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## CHINA'S GSI: IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH

### Abstract

The Global Security Initiative (GSI) proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping aims to end conflicts, enhance global security governance, and advance sustainable peace and development. This article examines the potential strategic benefits and challenges Bangladesh may have from the GSI in the face of geopolitical conundrums. It aims to provide a comprehensive outlook about the implications of GSI on Bangladesh's strategic outlook. Bangladesh remains a long-term friendly country with China, with deep bilateral economic, political, and strategic relationships. Bangladesh joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2016 and has flourished diplomatic and economic ties with China. However, through the GSI, Bangladesh can have access to resources and innovative solutions, especially to address non-traditional security concerns such as food security, cyber security, and environmental issues due to climate change. Hence, as GSI is a new initiative, therefore, Bangladesh needs to have a better understanding about its objective, prospects and drawbacks.

**Keywords:** China-Bangladesh Relations, Global Security Initiative, Non-Traditional Security Threats, Geopolitics

### 1. Introduction

The future of humanity, as well as world peace and progress, depends on the issue of global security. Global dangers and challenges include the COVID-19 pandemic, local conflicts, hotspots for regional security, and widening gaps in peace, development, security, and governance. However, the historical tendencies toward harmony, progress, and mutual benefit continue unabated. To solve these issues, Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed the GSI, which aims to end conflicts, enhance global security governance, and advance sustainable peace and development. Amid this backdrop, the 'Global Security Initiative' was published in 2022 by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a concept paper that provides a way of Chinese thinking about global security architecture.<sup>1</sup> First unveiled by President Xi Jinping at the Boao

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<sup>1</sup> MFA, "The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper," Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, accessed October 22, 2024, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221\\_11028348.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html).

Forum for Asia (BFA) in April 2022. This initiative by China has sparked wide discussion among countries around the world regarding its implications. At the Boao Forum for Asia, Xi outlined six core principles or commitments and 20 priority areas of cooperation and talked about six mechanisms of cooperation with countries.<sup>2</sup> Xi termed it as, “*A holistic approach, to collaboration, political discourse, peaceful negotiation, and the pursuit of sustainable security which can be considered as cornerstones of Xi Jinping’s vision for common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security.*”<sup>3</sup> In this regard, scholars argued how GSI may guide all nations to take into account the legitimate security concerns of others because humanity is a single, interconnected security community. To such universal and common security, there needs to be a balanced, efficient, and long-lasting architecture.”<sup>4</sup>

There is very limited research so far published on GSI altogether. Scholars like David Arase noted in his paper “China’s Global Security Initiative Stoking Regional Tensions,” that the US respects China’s core interests and withdraws from Asia and GSI is the push for a China-centred security community on BRI partners.<sup>5</sup> Then, Chris Cash argued that GSI is an anti-US-hegemonic initiative to push out the US and its allies-led order in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>6</sup> He also pointed out that South Asia will be an area of tough competition for the PRC to draw allies in the region with a diverse strategic outlook.<sup>7</sup> Siham Javid talked about a positive response in the regions of the world including South Asia about GSI.<sup>8</sup> Amrita Jash argued that GSI is an attempt to create a Unipolar Asia.<sup>9</sup> China through GSI targets security partnerships with Asian countries to counter allies of the US, according to R Pillai.<sup>10</sup> Carla Freeman and Alex Stephenson, in their paper, argued about Beijing’s promotion of “indivisible security,” as idea that refers that the security of states within regions is inseparable

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Manoj Kewalramani, *China’s Global Security Initiative: Undermining US Alliances or Quest for a New Security Architecture*, Takshashila Discussion Document-2, January 27, 2023, <https://takshashila.org.in/research/global-security-initiative-undermining-us-alliances>.

<sup>5</sup> David Arase, “China’s Global Security Initiative Stoking Regional Tensions,” Fulcrum, July 15, 2022, <https://fulcrum.sg/chinas-global-security-initiative-stoking-regional-tensions/>.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Cash, “What Is China’s Global Security Initiative?” Council on Geostrategy, September 29, 2022, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk>.

