived threat of peaceful evolution, the Chinese government has launched a campaign centered on what is termed as the *confidence doctrine.* This doctrine calls upon the Chinese society to be confident in their chosen path, in their guiding theories, in their political system, and confident in their culture. These four pillars of confidence are meant to strengthen domestic ideological cohesion and resilience against foreign influence. Additionally, efforts to export the Chinese experience—a model that emphasizes State-led economic development and authoritarian governance—have intensified, particularly in connection with the Belt and

Road Initiative (BRI). Through the BRI, China aims not only to expand its economic and geopolitical influence but also to promote its governance model as a viable alternative to Western democratic systems, particularly in developing nations (Yang, 2015).

This strategic shift in China's foreign policy is designed to position more effectively the country within the emerging multipolar global order. Central to this realignment is an emphasis on peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit, which China aims to achieve through the cultivation of high-quality international partnerships and the expansion of initiatives like the BRI. By fostering stronger economic and diplomatic ties globally, China seeks to enhance its influence on the world stage while advancing its interests in a way that emphasizes cooperation rather than conflict.

At the core of this change of focus in its foreign policy assessment is China's pursuit of national rejuvenation, which has been a central theme in the policies of President Xi Jinping. The Chinese Dream of rejuvenation involves transforming China into a modern socialist nation by the middle of the 21st century. This will be achieved by recognizing that a strong international presence is essential. This strategic alignment not only focuses on strengthening China's economic growth and technological advancement but also on enhancing political and cultural influence globally, which will eventually end up solidifying its role as a key player in a multipolar world (Yuan, 2024).

In conclusion, China's Strong Nation Diplomacy represents a strategic effort to secure its global position while reinforcing its domestic ideological foundations. By prioritizing sovereignty, security, and the protection of its socialist system, China seeks to navigate a complex international environment shaped by ideological divergence, particularly with Western liberal democracies. The confidence doctrine and initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative show China's ambition to project its model of governance globally, challenging dominant Western paradigms. As China moves forward, its foreign policy is increasingly tied to its vision of national rejuvenation, blending economic development with the protection of cultural and political identity. This approach positions China as a key player in an evolving multipolar world order, where it seeks not only to assert its influence but also to reshape global governance in ways that

reflect its unique historical and ideological trajectory. Ultimately, China's diplomacy signals a broader aspiration to redefine global norms, ensuring that its rise is aligned with the preservation and promotion of its ideological values even when engaging in the world stage.

3. Analysis of China's 2022 Global Security Initiative

3.1 The Main Proposals of the Global Security Initiative

China's 2022 Global Security Initiative (GSI) represents a significant milestone in the global geopolitical landscape, with vast and profound implications that could influence the international order. The GSI was launched at the annual Boao Forum for Asia from April 20th to the 22nd of 2022, under the theme: "The World during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: Working Together for Global Development and a Shared Future." This important forum is a high-level organization that brings together political leaders, academics, and entrepreneurs from the Asian continent, with its main objectives being to promote regional economic integration and to bring Asian countries closer to their development goals (Kortunov, 2023).

In the opening speech of that year, President Xi Jinping proposed the GSI for the first time, which was a vigorous proposal providing concrete answers to the most important questions of the current international context regarding the definition of security that countries need in a world with increasing geopolitical tensions and challenges in areas such as health, the environment, and economic development. The official document published by China's government that presents the GSI's content, priorities, and mechanisms is the *Global Security Initiative Concept Paper* published in English by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2023).

According to the content of the official document mentioned before, the GSI is based and developed on six main commitments:

1. Stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, which means respecting and safeguarding the security of each country; coordinated global governance, political dialogue and peaceful negotiation, resolving conflicts through development, and eliminating the main roots of insecurity. Security will only be sustainable if it is supported by morality, justice, and the right ideas.

2. Stay committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. Therefore, equal sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of another country, freedom to independently choose social systems and development paths.

