

Jointly Building a New Model of Global Leadership

— Work Together in Pursuit of a More Just
and Rational Global Governance System

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Preface

Looking back years from now, 2025 will stand as a landmark year in the course of human history and the evolution of the international order.

This year, historical memories have remained vividly alive. The 80th anniversary of the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War and the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations—these two 80th anniversaries remind us that world peace is hard-won and human solidarity is invaluable.

This year, the challenges of reality have been exceptionally severe. The United States has become the world's greatest disruptor. Some say that it not only seeks to "abandon the world it created", but also wants to return to 19th-century imperialism.

This year, the call of the future has been exceptionally fervent. The gears of technological revolution and industrial transformation have been spinning rapidly. Before humanity has fully answered the trying question of civilizational coexistence, the test of human-machine coexistence is already before us.

History, reality, and the future collide and converge, each bearing its own distinct temporal and special aura. Is it yesterday repeating itself or has the future already arrived? humanity stands at a new crossroads where the need for rebuilding global leadership is becoming ever more urgent: multiple challenges call for collective action; the path ahead remains unclear and is in dire urgent need of a guiding force. This is precisely the reason why this report focuses on global leadership—it is the fundamental safeguard that ensures that the vessel of world peace and development stays its course, avoids drift, and remains upright amid the torrents of changes of the century.

This report starts by examining the formation of "global leadership" from the perspective of the evolution of the modern international order and attempting to imbue this concept—originally from the field of human resource management in economics—with a new meaning from the perspective of political science. We believe that global leadership serves as the guiding force in global governance and an organic synthesis of major-power coordination and broader multilateralism. It rests upon three major multilateral cooperation mechanisms in security governance, financial governance, and trade governance, and encompasses four core elements: leadership in multilateral cooperation, public goods provision capacity, institutional rule-shaping power, and moral appeal.

Currently, the world is mired in a global leadership deficit, manifested in the failure of peace, imbalance in development, and discord among civilizations. This report represents an attempt to employ dialectical materialism and historical materialism approaches to analyze the world's backdrop of political thinking and the primary roots of this deficit: First, the United States, entangled in right-wing populist ideology, has become the primary driver of the expanding global leadership deficit; second, this deficit is also a product of dual tensions, namely, the tension between the surging crises of our times and contracting governance capabilities, the tension between the world's economic base and its superstructure.

While some nations subtract from global leadership, others add to it. This report contends that empowering global leadership requires collective action from all global forces: The phoenix-like rebirth of multilateral mechanisms from the ashes of crises provides a solid practice platform for rebuilding global leadership; Global South countries are awakening as major actors, transitioning from recipients of power distribution to active governance players, and supplying transformative energy for global leadership; on their part, major countries should still play a more active role in the global governance system. In this process, China is steadfast in working as a constructive force in a changing world and continuing to empower global leadership through its profound civilizational wisdom, sustained actions, steady domestic development, and pragmatic international cooperation.

A new era calls for new leadership. This report contends that the international community is in urgent need of a new model of global leadership. This leadership does not emanate from any single country, bloc, or international organization, but rather represents a multilateral form of leadership—a synergy forged by the international community in active response to global challenges.

The journey may be long and arduous, but the destination can be reached by continuous trekking. The fundamental strategy for jointly building this "new global leadership" lies in transcending the logic of hegemony through the logic of symbiosis. The following action plan can guide this endeavor: take shared human values as the compass, the Four Global Initiatives as the systemic blueprint, the promotion of an equal and orderly multipolar world and inclusive economic globalization as the direction of transformation, and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity as the future vision.

As one scholar observed, most people see and then believe while only a few believe and then see.^① In the world's most challenging times, there is a particular need for courage, wisdom, and willpower to "see because we believe".

^① Jin Yinan, "Cong 'Dongya Bingfu' dao Minzu Fuxing" [From 'Sick Man of East Asia' to National Rejuvenation], in *Duihua 2* (Guangzhou: Huacheng Chubanshe, 2012), 198

Chapter 1

At the Intersection Between the Old and the New —the "Global Leadership Deficit" amid Profound Global Changes

"The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born." This famous observation by Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist theorist of the 20th century, fits aptly as a description of the era that we find ourselves in. Standing at the intersection of history, we can hear the rumbling of three major transformations—in the mode of production, the international system, and the landscape of human civilizations. The dawning of the digital age, the emergence of a multipolar world, and the return to civilizational diversity are all happening at an accelerated pace. These are changes unseen in a century.

As humanity evolves into an increasingly close-knit community with a shared future, the need for global coordination and collective international action to comprehend, adapt to, and steer these transformations has never been more critical. Yet, disturbingly, our world finds itself deeply mired in a "global leadership deficit" predicament. Like "a ship without an anchor", it keeps rocking amid the towering waves of our times. Will the wheel of forward-marching history be reversed? Will the global transformation process spiral out of control? Will the crisis of the old order be defused through peaceful means or end in a catastrophic collapse? Will the shape of the emerging world order be a replica of the past or an innovative idea of a brighter future.... With such a string of questions, which bear directly on the destiny of humanity, laid before all countries, the rebuilding of global leadership has become an urgent imperative for the international community.

1.1 The Essential Meaning and Historical Trajectory of Global Leadership

Only by knowing the origin and pondering about the future can one be clear about the direction ahead. To rebuild Global Leadership, it is imperative to have a deep understanding and firm grasp of its essential meaning, historical evolution, and great significance to world peace and development and to the advancement of human civilization—all contextualized within the broader tapestry of world history and the evolving international system.

Essential Meaning: An Dynamic Integration of Global Coordination and Major-Country Guidance

The term "global leadership" originated as a concept in the field of human resource management in economics where it denotes the capacity to lead an enterprise or organization across diverse geographical and cultural settings. While the term is also often used in international relations, it lacks a uniform and clear definition and is sometimes

even used in similar discourse settings as other concepts such as "global governance", "international leadership", "major-country leadership", and even "hegemonic dominance".

Considering the evolution of contemporary and modern international systems and the practice of global governance in the globalization process, we believe "global leadership" to be the following process and state: It is not the hegemony of a certain big power that "dictates terms to the world", but rather a synergy forged by countries and international, regional and non-governmental organizations on an equal footing, through consultation, dialogue, and cooperation, and for addressing transnational and global issues while reforming and building an international order. It encapsulates the emphasis on global coordination and collective international leadership as well as the attention given to major countries' cooperation and leading role. It is reflected in a multilateral cooperative system that is shaped through virtuous interactions among those who guide, collaborate, and participate in global governance.

Contextual Formation: the Crystallization of a Modernized International Order

Viewed through the lens of macro-history, global leadership is a product of world historical progression and an objective requirement of globalized production. It represents humanity's quest to break free of the jungle of anarchy and is the crystallization of a modernized international order.

— The Formation and Development of the Traditional Sovereign Nation-State Governance Model

Marx and Engels point out: "The more thoroughly the primitive closed state of each nation is eliminated due to the increasingly perfect production relations, exchanges and the division of labor between different nationalities naturally formed due to exchanges, the more history will become world history."^① The opening of new sea routes at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries raised the curtain on "world history" and thus initiated the "duet" of globalization and modernization of human civilization. On the one hand, globalization gave rise to an inseparable and ever-expanding and inseparable web of internal connections worldwide. On the other hand, in its wake, the "modern international order", grounded in a series of principles such as sovereign equality and international rule of law, spread from Europe across the globe.^②

The mid-17th century Westphalia System, born from the Thirty Years' War in Europe, established a governance model based on sovereign nation-states as the basic units

^① Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995), 88.

