Texas National Security Review: Volume 2, Issue 1 (November 2018)
Print: ISSN 2576-1021 Online: ISSN 2576-1153

XI'S VISION FOR TRANSFORMING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: A STRATEGIC CHALLENGE FOR WASHINGTON AND ITS ALLIES

Liza Tobin

What does China's "community of common destiny," recently emphasized by Chinese President Xi Jinping, mean for the future of the international order? Liza Tobin unpacks what, precisely, this vision entails and what it might mean for the United States and its allies.

The Communist Party of China announced in October that it had published a new book by Xi Jinping on his concept for a "community of common destiny for mankind" (人类命运共同体).[1] In its *official* English translation — a "community of shared future for mankind" — the phrase lands with a soft thud. It sounds equally fuzzy — if more grandiose — when translated more literally from Chinese. But China watchers would be wrong to dismiss the concept as vague or empty propaganda. As one of the party's banner terms, it sheds light on Beijing's strategic intentions and plays an important role in China's approach to foreign policy issues as diverse as trade, climate change, cyber operations, and security cooperation. What, then, do Xi and other Chinese leaders mean when they call for building a community of common destiny? And why should anyone outside Beijing care?

The phrase expresses in a nutshell Beijing's long-term vision for transforming the international environment to make it compatible with China's governance model and emergence as a global leader. Chinese officials make clear that the concept has become central in Beijing's foreign policy framework and overall national strategy. China's top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, wrote in August 2018, "Building a community of common destiny for mankind is the overall goal of China's foreign affairs work in the new era." A prerequisite or pathway for building the community, he noted, is the establishment of a "new type of international relations" that supports, rather than threatens, China's national rejuvenation.[2] Xi has highlighted the community's crucial place in the party's renewal strategy. In June, for instance, he exhorted Chinese diplomats to "continuously facilitate a favorable external environment for realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation and promote the building of a community of common destiny."[3]

Although Xi has made "community of common destiny" a hallmark of his diplomacy, he did not coin the phrase, nor did he generate its core tenets. Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao, used the terminology in 2007 to describe cross-Strait ties and in later discussions of China's neighborhood diplomacy and peaceful development.[4] Chinese state media credit Xi with introducing it as a *global* concept in 2013 in Moscow, during his first international trip as president.[5] The aspirations it expresses echo and expand upon themes voiced by Chinese leaders since the early days of the People's Republic. In 1954, Premier Zhou Enlai proposed in meetings with India the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence": mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. Subsequent Chinese leaders, including Xi, have reaffirmed these principles as key tenets of Chinese foreign policy.[6] President Jiang Zemin's "new security concept" in the late 1990s echoed the Five Principles and

1 Cao Desheng, "Xi's Discourses on Mankind's Shared Future Published," *China Daily,* Oct. 15, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201810/15/WS5bc38adca310eff303282392.html.

2 Yang Jiechi, 求是 ["Seeking truth"], Aug. 1, 2018, http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2018-08/01/c_1123209510.htm. For more on the origins of China's "new type international relations" and its related concept, "new type great power relations," see Peter Mattis, "Nothing New, Nothing Great: Exploring 'New Type Great Power Relations,'" *Washington Journal of Modern China* 11, no. 1 (2013): 17–38. Mattis shows that despite its "new" label, China's "new type" proposals repackaged long-standing Chinese concepts of mutually beneficial cooperation, mutual equality, and demands for the United States to respect Chinese core interests.

3 "Xi Urges Breaking New Ground in Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics," *Xinhua,* June 24, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/24/c_137276269.htm.

4 Jin Kai, "Can China Build a Community of Common Destiny?" *Diplomat,* Nov. 28, 2013, https://thediplomat.com/2013/11/can-china-build-a-community-of-common-destiny/; Nadège Rolland, "Examining China's 'Community of Common Destiny,'" *Power 3.0,* Jan. 23, 2018, https://www.power3point0.org/2018/01/23/examining-chinas-community-of-destiny/.

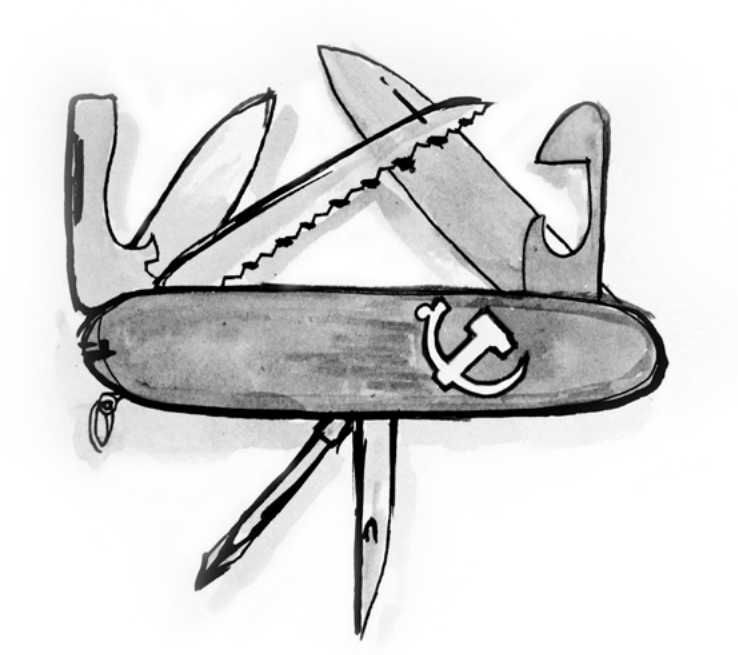
5 Zhou Xin, ed., "China Focus: China Pursues World Peace, Common Development in International Agenda," *Xinhua*, March 2, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/02/c_137011860.htm.