<sup>7</sup> Siham Javid, *China’s Global Security Initiative and Global Development Initiative: A Challenge to the US-Led Global Order?* (Islamabad, 2022), <https://irs.org.pk/Focus/11FocusDec22.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Amrita Jash, “Xi’s Global Security Initiative: In Pursuit of China’s Own Interests and Ambitions,” Think China, June 16, 2022, <https://www.thinkchina.sg/politics/xis-global-security-initiative-pursuit-chinas-own-interests-and-ambitions>.

<sup>10</sup> Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai, “China’s Xi Proposes Global Security Initiative,” The Diplomat, May 7, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/chinas-xi-proposes-global-security-initiative/>; Evan Ellis, “What Chinese Global Security Initiative Tells Us About its Strategic Engagement with Latin America,” The Diplomat, April 04, 2023, [https://thediplomat.com/2023/04\\_](https://thediplomat.com/2023/04_)

and that no country should pursue its own security at the expense of another.<sup>11</sup> Mehta and Chaddha said that GSI is an effort of China to expand its influence in regions like Southeast and South Asia.<sup>12</sup> As the available literature primarily consists of assumptions and personal opinions, therefore these require intellectual investigation.

China proposed the concept of the GSI and urged all nations to come together and cooperate to establish a world focused on security for humanity. The goal is to work together to create a world that is devoid of fear. The GSI prioritises non-traditional security concerns such as climate change, food security, energy, AI control, and public health, where countries like Bangladesh have the autonomy to select the areas to commence cooperation.<sup>13</sup> Hence, this article is an endeavor to investigate the extent to which GSI will have an impact on the strategic realities of Bangladesh. Consequently, the research question is as follows: What are the components that Bangladesh may consider while developing a strategic outlook in the midst of the emergence of GSI? Therefore, the study aims to ascertain the probable repercussions that Bangladesh may face as a result of GSI.

The research is qualitative, utilising data gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through interviews with practitioners, academicians, and analysts, while secondary data was obtained through a literature analysis. Documents from many sources, including governmental and non-governmental publications, scholarly journals, online commentaries, speeches, reports, newspaper stories, and podcasts or videos, are gathered from both online resources and print media. Respondents for KII are picked intentionally depending on their competence.

This paper begins by exploring the concept of the GSI, introduced by China as a response to global security challenges. It analyses the GSI's core principles, as outlined in China's concept paper, and assesses its strategic significance. The discussion then shifts to Bangladesh, evaluating why the country may engage with GSI based on its geopolitical positioning, economic interests, and dedication to

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<sup>11</sup> Carla Freeman and Alex Stephenson, "How Should the U.S. Respond to China's 'Global Security Initiative?'" United States Institute of Peace, August 04, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/how-should-us-respond-chinas-global-security-initiative>.

<sup>12</sup> Shibani Mehta and Saheb Singh Chadha, "China's Global Security Initiative Is a Bid to Dictate the Rules of Engagement," Carnegie India, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 16, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2022/06/chinas-global-security-initiative-is-a-bid-to-dictate-the-rules-of-engagement?lang=en>; Ananth Krishnan, "Xi's 'Global Security Initiative' Looks to Counter Quad," The Hindu, April 28, 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/xis-global-security-initiative-looks-to-counter-quad/article65363978.ece>.

<sup>13</sup> "China ready for deeper ties with Bangladesh," Daily Star, January 15, 2024, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/china-ready-deeper-ties-bangladesh-3519816>.

multilateralism. The article concludes by offering a future outlook on Bangladesh's strategic approach toward GSI, using a qualitative methodology based on both primary and secondary data sources.

## 2. Understanding the Global Security Initiative

GSI must be comprehended before to any discourse around the matter. This section has thoroughly examined the GSI, its components, and the concept paper associated with it to elucidate China's proposals for world peace and security.