^② Chinese political scholar Wang Honggang believes that the modern international order refers to an order arrangement among states, underpinned by a series of modern concepts; this order emerged and has continued to evolve alongside the emergence and steady rise of modern nation-states and the sustained progress of modernization in the world. It traces its origins to the establishment of the Westphalian System and has been developing through centuries of competition and cooperation among countries. See Wang Honggang: "Evolution of Modern International Order and China's Responsibility of the Times," *Contemporary International Relations*, 12 (2016): 1 - 14.

and thereby ushered in the modern international order. Subsequently, the 19th-century Vienna System, which lasted from the defeat of Napoleon till the outbreak of WWI, initiated the Concert of Europe based on the principle of the balance of power and is considered the "historical origin of contemporary global governance".^① The ensuing Versailles-Washington System emerged from the scourge of WWI as humanity's exploratory endeavor to build a new international order. Despite its obvious nature as a carve-up among the strong powers and a struggle for hegemony, it is also recognized as the "first international order of truly global significance".^② The League of Nations it created was an attempt to maintain world peace and collective security through an international system. And the principle of national self-determination that was emphasized in this system contributed, to some extent, to the development of national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies. From Westphalia to Versailles-Washington, the overarching trend was the replacement of backward arrangements of the order by more advanced ones. However, their undertone was the same power politics and the law of the jungle, with the logic of operation remaining the same win-or-lose, life-and-death zero-sum-game competition.

— Founding of the UN and Formation of Global Leadership

On June 26, 1945, representatives from 50 countries, including China, gathered at the War Memorial Veterans Building in San Francisco and solemnly signed the Charter of the UN. Having suffered from "the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind", humanity finally decided to join hands to build lasting peace. The formal establishment of the UN on October 24 opened a brand-new chapter in global governance. The UN-centered international system represents "the first time in human history that a rights-based international system of sovereign equality was constructed on a global scale".^③ To date, 193 countries have joined the organization.

The UN Charter embodies, in a more systematic manner, modern concepts and principles such as the sovereign equality of states big or small, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and observance of the international rule of law. Its purposes and principles became the fundamental norms for international relations and a vital cornerstone of a stable international order after WWII. Countries of different social systems, development paths, and cultural traditions united under the UN banner to contribute their strengths to the noble cause of peace and development of the human race. In this sense, one has reason to believe that the UN and its specialized agencies served as the vehicle through which global leadership was, for the first time in human history, systematically constituted through international recognition.

① Pang Zhongying, *China and Global Governance* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2016), 7.

② Zhao Kejin, *Introduction to Global Governance* (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2022), 32.

③ Xu Jian and Zhang Jing, "The Great Transformation of the World in the Era of Rights Politics Civilization," *East Asia Review* 1 (2024): 59.

— The Tortuous Evolution of Global Leadership After WWII

History always advances through twists and turns, with ups and downs. The Cold War situation that ensued after WWII reduced for some time the UN to a tool for the U.S.-Soviet rivalry for hegemony, rendering it ineffective, with world affairs shadowed by omnipresent bipolar rivalry. The vision of achieving global security governance through the UN Security Council as a collective security mechanism failed to take root. The "cold peace" under nuclear deterrence was accompanied by recurring local conflicts and regional crises.

Meanwhile, new forces of global governance and a new form of global leadership were also growing and strengthening; "international cooperation without hegemony" became not only a possibility, but also underwent development. For the UN system, with the massive accession of newly independent countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and with China's return to the UN, its internal structure gradually shifted from an East-West structure characterized by the confrontation between the two camps to a North-South structure based on different development levels. Its organizational structure and agendas for action were expanded accordingly. For example, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) was created in 1965, and the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order was adopted by the UN General Assembly at its Sixth Special Session in 1974.

Outside the UN system, non-Western countries increasingly became a force to be reckoned with on the international stage, starting with the proposition of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to the convening of the Bandung Conference and the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement. Not to be ignored is the fact that the Western camp was also experiencing internal loosening, with the most representative event being the start of European integration in Western Europe, which eventually led to the formation of the European Community.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar pattern reactivated the UN. Peacekeeping operations gained greater operational space, humanitarian assistance benefited more vulnerable groups, the UN reform was initiated, and the Millennium Development Goals ushered in global development governance in the true sense of the word.... The standing and role of the UN in global governance continued to show prominence.

In 1995, the Commission on Global Governance, composed of 28 international dignitaries, issued its report entitled *Our Global Neighborhood*, proposing that "there is no other way than collective effort and the use of collective power to create a better world." Against the era's backdrop of the mutual stimulation of world multipolarization, economic globalization, and revolution in communication and information technology (ICT), the concept of global governance gained increasing popularity, the practice of global governance was rolled out globally to the regional level, and the forms of

global leadership became more diverse and pluralistic. The most significant change has been the comprehensive rise and collective self-strengthening of countries in the Global South. Through multilateral mechanisms such as G20, the BRICS cooperation mechanism, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as key vehicles, countries of the South have become a crucial force that leads and drives the reform and innovation of global governance. The prospective image that "the 21st century will be a true century of global governance, driven primarily by non-Western countries" is becoming increasingly tangible and clear.

1.2 Main Pillars and Core Elements of Global Leadership

In the post-WWII world, multilateralism has gradually become the mainstream of the era. This means that sustainable and effective global leadership will inevitably be built on the basis of multilateral mechanisms. By advancing multilateral cooperation, contributing public goods, shaping institutional rules, and providing conceptual guidance, multilateralism contributes to the organic unity of national interests and the overall interests of humanity, and to the joint construction of a better world.

Two Main Pillars

The post-WWII global leadership has two main pillars: the UN and its specialized agencies, programmes and funds, on the one hand, and the Bretton Woods institutions (BWIs), on the other. Both pillars were established to manage the international political order and the international economic and financial order, respectively. Over the past 80 years, these two main pillars, having evolved continuously through crises and reforms and undergone the transformation of the international landscape from bipolarity to multipolarity, have been playing crucial roles in global governance to this very day.

The UN is the most important multilateral organization in the world today. It has the UN Security Council as the core of the international collective security mechanism in administering global security governance along two main lines: i.e., non-proliferation and peacekeeping operations. The UN's leading role in the field of global development governance was gradually established after the Cold War. From the International Development Strategy for the UN Development Decade to the Millennium Development Goals and then onto the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN development governance system has become ever more professional and resilient.

The various specialized agencies of the UN also perform their respective duties in different fields of global governance. For example, the World Health Organization and the UN Human Rights Council take up central positions in global health governance and human rights governance respectively, UNESCO plays a key role in global cultural governance, and UN Women plays an important role in the global governance of women's issues. However, the United States and some other Western countries place their own interests above those of the UN and flagrantly interfere in other countries' internal

affairs. They pursue, maintain, and abuse hegemony, engage in power politics, provoke confrontation and antagonism, and wantonly trample on the international order, sowing the seeds of global instability.

Four Core Elements

— Capacity to Guide Multilateral Cooperation

Solidarity and cooperation are the most powerful weapons to address various global challenges. Leadership in guiding multilateral cooperation refers to the capacity to guide the parties, through communication, coordination, and agenda-setting, to overcome differences, build consensus, and find the best combination of interests and the biggest common denominator for cooperation to move toward large-scale collective action for the "1+1>2" synergistic effects.

— Capacity to Provide Public Goods

International public goods are the commodities, resources, services, and rules and regulations shared by all countries and generations, which concern the well-being of humanity as a whole. Their optimal supply level is achieved at the "Lindahl equilibrium", i. e., the contributions made by all countries to international public goods are marginally equal to the benefits received. As major countries possess advantages in resources and capabilities, they are the main providers of international public goods.

— Capacity to Shape Institutional Rules

Global leadership is embodied in a system with a complete set of rules; a just and rational system has countries' voluntary acceptance and compliance. Reforms that are carried out in step with the times offer the magic key to perpetuating the legitimacy and authority of international mechanisms and rules.

— Appeal of Values and Ideas

Global leadership requires both the "hard underpinning" of institutions and mechanisms, and the "soft support" of values and ideas. Mainstream international values are the basis for formulating international norms^① and determine the overall spiritual outlook of the world. With the Washington Consensus and neoliberalism falling from grace, there is a lack of a dominant global ideology. A new form of mainstream international values will have a profound impact on countries' capability, or the lack thereof, to address various domestic governance and global governance challenges.