6 Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014). See his Dec. 26, 2013, speech, "Carry on the Enduring Spirit of Mao Zedong Thought," 32–33.

rejected the "old security concept based on military alliances and build-up of armaments."[7] In a similar vein, President Hu proposed building a "harmonious world" in a 2005 speech to the United Nations. Hu affirmed his predecessors' concepts and called for reforms to give developing countries a greater voice in global governance.[8] Each of these proposals reflects long-standing Chinese objections to features of the current international order, including U.S.-led security alliances, military superpower, and democratic norms.

Xi, however, has gone much further than his predecessors to promote his vision for transforming global governance (全球治理变革). For Xi, China's growing comprehensive national power (综合国力) means that Beijing has greater ability — and faces a greater urgency — to achieve its long-held aspirations.[9] In June 2018, at a Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference (a rarely convened forum in Beijing that issues seminal guidance to China's diplomatic establishment), Xi made a crucial progression from his predecessors' rhetoric. He called for China to "take an active part in leading the reform of the global governance system" (积极参与引领全球治理体系改革).[10] Previously, he and his forebears had more modestly called for China to "actively participate" in global governance reforms.[11] Xi linked his exhortation to his vision of building a community of common destiny.

Xi's signature Belt and Road Initiative, also launched in 2013, is the most visible means by which Beijing is executing his vision. In August, diplomat Yang Jiechi called Belt and Road an "important practical platform" for making the community of common destiny a reality. The multibillion-dollar plan aims to build physical and virtual connectivity between China and other countries, originally in Asia and now throughout the world.[12] At the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, the party amended its constitution to add two phrases: "pursue the Belt and Road Initiative" and "build a community of common destiny"[13] — elevating both the initiative and its underlying vision within the party's long-term strategy.



China's success or failure in achieving its vision will depend in large part on how its proposals are received in other countries. Regardless of the ultimate outcome, Beijing's pursuit of its goals has already had repercussions, as evidenced by the growing international attention toward the Belt and Road Initiative, both its failures and achievements.[14] Policymakers in the United States and like-minded countries seeking to defend and strengthen the principles of what they now

7 Jiang Zemin, "Promote Disarmament Process and Safeguard World Security," speech at U.N. Conference on Disarmament, March 26, 1999, http://www.china-un.org/eng/chinaandun/disarmament_armscontrol/unga/t29298.htm.

8 "Hu Makes 4-Point Proposal for Building Harmonious World," *Xinhua,* Sept. 16, 2005, http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/UN/142408.htm.

9 I benefited from Dan Tobin's insights placing the Xi Jinping era in the context of Communist Party history.

10 "Xi Urges Breaking New Ground in Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics," *Xinhua.*

11 "Xi: China to Contribute Wisdom to Global Governance," *Xinhua*, July 1, 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/01/c_135481408.htm.

12 Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China,* vol. 2 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2017). See speeches on the Belt and Road Initiative, 543–53. Earlier speeches emphasize the Belt and Road Initiative in Asia, whereas more recent speeches emphasize its global scope.

13 "Full text of Resolution on Amendment to CPC Constitution," *Xinhua*, Oct. 24, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/24/c_136702726.htm.

14 For example, see "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Debt Trap or Hope?" *Straits Times,* Oct. 20, 2018, https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-debt-trap-or-hope.

refer to as the "free and open Indo-Pacific"[15] need to look carefully at China's goals for reforming global governance as Beijing itself expresses them.

Xi's description of his concept in two speeches to the United Nations, at the General Assembly in September 2015 and in Geneva in January 2017, is a good place to start.[16] In the 2017 speech, Xi likened the community of common destiny to a Swiss army knife — a Chinese-designed multifunctional tool for solving the world's problems. On both occasions, he proposed the concept as a better model for global governance in five dimensions: politics, security, development (economic, social, technological, etc.), culture, and the environment. In sum, the five dimensions reflect the extraordinarily wide range of arenas in which Beijing believes it must restructure global governance to enable China to integrate with the world while at the same time achieving global leadership. If Beijing succeeds in realizing this ambitious vision, the implication for the United States and like-minded nations is a global environment with striking differences from the current order: A global network of partnerships centered on China would replace the U.S. system of treaty alliances, the international community would regard Beijing's authoritarian governance model as a superior alternative to Western electoral democracy, and the world would credit the Communist Party of China for developing a new path to peace, prosperity, and modernity that other countries can follow.

China's success or failure in achieving its vision will depend in large part on how its proposals are received in other countries.

Politics

Xi's description of the political dimension of the community includes emphasis on two terms that are worth examining closely: democracy and partnerships. Both highlight the link between China's domestic political requirements and its push to reform the international system.

