

CHINA'S GLOBAL EMBRACE

The absolute power achieved by Xi Jinping at the Communist Party Congress set the tone for China's development over the next 100 years.

Chinese intelligence services plan to use the Global Security Initiative to disrupt the Western security architecture.

Xi Jinping's pledge to open China up to the world means an even more vigorous implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative.

In 2022, Xi Jinping's confirmation for a third term as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was a landmark event in China's development, which Xi said will usher in the next 100 years of development in China. Xi loyalists hold an unprecedented majority in the new seven-member Standing Committee.

Health permitting, Xi Jinping is very likely to stay in office for a fourth term, continuing to lead the party, the military and the country beyond 2027, as the 20th Congress's reshuffle of the CCP leadership does not clearly point to a successor for Xi Jinping. Twenty years in power, however, would exacerbate tensions within the party and the possibility of a replay of the events of the 1970s, when Mao Zedong's autocracy completely paralysed the party and state leadership, the economy collapsed, and infighting within the party was rife.

During Xi Jinping's third term over the next five years, authoritarianism will likely deepen, and relations with the West will likely continue to deteriorate. Although a marginal part of the overall proceedings, the foreign policy section of the 20th Party Congress was very telling. The wording and context of the congressional report make it very clear that China's goal for the coming years is to build a strong community of like-minded countries opposed to the West, in line with the Cold War bloc mentality. Based on the report, China will focus particularly on developing countries and organisations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

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China's global ambitions while keeping a low profile like Deng Xiaoping, it no longer hides its ambition of becoming a global superpower. At the same time, China has begun to push a vision of universal rights for humanity, constructing what the CCP's rhetoric paints as a new, more just and practicable concept of human rights. In the past, China was a firm denier of universal human rights, claiming the concept was merely a Western instrument for interfering in other countries' domestic affairs.



China's goal is to undermine and reshape the Western security architecture through the Global Security initiative.

Source: Mark Schiefelbein / AP

A major new cooperation initiative in 2022 was the Global Security Initiative (GSI), unveiled by Xi Jinping in April 2022. Chinese intelligence believes that the accession of a critical number of countries (with a focus on developing countries) to the GSI would effectively disrupt the Western security architecture. Throughout 2021, China kept talking at a very high level about the need to reshape the European security architecture considering Russia's interests. According to Chinese vice foreign minister Le Yucheng, NATO should be consigned to the ash heap of history. Such systematic and calculated efforts by China also undermine Estonia's security.

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In addition to a political dimension, China's "global embrace" naturally also involves technological integration, trade and scientific cooperation in building an autonomous microcosm with like-minded states. At the CCP's 20th Congress, Xi Jinping stressed China's goal of even greater openness and becoming a technological superpower by 2035. While China's message seemingly invites the world to export its goods to China (as opposed to the protectionist US), in CCP's vocabulary, "opening up the country" means implementing the Belt and Road Initiative even more effectively. This implies an increasingly systematic construction of an autonomous Chinese microcosm.

China's foreign policy of the "new era" is increasingly confrontational with the West. Still, it is also stepping up its efforts to find and engage with like-minded individuals, associations and countries in the West. Chinese intelligence services do not necessarily seek individuals with a similar worldview. They also target high-profile critics of China who would be willing to continue their criticism while spreading the message that China cannot be ignored. This is why not only ordinary citizens but also intelligence officers are waiting for China's Covid restrictions to be relaxed so they can resume organising their ostensibly innocent platform events for recruitment purposes.