3. Maintain the commitment to respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. The various confrontations and injustices in today's world have not occurred because the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter have become obsolete, but because they are not being effectively maintained and applied. We call on all countries to practice true multilateralism and respect the authority of the UN as the main platform for global security governance. The Cold War mentality, unilateralism, block confrontation, and hegemonism contradict the spirit of the UN Charter and should be resisted and rejected.

4. The security of one country should not harm that of others. The legitimate and reasonable security concerns of all countries must be taken seriously and addressed appropriately, not persistently ignored or systematically questioned. Upholding the principle of indivisible security, advocating for the indivisibility between individual and common security, between traditional and non-traditional security, between security rights and security obligations, and between security and development.

5. Urge countries to strengthen dialogue, strategic communication, increase mutual trust in security matters, diffuse tensions, manage differences, and eliminate the root causes of crises. The international community must support all efforts leading to the peaceful resolution of crises and encourage conflicting parties to build trust, resolve disputes, and promote security through dialogue. Abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction does not solve a problem, but only creates more difficulties and complications.

6. Maintain the commitment to ensuring security in both traditional and non-traditional areas. Security is more interconnected, transnational, and diverse. Traditional and non-traditional security threats have intertwined, as seen in global challenges like terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity, and biosecurity.

In summary, firstly, the GSI addresses a fundamental concern for global stability: security. China, as one of the most prominent emerging powers, recognizes the importance of actively contributing to international security. By launching this initiative, the country shows its commitment to promoting peace and stability in an increasingly interconnected and complex world. By addressing transnational threats such as terrorism, piracy, cyberattacks, and drug trafficking, China demonstrates its willingness to work with other countries to tackle shared challenges.

Secondly, the GSI offers a platform for multilateral cooperation. At a time when unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise in some countries, China's security initiative emphasizes the importance of collaboration among nations. By promoting cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, conflict prevention, and crisis management, the GSI encourages a collective approach to addressing the complex security threats faced by the international community (Fravel, 2024).

Finally, the GSI reflects China's growing influence in global affairs. As the Asian country becomes an economic and military power, its role on the international stage is increasing. The Global Security Initiative is an example of how China seeks to play a more active and constructive role in shaping the world order. By leading in areas such as maritime security and the fight against climate change, China is positioning itself as a key player in promoting global stability and sustainable development (Baig, 2023).

3.2 Meta-relations and Indivisible Security

The concept of indivisible security, as proposed within the framework of the Global Security Initiative (GSI), presents a multifaceted and holistic approach to understanding global security. It advocates for the inseparable connection between various aspects of security, including the relationship between individual and collective security, traditional and non-traditional threats, security rights and obligations, as well as the interdependence between security and development. This framework not only redefines how countries should approach their security concerns but also emphasizes the principle that no nation's security can be ensured in isolation from the rest of the world. It also calls for an understanding that the security of one country is inherently

linked to that of others, therefore highlighting the necessity of reinforcing each other's security rather than allowing the actions of one State to compromise the safety and well-being of another (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República Popular de China, 2022).

This indivisibility perspective is innovative in its attempt to shift the traditional paradigm of security studies. Historically, security has often been viewed through the lens of zero-sum competition, where the strengthening of one country's defenses is perceived as inherently threatening to others. However, the GSI's approach advocates a cooperative and integrative understanding of security. By recognizing that global security challenges are increasingly complex and interconnected, the GSI reframes security as a shared responsibility. Transnational threats like terrorism, cyberattacks, piracy, and drug trafficking are not confined by borders, making it clear that no country can effectively tackle these issues alone. In this sense, the indivisibility of security is not only a theoretical construct but a practical necessity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Moreover, the practical application of the GSI's indivisible security concept carries significant implications for international stability. When countries acknowledge that their security is intertwined with the well-being of others, they are more likely to engage in cooperative security efforts. This is particularly crucial in an era where global challenges require collaborative solutions. For example, cybersecurity threats can quickly transit across borders, and terrorist networks operate transnationally, making unilateral approaches insufficient. By embracing the GSI's principles, which include and highlight indivisible security, China signals its willingness to cooperate with the global community to address these threats collectively, reinforcing a commitment to peace and stability. Through this lens, security is not viewed as a competitive arena, but as a domain where collective efforts can generate mutual benefits.