"Democracy" is a core principle to which Beijing officially ascribes, both in international relations and domestic governance. In his 2015 speech to the United Nations, Xi said, "Consultation is an important form of democracy, and it should also become an important means of exercising international governance." So what do the leaders of the world's largest authoritarian regime mean when they advocate "consultative" democracy? In international relations, it means equality among sovereign nations regardless of regime type (i.e., authoritarian or democratic); a growing voice for developing countries (including China); and an absence of "dominance by just one or several countries," as Xi put it in 2017. This reflects Beijing's objections to Washington's dominant international influence, along with its like-minded allies. For Beijing, democracy in international relations means shifting global influence away from Washington and U.S. allies and toward China and other countries that accede to its concepts.

Chinese leaders advocate "consultative" democracy not only in state-to-state relations but also within states, arguing that it is a valid and even superior model. Chinese official media disparage Western democratic regimes as chaotic, confrontational, competitive, inefficient, and oligarchic.[17] They assert that China has developed a more enlightened form of democracy in its "new type of party system" (新型政党制度).[18] In this system, the Communist Party is the sole political authority, but minority parties and nonaffiliated groups participate in parts of the decision-making process as outside consultants via the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.[19] They argue that other features of China's political system, such as people's congresses and consensus-building "inner-party democracy," purportedly

15 "American Leadership in the Asia Pacific, Part 5": Hearing Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy, 115th Cong. (May 15, 2018) (statement of Alex Wong, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs), https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/051518_Wong_Testimony.pdf.

16 Both speeches are found in Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 569–75 and 588–601.

17 Li Laifang, "Enlightened Chinese Democracy Puts the West in the Shade," *Xinhua*, Oct. 17, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-10/17/content_33364425.htm.

18 Zhong Sheng [Voice of China], "Op-ed: China's New Type of Party System Enlightens World," *People's Daily*, March 12, 2018, http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0312/c90000-9435991.html.

19 "Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," PRC National People's Congress, http://www.china.org.cn/english/archiveen/27750.htm.

make China's "democracy" more effective than Western electoral democracy.[20] There is, however, a clear contradiction between China's articulation of "democracy" in international relations, which argues that all countries are equal regardless of size or political regime, and its approach in domestic politics, where a single party rules, minority parties serve as outside consultants, and dissenting voices are silenced. Nonetheless, the Communist Party is taking practical steps to disseminate its ideas abroad by providing political training to African leaders and young elites in topics such as party structure, propaganda work, and managing center-local relations.[21]

Partnerships are another foundational element in Xi's community of common destiny. They are key vehicles by which Beijing promotes international acceptance of its concepts. At the United Nations in 2017, Xi called for international partnerships based on "dialogue, non-confrontation, and non-alliance" and asserted that "China is the first country to make partnership-building a principle guiding state-to-state relations." Partnerships are China's alternative to U.S.-style alliances. Beijing prefers them because they do not confer treaty obligations and they allow the partners to cooperate despite differences in ideologies and social systems.[22] According to Xi, China had 90 such partnerships with countries and regional organizations around the world as of 2017,[23] and Beijing intends to continue expanding its "global network of partnerships."[24]

China and its partner often designate a name for the relationship, setting a positive tone and a basis for cooperation. A frequently used moniker is "comprehensive strategic partnership." This has been applied to China's relations with Australia, Egypt, the European Union, Indonesia, Iran, and many others.[25] Importantly, China and Russia have gone a step further, naming their ties a "comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination." The title reflects both the wide scope of the relationship ("comprehensive") and agreement to collaborate on development strategies and international affairs ("coordination").[26] China and the United States established a lesser constructive strategic partnership in the late 1990s.[27] However, successive U.S. administrations dropped the term, and the two countries no longer have a named partnership.

That is probably just as well for the United States, because China often invokes the partnership to threaten retaliation when it perceives that its partner has violated "mutual trust." In January 2018, on the eve of British Prime Minister Theresa May's first visit to China, Beijing's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Liu Xiaoming, wrote in glowing terms of the "China-UK 'Golden Era,'" which he called "the strategic definition of China-UK relations."[28] But in September, Britain tarnished the golden glow by sailing the HMS *Albion* near the Paracel Islands, disputed features that China occupies in the South China Sea. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson warned that the action would harm bilateral ties. State-controlled *China Daily* filled in the details, admonishing London to "refrain from being Washington's sharksucker in the South China Sea" if it hoped to make progress with China on a post-Brexit trade deal.[29]

As others have documented, the U.K. experience

20 Zhou Xin, ed., "China Focus: Chinese Democracy: How It Boosts Growth and Prosperity?" *Xinhua*, March 16, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/16/c_137043686.htm.

21 William Gumede, "China Impact on African Democracy," *Namibian,* Aug. 28, 2018, https://www.namibian.com.na/70804/read/China-Impact-on-African-Democracy. Also see Yun Sun, "Political Party Training: China's Ideological Push in Africa?" Brookings Institution's *Africa in Focus* blog, July 5, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2016/07/05/political-party-training-chinas-ideological-push-in-africa/.

22 Wang Yi, "Work Together to Build Partnerships and Pursue Peace and Development," speech at China Development Forum luncheon, March 20, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1448155.shtml.

23 Xi, *The Governance of China,* vol. 2, 588–601.

24 Wang Yi, "Forge Ahead Under the Guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Thought on Diplomacy," Sept. 1, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1489143.shtml.

25 China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs frequently references its named partnerships in official readouts of engagements with foreign leaders, posted on its website: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/. For an example of another country referring to its named partnership with China, see "China country brief," Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, https://dfat.gov.au/geo/china/Pages/china-country-brief.aspx.