^① Yan Xuetong, *Great Power Leadership* (Beijing: CITIC Press Corporation, 2020), 151.

1.3 The Era's Symptoms of a Global Leadership Deficit—Faltering Peace, Imbalanced Development, and Inter-civilizational Discord

The contemporary international order is facing a crisis of collapsing norms and structures, with international public morality repeatedly falling to the nadir. The United States has shown a propensity for withdrawing from international organizations and renegeing on treaties, allowing rule-breakers to act with impunity. Genocide and imperial expansionism are re-emerging while unilateralism, power politics, and bullying practices run rampant. The core components of global leadership have suffered from a comprehensive erosion, from the weakening of multilateral cooperation to the undersupply of global public goods, from the ineffectiveness of major mechanisms to the decline of mainstream values. At the crucial moment when the human race is facing more complex global challenges that call for more resilient global leadership, the realities are, in contrast, feeble global governance and a consistently growing "global leadership deficit", which has plunged our planetary home into a "triple predicament" of faltering peace, imbalanced development, and inter-civilizational discord.

Faltering of Peace

Across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, armed conflicts, territorial disputes, and political turbulence have kept surging here and there. The Ukraine crisis, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and civil war in Sudan are continuing without resolution; fighting has resumed in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; the largest air battle in recent years broke out between India and Pakistan.... The world is experiencing the highest incidence of military conflicts since the end of WWII.

Since the end of WWII, major wars provoked or waged by the United States include the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the Kosovo War, the war in Afghanistan, the Iraq War, and the wars in Libya and Syria. Since 2001, the wars and military operations launched by the U.S. in the name of counter-terrorism have resulted in over 900,000 deaths, of which approximately 335,000 are civilians. The United States has also leveraged its military hegemony to pave the way for expansion, with its annual military budget averaging over \$700 billion in recent years, accounting for 40% of the world's total military expenditure. At present, it maintains around 800 military bases overseas and has 173,000 troops stationed in 159 countries. This has plunged the globe into a state of "collective anxiety" over security.

The humanitarian crises triggered by conflict and war are becoming increasingly alarming. In the Gaza Strip, over 67,000 people have been killed in the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the humanitarian crisis has reached a "catastrophic level". In Sudan, the ongoing armed conflict has displaced more than 12 million people, with approximately two-thirds of the national population in dire need of life-sustaining assistance. In Yemen, over 17 million people face a food security crisis and more than

one million children under the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition. A report of the UK-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) shows that, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, the number of deaths from violent conflicts worldwide approached 200,000, a 37% increase year-on-year.

In addition to traditional security threats, non-traditional security threats such as the climate crisis, food crisis, and energy crisis are spreading further across national borders. Countries are confronted with a complexity of security risks that has resulted from multiple interwoven factors, including political, economic, and cultural ones. The world is thus evolving into a "risk society" characterized by a high degree of uncertainty.

Imbalance in Development

The globalization model grounded in neoliberalism has wealth generation as the top priority, resulting in a continuously widening gap between the rich and the poor at both domestic and international levels. Domestically, the divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has become prominent. In developed countries, inequality in wealth distribution continues to worsen; in the United States, for the first time the wealth of the top 1% of the population surpassed the total wealth of the middle class. Meanwhile, in developing countries and underdeveloped regions, unemployment has continued its steady rise, making the plight for those at the bottom of the society even more dire. Internationally, the North-South divide is widening. Frictions are intensifying between "core" and "periphery" countries over resource sharing, the division of labor in production, and benefit distribution. While the growth prospects for emerging economies vary, half of the world's poorest countries are undergoing a "historic reversal" in their development process. Relevant statistics indicate that more than 800 million people worldwide live in poverty and the global Gini coefficient has reached approximately 0.7, exceeding the commonly recognized "danger line" of 0.6.

What is deeply disconcerting is the fact that Western digital hegemony is exacerbating global inequality and polarization. According to the World Bank's data, there are still more than two billion people globally who have never used the internet; fewer than half of the businesses in many developing countries have internet access, often with slow connection speeds. Furthermore, in the UNCTAD Frontier Technologies Readiness Index, developed countries in Europe and North America dominate the rankings while developing countries generally rank low. Some scholars believe that workers in the Global South are more vulnerable to a "new Malthusian trap" brought on by the AI technological revolution, due to the rapidly widening digital divide between the North and the South.^①

To add injury to insult, escalating geopolitical tensions and the ever-stronger surging anti-globalization and protectionism are severely hindering global economic recovery and the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The

^① Ren Lin, "Overcoming the Four 'Traps' That May Result from Changes in the International Order," *World Affairs* 9 (2025): 43.

Trump administration's "reciprocal tariffs" have dragged the international trading system into a turbulent vortex, causing distortions in global economic activities. As World Bank Deputy Chief Economist Ayhan Kose described it, the uncertainty created by U. S. tariffs is like the "fog on a runway", dragging down the pace of global investment and dimming economic prospects.

Discord Among Civilizations

After the end of the Cold War, the "clash of civilizations" argument caused quite a stir at the time. Since the world entered the second decade of the 21st century, the rise of conservatism has further undermined pluralistic values. The false narrative of "democracy versus authoritarianism" has incited confrontation between different systems while "identity politics" and "recognition politics" have intensified interethnic tensions, religious conflicts, and even civilizational confrontation.

The world today is experiencing a new round of reshaping in the landscape of human civilization while the return to civilizational diversity has become an irreversible trend. Those who embrace Western civilization, which no longer singularly dominates the world, have grown increasingly anxious while supporters of the now fully awakened non-Western civilizations have become all the more buoyant. How to construct a new form of relations among civilizations has emerged as a major challenge facing the human race. Although American political scholar Samuel P. Huntington drew criticism for his assertion that "the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics", his warning is not without merit. He cautioned that Westerners should "accept their civilization as unique, not universal" and that ultimately "the avoidance of a global war of civilizations depends on world leaders accepting and cooperating to maintain the multicivilizational character of global politics".^①

Perhaps even more striking than the relationship between Eastern and Western civilizations is the "spiritual civil war" currently being waged within the Western world between liberalism and conservatism. The further radicalization of both camps has further deepened political polarization and social fragmentation across European countries and the United States. The assassination of Charlie Kirk, a prominent American conservative activist, has sparked worries that the U.S. may be plunged into a new cycle of political violence.

^① Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, trans. Zhou Qi et al. (Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House, 2002), 5.

Chapter 2

Diagnosing Disorder and Crises—The International Backdrop in Political Thinking and Political—Economic Roots of the Global Leadership Deficit

Compared with the early years of the twenty-first century—when the international community collaborated in combating terrorism and responding to the global financial crisis—the present moment is unmistakably a dark hour for global leadership. Confronted with a world rife with disorder and recurrent crises, it has failed to exhibit the capacity to steer the course of events. Not only has it fallen short of advancing the Sustainable Development Goals as scheduled, but even the timely containment of regional conflicts has become an unattainable expectation of the general population.

Why, in barely a decade, has global leadership plummeted from its apex to its nadir? What shifts in global political thought does this decline reflect? What deeper political and economic causes lie beneath it? Clarifying these questions is vital to the reconstruction of global leadership.

2.1 The Primary Cause of the Worsening Global Leadership Deficit: Major Power Dereliction of Duty and Anomie

The stability of the international order depends on the institutional authority and moral legitimacy of leading powers. One of the fundamental principles governing the modern international order is that major countries are expected to play a leading role. This does not, however, grant them the license to act at will. In fact, to ensure the acceptability of their leadership, major countries, while enjoying special rights such as leading in rule-setting for the international system, should also shoulder corresponding special responsibilities,^① including promoting world peace and development, providing international public goods, and serving as both custodians and guarantors of the international order. To this end, major powers should possess "the virtue of compromise" and "the spirit of giving" and, as the British political scholar Hedley Bull put it, must "meet the demands for certain just changes in the world". Yet, at a time when the world is beset by multiple crises and responsible major country leadership is most expected, what has emerged instead is a spectacle of great power dereliction of duty and violation of norms.