### 2.1 What is GSI?

The GSI provides six principles and concepts to act upon. First, GSI is committed to a 'vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.'<sup>14</sup> This vision prioritises collaboration, sustainable security, and an all-encompassing approach. It places a strong emphasis on upholding and defending the security of every nation, encouraging civil discourse and nonviolent negotiation, and assuring morality, equitable treatment, and righteous ideals. Second, the initiative commits to upholding international law's fundamental principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of all states.<sup>15</sup> All countries, regardless of size, strength, or wealth, are equal members of the international community, ensuring equal rights, rules, and opportunities. Third, GSI believes that the United Nations Charter provides an institutional framework for common security and enduring peace by taking lessons from the two world wars.<sup>16</sup> However, ineffective execution rather than outmoded ideas is the cause of today's disputes and injustices. Rejecting bloc rivalry, unilateralism, and the Cold War mindset, countries should embrace the UN's authority and engage in multilateralism. Fourth, all nations have equal security interests, and humanity as a whole is one cohesive security community.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to address all justifiable security concerns and to take other nations' security concerns into account. To attain universal and shared security, the indivisible security principle promotes an equitable, pragmatic, and persistent security architecture. Fifth, in order to resolve conflicts, it highlights the value of communication and consultation between states.<sup>18</sup> It calls for nations to improve their strategic communication, boost confidence in their shared security, reduce tensions, manage disagreements, and eliminate of causes of a crisis. GSI urges parties involved

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<sup>14</sup> MFA, *The Global Security Initiative*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

in a conflict to develop mutual trust and requests global support for amicable resolutions. Sixth, the global security landscape is becoming increasingly interconnected, transnational, and diverse. To address global challenges like terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity, and biosecurity, countries should practice consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits in global governance.<sup>19</sup>

GSI is likely to work as a major foreign policy objective for China. It has provided a global security architecture shift, a new path to drift away from the US-led order persisting since the conclusion of World War II. While pursuing and implementing the initiative, GSI reiterates that goal of the UNSG's New Agenda for Peace is to improve peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies.<sup>20</sup> The UN is to back peacekeeping efforts, respect values of impartiality, consent, and non-use of force, and supply sufficient funding. To preserve world peace and security, major nations are to encourage cooperation and constructive engagement. China has reaffirmed its commitment to averting nuclear war, and nations are stepping up their communication and coordination to that end. It is also encouraged to support international conventional armaments control and humanitarian demining. The promotion of political resolution of hotspot issues on a global and regional scale is achieved by open discourse and communication is advocated. Cooperation in non-traditional security areas are to be encouraged, and improvements should be made to the regional security cooperation mechanism and architecture that is focused on ASEAN.

Advocating for non-proliferation, collective security, equality, justice, and mutual respect, the five-point plan for achieving peace and stability in the Middle East is to be put into practice. GSI puts forward that to combat terrorism, resolve regional disputes, and protect maritime security. The text of GSI highlights the value of aiding African nations, Latin American and Caribbean nations, Pacific Island nations, and the international community. It argues for encouraging the peaceful settlement of hotspots in the Horn of Africa, Sahel, and Great Lakes region as well as providing financial and technical support for counterterrorism operations led by Africa. The document also emphasises the necessity of advancing sustainable development, combating transnational crimes at sea, and bolstering marine communication and trade. In order to assist Pacific Island nations in addressing non-traditional security challenges, more funding is necessary. The UN's position as the primary coordinator of the international campaign against terrorism must be strengthened, with a particular

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> MFA, *The Global Security Initiative*.

emphasis on putting counterterrorism resolutions and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy into action, according to the text. Additionally, it promotes teamwork in developing international guidelines for digital governance and setting up of a worldwide framework for cyberspace government.

Additionally, the official document of GSI highlights the necessity of bolstering international security governance on artificial intelligence (AI), encouraging responsible bioscience research, and fortifying biosecurity risk management. Moreover, it enables the World Health Organization to manage public health and organise worldwide resources for the fight against COVID-19 and other serious infectious illnesses. The Concept paper concludes by highlighting the significance of combating climate change, preserving stable industry and supply networks, and quickening the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's implementation.