26 "Russia-China Partnership at Best Level in History: Putin," *Xinhua*, May 26, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/26/c_137208088.htm. Also see "Interview: Chinese Ambassador Expects China-Russia Partnership to See Wider, Deeper Future Development," *Xinhua*, July 12, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/12/c_137320337.htm; and "China and Russia: Partnership of Strategic Coordination," PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18028.shtml.

27 "China, U.S. Pledge to Build Constructive Strategic Partnership," PRC Embassy in the United States of America, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmgx/zysj/zrjfm/t36212.htm.

28 Liu Xiaoming, "The UK-China 'Golden Era' Can Bear New Fruit," (London) *Telegraph,* Jan. 29, 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/29/uk-china-golden-era-can-bear-new-fruit/. The op-ed was also posted on the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

29 "UK Should Try to Have More Than One Friend," *China Daily*, Sept. 6, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201809/06/WS5b911253a31033b4f4654a8e.html.

is far from unique. A number of countries in recent years have experienced China's economic coercion.[30] This phenomenon highlights the pretense in Beijing's promises to offer its partners cooperation with "no strings attached" and its refrain that "major powers should treat small countries as equals." If Beijing wishes to generate greater global acceptance of its model over the long term, it may need to adjust its narratives or its behavior to address, or at least distract from, these contradictions.

Security

The solutions Xi proposes for the world's urgent security crises can be summarized in two words that feature prominently in his speeches at the United Nations, as well as in other Chinese leaders' statements: dialogue and development. Xi advocates resolving crises via dialogue between the parties directly involved. The United Nations, according to Xi, should mediate when necessary and, through its Security Council, should play the central role in ending conflicts and keeping peace. For example, for Syria's civil war, China consistently advocates political settlement as the only legitimate path to a solution.[31] The unstated alternative — Western powers intervening militarily in a dictatorship on humanitarian grounds — is highly worrisome to Beijing. Chinese leaders also argue that development is key to addressing the root causes of international problems such as terrorism and refugee crises.

The notion that Chinese development assistance could bring renewal and stability to regions plagued by terrorism and refugee crises has appeal, especially in an era of stretched budgets in Western countries. Yet, China's draconian crackdowns on what it calls "terrorism, separatism, and extremism"[32] within its borders are reasons to be circumspect about Beijing's claims that it has developed better solutions for mankind's problems.

Furthermore, the United States and its allies should be clear on the significant change from the status quo that China's proposals would impart. Beijing opposes "interventionism" and, as noted above, calls frequently for "partnerships based on dialogue, non-confrontation, and non-alliance."[33] Beijing views U.S.-style alliances as outdated relics of the Cold War, overly antagonistic and out of step with contemporary international conditions. It is logical to infer that Beijing's opposition to U.S. security alliances is also due to the coercive potential that coalitions of democracies represent. Xi's speeches to the United Nations do not acknowledge any contribution of the United States and its allies to keeping the peace and enhancing global prosperity since World War II. Rather, he credits the United Nations and the global community writ large and proposes his community of common destiny as the framework for future success. Beijing's objections to U.S. alliances reflect a deep-seated belief that the U.S.-led security architecture in Asia is a structural impediment to China's development and security.[34] Chinese leaders' strong aversion to chaos that could put China's strategic interests at risk suggests that Beijing will not seek to overturn U.S. alliances suddenly. But over the long term, Beijing's community of common destiny implies a future in which U.S. alliances are absent. Given Xi's track record for moving more assertively than his predecessors to implement foreign policy preferences, the United States and its allies should be vigilant about Chinese attempts to discredit or meddle in their ties.

[T]he United States and its allies should be clear on the significant change from the status quo that China's proposals would impart.

30 Peter Harrell, Elizabeth Rosenberg, and Edoardo Saravalle, "China's Use of Coercive Economic Measures," Center for a New American Security, June 11, 2018, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/chinas-use-of-coercive-economic-measures.

31 "Wang Yi Meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem of Syria," PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sept. 28, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1601120.shtml.

32 "Full Transcript: Interview with Xinjiang Government Chief on Counterterrorism, Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang," *Xinhua*, Oct. 16, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-10/16/c_137535720.htm.

33 Both speeches are found in Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 569–75 and 588–601.

34 Timothy R. Heath, "China and the U.S. Alliance System," *Diplomat*, June 11, 2014, https://thediplomat.com/2014/06/china-and-the-u-s-alliance-system/.

Development

Xi claims that his community provides a better path for countries to achieve development and modernity than what the West offers. For Chinese leaders, development includes and goes beyond economics to encompass social development, technology, and innovation, and it can serve as a point of connection between countries to keep conflict at bay.

According to Xi, two concepts crucial to the success of the Chinese development model are openness and markets. Ironically, these were precisely the terms Washington used earlier this year to criticize China's economic practices. According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative, since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 China has failed to adopt "open, market-oriented policies" in line with its accession commitments.[35] Clearly, there is a discrepancy in how Washington and Beijing are using the same terms.

Chinese leaders continue to affirm their decision to join the World Trade Organization as the right strategic choice. And when they defend China's commitment to openness, measures such as lowering barriers to China's domestic markets and easing foreign equity restrictions are among the things they point to. For Beijing, "opening" does not mean what it means to Washington, which envisions a largely one-way process of China opening its doors to the world and progressively adapting to international norms. Rather, Beijing sees opening as a two-way process of integration with the global economy that is necessary for China's rise — initially to acquire advanced technology and expertise and, later, to shape global norms, standards, and institutions in line with Chinese strategic requirements. China's frequent calls to make globalization more "open, inclusive, and balanced" appear to be rooted in a belief that connectivity between China and the world will require the world to adapt to Beijing's preferences as much as — or perhaps more than — the other way around.