The United States Is "Abandoning the World It Created"

From the UN system to the Bretton Woods institutions, the United States played a

^① Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 4th ed., trans. Zhang Xiaoming (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2015), 191–192.

leading role in constructing the post – WWII international order and, after the Cold War, even enjoyed a position of unrivaled dominance. The post – Cold War international order was regarded as one under American hegemony. For decades, the U.S. acted as a "world cop" around the world. However, amid the surge of various "-isms"—populism, conservatism, racism, and exclusivism—the U.S. is now "abandoning the very world it created" and continuing to unleash destructive forces. It has thus become the primary source of the ever-growing global leadership deficit and the greatest factor of instability for world peace and security.

As "the least Wilsonian president since Woodrow Wilson himself", Donald Trump decidedly abandoned the internationalist paradigm of U.S. foreign policy started by Woodrow Wilson. A nation that once vowed to "lead the world for another hundred years" is now pursuing the doctrine of "America First" and shirking its international responsibilities in order to "offload burdens". It has treated the international system and the rule of law regime as instruments of convenience—to be used when useful and discarded when not—while successively withdrawing from multilateral arrangements, tearing up agreements, and attempting to reverse globalization through tariff and trade wars. The so-called benevolent hegemony has thus revealed its true face—one of arrogant privilege.

The Rightward Turn of Global Political Thought and "America First"

Over the past 100 years, global political thought has evolved from the three "grand narratives" of the 1930s—liberalism, socialism, and fascism to the two "grand narratives" after WWII—Western liberalism and Soviet socialism, and finally to a single "grand narrative" following the Cold War—Western liberalism. Today, even neoliberalism has ceased to be a "global narrative". Neoliberal globalization has led to a further widening divide between the rich and the poor and social stratification, provoking a strong resistance from the disenchanted. Right-wing populism—visibly marked by its rejection of liberalism, globalization, immigration, and the political establishment—has risen to prominence as the zeitgeist of the Western world. The Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, with "America First" as its core philosophy, is precisely a product of this rightward shift in global political thought.

Some Chinese political scholars believe that political thought serves as the "genetic code" of the international order. Its internal operational mechanism is that political ideas affect the shaping of political directions through their influence on key actors—whether by way of radical revolution, moderate social movement, or change of the policy status by decision-makers.^① In practice, "America First", which is rooted in a dual core of economic nationalism and cultural conservatism, is not only reshaping the political ecology of the United States, but also upending the post – war international system. The Brookings Institution has warned that the ultimate objective of the MAGA

^① Yang Guangbin, "Political Thought as the 'Gene' of World Order," *Beijing Daily*, July 29, 2019.

movement is to replace the liberal-democratic model with electoral authoritarianism—an experiment whose outcome may well determine the future trajectory of the global governance system in the 21st century.

The Political and Economic Roots of "America First"

The surge of "America First" and the MAGA movement is rooted in the deep-seated political and economic contradictions in the United States itself. After WWII, particularly following Ronald Reagan's neoliberal reforms, the evolution of American capitalism was a process in which financial capital gradually overtook industrial capital to assume a dominant position. Capital knows no borders as the pursuit of maximized profit is its goal. To secure the outward expansion of American financial capital in the global market, successive U.S. administrations have taken the rivalry for and maintenance of hegemony as the highest goal of U.S. foreign policy. During the Clinton administration, in particular, U.S. hegemony reached its proud zenith and the wave of globalization led by Washington significantly expanded the spatial scope of its capital export. Through the use on a large scale of financial instruments worldwide, the United States developed what left-wing scholars abroad termed a new mode of "predatory accumulation". Both the scale and profitability of capital export rose sharply, giving rise to a de facto "globalized imperialism". This process, however, directly resulted in serious social problems such as the hollowing out of the country's domestic industrial structure, massive job losses in manufacturing, and a sharp intensification of inequality in American society.

To address its serious domestic problems, Donald Trump has sought in his foreign policy to break away from the post – Cold War hegemonic model of "financial capital plus globalized imperialism" by reconstructing a new "America First" model of hegemony. This has undoubtedly deepened the plight of multilateral cooperation and further increased the global leadership deficit.

2.2 A Political– Economic Analysis of the Global Leadership Deficit—the World under Dual Tensions

From a politico-economic perspective, the global leadership deficit is a product of the contemporary world's exposure to two layers of dual tension: One is the tension between the surge of contemporary crises and the shrinking capacity for governance; the other is the tension between the world's economic base and its superstructure.

Imbalance Between Demand and Supply

Ours is a deeply troubled world—haunted by extreme weather events, by rapid population growth, by gross income inequality, by shortages of food and water, by environmental degradation, by energy scarcity, by proxy wars, by mountains of consumer waste, and by an ever-expanding population of the poor. In this vivid portrayal, American philosopher Roger T. Ames captures the dual crises of globalization and moderniza-

tion confronting humanity today. After their centuries-old journeys, both the globalization process and the modernization process have now entered a new "iteration period".

Amid the "dual crises", global challenges have multiplied, grown increasingly severe, and become highly interlinked, placing unprecedented demands on global governance and global leadership. Yet, the crises have also triggered numerous domestic problems within countries, leaving many governments trapped in internal governance dilemmas and unable to look beyond their borders. The United States' "withdrawal from the international stage", coupled with other countries' inward turn, has led to an acute contraction of global leadership, rendering the international community incapable of effectively addressing the "dual crises". The worsening crises, in turn, further erode domestic governance capacities, driving countries toward even greater inwardness and leading to a further decline in global leadership. There is a yawning gap between the demands of the times and the availability of global leadership, leaving global governance caught in a "tragedy of the commons".

Mismatch Between Superstructure and Economic Base

The world's economic base is undergoing a qualitative transformation: Geographically, the pattern has shifted from a bipolar structure centering around the US-led Asia-Pacific value chain and the Germany-led European value chain to a tripartite structure comprised of the US-led North American value chain, the China-led Asian value chain, and the Germany-led European value chain.^① From the perspective of the Global South and the Global North, the global share of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) taken up by emerging market and developing countries has now surpassed that of developed countries; the former group of countries' contribution to world economic growth over the past 20 years reached 80percent. Additionally, Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean political scholar, proposed the concept of "CIA countries", with "C" standing for China, "I" for India, and "A" for ASEAN, which together form the world's most dynamic region.

Currently, world politics is "embedded within a normative and institutional structure containing hierarchy and power inequalities".^② The changes in the world's economic base inevitably demand changes to this "superstructure": First, adapting to a more diverse and balanced economic landscape and building a new international order that better respects diversity and embraces differences; second, ceding power to the Global South and empowering southern countries, enhancing their representation, voice, and decision-making power in global governance. However, the progress in changes in both areas has been slow. A certain country, to maintain hegemony and pursue self-interest, has long obstructed the reform process of the UN and its agencies, funds, programmes,

^① Ju Jiandong, *Great Power Competition and the Reconstruction of the World Order*, 2024 ed. (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2024), 94 - 101.

^② Michael Zürn, *A Theory of Global Governance: Authority, Legitimacy, and Contestation*, trans. Dong Liang (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2024), 3.

and institutions, causing serious delays in reforms such as the IMF quota and World Bank shareholding adjustments, significantly reducing the development space for global leadership.

Chapter 3

Empowering Global Leadership—the International Community in Action

The COVID-19 pandemic tested global health emergency response capabilities, the climate crisis challenged the willingness for international coordinated action, the Ukraine crisis reshaped the regional security architecture, and the Gaza conflict shocked the bottom line of human conscience.... The world of today is undergoing an unprecedented stress test of its governance system. Seeking opportunities amid crises and breaking deadlocks in difficulties, the international community is taking action to advance global governance and empower global leadership. Multilateral mechanisms have sped up reforms to address global challenges. The Global South is strengthening solidarity, becoming a new increment to global leadership. As a responsible major country, China is steadfast as a constructive force in a changing world, continuously empowering global leadership through its steady domestic development, solid foreign cooperation, and profound civilizational wisdom.