China has discussed the mechanisms to advance GSI on a global scale. GSI seeks to solve security issues at many international and regional organisations using comprehensive dialogue and communication. To gradually accomplish security objectives, it will make use of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS cooperation, and East Asia Cooperation mechanisms. To improve interagency collaboration and boost policy communication, GSI will host high-level conferences. Platforms for international conversation such as the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum will be supported by it. Additionally, the GSI will create global forums to tackle non-conventional security issues like biosecurity, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and emerging technologies. China is dedicated to cooperating with all nations and peoples to improve mankind's future.

## 2.2 Analysing the Concept Paper of GSI

GSI has been highly discussed by the Chinese academia and government to provide legitimacy to their declared pathway to tailored global security architecture in favour of China in the coming days. Chinese Scholar Tian Wenlin, a professor at the School of International Studies at the Renmin University of China argued that China's GSI is providing a better alternative to the 'Western-dominated world order which is filled with war and conflict.'<sup>21</sup> He wrote that to eliminate the root causes of

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<sup>21</sup> Tian Wenlin, "The Epochal Value of the Global Security Initiative Surpasses the Traditional Western Security Outlook [全球安全倡议的时代价值超越西方传统安全观]," 2022, Interpret: China, <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/the-epochal-value-of-the-global-security-initiative-surpasses-the-traditional-western-security-outlook/>

war and build a better world, crucial is to have a ‘new security framework that embodies a new concept of governance.’ He also mentioned that President Xi said, “The themes of the era of peace and development are facing serious challenges, and the world is neither peaceful nor tranquil.”<sup>22</sup> China has put forward two crises to justify its policy initiative.<sup>23</sup> First, “unilateral sanctions” against Russia transformed a “regional crisis into a global one.” And Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, which compromised their security. Through this paper, China puts forward its regional security concern seriously which is a continuity of its policy. The State Council Information Office released a white paper in 2017 stating that “the key to maintaining the long-term stability of the Asia-Pacific region is to build a security framework which is oriented to the future.”<sup>24</sup> Wang Yi, the State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China mentioned, “to maintain world peace and prevent conflicts and wars,” to continue “common aspirations of all countries to uphold multilateralism and international solidarity” and to build “a better world beyond a pandemic,” GSI is sorely needed.<sup>25</sup> He also mentioned that GSI is a new ‘China’s independent foreign policy of peace and the practices with Chinese characteristics.’<sup>26</sup>

Another key feature of this initiative is the Chinese commitment to the global south. Analyst Mohammed Soliman argues it as “a non-Western alternative and mechanism by the global south for the global south.”<sup>27</sup> GSI according to their documents clears that GSI is like BRI and GDI emphasises close collaboration with rising regional actors and calls for ‘Asian Unity’ against the Western-led world order. Chen Xiangyang of China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Dong Chunling from Overall National Security Concept Research Center, and Han Liqun of the Economic and Social Security Research Center of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations wrote, “for dealing with the new situation and new challenges in international security, conforms with the common pursuit of the world upholding multilateralism and maintaining international unity,” GSI provides

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Shibani Metha and Saheb Singh Chadha, “Review of China’s Global Security Initiative Is a Bid to Dictate the Rules of Engagement,” Carnegie India, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 16, 2022, <https://carnegieindia.org/2022/06/16/china-s-global-security-initiative-is-bid-to-dictate-rules-of-engagement-pub-87340>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Wang Yi, “Acting on the Global Security Initiative to Safeguard World Peace and Tranquility,” Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, May 06, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202205/t20220506\\_10682621.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202205/t20220506_10682621.html).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ved Shinde, “The Global Security Initiative—with Chinese Characteristics,” Australian Institute of International Affairs, November 30, 2022, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-global-security-initiative-with-chinese-characteristics/>.

a “Chinese Wisdom, a Chinese Path, and a Chinese Solution.”<sup>28</sup> This paper mentions President Xi’s quotes in the proposal of GSI, “as President Xi Jinping pointed out: “all countries are on board in a great ship with a common destiny. To cross the stormy seas and sail to a bright tomorrow, we must act as if we are all in the same boat...”<sup>29</sup>

