

Global Times: What the Global South desperately wants: predictable global governance

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In this pivotal year of 2025 - commemorating both the 80th anniversary of the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the UN - Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Governance Initiative (GGI), offering China's wisdom and solutions to further strengthen and improve global governance. The Global Times (GT) has launched a series of interviews, "China's vision on global governance," to share international scholars' insights into the spirit, contemporary relevance and global significance of the GGI.

GT: Could you briefly explain your understanding of the GGI?

Bertrand: It is trying to organize a predictable international order where countries can trade, develop and cooperate. The way I understand the GGI is essentially China's attempt to restore the international system to its intended design, not by creating new rules, but by actually making sure that the existing ones are followed.

GT: How would you describe a global governance that most countries hope for?

Bertrand: Most countries simply want rules - that's it. Actual, predictable, consistent rules that apply to everyone equally.

What the Global South - and most of the world - desperately wants is predictability.

A small country wants to know that if it follows the rules on sovereignty, its sovereignty will be respected. A trading nation wants to know that if it complies with WTO regulations, it won't face unilateral sanctions. This transcends ideological divides, precisely because rules, by definition, are ideologically neutral. You want to know that signing a trade agreement means something. You want to know that your embassy won't be bombed. You want to know that your assets won't suddenly be frozen one day.

GT: How do the principles of the GGI address the issues in global governance that you mentioned?

Bertrand: In the five core concepts of the GGI, I think the international rule of law dimension is what resonates most powerfully, because it addresses the core absurdity everyone sees: We live in a "rules-based order" that has no rules.

So when the GGI commits to applying international law equally and uniformly, with no double standards, it offers what countries desperately crave: actual rules that won't mysteriously change tomorrow.

I think the core systemic problem in global governance is legitimacy.

A great power can actually be bound by law.

GT: Although the GGI is a recently announced initiative, do you think its spirit and principles have already been reflected in some examples of China-foreign cooperation?

Bertrand: There is a very long tradition in China's diplomatic history of following the same principles that are in the GGI, which are themselves based on the core principles of peaceful coexistence.

I was invited to the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in Beijing where the former French prime minister Dominique de Villepin was also present. He gave a speech in which he said something that I found quite profound: Whenever you work on concrete peace, you find these five principles to be the keys that can unlock almost any lock. I think the same applies to the GGI.

GT: From the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) to the GGI - which together form a more comprehensive set of "four initiatives" - how are they connected?

Bertrand: What's brilliant is how they all reinforce each other. The GDI creates material incentives for cooperation, the GSI removes security threats that derail development, the GCI provides ideological space for different systems to coexist, and the GGI institutionalizes these principles into actual governance.

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