3.1 Multilateral Mechanisms: Addressing Challenges Through Reforms

During a period of profound transformation in the international order and global governance, both established and emerging governance platforms as well as global organizations and regional cooperation entities, are exerting their efforts interactively. International organizations such as the UN have been undertaking large-scale reforms to enhance their operational efficiency and governance effectiveness. Meanwhile, regional cooperative organizations including the European Union, the African Union, and ASEAN are strengthening internal integration and upgrading their modes of cooperation to respond to the tide of deglobalization with closer and more resilient regional integration. These explorations and efforts are injecting new momentum into multilateral cooperation at both global and regional levels.

UN Transformation: Revitalizing Authority and Vitality Through Self-Renovation

As the most universal, authoritative, and representative intergovernmental organization of an international nature, the UN has been committed since its inception to maintaining world peace, promoting global development, upholding the international rule of law, and advancing the cause of human rights, having made indelible contributions to the progress of human civilization. Now, with the international security environment continuing to worsen and the global implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda continuing to lag behind, the UN is facing unprecedented challenges. How to respond timely and effectively to the constantly emerging global issues? How to make the institutional setup and power distribution fully reflect the increasingly surging

trend of multipolarity? How to break free from inefficiency and financial shortfalls? The UN is using reforms to break the deadlock, revitalizing its authority and vitality through self-reform to better adapt to the need to transform the global governance system and respond to the international community's wide expectations for multilateralism.

In September 2024, the UN Summit of the Future adopted the Pact for the Future, proposing 19 actions for global governance reform with the focus on reforming the peace and security architecture and the international financial architecture. Last March, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the UN80 Initiative. This ambitious plan was designed to "build a stronger and more mission-focused UN" by advancing along three major reform tracks: enhancing efficiency and improving working methods, reviewing the implementation of mandated tasks, and undertaking structural reforms and program adjustments. As UN Deputy Secretary-General Guy Ryder stated, "If we believe multilateralism is the best tool for addressing global challenges, then we must ensure that we transform and update it (the UN), making it as efficient and fit for purpose as possible."

During his meeting with UN Secretary-General Guterres on August 30, 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out: history has revealed to us that multilateralism, solidarity, and cooperation are the right answers to coping with global challenges. We should revisit the original aspirations at the founding of the UN, reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and push for the revitalization of the UN's authority and vitality in the new situation so that it becomes the main platform for countries to take concerted action in response to the challenges.

It is foreseeable that the focus of the UN's work will shift further toward global governance. In addition to continuing and strengthening global security governance and global development governance, the UN will also play a more proactive role in areas such as global human rights governance, global science and technology governance which includes artificial intelligence governance, and the governance of global commons such as cyberspace, polar regions, deep seas, and outer space.^① Setting out again after 80 years, the UN should enhance its governance effectiveness and reshape the governance landscape through reform and transformation to become a platform for upholding international law, ensuring the international rule of law, and defending multilateralism.

Regional Organizations in Action: Leveraging Regional Integration to Withstand the Impacts of Deglobalization

As major-power competition intensifies and global governance weakens, regional integration processes are quietly strengthening. Regional cooperation mechanisms, which are aimed at economic cooperation and development and downplaying ideological and political overtones, are flourishing, becoming an effective supplement to global multilateralism.

In Asia, ASEAN adheres to the "ASEAN Way" of informal consultations and non-

^① Zhang Guihong, "The UN at 80: Evolving and Strengthening in Global Governance," *World Affairs* 17 (2025): 16.

confrontational dialogue, advancing the construction of the ASEAN Community and promoting the formation of open regionalism. Leveraging the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—the world's largest free trade agreement by participating population, trade volume, and development potential, ASEAN has become a crucial node in global industrial and supply chains. In Africa, the African Union upholds the principle of "African solutions to African problems", establishing conflict prevention mechanisms through the African Peace and Security Architecture. By establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which encompasses 54 countries and 1.3 billion people, it aims to cope with external market fluctuations and accelerate Africa's industrialization process by strengthening internal trade.

In Latin America, regional integration has restarted at an accelerated pace. The South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) is promoting institutional reforms and speeding up free trade negotiations with other economies. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States has declared a clear common stance of its member states on strengthening regional solidarity, advancing regional integration, and opposing external interference, projecting a "Latin American voice" while taking into account its diversity. In Europe, as a regional organization with the world's highest degree of integration today, the European Union has set an example for regional governance through its common market, monetary union, and common foreign policy. It demonstrates its great influence in promoting trade liberalization, upholding multilateralism, and advancing global governance, with its role in areas such as climate change and digital governance being particularly noteworthy.

3.2 The Global South: Advancing Transformation Through the Power of Solidarity

The Global South is a collective of emerging market countries and developing nations. An independent and self-reliant political foundation, a historical mission of development and revitalization, and a common advocacy for fairness and justice are their shared characteristics.

For a long time, global economic power has been highly concentrated in the hands of a few developed countries, forming what is described as an unequal "center – periphery" structure. With the collective rise of emerging market countries and developing countries represented by the BRICS, the Global South has entered a "new era of awakening", undergoing a frog leap in role from objects of power distribution to active participants in global governance. From calling for reforms of traditional platforms to creating new governance platforms, countries of the Global South have continued to supply transformative energy to global leadership, with their actions profoundly reshaping the landscape of global governance.

Proactively Setting Agendas and Striving for Fair Development Space

Amid the profound readjustments of the global order, emerging economies are par-

ticipating in governance reform with an unprecedented sense of collective consciousness. From climate change to international financial rules and the UN' reform agenda, the Global South has, through collective consultation, taken the initiative to set agendas, striving for fair development space and restructuring decision-making processes. It is promoting the global governance system's deep-level structural adjustments toward inclusiveness and shared benefits, profoundly shaping the rule-making evolution path of a multipolar world.

Countries of the Global South widely believe that the existing UN framework, particularly the structure of the Security Council, fails to adequately reflect the reality of today's global power distribution. They stand for an increase of Security Council seats to enable developing regions such as Africa and Latin America to have fairer representation and decision-making power. This demand is further manifested in their collective efforts to coordinate on specific issues.

The agenda-setting power of the Global South has also increased significantly. From advancing the implementation of climate financing to calling for bridging the digital divide, these countries are actively turning their concerns into core international agendas and leveraging mechanisms such as the Group of 77 and China to forge unified positions in international negotiations. The intense debate after the pandemic around the waiver of COVID-19 vaccine-related intellectual property rights stands as a vivid example of the Global South's pursuit of equitable rights in global public health governance.

Moving Beyond Western Paradigms in Search of New Models of Cooperation

The Global South's dissatisfaction with the existing Bretton Woods system (which encompasses the International Monetary Fund and World Bank) with regard to the terms of loans and the allocation of the weighted voting rights has driven its pursuit of diversified pathways for global financial governance. Multilateral development banks initiated and led by emerging economies, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, have become vital complements to the international financing architecture. By offering more tailored financing solutions with fewer conditions, they provide crucial support for infrastructure development and sustainable development projects across the Global South.

Countries in the Global South are also making a more conscious effort to explore development models suitable for their national conditions, transcending the limitations of the Western paradigm of modernization. They are actively promoting platforms such as the Global Development Initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative which emphasize connectivity and common development, to secure greater support for infrastructure investment, green transition, and technology transfer.

Resolving Conflicts Peacefully and Pushing for the Return of Development to the Center of Global Agenda

Numerous countries of the Global South, having suffered from the ravages of war

and external intervention, have consequently developed a security concept of the Global South that places greater emphasis on dialogue, reconciliation, and autonomous regional resolution of disputes. Regional organizations such as the African Union and ASEAN have played an increasingly proactive role in mediating local conflicts.

The Global South countries deeply understand the threats posed by non-traditional security challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change to lasting peace. In the UN and other multilateral forums, they place development issues like eradicating hunger, ensuring water security, and combating extreme weather at the core of security discussions. This effort is aimed at advancing a more comprehensive global security framework and pursuing a new paradigm of "security through development".

