

Principles of Extensive Consultation, Joint Contribution, and Shared Benefits: The Concept, Practice, and Optimization Path of China's Leadership in the Reform of the Global Governance System

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Abstract

The world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, with the global governance system facing multiple challenges such as governance deficits, development deficits, and security deficits. Problems including insufficient representation and lagging effectiveness of existing governance mechanisms have become increasingly prominent. As an important member of the Global South, China, guided by the core concept of global governance featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, has achieved fruitful practices in areas such as infrastructure connectivity, South-South cooperation, and multilateral mechanism building through the synergistic efforts of the "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI) and the "Three Global Initiatives" - namely the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). Based on the triple dimensions of historical logic, theoretical logic, and realistic logic, this paper systematically elaborates on the core concepts of China's participation in the reform of the global governance system. Combining typical cases and empirical data, it analyzes the path characteristics and effectiveness of China's practices. In response to current challenges such as geopolitical games and differences in rules and standards, the paper proposes optimization plans including deepening the coordination of "initiatives + mechanisms", promoting mutual recognition of rules, and strengthening risk prevention and control, to provide Chinese wisdom and practical reference for the development of the global governance system in a more fair and reasonable direction.

Keywords

Reform of the global governance system, Chinese solutions, Extensive consultation, Joint contribution, Shared benefits, The Three Global Initiatives, The Belt and Road Initiative

Introduction

Research background and problem formulation

Since the concept of "global governance" was formally proposed in 1990, the global governance system has played a vital role in maintaining world peace and advancing economic globalization. However, as the once-in-a-century changes accelerate and the balance of international power shifts profoundly, the global governance system has entered a period of in-depth transformation [1]. Currently, the structural predicaments facing global governance have become increasingly prominent:

(1) Global economic recovery remains sluggish: Global foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by 11% to \$1.5 trillion in 2024. (2) The North-South development gap continues to widen: The proportion of people living in

extreme poverty globally has risen back to 9.7%, and 343 million people face acute food insecurity. (3) Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, with individual countries weaponizing multilateral mechanisms, exacerbating the failure of governance institutions.

Against this backdrop, the international community's demand for reform of the global governance system has grown stronger. The collective rise of Global South countries has injected crucial momentum into this reform: their economic output now accounts for over 40% of the global total, and their contribution to global economic growth has reached 80% [2].

As the largest developing country and a responsible major power, China is increasingly moving closer to the

center of the world stage, gradually transitioning from a participant in global governance to a leader [3]. The core research questions of this paper are as follows: How can the governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits be translated into sustainable practical outcomes? How can the synergistic effects of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Three Global Initiatives address governance deficits? How can China respond to external challenges such as geopolitics to enhance the international recognition and implementation effectiveness of Chinese solutions?

Literature review

Existing studies on the reform of the global governance system and China's role have formed three main perspectives:

(1) Focusing on the causes of global governance deficits, arguing that the “center-periphery” structure of the current governance system, the lack of responsibility among major powers, and institutional lag are the core cruxes. (2) Exploring the innovativeness of China's governance concepts, emphasizing that the global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits transcends the traditional hegemonic governance model. (3) Empirically analyzing the practical effectiveness of the BRI, concentrating on summarizing achievements in areas such as infrastructure construction and trade facilitation.

Existing research provides an important foundation for this paper, but there are still areas for expansion:

First, there is insufficient theoretical tracing and systematic interpretation of China's governance concepts, lacking integrated analysis of historical, theoretical, and realistic logics. Second, research on the synergy mechanism between the Three Global Initiatives and the BRI is not in-depth enough, failing to fully reveal the transmission path of “concept-mechanism-practice”. Third, there is a lack of systematic discussion on the implementation challenges and optimization strategies of Chinese solutions in the current geopolitical context, combined with the latest practical cases. Based on the latest policy documents and empirical data, this paper attempts to address the above research gaps.