The GSI's promotion of indivisible security also serves as an implicit call for increased multilateralism in international relations. At a time when unilateral actions and nationalism are on the rise in some parts of the world, the GSI emphasizes that global

security is a shared concern that requires an inclusive approach. The proposal advocates for all countries to take seriously the security concerns of others and to treat those concerns with equal consideration. This approach fosters an environment where multilateral institutions and international cooperation become vital tools for addressing global issues. As nations work together in fields like conflict prevention, crisis management, and cybersecurity, they not only strengthen global security but also deepen diplomatic ties and trust between States. The collaborative framework presented by the GSI thus provides a fertile ground for fostering cooperation on the most pressing international security challenges of the 21st century.

Beyond its immediate impact on international security, the indivisible security concept also marks a strategic move by China to position itself as a leading force in shaping the future of global governance. As an emerging global power with significant economic and military influence, China's active involvement in global security is indicative of its broader ambitions on the world stage. Through the introduction of the GSI, China is not merely participating in international dialogues on security but is attempting to redefine them in ways that align with its strategic interests. The innovative concept of indivisible security helps China consolidate its role as a key architect of the global order, especially in a multipolar world where its influence continues to grow. By leading initiatives that offer new perspectives and solutions to global challenges, China strengthens its voice in international relations, asserting itself as a central player in the evolution of security frameworks and policies.

Additionally, the indivisible security approach is particularly relevant in addressing the complex and evolving global challenges of the 21st century. In a world grappling with climate change, mass migration, pandemics, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is evident that traditional notions of security are no longer sufficient. These issues do not respect national boundaries, and their resolution requires cooperation on a global scale. The GSI's principle that one country's efforts to enhance its security should not undermine that of others serves as a framework for more equitable and sustainable solutions. For instance, responses to climate change must be coordinated at an international level, as the actions of one nation can have ripple effects across the

globe. Similarly, policies on migration or health security must take into account the interdependence of nations. The GSI's indivisible security framework thus provides a critical foundation for addressing these challenges in a way that emphasizes shared responsibility and cooperative problem-solving.

In summary, the concept of indivisible security as presented by the GSI is both a reflection of China's growing influence on the international stage and a call for a new way of thinking about global security. By advocating for a holistic and interconnected understanding of security, the GSI provides a framework that is not only timely but necessary in the face of the complex and transnational challenges that define the contemporary world. The emphasis on cooperation, mutual reinforcement, and the shared nature of security challenges represents a significant departure from traditional security paradigms, offering a path toward greater global stability and cooperation in the 21st century.

With the former paragraphs that highlight the relevance of the concept of indivisible security, now it is important to transition into explaining how this concept is intricately related to the meta-relations concept stated in the Chinese Relationality Theory, which was developed in section 2.1.2. In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, the need for a more integrative approach to international relations is becoming more crucial than ever. The concept of indivisible security, as proposed within China's GSI, emphasizes the inseparability of different facets of security and advocates for cooperative rather than competitive security measures. At its core, the GSI stresses that the security of one nation cannot come at the expense of another's, and that the security of all countries is inherently linked. This idea can be closely related to China's broader philosophical and strategic perspective, particularly the concept of meta-relations, which provides a holistic vision of resolving conflicts and balancing opposites to create harmony. Both indivisible security and meta-relations challenge traditional zero-sum thinking in global affairs and propose a vision of global cooperation rooted in mutual reinforcement and balance.