3.3 China's Choice and Action: Consistently Acting as a Constructive Force in a Changing World

What defines major countries? According to Chinese historian Qian Chengdan, major countries are those that lead the trend of the times, usher in new epochs, and become an exemplary model for others to follow.^① At a time when the world faces grave risks and challenges, it is all the more important for major countries to prioritize the future of humanity and take the lead in practicing what is contained in the UN Charter, providing global public goods, and contributing to world peace and development.

China's choice and action is to steadfastly serve as a constructive force in a changing world. In the process of participating in and guiding the reform of the global governance system, it has created a distinctive Chinese approach to empower global leadership, i.e., a trinity of empowering mechanisms of "visionary guidance", "institutional reform", and "pragmatic actions", or the "VIP" empowerment mechanisms for short.

Visionary Guidance

Navigating out of the difficulties of our times requires illumination from a beacon of thought. Confronted with the profound questions of "what is happening to our world, and what should we do about it?"—questions that are simultaneously about the world, history, and our era—China has creatively put forward the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity. Since its introduction in 2013, this concept has evolved into a comprehensive and well-structured scientific system. With the goal of building a world that is open, inclusive, clean, peaceful, and prosperous, an implementation pathway of global governance based on the principles of wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, the practice of the common values of humanity as its universal guide, and the configuration of a new model of international relations as its fundamental support, this concept is strategically guided by the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative, with the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initia-

^① Qian Chengdan, *Rising Winds and Flying Clouds: Qian Chengdan on the Emergence of Great Powers*, 2024 ed. (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2024), 392.

tive serving as its practice platform. This vision has enriched and developed Marxist theories of international relations, broken away from traditional Western doctrines on international relations and illuminated the path forward for global governance.^①

Regarding global governance in different specific domains, China has initiated and advanced the building of a global community of health for all, a community with a shared future in cyberspace, a community of all life on Earth, and a community of shared security across various areas of global governance. These initiatives have further enriched the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity in both its conceptual width and practical reach.

In response to the ever-increasing global challenges, China has proposed a range of holistic governance concepts that address both symptoms and root causes. These include the approach to global economic governance based on equality, openness, cooperation, and shared benefits; the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable global security, the philosophy of innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development; the approach to cooperation underpinned by openness, connectivity, mutual benefit, and win-win outcomes; the perspective on civilizations founded on equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness.

Keeping pace with the times is a distinctive theoretical and practical hallmark of China's diplomacy in the new era. In this special historical year marking the 80th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the UN, faced with the accelerating changes unseen in a century and the growing deficit in global governance, President Xi Jinping solemnly put forward the Global Governance Initiative which contains the core concepts of upholding sovereign equality, observing the rule of law in international relations, practicing multilateralism, advocating a people-centered approach, and emphasizing action-oriented cooperation. This new proposal by China to bolster and improve global governance is both timely and visionary. It demonstrates China's sense of responsibility and has received active response and broad recognition from the international community.

Institutional Reform

Empowering global leadership requires both philosophical renewal and institutional reform. China consistently pursues a dual approach of "reforming existing structures" and "building new mechanisms" in parallel, consolidating and optimizing the global governance system through incremental reforms to enhance the vitality and effectiveness of global leadership while promoting the establishment of a more just and equitable international order.

In "reforming existing structures", China has been pushing for the rationalization re-

^① Wang Yi, "Holding High the Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Breaking New Ground in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics—Address at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Research Center for a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, January 2, 2025.

forms of major global governance platforms including the UN, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, promoting equitable resource allocation and fairness in governance structures. In "building new mechanisms", China initiated the establishment of innovative multilateral institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, and it proposed new cooperation models such as "BRICS Plus" and "China-Central Asia", thereby injecting fresh momentum into economic globalization and international development cooperation while providing sound guidance for Global South countries to forge a closer community with a shared future and establish new models of international relations.

The signing ceremony of the Convention of the International Organization for Mediation held in Hong Kong in May 2025 has been interpreted as a new symbol of China's "innovative capacity" and "unifying power" in global governance. With 33 countries as its founding members, the International Organization for Mediation fills a critical institutional gap in international mediation, providing an essential rule-of-law public good for advancing global governance. Brasil 247 commented: The massive support from Global South countries demonstrates that a transformation is underway—former powers can no longer monopolize international rule-making, nor can they unilaterally impose the means of dispute resolution.

Pragmatic Actions

The inadequate supply of international public goods is a salient manifestation of the "global leadership deficit". As a responsible major country, China has proactively assumed the role of a provider of international public goods. China's contributions to the international community encompass three dimensions: tangible public goods, institutional public goods, and ideological public goods. Among these, the tangible public goods delivered through concrete pragmatic actions not only address the most pressing practical needs of the international community and relevant countries, but also effectively catalyze and drive international cooperation through exemplary leadership.

"Great visions are simple and practical actions are of the essence." In the agricultural sector, China has provided Juncao technology to Pacific island countries and assisted African countries in developing hybrid rice cultivation. In the health sector, China has supplied COVID-19 vaccines globally and helped build the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In peacekeeping, China has cumulatively dispatched over 50,000 peacekeepers and established a peacekeeping standby force. In the field of international development cooperation, China has implemented poverty alleviation and agricultural support projects as well as climate change adaptation initiatives through the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, advanced the construction of the Green Silk Road and Digital Silk Road within the overarching framework of Belt and Road cooperation, and facilitated the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership by all parties, thereby creating the world's largest, most equitable, and most dynamic free trade area. ...

At a time when the cause of the UN faces serious challenges from unilateralism and power politics, China has remained steadfast in fulfilling its commitment that "supporting the UN in playing its role and upholding its authority and status is a fundamental policy of Chinese diplomacy"^①. On the one hand, top Chinese leaders have on many occasions met with principal UN officials, visited UN headquarters and the UN specialized agencies, and participated in a series of UN events, making personal efforts to advance China-UN cooperation. Additionally, China has actively provided robust support to the UN in its undertakings by, *inter alia*, establishing the China-UN Peace and Development Fund and the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, promoting the implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and serving as the second largest contributor to the UN assessed contributions and peacekeeping funds. Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator in China, observed: China has demonstrated strong policy coordination capacity and action implementation capability in areas such as poverty alleviation, global cooperation in public health, climate change response, and green transformation. He emphasized the need for China's leadership which reunites the world under the multilateral agenda.

① "Xi Jinping Meets with UN Secretary-General Guterres," Xinhua News Agency, April 8, 2018.

Chapter 4

Building a New Model of Global Leadership— A Better Future for humanity

What form will the world take as it enters a new era of turbulence and transformation? Will it be more secure or more chaotic? More prosperous or more stagnant? More integrated or more divided? "The vastness of our future as yet defies comprehension." As former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger observed, "All these demand navigators with the creativity and fortitude to guide societies to as yet unknown, but more hopeful, destinations."^①

The international community calls for a new model of global leadership capable of responding powerfully and effectively to global challenges and leading humanity toward a better future. We believe that this global leadership should represent an optimization and refinement of the global leadership framework established after WWII—a new ecology of global governance characterized by coordination among diverse actors, dynamic evolution of rules, and inclusive sharing of development gains. Building a new model of global leadership jointly is both an effective response to the "transformation unseen in a century" and the direction for the progress of human civilization.

4.1 The Fundamental Strategy for Building a New Model of Global Leadership: Transcending Hegemonic Logic with win-win Logic

Scholars examining the evolution of great power competition and world order since 1500 argue that the world order is undergoing a paradigm shift from hegemonic succession to competitive coexistence.^② Both the catastrophic historical practice of hegemonic wars among great powers and the destructive contemporary effects of hegemonic, domineering, and bullying behavior fully demonstrate that hegemonism and hegemonic logic have long been outdated and unpopular. Building a new model of global leadership jointly represents, in essence, a reconstruction of the fundamental logic underlying the international order—abandoning the hegemonic logic of self-supremacy and winner-takes-all and, in their stead, constructing a win-win logic characterized by mutual benefit, orderliness, and inclusiveness.