Research framework and methods

This paper adopts an analytical framework of “concept - practice - solution” and combines historical analysis,

case study, and comparative research methods. First, it theoretically explains the core concepts of China's participation in global governance and their theoretical innovations. Second, it empirically analyzes the practical paths and effectiveness of China's leadership in global governance reform through typical cases of the BRI and the Three Global Initiatives. Finally, it proposes feasible optimization plans in response to the challenges encountered in practice. The research data are mainly sourced from white papers of the State Council Information Office, reports of international organizations (IMF, UNCTAD, relevant UN agencies), authoritative media coverage, and academic research results, to ensure the objectivity and rigor of the study.

The core concepts of China's participation in the reform of the global governance system

China's conceptual contribution to the reform of the global governance system is not a subversion of the existing governance model, but a theoretical innovation and conceptual upgrading based on the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. It has formed a conceptual system centered on extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, and supported by the Three Global Initiatives [4]. This approach not only respects the evolution logic of the existing international order but also injects new vitality into addressing global challenges such as climate change and economic inequality.

The global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits:

Core leadership

The global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits is an important part of Xi Thought on Diplomacy, and a major achievement of adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions and the times in the field of international relations [5]. This concept profoundly answers the fundamental questions of “who governs”, “for whom to govern”, and “how to govern”, and has achieved integrated innovation at the ontological, epistemological, and methodological levels.

From a historical logic perspective, this concept responds to the development trend of human society from regional order to global governance. Since the Peace of Westphalia established the principle of sovereign

equality, and the post-WWII UN system constructed a global governance framework, the core demand of global governance has evolved from “avoiding war” to “common development”. The global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits inherits the principle of sovereign equality, while breaking through the exclusivity of the traditional governance system, adapting to the historical inevitability of the collective rise of the Global South.

From a theoretical logic perspective, it uses dialectical thinking to solve the problem of unifying rights and responsibilities, systematic thinking to view the integrity of global governance, and a problem-oriented approach to focus on core issues such as development, security, and civilization, transcending the traditional “center-periphery” governance thinking and zero-sum game logic. From a realistic logic perspective, it advocates the diversification of governance subjects, holds that global affairs should be jointly discussed by all countries, and governance achievements should be shared by all countries, accurately responding to the urgent demand of developing countries to enhance their discourse power in governance.

The Three Global Initiatives: Strategic support for conceptual materialization

If extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits are the “top-level concept” of China’s participation in global governance. Then the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) constitute the “three pillars” for the implementation of the concept, forming a complete conceptual system covering three core areas: development, security, and civilization [6].

Centered on “development first”, the GDI focuses on addressing global development deficits, advocating narrowing the North-South gap through South-South cooperation and the provision of inclusive public goods. Which is highly aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its core lies in placing development at a prominent position on the global governance agenda, addressing the governance imbalance of “prioritizing security over development”, and providing support for developing countries to enhance their independent development capabilities. Adhering to a new security concept featuring common,

comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, the GSI opposes the ideologization and bloc confrontation of security issues, and advocates resolving conflicts through dialogue and consultation, providing a new path for addressing global security deficits. The GCI advocates respecting the diversity of world civilizations, opposes the theory of civilization superiority and the clash of civilizations thesis, and lays a value foundation for promoting the exchange and mutual learning of civilizations and building consensus on governance.

The Three Global Initiatives are inherently consistent with the global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. They have constructed an interrelated and organically unified conceptual system from three dimensions: development momentum, security guarantee, and value recognition, providing clear conceptual guidance for the reform of the global governance system.

True multilateralism: The basic principle for practicing the concept

The true multilateralism advocated by China is an important part of the global governance concept, with its core being adherence to the UN-centered international system and opposition to “pseudo-multilateralism” and exclusive “small circles”. This principle includes three connotations: First, upholding sovereign equality, where all countries, regardless of size, strength, or wealth, have the equal right to participate in global governance. Second, safeguarding international rules of law, opposing double standards and exceptionalism, and ensuring the equal and unified application of international law. Third, emphasizing action orientation, highlighting the practical effectiveness of multilateral mechanisms, and avoiding endless discussions without decisions or decisions without implementation [7,8].