How does Beijing define "markets"? Chinese development is not premised on capitalism, either of the free-market or state capitalist sort. In Beijing's telling, its success lies in its socialist market economy.[36] Deng Xiaoping pioneered the concept, arguing in 1985 that "there is no fundamental contradiction between socialism and a market economy" and that combining planning and market economics would "liberate the productive forces and speed up economic growth."[37] Chinese leaders have made many adjustments to the balance between planning and markets, but the basic principle of combining the two still applies.

In development, as in politics, Chinese state media express increasing confidence that China provides a path superior to what the West offers. These sources argue that "socialism with Chinese characteristics, compared with capitalism, is yielding better results."[38] In his 2015 speech to the United Nations, Xi listed capitalism's pitfalls: proneness to crises, a lack of moral constraints, and yawning wealth gaps. (Unsurprisingly, he did not mention China's own struggles with these issues.) Countries can avoid capitalism's snares by relying on, in Xi's words, "both the invisible hand and the visible hand." China's "better way" combines markets' ability to allocate resources efficiently with a strong role for the state in controlling key sectors, ensuring equitable social and economic outcomes, stabilizing markets, and solving large-scale problems.[39]

Beijing goes further than touting its model as worthy of others' emulation. Like in the political dimension, it proposes its concepts as a framework to reform global economic governance. China claims to speak on behalf of developing countries as a group, calling for reform of "unfair and unreasonable aspects of the current global governance system."[40] In part, this means reforming institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and bolstering organizations with a larger voice for developing countries and emerging markets, such as the Group of 20, the BRICS emerging economies, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Over

35 "2017 Report to Congress on China's WTO Compliance," United States Trade Representative, January 2018, https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/files/Press/Reports/China%202017%20WTO%20Report.pdf.

36 Qui Shi, "The West Once Again Gets It Wrong on China," *China Daily,* Sept. 7, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201809/07/WS5b925c35a31033b4f4654e4f_4.html.

37 Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works,* vol. 3 (1982–1992) (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), 151–53. The 1985 selection can be found online at http://en.people.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1480.html.

38 Shi, "The West Once Again Gets It Wrong on China." See also "China Focus: Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: 10 Ideas to Share with World," *Xinhua,* Oct. 8, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/08/c_136665156.htm.

39 Shi, "The West Once Again Gets It Wrong on China."

40 "Xi Jinping: Strengthen Cooperation for Advancing the Transformation of the Global Governance System and Jointly Promote the Lofty Task of Peace and Development for Mankind" (习近平：加强合作推动全球治理体系变革 共同促进人类和平与发展崇高事业), *Xinhua,* Sept. 28, 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-09/28/c_1119641652.htm.

the long term, Beijing would like to diminish the U.S. dollar's role in global finance and the leverage this gives Washington to squeeze other countries with sanctions and monetary policy.[41] China also seeks a larger role for itself and other developing countries in setting global rules, including in emerging domains such as cyberspace, deep seas, polar regions, and outer space.[42]

There is certainly a need for a greater voice for developing countries in economic governance given their growing share in global GDP. Outside observers should be vigilant, however, about Beijing's tendency to conflate its priorities and values with those of the entire community of developing nations. China's professed commitment to respect each country's individual choice of a development path and social system rings hollow when juxtaposed with its claims to speak for the majority of the globe. Its partners should insist that the "extensive consultation" China says is foundational in its external initiatives be truly two-way.

Culture

Outside observers tend to focus on the triumvirate of political, security, and economic drivers of China's global engagement, glossing over a fourth arena that Beijing views as vital to its national rejuvenation strategy and global governance vision: culture. This is unfortunate, because culture is arguably the most far-reaching and, at least among China watchers in the United States, the least understood element of China's foreign policy framework. China's solution for achieving legitimacy at home and influence abroad hinges on more than economics backstopped by hard power and political maneuvering. Developing an "advanced culture" has long been a core element in the national rejuvenation strategy, and Xi has called for "more energy and concrete measures" to achieve this. In his words, China must do more to "develop a great socialist culture" and "cultivate and observe core socialist values" in order to build itself into a "great modern socialist country" by mid-century.[43]

While Beijing's primary focus is on China's domestic population, the outside world is not exempt. Yang Jiechi wrote in August, "The culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics has contributed to the solution of the problems of mankind China's wisdom and China's proposals."[44] According to *Xinhua*, the community of common destiny, manifested most visibly in the Belt and Road Initiative, "connects the Chinese dream with the aspirations of the whole world for peace and development."[45] The implication is that China's socialist culture has something to offer not only in China but globally. What does Beijing mean by its "culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics," and how does that fit into its foreign policy?

For external audiences, Xi frames the cultural component of the community of common destiny in terms of cross-cultural exchanges and respect for diversity. In his 2015 speech, Xi called for an increase in "inter-civilization exchanges to promote harmony, inclusiveness, and respect for differences" because "the world is more colorful as a result of its cultural diversity." In 2017, he echoed those themes and added, "There is no such thing as a superior or inferior civilization." (Xi did not pioneer these concepts; Jiang Zemin, for example, expressed similar ideas at the United Nations in 2000.[46]) At face value, these are pleasant-sounding, pluralistic sentiments that bring to mind exchanges of language, art, philosophy, and so forth to foster mutual understanding.