Outdated and Unpopular Hegemony

According to the hegemonic theory of Giovanni Arrighi, a representative figure of the world-systems theory, the centuries-long capitalist world system has undergone a se-

^① Henry Kissinger, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*, trans. Hu Liping and Lin Hua, 2024 ed. (Beijing: CITIC Press Corporation, 2024), 512.

^② Ju Jiandong, *Great Power Competition and the Reconstruction of the World Order*, 2024 ed. (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2024), 2.

ries of systemic cycles in which a leading hegemon established and maintained an effective international order. Each transition of hegemony involved warfare and, at the same time, transformed the old order into a new one.^①

For the Western world, holding onto hegemony has become a historical inertia. Even if its power has declined in relative terms, it is still reluctant to relinquish hegemony. Many of today's U.S. foreign policies are seen as attempts to revive 19th-century imperialism, "replacing the global network of ideology-based hegemony with a hard-power-based hegemony of regional blocs".^② What's more, the Western world is bent on viewing other rising powers through a "hegemonic lens". In October 2018, *The Economist* published an article titled *A New Hegemon: The Chinese century is well under way*, deliberately labeling the rapidly developing China as a "new hegemon".

Reality, however, is never a mere repetition of history. Neither is the world of the 21st century the Europe of the 19th. When we "open our eyes to the world" beyond the logic of hegemony, what we see is a world where peace, development, cooperation, and win-win constitute the trend of our times, where the modernization process is advancing in greater depths and breadths, and where the collective rise of the Global South and the big trend toward multi-polarization are unstoppable. In such a world, power is bound to be distributed more evenly among numerous countries, and rights and responsibilities will likewise be more evenly matched.

Hegemony is outdated and unpopular because the world's economic base has changed. The economic globalization that started in the 1980s has broken the geographic monopoly of production stages, leading to the globalization of production. Today, the main engine of global development is shifting from material capital as a dominant force to human capital. With science and technology serving as shared public goods, production worldwide is also bound to become more deeply and broadly integrated. This means that the hegemony built upon capital monopolies will lose the economic foundation that once sustained it.

Hegemony is outdated and unpopular also due to its nature as a "source of global upheaval" that is being increasingly revealed. The American economic historian Charles Kindleberger, through his study of the 1929 Great Depression, proposed the "hegemonic stability theory". By introducing the concept of global public goods into studies on international relations, he emphasized: the world economic system needs a stabilizer and a single one only. Within this theoretical framework, the presence of a hegemon in the international community is essential to maintaining the world economic order and promoting global welfare. Yet, in the international political realities of the 21st century, this ideological product, concocted subjectively by Western scholarship, is collapsing as never before. The Washington authorities that pursues the "America First" policy has

^① Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*, trans. Yao Naiqiang, Yan Weiming, and Wu Chengyi, 2020 ed. (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2020), 38.

^② Kang Jie, "Resetting the 'Operating System' of Hegemony: Understanding U.S. Foreign Policy in the Trump 2.0 Era," *Culture Review*, April 2025, 8.

not only shirked its responsibility as a major country to provide international public goods but, what's worse, brought severe disruptions to the existing international order through its "withdrawal diplomacy" and global tariff wars. The world has not achieved stability because of hegemony, but has become all the more turbulent because of it.

Fundamental Features of the win-win Logic: Mutual Benefit, Orderliness, and Inclusiveness

The current concentrated explosive surge of structural problems within the old global governance paradigm reflects the predicament of the "core-periphery" world system. To defuse this crisis, there is an urgent need to move beyond the entrenched mentality of zero-sum games and move global governance and international order in a progression toward a win-win logic characterized by mutual benefit, orderliness, and inclusiveness and, on this basis, jointly build a new model of global leadership.

The mutual benefit of the win-win logic, in essence, lies in transforming the zero-sum games in traditional international relations into a multidimensional, win-win ecosystem of coexistence through the reconstruction of the benefit distribution mechanism. Its core is to build a global value-creation network centering on the common right to development and a balance between efficiency and equity, thereby achieving shared growth among all parties.

The orderliness of the win-win logic is reflected in building a stable, inclusive, and sustainable global governance framework through the reconstruction of rules and coordination among actors. Its core is to establish a new rule-based system centering on equal consultation, dynamic balance, and the guarantee of the right to development.

The inclusiveness of the win-win logic is manifested in ensuring that the achievements of globalization benefit all countries, particularly the developing countries through institutional innovation and resource redistribution. Its core is to transform development dividends into inclusive public goods and emphasize the fair participation of Global South countries in international cooperation.

4.2 Action Strategies for Building Together a new model of Global Leadership: Value Benchmark, Systematic Plan, Transformation Path, and Future Vision

The global leadership deficit has caused a plethora of global problems and crises that remain protracted or even continue to worsen and spread. This has, in turn, deepened the deficit itself. This vicious cycle has severely undermined world peace, stability, development, and prosperity.

Building a new model of global leadership has become a matter of urgency for the international community to effectively address global crises and lead all countries onto a new path of shared development and common prosperity. In this global endeavor, it is imperative to take the common values of humanity as the value benchmark, the four global initiatives as the systematic plan, the pursuit of equitable and orderly

multi-polarization and inclusive, mutually beneficial economic globalization as the transformation path, and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity as the future vision. This new model of global leadership does not emanate from any single country, bloc, or international organization, but from the synergetic efforts of the international community in response to common crises. It represents a form of "multilateral global leadership" wherein each and every country can play a role and empower it.

Value Benchmark: Common Values of humanity

Human civilization has now arrived at a new crossroads. On the one hand, with the continuing accumulation of material wealth and the rapid advancement in science and technology, human civilization has developed to an unprecedented height. On the other hand, there are frequent outbreaks of regional conflicts, ongoing global challenges such as terrorism and refugee crises, widening poverty and income gaps, and rising uncertainty in the world. The pursuit of peace, development, cooperation, and win-win outcomes has become the common aspiration of people of all countries.

At the general debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, President Xi Jinping proposed for the first time that peace, development, equality, justice, democracy and freedom are common values of humanity. This important concept, transcending differences in ideology, social systems, and civilizations, is focused on humanity's shared pursuits. It directly responds to the problems of today's world and contributes to forming the biggest common denominator of values based on seeking common ground while putting aside differences, exchanges on an equal footing, and mutual learning, thereby providing a science-based philosophical guide for humanity to choose the right path forward. Indeed, it serves as a fundamental principle for promoting progress in world civilization.

The collective effort to build a new model of global leadership should be based on keeping to the correct value orientation by taking the common values of humanity as the value benchmark and always standing on the right side of history with a view to minimizing "detours" in the development of human civilization and guiding it toward greater progress.

Specifically, in building together this new model of global leadership, it is important to uphold the principles of treating all countries as equals, regardless of size, strength, or wealth, respecting the right of the people of each country to choose their own development path, opposing interference in the internal affairs of other countries or the imposition of one's will on others, supporting the UN in playing an active role, advancing the democracy of international relations, and opposing hegemonism and power politics. We should focus on the common development and progress of humanity as a whole, oppose putting any one country in a position of priority, and insist that the interests of a single country should be considered within the framework of the common interests of the entire human race.

Systematic Solution: Four Global Initiatives

In today's world, global risks and challenges such as deficits in peace, development, trust and governance are growing unabated. In the face of these challenges and problems, the joint endeavor to build a new model of global leadership should be focused on the key areas and weak links in global governance, using the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), and the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) as a systematic solution. As international public goods, these four global initiatives, each with its own concentration, provide valuable intellectual inspiration and clear practical pathways for tackling the myriad real problems that face our world.