All the analyses above can be seen from a ‘Threat Prism’ and ‘Normative Prism.’ All the documents and statements from the government of the PRC outlined a pathway with ‘Chinese Characteristics’ for all countries in the world to ensure global security and China’s interests. Chinese Leadership is looking towards the current global order as inadequate and in some instances as a ‘threat’ to China’s long-term desire to play a global role. To shape the world order more favourable to Chinese cause this GSI is a tool of China. From a normative perspective, GSI underpins “Cold War mentality, unilateralism, bloc confrontation and hegemonism” to be substituted by “common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security” and “indivisible security.”<sup>30</sup> Through this China fundamentally argued against the Western-led world order and pushed forward to adhere to UN-based multilateralism for resolving conflicts and disputes. China through upholding its commitment to multilateralism proves itself as a legitimate responsible actor in the world. China blamed “unilateral sanctions.” Suffering from a ‘Trade war’ with the US and seeing the US sanction against Russia as a punitive action to hamper regional and global security, China securitised economic engagements and urged to stop these actions. Lastly, China looking forward to bolstering ‘minilateral’ arrangements across the world for security cooperation to secure China’s interest and play a pivotal role in ensuring world peace.<sup>31</sup>

The GSI, proposed by China, aims to address global security challenges through cooperative and multilateral efforts, promoting a new security architecture that moves away from Cold War-era alliances and conflicts. The GSI emphasises mutual respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and the resolution of disputes through dialogue, aligning closely with China’s broader foreign policy goals of promoting a multipolar world order. The GSI might offer Bangladesh both prospects and obstacles. Bangladesh’s involvement in the GSI can bolster national security by fostering closer cooperation with China in counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and marine security. Given Bangladesh’s ongoing challenges, including terrorism and regional instability,

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<sup>28</sup> Chen Xiangyang, Dong Chunling, and Han Liqun, “Deep Comprehension of the Global Security Initiative: Coordinating Our Own Security and Common Security” [深刻领悟全球安全倡议统筹自身和共同安全], China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), May 09, 2022

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Kewalramani, *China’s Global Security Initiative*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

alignment with China's GSI may offer further resources and support to tackle these concerns. Nonetheless, there are considerable ramifications for Bangladesh's security and foreign policy. If Bangladesh were to intensify its security collaboration with China, it must judiciously manage its relationships with other regional countries, including India and the United States. Historically, both nations have regarded South Asia as a key area, and China's increasing influence in Bangladesh may generate difficulties, especially concerning the United States-led Indo-Pacific strategy, which is endorsed by India.

Bangladesh's foreign policy has historically adhered to non-alignment and the balance of relations with major powers. Additionally, the initiative's emphasis on multilateralism aligns with Bangladesh's foreign policy of balancing relations with major powers while fostering regional stability. In this regard, the GSI may provide Bangladesh with an opportunity to address many of its non-traditional security concerns. Effectively understanding Bangladesh's perspective regarding GSI these dynamics necessitates astute diplomacy and strategic foresight, guaranteeing that Bangladesh reaps advantages of its bilateral connections with China while preserving its wider international contacts and strategic autonomy.

### 3. Strategic Significance of GSI

Since GSI was initiated, the world has seen brewing geopolitical disputes across the globe. China has since played or tried to play a mediator role or act as a guarantee for peace efforts in global hotspots. Xi Jing Ping during 2022 Saudi Arabia visit proposed eight major joint actions for Sino-Arab cooperation in different eight sectors, along with 56 specific cooperative initiatives.<sup>32</sup> According to Wu Bingbing, China has been careful to engage with MENA countries, maintaining a "positive balance" and "not choosing sides, nor making enemies."<sup>33</sup> China also expressed great interest in mediation in Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>34</sup> China also has a long plan to work in development sectors with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt under their respective Vision 2030.<sup>35</sup> China also holds its only overseas military base in Djibouti. RAND Corporation report finds that China

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<sup>32</sup> Andrea Ratiu, "Full Throttle in Neutral: China's New Security Architecture for the Middle East," Atlantic Council, February 15, 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/full-throttle-in-neutral-chinas-new-security-architecture-for-the-middle-east/>.