But moments after denying the superiority of any culture, Xi suggested that China's history and culture uniquely qualify it to propose a better model for global governance: "For several millennia, peace has been in the blood of us Chinese and part of our DNA," Xi told the United Nations. According to Xi, China, throughout its history, has been committed to not only its own peaceful development but also the greater good of the world at large. The party's claim that its

41 Li Wen, "An International Strategy of Seeking One's Own Self-Interests" (谋一己之私的国际战略), *People.com*, Sept. 18, 2016, http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0918/c1002-28719418.html.

42 Yang Jiechi, "Working Together to Build a World of Lasting Peace and Universal Security and a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," speech at World Peace Forum at Tsinghua University, July 14, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1577242.shtml.

43 "Xi Urges Efforts in Building China into a Great Modern Socialist Country," *Xinhua*, March 20, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/20/c_137052370.htm.

44 Yang Jiechi, 求是 ["Seeking truth"].

45 "Spotlight: Chinese Dream Connects Aspirations of the Whole World for Peace, Development," *Xinhua*, Nov. 29, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/29/c_136788472.htm.

46 Jiang Zemin, "Speech at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations," Sept. 6, 2000, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t24962.shtml.

THE PARTY HAS MADE CLEAR THAT ITS "CULTURE OF SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS" AND "SOCIALIST CORE VALUES" MUST BE THE PRIME OBJECT OF ALLEGIANCE FOR ALL CHINESE PEOPLE, ABOVE ANY OTHER RELIGIOUS, MORAL, ARTISTIC, OR INTELLECTUAL BELIEFS OR LOYALTIES.

community of common destiny will benefit the entire world is rooted in this depiction of China as an extraordinarily peaceful country.

However, the party's heavy-handed domestic policies, calibrated to ensure political allegiance in all forms of cultural expression, cast shadows on Xi's claim to promote "harmony, inclusiveness, and respect for differences." The party has made clear that its "culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics" and "socialist core values" must be the prime object of allegiance for all Chinese people, above any other religious, moral, artistic, or intellectual beliefs or loyalties. A recent example is Beijing's restructuring of the "ideological sector" in mid-April to strengthen the party's ability to ensure political allegiance. The film and press industries, formerly governed by the State Council, would henceforth report to the party's Propaganda Department. Politburo member and department chief Huang Kunming, in explaining the change, cited the need to "enhance cultural confidence" and strengthen party leadership over filmmaking, screening, content enforcement, and international exchanges.[47] Similarly, in 2015, the Politburo issued a statement that called on professionals in the arts and literature to focus on promoting "core socialist values" and noted that "strength of ideology and high moral standards" were "absolute requirements."[48]

Those examples pale in comparison to the ongoing efforts to ensure that all religions in China answer first and foremost to the party. At a conference on religious work in late April 2018, Xi exhorted fellow cadres to "guide religious believers to ardently love the motherland and the people." Religious adherents must "subordinate themselves to, and serve, the highest interests of the country," he said, and "actively practice socialist core values."[49] The widely-noted extrajudicial detention of as many as a million Muslim Uighurs in "vocational education and training" centers in Xinjiang,[50] where detainees reportedly endure political indoctrination and torture, show the extreme measures the party will take to enforce its conceptions of civilization.[51] While the Uighurs' case stands out in sheer scope and brutality, none of China's five legal religions (Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and the Protestant and Catholic branches of Christianity) are exempt from the Communist Party's systematic attempts to compel allegiance. Chinese authorities reportedly are burning Bibles and crosses, shutting down and bulldozing churches,[52] drafting regulations to further restrict religious content online,[53] and instructing clergy from all five denominations to align their religious beliefs with socialist core values.[54]

The requirement for party cadres to generate "ardent love" for the motherland is reminiscent of George Orwell's 1949 dystopian novel *1984*. In it, dissident Winston Smith succumbs to torture in the Ministry of Love and renounces his personal and political loyalty. As the book ends, Smith finally realizes that he loves Big Brother. Orwell's *1984* is, of course, fiction. But China watchers should bear in mind that repression of religious, artistic, and intellectual expression is not merely a product of local authorities reacting to events and desperately attempting to maintain control. Rather, it is also a product of the party's top-down strategy to instill adherence to its view of civilization and root out disloyalty to the cause of Chinese socialism. Culture — including the "great socialist culture" Beijing is trying to build — is an integral part of Xi's community of common destiny. Much about how Beijing will seek to implement its views of culture into its foreign policy remains to be determined. Beijing's record of crushing dissent at home could be a harbinger of its behavior overseas — or the Achilles' heel in its attempts to build cultural "soft power."

47 "China Unveils Three State Administrations on Film, Press, Television," *Xinhua*, April 16, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/16/c_137115379.htm.

48 "CPC Leadership: Carry Forward Chinese Values Through Art," *Xinhua*, Sept. 11, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2015-09/11/c_134615838.htm.

49 "China Focus: Xi Calls for Improved Religious Work," *Xinhua*, April 23, 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2016-04/23/c_135306131.htm.

50 "Full Transcript: Interview with Xinjiang Government Chief on Counterterrorism, Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang," *Xinhua*.