The concept of meta-relations, deeply intertwined in Chinese philosophy, views conflicts and oppositions not as destructive forces but as potentially productive dynamics. Meta-relations suggest that opposites, rather than being inherently at conflict, can be harmonized to form a balanced, complementary whole. This idea, derived from ancient Chinese thought, is particularly aligned with the doctrine of yin and yang, where opposites are seen as interdependent forces that together create a cohesive and balanced system. Applied to international relations, this philosophy offers a framework where differences between States, whether in political ideologies, economic interests, or security needs, are not treated as invincible barriers but as forces that can be managed and harmonized for the collective good. This perspective can be corroborated in much of China's diplomatic strategy, where emphasis is placed on balance, cooperation, and the avoidance of zero-sum competition.

In this context, the indivisible security concept presented by the GSI can be seen as a direct application of meta-relational thinking to the global security framework. The idea that one country's security cannot be achieved in isolation from or at the expense of others mirrors the meta-relational view that oppositions—such as differing national security interests—do not need to result in conflict. Instead, these differing interests can be harmonized in such a way that all parties benefit. Indivisible security rejects the traditional realist approach to international relations, where security is often conceived as a competitive, zero-sum game. In the realist view, the increase of one State's security is often seen as a threat to another's, leading to a cycle of arms races and mutual suspicion. In contrast, the indivisible security approach suggests that mutual security can only be achieved when States work together, recognizing their interconnectedness and the need for balance.

This alignment between indivisible security and meta-relations is crucial in understanding China's broader strategy in foreign policy. By advocating for an approach that prioritizes harmony and balance, China's Relationality Theory, based on meta-relations, provides a framework that avoids conflict escalation and instead seeks solutions that integrate the interests of all parties involved. In the context of international security, this means that China's foreign policy aims to nurture an environment where

the security needs of one nation are addressed in a way that does not compromise or threaten the security of others. The focus shifts from competition to complementarity, where different national security concerns are woven into a larger, cooperative framework. The indivisible security concept within the GSI is a reflection of this relational approach, as it calls for nations to pursue security in a way that reinforces, rather than undermines, the security of others.

Moreover, the holistic perspective of meta-relations also aligns with the GSI's emphasis on addressing both traditional and non-traditional security threats. Meta-relations offer a way to understand and manage the balance between different and sometimes competing dimensions of security. For example, traditional security threats like military conflict are often seen as separate from non-traditional threats like climate change or cyberattacks. However, the indivisibility concept, much like the holistic vision of meta-relations, stresses that these issues are interconnected and must be addressed together. Meta-relations allow for a conceptual space where traditional and non-traditional security threats can be harmonized, recognizing that military security, environmental security, and economic security are interdependent facets of a larger global system.

Another significant point of intersection between indivisible security and meta-relations is the role of multilateral cooperation in resolving global security challenges. The GSI promotes the idea that security must be pursued collectively, through multilateral platforms and cooperative frameworks. This is directly aligned with the meta-relational view that balance and harmony are achieved through relational interactions between multiple actors. In international relations, this means fostering dialogue, collaboration, and shared responsibility among nations. China's promotion of international cooperation through organizations such as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and various regional forums exemplifies this commitment to relational harmony and balance in global governance.

Furthermore, the meta-relational approach contributes to the understanding that differences between States, whether in political ideology, economic models, or cultural

values, do not necessarily lead to conflict but can be the basis for creating a complementary global system. This approach is reflected in China's advocacy for "win-win" solutions in its foreign policy, which seeks to create outcomes that benefit all parties involved. The indivisible security concept extends this idea into the domain of security policy, where the goal is not for one State to gain security at the expense of another, but for all States to enhance their security through cooperation and mutual reinforcement. In this way, both meta-relations and indivisible security are part of a broader Chinese strategy aimed at fostering a global order based on balance, harmony, and shared responsibility.

As a wrapping paragraph for this section, the indivisible security concept proposed by China's GSI is deeply rooted in the philosophical framework of meta-relations. Both concepts challenge traditional, competitive views of international relations and security, offering instead a vision of global security that prioritizes balance, harmony, and cooperation. By applying the principles of meta-relations to its foreign policy through the Theory of Relationality, China promotes an approach that seeks to harmonize conflicting interests and integrate different security concerns into a cooperative, mutually reinforcing framework. This holistic approach reflects China's broader diplomatic strategy of creating a stable, balanced, and harmonious international order, where the security of one nation is inextricably linked to the security of all. Through the integration of indivisible security and meta-relations, China is advancing a vision of international relations that prioritizes collaboration over conflict and balance over competition, offering a new paradigm for addressing the complex security challenges of the 21st century.