The multilateralism promoted by China is not a negation of existing international mechanisms, but an effort to promote the multilateral system to more balancedly reflect the will of the majority of countries through supplementary mechanism building and reform initiatives. For example, the establishment and operation of the “Group of Friends of Global Governance” embodies China’s multilateralist practice of uniting developing countries to promote UN reform and enhance the representation of developing countries, injecting new vitality into true multilateralism.

China's practical paths in leading the reform of the global governance system

The vitality of concepts lies in practice. Through the practical platform of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the synergistic advancement of the Three Global Initiatives, China has achieved a series of landmark outcomes in areas such as infrastructure connectivity, South-South cooperation, and multilateral mechanism building, providing replicable and promotable practical models for the reform of the global governance system [9].

The Belt and Road Initiative: A practical platform for global governance

As a major practice in building a community with a shared future for mankind, the BRI has evolved from a "broad outline" to a "detailed painting" since its proposal. It has become a widely acclaimed international public goods and cooperation platform, offering a pragmatic carrier for global governance cooperation.

In terms of infrastructure connectivity, a number of landmark projects have been implemented with remarkable results, unblocking the "arteries" for the development of the Global South. The Jakarta - Bandung High-Speed Railway has carried over 8 million passengers cumulatively, ushering Indonesia into the "high-speed rail era". The China-Laos Railway has handled a total of over 54 million tons of cargo and carried more than 48.6 million passengers, emerging as a "golden corridor" for regional economic circulation. The Padma Bridge Rail Link in Bangladesh has shortened the travel time from Dhaka to Jessore from 10 hours to 3 hours, known as the "Dream Railway" by local people. These infrastructure projects have not only improved the transportation conditions of host countries but also driven regional trade development and industrial upgrading, providing hardware support for narrowing the North-South development gap [10].

In terms of sustainable development, the BRI has actively promoted green development and integrity building, practicing the concept of high-quality development. China has deepened cooperation with partner countries in green infrastructure, green energy, and green transportation. The first phase of the Tashkent new energy bus project in Uzbekistan, with 1,000 buses put into operation, has facilitated the low-carbon

transition of public transportation in Central Asia. In the field of renewable energy, Chinese technologies and experience have helped many developing countries address power shortages. Meanwhile, the BRI adheres to building "Integrity Road". Over 60 Chinese enterprises have launched the "Initiative on Integrity and Compliance for Enterprises Participating in the Belt and Road" (BRI), and central enterprises have issued 868 compliance guidelines for key areas, ensuring the efficient operation of projects with integrity [11].

In terms of improving people's livelihoods, the BRI focuses on building people-centered projects, promoting the inclusive sharing of development fruits. China's livelihood projects in Africa, covering food security, water supply, and education, have benefited a wide range of people. It has participated in the construction and renovation of nearly 100,000 kilometers of highways and over 10,000 kilometers of railways. In Madagascar, the cumulative promotion area of Chinese hybrid rice has exceeded 75,000 hectares, helping the country move towards the goal of becoming "Africa's granary". The delivery of the "Guayaquil Dream" affordable housing project in Ecuador has fulfilled the housing dreams of 668 families. These "small yet beautiful" livelihood projects have allowed local people to truly feel the warmth of global governance [12].

The Three Global Initiatives: Precisely addressing governance deficits

Targeting the prominent shortcomings of global governance, the Three Global Initiatives have formed targeted practical paths, which, together with the BRI, synergistically promote the improvement of global governance effectiveness.

With the goal of implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) has built a diversified South-South cooperation system [13]. China has established the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund and promoted the establishment of multilateral financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB), providing long-term and stable financial support for developing countries. In the agricultural sector, China has helped developing countries enhance their food production capacity through technical cooperation and training. In the digital field, China has promoted the

transfer and application of digital technologies, narrowing the global digital divide. By 2025, the GDI has formed multiple cooperation platforms and become a core force driving the global development agenda.

Focusing on traditional and non-traditional security threats, the Global Security Initiative (GSI) has built a win-win security governance model. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China actively participates in peacekeeping operations, being the second-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget and a major contributor of peacekeeping personnel, providing important support for restoring stability in conflict-affected regions. In the field of non-traditional security, China has taken the lead in international cooperation against the pandemic, promoting the equitable distribution of vaccines. In areas such as cybersecurity and climate change, China has strengthened policy coordination with other countries to build cooperation mechanisms for preventing and mitigating risks. The comprehensive security concept advocated by the GSI has provided a new governance framework for addressing security deficits.