51 Anna Fifield, "With Wider Crackdowns on Religion, Xi's China Seeks to Put State Stamp on Faith," *Washington Post*, Sept. 16, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/with-wider-crackdowns-on-religion-xis-china-seeks-to-put-state-stamp-on-faith/2018/09/15/b035e704-b7f0-11e8-b79f-f6e31e555258_story.html.

52 Fifield, "With Wider Crackdowns on Religion, Xi's China Seeks to Put State Stamp on Faith."

53 "China Mulls Censoring Online Religious Content in New Draft Regulations," *Hong Kong Free Press*, Sept. 11, 2018, https://www.hongkongfp.com/2018/09/11/china-mulls-censoring-online-religious-content-new-draft-regulations/.

54 Zhang Yu, "Priests Search for Patriotic Elements in Scripts as China Promotes Religious Localization," *Global Times*, May 31, 2018, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1104987.shtml.

Environment

The final dimension of Xi's community of common destiny focuses on the environment and, more specifically, on reforming global governance to promote "the building of sound ecosystems." In his speech to the United Nations in 2017, Xi called on the global community to pursue a "green, low-carbon, circular, and sustainable way of life and work." Further, he endorsed the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a plan to eradicate poverty; protect the environment; and foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.[55] Of the five dimensions, this is arguably where China's long-term goals align most closely with near-universal aspirations for sustainable development. In a speech at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015, Xi acknowledged that China's decades of rapid economic growth have "taken a toll on the environment and resources."[56] Although understated, this was nonetheless an admission of China's shortcomings. Xi went on to enumerate steps China was taking to address environmental problems, such as increasing renewable energy capacity, and future benchmarks it had set, such as reaching peak CO2 emissions by 2030 or earlier. "This will require strenuous efforts, but we have the confidence and the resolve to fulfill our commitments," Xi said in Paris. China's abysmal track record of environmental management and immense difficulties transitioning to a more sustainable path are reasons to be skeptical. But Chinese leaders have made environmental progress a higher political priority in recent years. Since the 18th Party Congress in 2012, when Hu Jintao elevated "ecological progress" to a prominent position in China's overall development plan (placing it alongside economic, political, cultural, and social progress),[57] leaders have taken more serious steps to limit pollution and protect the environment. These include imposing tougher penalties on local officials who fail to meet pollution targets and establishing a system to hold individuals and companies that pollute the soil accountable for life.[58] Chinese leaders have made clear that building a "Beautiful China" is one of their mid-century goals for national rejuvenation, so the environment is likely to remain a political priority for years to come.

In the political, security, development, and cultural dimensions, Beijing argues that its historical experience and remarkable modern track record of peaceful development qualify it to take a leading role in reforming the global governance system to make it more peaceful, equitable, and prosperous. But Xi's claims in the environmental dimension are much more modest. The implication is that China has learned the hard way the importance of protecting the environment and that it must strive to work with the world for a cleaner future, albeit on China's timetable. Certainly, some of Xi's proposals in Paris appear designed to promote his community of common destiny, such as his call for a global governance mechanism on climate change and for developed countries to provide funding and technology to enable developing countries to fulfill environmental commitments. These are resonant with the community of common destiny's emphasis on striving for a more fair and equitable international order that provides a greater voice for developing countries. Countries' differing approaches to prioritization and speed of implementation will continue to create massive hurdles to progress, as the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords attests. But there is a kernel of hope in the fact that China's end goal for the environment — as Xi puts it, to "make our world clean and beautiful by pursuing green and low-carbon development" — expresses a universal hope rather than a claim that China offers a unique and superior path to a better world. It leaves open a greater possibility of flexibility in China's approach.

In the environmental dimension, the United States and other countries can persevere in cooperation with China, highlighting long-term alignment in strategic interests despite important differences in timelines, approach, and priorities. As friction grows between Washington and Beijing on trade and many other issues, an area for cooperation could provide a valuable source for interaction that is genuinely win-win.

55 "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld.

56 Xi Jinping, "Build a Win-Win, Equitable and Balanced Governance Mechanism on Climate Change," speech at United Nations Climate Change Conference, Nov. 30, 2015, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/cop21cmp11_leaders_event_china.pdf.

57 "CPC Advocates Building 'Beautiful' China," 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Nov. 8, 2012, http://www.china.org.cn/china/18th_cpc_congress/2012-11/08/content_27051794.htm.

58 "China Fines for Environmental Violations Up 48 Percent from Jan–Oct: Ministry," *Reuters*, Dec. 5, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-environment/china-fines-for-environmental-violations-up-48-percent-from-jan-oct-ministry-idUSKBN1E0089; "China Sets Up Lifelong Accountability System to Control Soil Pollution," *China Daily*, Jan. 18, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-01/18/content_27992959.htm.

Policy Implications

Beijing's attempt to build a community of common destiny presents a challenge for the United States and like-minded nations committed to the free and open international order.[59] What options do policymakers have to respond?

An effective U.S. strategy would account for the comprehensive character of China's aspirations. Washington is starting to move in this direction and broaden its focus beyond trade. At this juncture, several steps could help policymakers build a broader strategy on the foundation of a correct understanding of how Beijing operates *and* a fuller appreciation of the advantages that the United States and like-minded nations can bring to the competition.