<sup>33</sup> Bingbing Wu, "Professor at Peking University: The First Sino-Arab Summit Has Significant Implications, but We Should be Overly Optimistic in Two Cases," Guancha, December 10, 2022, [https://k.sina.com.cn/article\\_1887344341\\_707e96d501901bsoc.html](https://k.sina.com.cn/article_1887344341_707e96d501901bsoc.html)

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> "Full Text of Xi's Signed Article on Saudi Media," Xinhua, December 08, 2022, <https://english.news.cn/20221208/cc10b8d41b3749a78ec981ceeda6b26b/c.html>

has further plans to establish its bases around the MENA region.<sup>36</sup> A bilateral joint statement was released after Xi visited Saudi where both states committed to expanding cooperation in regional security, peace, and stability.<sup>37</sup> Xi has his own vision for Middle East peace. China proposed a comprehensive five-point initiative for the Middle East's security and stability; a four-point proposal for the Syrian political issue; and a three-point vision of the two-state solution to the Palestinian question.<sup>38</sup> In the address at the China-GCC Summit in December, Xi invited the regional states and said that "China and the GCC should be partners for common security."<sup>39</sup> China's successful mediation of Saudi-Iran diplomatic ties has given a strong footing for GSI's prospect in the region. Two years of high-level dialogues and confidence-building measures arranged by Oman assisted by Iraq and negotiated through China have replaced the US as a peace deal breaker in the Middle East.<sup>40</sup> This action amplified China's effort to lead the GSI into implementation from just a concept.

China declared its position about the Ukraine-Russia War on its anniversary. Xi saw this as a golden opportunity to put forward the GSI agenda once again before the world. With a 12-point position paper, released by MFA, China called to abandon the 'cold war mentality,' initiate peace talks, end hostility, respect respective sovereign borders, and urge to stop unilateral sanctions.<sup>41</sup> China supports Russian actions under the GSI principle of "indivisible security." China also supported Ukraine for nuclear facilities safety and security and the Black Sea Grain Initiative.<sup>42</sup> China also chose to side with Russian President Putin in the ICC warrant issue where MFA said, the ICC "needs to take an objective and just position, respect the jurisdictional immunity of a

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<sup>36</sup> Cristina L. Garafola, Stephen Watts, and Kristin J. Leuschner, "China's Global Basing Ambitions Defense Implications for the United States," RAND, December 2022, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1496-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1496-1.html)

<sup>37</sup> "President Xi Proposes 'Eight Major Common Actions' for China-Arab Cooperation," CGTN, December 10, 2022, <https://newsus.cgtn.com/news/2022-12-10/Xi-proposes-Eight-Major-Common-Actions-for-China-Arab-cooperation-1fDvC4nvOpO/index.html>

<sup>38</sup> "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on September 20, 2022," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, September 20, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/202209/t20220920\\_10768528.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202209/t20220920_10768528.html)

<sup>39</sup> "President Xi Proposes 'Eight Major Common Actions' for China-Arab Cooperation," CGTN, December 10, 2022, <https://newsus.cgtn.com/news/2022-12-10/Xi-proposes-Eight-Major-Common-Actions-for-China-Arab-cooperation-1fDvC4nvOpO/index.html>

<sup>40</sup> Bilahari Kausikan, Broto Wardoyo, Endy Bayuni, Ngeow Chow Bing, Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby, and Tong Zhao, "Assessing China's Emerging Role in 2023," Atlantic Council, April 23, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/04/26/assessing-china-s-emerging-role-in-2023-pub-89625>

<sup>41</sup> "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis," MFA, Updated February 24, 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531\\_11367485.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367485.html).