Centered on the exchange and mutual learning of civilizations, the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) has built diversified platforms for inter-civilizational dialogue. Through mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the China-CELAC Forum, and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF), China promotes equal dialogue and mutual understanding among different civilizations. In fields such as culture, education, and science and technology, China has carried out multi-level exchange activities with partner countries, facilitating the sharing of civilized achievements. The GCI opposes the clash of civilizations thesis and ideological confrontation, laying a value foundation for building consensus on global governance and resolving governance differences.

Multilateral mechanism building: Improving global governance architecture

Adhering to multilateralism as the core, China promotes a more fair and reasonable global governance architecture by participating in the reform of existing mechanisms and establishing new multilateral mechanisms.

In terms of reforming existing mechanisms, China

actively promotes the reform of institutions such as the UN, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. Calling for enhancing the representation and voice of developing countries. On behalf of 43 members of the "Group of Friends of Global Governance". China delivered a speech at the UN, advocating that the UN 80th Anniversary Reform should address the concerns of developing countries and promote the balanced development of the three pillars (peace and security, development, and human rights). In the field of climate change, China promoted the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reach an agreement on issues such as the Loss and Damage Fund, injecting momentum into global climate governance.

In terms of building new multilateral mechanisms, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), initiated by China, has become an important part of the global multilateral development system. With a growing number of members, it provides diversified financing channels for infrastructure construction. The BRICS cooperation mechanism has successfully expanded, forming a hierarchical and flexible cooperation framework that transcends the limitations of traditional international mechanisms. These new multilateral mechanisms complement existing ones, constructing a more inclusive and efficient global governance architecture.

Challenges and optimization plan for China's leadership in the reform of the global governance system

Key challenges facing China currently

Despite remarkable achievements in the reform of the global governance system, China still confronts multiple challenges amid the complex international environment: First, external resistance from intensifying geopolitical games. Some Western countries, adhering to a Cold War mentality, regard China's participation in global governance as a "systemic competition". They interfere with the implementation of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects through sanctions and containment, set technical barriers in the field of science and technology, and hinder the advancement of the Global Development Initiative (GDI). Influenced by geopolitics, some countries hold misunderstandings and doubts about China's initiatives,

affecting cooperation effectiveness.

Second, coordination costs arising from differences in rules and standards. Most existing global governance rules are formulated under the leadership of Western countries. China's initiatives face issues such as rule adaptation and standard mutual recognition during promotion. In areas like infrastructure construction and green development, differences in technical standards, laws, and regulations among countries increase the difficulty and cost of project coordination.

Third, multiple tests to the sustainability of cooperation. Many developing countries are burdened with heavy debts. As of the end of 2023, the total external debt of low- and middle-income countries reached \$8.8 trillion, which impacts the sustainability of cooperative projects. Meanwhile, external factors such as climate change and natural disasters also pose challenges to the long-term operation of BRI projects.

Fourth, recognition challenges caused by insufficient international discourse power. Western public opinion has long dominated international communication, with biased interpretations of China's concepts and practices. Some negative narratives have affected the international recognition of Chinese solutions. Differences in interests and demands among developing countries also increase the difficulty of building consensus on global governance.

Optimization plans and implementation paths

In response to the above challenges, combined with China's institutional advantages and practical experience, the following optimization plans are proposed:

(1) Deepen the coordination of "initiatives + mechanisms" to enhance governance effectiveness.

Construct a coordinated governance system of "Three Global Initiatives + BRI + multilateral mechanisms", forming a closed loop of conceptual guidance, platform support, and mechanism guarantee. Integrate GDI projects with the financing support of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) to improve project implementation efficiency. Promote the implementation of the Global Security Initiative (GSI) through platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS cooperation mechanism. Build dialogue platforms for the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) relying on various multilateral forums. Strengthen policy coordination and resource integration among initiatives

to avoid duplicate construction and form a synergy for governance.

(2) Promote mutual recognition of rules and standards to reduce coordination costs.