3.3 Relational Governance and the Cooperation Mechanisms proposed in the Global Security Initiative

As explained in section 2.1.3, the concept of relational governance is central to the Relationality Theory of International Relations. The GSI follows the path drawn by this type of governance and the evidence is in its proposals for cooperation mechanisms to achieve an indivisible international security. It is important to remember that the main

pillars of relational governance are processes, relationships, reciprocity, cooperation, trust and morality. Therefore, the cooperation mechanisms proposed in the GSI are built in and promote those pillars, and in order to further analyze them it is important to mention them. The following are the cooperation mechanisms proposed by the GSI (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República Popular de China, 2022):

- Participation in broad discussions and communications: China proposes to engage in discussions and communications on peace and security within the UN General Assembly, relevant UN committees, the Security Council, pertinent institutions, and other international and regional organizations. The goal is to present joint initiatives and proposals to build consensus in the international community and address security challenges. This proposal promotes the idea of embracing the processes, which is to recognize that reaching a consensus involves constant dialogue and participation. It also involves morality because the UN and its branches have always promoted an environment that is ruled by a code of conduct and shared values that enable a respectful exchange of ideas and discussions.

- Maximize the advantage of roles in regional organizations: China seeks to leverage on the roles of regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS cooperation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the "China+Central Asia" mechanism, and other cooperation mechanisms in East Asia to promote security cooperation. This proposal promotes the importance of building close relationships, in this case focused on the regional sphere since it is common for security concerns to be similar or even the same.

- High-level conferences on the GSI: The idea of organizing high-level conferences on the Global Security Initiative (GSI) is being proposed to strengthen political communication in the field of security, promote intergovernmental dialogue, and foster international cooperation to address security challenges. This proposal promotes reciprocality because it recognizes an horizontality in the State's

participation towards international security by taking into consideration everyone's concerns and ideas in equal value.

- Support the international forums and dialogues: China supports forums such as the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Xiangshan Forum in Beijing, and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang), among others. These forums promote exchange and cooperation in security, because they embrace that the only way to achieve security is through the constant dialogue and reunions where the topic is discussed and re-discussed until the current needs of the actual context are met.

- Creation of additional international platforms: It is proposed to build more platforms and international mechanisms for exchange and cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, and emerging technologies. China also offers global security training opportunities for professionals from developing countries. This proposal enables trust in the international context because by addressing the topics that are unknown territory for the majority of the countries in a cooperative and dialectic manner, uncertainty decreases and there is a shared feeling that countries can rely on each other to find a solution that truly benefits all.

In summary, China promotes openness, inclusion, and cooperation at various levels and in various areas to address global security challenges. China's GSI seeks the participation of all interested actors to enrich its content and explore new forms of collaboration to build a safer and more prosperous future for humanity.

However, it is important to mention that the GSI has also raised certain concerns and criticisms. Some observers have expressed doubts about China's real intentions behind the initiative and questioned whether it seeks to expand its influence at the expense of other global powers. Moreover, the lack of transparency in some aspects of the GSI has generated questions about its real goals. In all topics and with any State, it is always important to maintain a conscious, open and critical perspective in order to assess its proposals with responsibility and the most objectivity possible.

There is an article published in 2023 titled 'Why is China's Global Security Initiative Cautiously Perceived in Southeast Asia?' written by Hoang Thi Ha, who is the co-coordinator of the Regional Strategic and Political Studies Program at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. She explains that, according to the State of Southeast Asia 2023 survey, the region's general reaction to the GSI is rather ambivalent and cautious, as they fear it may increase tensions between the United States and China and intensify the pressure on regional states to take sides. Southeast Asian countries' caution towards the GSI, in contrast with their support for China's Global Development Initiative, indicates a dichotomy between their reservations about China's role as a security provider and their appreciation of China's role as an economic partner.