First and foremost, leveraging the Global Development Initiative to address the development deficit. Development is an eternal theme of human society. The world of today faces multiple challenges, including rising unilateralism and protectionism, slowdown in economic growth, frequent outbreaks of geopolitical conflicts, intensifying climate change, and a widening digital divide. International development cooperation has been severely impacted and progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is seriously lagging. To build together a new model of global leadership, we should continue to promote the implementation of the Global Development Initiative to address the development deficit and achieve common development and prosperity for all countries.

Secondly, maintaining peace and security with the Global Security Initiative. Security is the prerequisite of a country's development whereas safety is the lifeline of people's happiness.^① Global development cannot be achieved without a peaceful and stable international environment. Now, the world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, and the common challenges facing humanity in the security domain are more severe and complex. In our joint effort to build a new model of global leadership, we should actively practice the Global Security Initiative to eliminate the root causes of international conflicts and improve global security governance to achieve lasting world peace and development.

Thirdly, promoting mutual learning among civilizations with the Global Civilization Initiative. Diversity is a distinct feature of human civilization. In today's world where the futures of all countries are closely intertwined, the inclusive coexistence, interaction, and mutual learning among different civilizations have an irreplaceable role in advancing the modernization process of human society and in enriching the global garden of civilizations.^② In building together a new model of global leadership, we should continue to promote the implementation of the Global Civilization Initiative to enhance mu-

^① Xi Jinping: *Join Hands to Build a Better SCO Community—Address at the SCO Plus Astana Summit*, Xinhua News Agency, July 4, 2024.

^② Xi Jinping, *"Joining Hands on the Path Toward Modernization—Keynote Address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting,"* Xinhua News Agency, March 15, 2023.

tual understanding and friendliness among the people of all countries.

Fourthly, responding to the challenges of our times with the Global Governance Initiative. The current international situation is marked by changes and turbulence. The dichotomy between the increasing demand for global governance and the accelerating dysfunction and failure of the global governance system is becoming increasingly prominent, posing unprecedented risks and challenges to humanity. The Global Governance Initiative focuses on the contemporary issues of what kind of global governance system should be built and how to reform and improve global governance. It presents an exposition on the principles, methods, and pathways that need to be followed for reforming and improving global governance, pointing to the direction for addressing the governance deficit and building a more just and rational global governance system. To build a new model of global leadership, we should actively practice the Global Governance Initiative to promote the reform and improvement of the global governance system, thereby effectively responding to the challenges of the times.

Transformation Direction: Toward an Equal and Orderly Multipolar World and a Universally Beneficial and Inclusive Economic Globalization

Looking ahead, in what direction should the international order evolve? What direction is in keeping with the trend of the times, the greatest interests of the world, and humanity's expectations for a better future? To build a new model of global leadership, we should aim at promoting an equal and orderly multipolar world as well as inclusive and beneficial economic globalization as the direction of changing the international order, fostering the formation of a peaceful and stable international landscape, building an open world economy, and achieving common development and prosperity for all countries.

Now, with the collective rise of the Global South and profound changes in the balance of power between East and West, multipolarization has become an unstoppable trend of the times. Equal multipolarization should be reflected in equality of rights, opportunities, and rules for all countries. It is no longer permissible for an individual big power or a few major powers to monopolize international affairs; nor is it permissible for countries to be categorized in a hierarchical order based on the so-called position of strength. It is essential to ensure that all countries, regardless of their size or strength, can participate equally in the multipolarization process, enjoy their rights, and play their roles. Orderly multipolarization means joint adherence to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and upholding the universally recognized basic norms of international relations. Multipolarization is not about forming blocs, much less about fragmentation and disorder. All countries should act within the remit of the international system with the UN at its core and cooperate in the global governance process.^① An equal and orderly multipolar world meets countries' shared aspiration for fairness, jus-

^① "Wang Yi Elaborates on the Meaning of Equal and Orderly Multipolarity and Inclusive and Beneficial Economic Globalization," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 7, 2024.

tice, and win-win cooperation, and offers the soundest political landscape for safeguarding world peace and stability and promoting common development and prosperity.

Economic globalization is an inevitable trend in world economic development. Universally beneficial globalization means growing the pie of economic development and sharing it fairly, enabling different countries, social strata, and groups to participate in and partake of economic and social development, properly addressing development imbalances between and within countries, and achieving common development and prosperity. Inclusive globalization means supporting countries in pursuing the development paths suited to their national conditions, avoiding a single development model, rejecting beggar-thy-neighbor unilateralism and protectionism, maintaining the stability and smooth flow of global industrial and supply chains, and sustaining the vitality and momentum of global economic growth. Advancing inclusive and universally beneficial economic globalization is precisely a correction and rectification of the neoliberal-led globalization characterized by "the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer."

Future Vision: Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity

Facing major questions of our time concerning the future of the human race, such as "where should human society be headed" and "what kind of a world we need and how to build such a world", President Xi Jinping proposed the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity in 2013, which is aimed at resolving the common survival crises and development dilemmas facing humanity through win-win cooperation. The core principles of this vision are that the future of the humanity should be decided by all countries, international rules should be written jointly by all countries, global affairs should be governed by all countries, and the fruits of development should be shared by all of them as well.^① This major vision reflects the wide consensus and common expectations of the international community, embodies the greatest common denominator for the people of all countries to jointly shape a better future, draws a new and splendid blueprint for global development, and points a new way forward for human development.

In a philosophical sense, the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity is rooted in an Eastern philosophical view that one seeks unity between opposites and strives for the synergistic coexistence of contradictory entities. The vision represents the commitment to establishing a plural and win-win international order in a multipolar world. As President Xi Jinping pointed out, "Building a community with a shared future for mankind is not about replacing one system with another or one civilization with another. Instead, it is about countries with different social systems, ideologies, histories, cultures, and development levels sharing interests, rights, and responsibilities in international affairs, and forming the greatest common divisor for building a bet-

^① Xi Jinping, "Work Together to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind—Address at the UN Office at Geneva," *Xinhua News Agency*, January 18, 2017.

ter world."^①

Today, the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity increasingly demonstrates its vitality and contemporary value, continuously injecting forces of peace and stability, development and prosperity, and unity and progress into the world. To build a new model of global leadership, we should take the building of a community with a shared future for humanity as our future vision, galvanize the greatest synergy for the international community to address common global challenges, move the international community out of the difficulties of the times toward lasting peace and stability, achieve common development and prosperity, and create a bright future for humanity as a whole.

^① Xi Jinping, "Address at the Meeting Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Lawful Seat of the People's Republic of China in the UN," Xinhua News Agency, October 25, 2021.

Concluding Remarks

At a press conference on July 9, 2020, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus choked up when addressing the COVID-19 pandemic: "The greatest threat we face now is not the virus itself. Rather, it is the lack of leadership and solidarity at the global and national levels."

Dr. Tedros' words are equally applicable to many global challenges and crises of our times. Today, the world economy is experiencing a sluggish recovery, the development divide is further widening, trade frictions are multiplying, unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemony are on the rise, major power rivalry is intensifying, localized conflicts erupt from time to time, and the global governance system is dysfunctioning at an accelerated speed. The deficits in peace, development, security, and governance are increasing unabated. Human society is confronted with unprecedented risks and challenges.

In the midst of this world with intertwining turmoil and change, what should all countries do? Should they allow the world to remain in turbulence or push it back onto the path of peaceful development? The answer is obvious: the greater the storms and waves of the times, the greater the need for countries to ride the tide, take proactive action, and jointly address the crises of our era with strategies in recognition of and response to the changes.

There is but one Earth in the universe and the human race shares one common home. When the world is fine, countries fare well; when countries do well, the world will be a better place for all. To address the global leadership deficit and remove global chaos, countries in the Global South, including China, and multilateral mechanisms such as the UN are actively taking steps. The international community's joint construction of a new model of global leadership will help address common crises at their root and create a brighter tomorrow for the human race. In this process, China will always stand on the right side of history and on the side of human civilization's progress. Together with countries around the world and international organizations, China will continue to work to address the challenges of our times and empower the world in a pledge to bring about a bright future for humanity.

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