Adhere to the principle of "extensive consultation and joint contribution" to promote the formation of a diversified system of rules and standards. In the field of infrastructure construction, promote voluntary standards such as the BRI Green Investment Principles. Which are compatible with international standards. In emerging areas such as digital governance and green transition, join hands with developing countries to propose rule initiatives and enhance their discourse power in rulemaking. Promote the mutual recognition and alignment of rules and standards through bilateral agreements and regional cooperation to reduce the institutional costs of project implementation.

(3) Strengthen the risk prevention and control system to ensure the sustainability of cooperation.

Establish a multi-level risk prevention and control mechanism to improve the risk resilience of cooperative projects. In the field of investment and financing, follow the principle of debt sustainability, innovate investment and financing models, broaden financing channels, and avoid increasing the debt burden of host countries. During project implementation, strengthen environmental and social risk assessments, promote the construction of green and low-carbon projects, and adapt to the challenges of climate change. Establish dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve differences and contradictions in cooperation through consultation and dialogue. Strengthen capacity-building support for partner countries to improve their project operation and management capabilities and enhance the endogenous driving force of cooperation.

(4) Expand international communication channels to enhance the recognition of Chinese solutions.

Build a diversified international communication system to tell compelling stories of China's participation in global governance. Utilize new media platforms to produce multilingual and visualized communication content, showcasing the practical achievements of the BRI and the Three Global Initiatives. Leverage third-party forces such as international think tanks and academic institutions to conduct objective interpretations of China's concepts and solutions, improving their

international recognition. Strengthening cooperation with media in developing countries, building a communication network among Global South countries, and breaking the monopoly of Western public opinion. Through the exchange and mutual learning of civilizations, enhance the international community's value recognition of China's concepts and build consensus on global governance.

(5) Deepen South-South cooperation to forge a synergy for reform.

Prioritize supporting the development and revitalization of the Global South and deepen strategic coordination with developing countries. Expand the scope and upgrade the level of pragmatic cooperation through platforms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the China-CELAC Forum. Promote the regularization of mechanisms such as the "Global South Financial Forum" to facilitate financial cooperation and capital flows among Global South countries. Strengthen position coordination among developing countries in multilateral venues such as the UN to jointly promote the reform of the global governance system. Through deepened South-South cooperation, form a strong synergy for advancing the reform of global governance.

Conclusion

The reform of the global governance system is an inevitable trend in today's world and an urgent requirement for addressing global challenges. China's proposed global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, together with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Three Global Initiatives, has provided systematic conceptual guidance and practical solutions for the reform of the global governance system. These concepts and practices have broken through the hegemonic logic and "center-periphery" structure of traditional global governance, advocated a governance model featuring equal participation and win-win cooperation, conformed to the historical trend of the collective rise of the Global South, and served the common interests of the international community.

Through the practical platform of the BRI, China has achieved remarkable results in areas such as infrastructure connectivity, people's livelihood

improvement, and sustainable development. The synergistic advancement of the Three Global Initiatives has precisely addressed governance deficits in development, security, civilization, and other fields. The deepening of multilateral mechanism building has promoted the optimization and improvement of global governance architecture. These practices fully demonstrate that Chinese solutions possess strong feasibility and effectiveness, injecting new momentum into the reform of the global governance system. Meanwhile, China also faces multiple challenges in leading the reform of the global governance system, such as geopolitical games, differences in rules and standards, and the sustainability of cooperation. In the future, China needs to further deepen the coordination of "initiatives + mechanisms", promote the mutual recognition of rules and standards, strengthen the risk prevention and control system, expand international communication channels, and deepen South-South cooperation, so as to continuously enhance the implementation effectiveness and international recognition of Chinese solutions. The reform of the global governance system is a long-term and complex process that requires the joint efforts of the international community.

China will continue to uphold the global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, adhere to true multilateralism, and work with countries around the world to promote the development of the global governance system in a more fair and reasonable direction, making greater contributions to building a community with a shared future for mankind. Future research can further focus on new areas such as digital governance and artificial intelligence governance, exploring the application and innovation of Chinese solutions in emerging fields.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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