Ha explains that this is because, although the principle of sovereign equality is a prerequisite for friendly interstate relations and is in line with the UN Charter, China's policy and behavior in the South China Sea disputes suggest a 'winner-takes-all' approach. Therefore, China's advocacy for these principles loses credibility, given its excessive claims that violate the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and its constant invasions, intimidation, and harassment of other claimant states. As much as China talks about making the South China Sea 'a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation, the two main concerns of Southeast Asian countries in these waters are: (i) China's militarization and assertive actions, and (ii) China's incursions into the maritime zones of other coastal states.

Added to this, China's support for the purposes and principles of the UN Charter in the GSI does not align with its decision not to criticize Russia's invasion of Ukraine and instead lend propaganda support to Moscow's justification for waging its war. The author of this article concludes that to persuade regional states that the GSI is a net contributor to regional security and stability, China should strive for greater consistency between its words and actions.

As a conclusion for this section, the GSI is important for several reasons. It represents a significant commitment by China to promoting international peace and

stability, offers a platform for multilateral cooperation, and reflects the country's growing influence in global affairs. However, it also raises challenges and questions about its true intentions and its impact on the international order.

Conclusions

In conclusion, by finding the ties between the concepts explored from the Relationality Theory–meta-relations and relational governance–and the recent proposal for global security by China (the GSI), the hypothesis that China's ideology is reflected in its foreign policy decisions and actions can be proved right, which accomplishes the main objective of this investigation. However, it is important to mention that while the GSI acts as proof, there are concerns about some of the actions taken by China that do not abide by its own GSI proposals, such as what has already been mentioned like its behavior regarding the South China Sea disputes, since it has maintained more of a zero-zum position rather than a cooperative and harmonious one. These concerns act as a possible anti-thesis for this hypothesis and it would be valuable for future works on the same matter to pursue a thorough investigation in that direction to have a more objective perspective.

Moving on to the secondary objectives of this investigation, let's recall that the first one was that, by demonstrating that the Chinese interpretation of international relations cannot be fully understood using only Western theories and concepts; the necessity to consider the Chinese way of interpreting reality arises, and with it, epistemicide of Eastern knowledge can be prevented. This first secondary objective is considered to be accomplished because this work acts as proof that theories like the Relationality Theory which comes directly from the Chinese School of International Relations must be valued and visited in an attempt to understand the Chinese worldview.

The second one was to highlight that the fact that China has a different view of international relations does not make it good or bad, it just makes it different, which must be valued because that difference may help find solutions to the emerging and changing challenges in the international context. This objective is also considered to be accomplished because the GSI is proof that China is making proposals that are compatible with the needs of the current international context and therefore it is important to evaluate them and take them into consideration because the current sight is extremely reduced and could very well benefit from this kind of content.

As one can see, this research was a very successful one when evaluating it from its own self-allocated objectives. However, I as the author of this investigation consider it substantial to make emphasis on the fact that this work does not intend in any way to leave behind the much needed critical posture that we all must maintain when contributing to the International Relations Academy. My purpose of demonstrating the importance of acknowledging the differences in China's ideology and therefore, its perception of international relations is to avoid epistemicide and Westernization, because I for one have grown and developed in a world where almost no non-Western knowledge was taught to me. The dangerous thing is that it has not been taught not because it does not exist, but because it is not valued nor acknowledged as important as the Western one.

This being said, I emphasize that this work is not intending to place the Chinese perspective as the best and only one. On the contrary, it is to help raise awareness about the importance of embracing the diversity of epistemology that exists out there. Therefore, it remains as important to do visit proposals as the GSI and learn about theories like the Relationality Theory, but maintain a critical view with the most objectivity possible to truly make a list of pros and cons about its contents; and if something valuable is presented, to take it into consideration with the same respect and commitment as if it was a Western proposal.

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