To begin with, China watchers have the opportunity to broaden how they inform policymakers and the public about Beijing's own articulation of its global ambitions. U.S. observers frequently use the trinity of economic, political, and security factors to explain China's motives, but this well-worn framework misses the full scope of Beijing's aspirations for global leadership. By Xi's own account, Beijing intends to realign global governance across *at least* five major dimensions: politics, development (to include economics, society, and technology), security, culture, and the environment. Early identification of emerging Chinese banner terms offers U.S. policymakers a greater chance to influence these concepts before repetition in Chinese leaders' speeches, official documents, and laws cement their place in Chinese strategy. Awareness of these concepts would also help policymakers anticipate their Chinese counterparts' talking points and avoid carelessly repeating them — and unintentionally signaling acceptance of Beijing's proposals. To accomplish all this, governments and scholars can consider devoting more resources to monitoring and analyzing Beijing's publicly available, high-level documents and authoritative media. Deeper understanding of the party's rhetoric and use of information as a tool of statecraft can be incorporated into U.S. policymaking processes.

Bolstering China-related expertise is only part of the solution, however. As has been argued in this journal, the United States lacks a sufficiently robust "team to take the field" — a cadre of individuals with the right combination of expertise on China, policy tools, and competitive strategy.[60] Beijing's systematic fusing of categories that in the West are generally considered distinct has created strategic dilemmas for Washington and its allies. Examples of these blurred lines include Beijing's effort to "fuse" its military and civil industrial bases,[61] the party's intrusions into private and foreign firms,[62] and its growing use of political influence activities overseas.[63] These conditions are forcing Washington to reevaluate how it weighs the costs and benefits of engagement with China. Questions such as "Will it boost quarterly earnings?" and "Does it break any laws?" or "Is it state-owned or private?" produce answers that fail to account for hidden economic costs and national security risks. The U.S. government needs rigorous, cross-disciplinary frameworks to conduct this type of cost-benefit analysis. The creative thinking required to develop them is unlikely to emerge from government alone. As U.S. policymakers broaden

An effective U.S. strategy would account for the comprehensive character of China's aspirations.

59 Statement of Alex Wong, deputy assistant secretary of state, in Hearing Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy, 115th Cong. (May 15, 2018).

60 Peter Mattis, "From Engagement to Rivalry: Tools to Compete with China," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 4 (August 2018), https://tnsr.org/2018/08/from-engagement-to-rivalry-tools-to-compete-with-china/.

61 China's plan to break down barriers between the defense and civilian industrial bases involves "military-civil fusion," which aims to promote the free flow of technology, intellectual property, talent, and expertise between civilian and defense entities and to ensure that China develops a "strong army." For more on this and the challenge it poses to the United States, see remarks by Christopher A. Ford, "Chinese Technology Transfer Challenges to U.S. Export Control Policy," CSIS Project on Nuclear Issues, July 11, 2018, https://www.state.gov/t/isn/rls/rm/2018/284106.htm.

62 See, for example, Simon Denyer, "Command and Control: China's Communist Party Extends Reach into Foreign Companies," *Washington Post*, Jan. 28, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/command-and-control-chinas-communist-party-extends-reach-into-foreign-companies/2018/01/28/cd49ffa6-fc57-11e7-9b5d-bbf0da31214d_story.html.

63 For a thorough assessment of the party's "united front" work to influence domestic audiences, see Anne-Marie Brady, "Magic Weapons: China's Political Influence Activities Under Xi Jinping," conference paper, Sept. 16–17, 2017, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/magicweaponsanne-mariebradyseptember162017.pdf.

the focus of competition with China beyond trade issues, engaging with innovative thinkers with diverse perspectives on competition in business, marketing, economics, science and technology, history, entertainment, and other fields can help them conceptualize the challenge, set priorities for addressing it, and devise effective strategies for competing with China.

Finally, the United States has an opportunity to use public affairs and diplomacy to counter problematic elements of Beijing's governance proposals. Many in Washington are reluctant to publicly dispute Beijing's ideas, for fear of provoking China. But challenging Beijing's proposals is not the same as merely "poking" China. Xi's bid to build a community of common destiny is an invitation to a debate over the best approach to global governance and the validity of competing governance models. The United States brings significant advantages to the debate — including a competitive marketplace of ideas, a strong capacity for clear-eyed self-reflection, and a willingness to acknowledge its own shortfalls. Media rancor, political chaos, and foreign policy stumbles have understandably prompted many in the United States and other developed democracies to compare their systems unfavorably to Beijing's. But this is shortsighted. Beijing's need to exert rigid control over its media, corporations, officials, and citizens reveals vulnerability rather than strength. Its highly orchestrated, ostentatious campaigns to trumpet its vision are nothing to envy. In its public affairs and exchanges with Chinese interlocutors in bilateral and multilateral settings, the United States has an opportunity to listen carefully to China's proposals — and clearly reject the ideas that are incompatible with the principles of a free and open order. Washington can argue vigorously for the order's principles even while admitting that its stewardship of these principles is imperfect. Finally, Washington and others can consistently make clear that the free and open order is also open to China. Indeed, the order would be stronger — as would China itself — if Beijing chose to accept the invitation.

Liza Tobin *has worked for twelve years in various capacities as a China specialist for the United States government. Currently she is part of a team that provides assessments of China's strategy for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Headquarters. She has published recently on China's maritime strategy in* Naval War College Review *and* War on the Rocks. *The views expressed here are her own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command or the U.S. government.*