<sup>42</sup> "China's Position on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, October 27, 2022, <https://www.uscc.gov/research/chinas-position-russias-invasion-ukraine>.

head of state under international law,...” and should “not engage in politicisation or use double standards.”<sup>43</sup>

China has been proactive in putting forward its role in the UN as mentioned in GSI. GSI emphasised UN-led initiatives as they provide the scope for greater multilateralism. In 2022, Xi Jinping pledged to train 2,000 law enforcement personnel for member states. The Commission noted General Secretary Xi’s pledge at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit as part of the GSI’s commitment to deeper exchange programs between military and universities.<sup>44</sup> The GSI signifies different non-traditional security areas like data security, biosecurity, etc. China also initiated different types of pilot projects under GSI with regional arrangements in Asia, notably, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) and Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa with the institutionalisation of the China-Horn of Africa Peace, Governance and Development Conference.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. Implications for Bangladesh

Bangladesh continues to be a longstanding partner of China. Bangladesh and China maintain a profound bilateral economic, political, and strategic partnership. Bangladesh ranks among the leading importers of various products from China. China and Bangladesh have collaborated in technology, infrastructure, defense industry, finance, investment, and educational institutions. Bangladesh and China are engaging in several regional and international venues for trade, business, and economic collaboration. Both parties appreciate a reliable collaborative partnership. Bangladesh was the inaugural nation to participate in the BRI in 2016. Since that time, political and commercial relations between Bangladesh and China have prospered.

China-Bangladesh bilateral relations have been marked by a steady strengthening of ties, particularly in recent years, driven by mutual economic interests, infrastructural collaborations, and strategic considerations.<sup>46</sup> These relations have deep historical roots but have gained momentum in the context of China’s rise as a global power and Bangladesh’s strategic location in South Asia, serving as a key player in regional stability and economic corridors.<sup>47</sup> Diplomatic relations between China and Bangladesh were established in 1975, but the relationship has grown exponentially since the early 2000s. China’s influence in Bangladesh is evident in

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Review of Issue Brief: China’s Paper on Ukraine and Next Steps for Xi’s Global Security Initiative*, Edited by USCC (Washington, D.C.: 2023).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, “China ready for deeper ties with Bangladesh.”

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, “China ready for deeper ties with Bangladesh.”

various sectors, including trade, infrastructure, and defence. Economically, China is Bangladesh's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$18 billion annually.<sup>48</sup> Bangladesh imports a significant portion of its goods from China, including machinery, electronics, and raw materials, which are vital for its burgeoning manufacturing sector.

China has been instrumental in the development of Bangladesh's infrastructure through the BRI. Significant undertakings encompass the development of the Padma Bridge, the Karnaphuli Tunnel, and the expansion of the Payra Port. These initiatives not only strengthen Bangladesh's economic development but also augment its strategic significance in the region. China has also been a prominent provider of military equipment to Bangladesh, including navy vessels, fighter aircraft, and missile systems. This military collaboration has enhanced Bangladesh's defence capabilities and aligned it more closely with China's strategic aims in the Indian Ocean region.

Bangladesh's foreign policy aligns with the concept of GSI in many regards. GSI promotes respect for every state's sovereignty and territorial integrity with no interference in a state's internal affairs. Like GSI, Bangladesh practices and abides by UN system. Bangladesh is an active participant in every UN organisation and global initiative. In fact, it is the highest troops contributing country surpassing China.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Bangladesh is a responsible actor in the region. Bangladesh supports peaceful resolution to disputes and promotes the importance of dialogue for conflict resolution. GSI identified traditional and non-traditional security issues are interconnected and should be approached in a holistic manner. Bangladesh engages with multilateral and diplomatic endeavours whenever the state needs to resolve a crisis. Therefore, some similarities can be seen in the principles of GSI and Bangladesh's foreign policy.

However, there also lies differences as well along with the similarity. In a study conducted by RAND Corporation from USA, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Myanmar are the most possible overseas base hosts for China.<sup>50</sup> Bangladesh is one of the top arms importers from China.<sup>51</sup> There is hope that Bangladesh might cooperate

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<sup>48</sup> Dang Yuan, "Decoding China: Seizing the moment in Bangladesh," Deutsche Welle, August 16, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/en/decoding-china-seizing-the-moment-in-bangladesh/a-69961454#:~:text=China%20has%20been%20Bangladesh%27s%20largest%20trading%20partner%20for,a%20BRI%20event%20in%20Dhaka%20in%20September%202023.>

<sup>49</sup> United Nations, "Troop and Police Contributors," United Nations Peacekeeping, July 31, 2023, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

<sup>50</sup> Garafola, Cristina L., Stephen Watts, and Kristin J. Leuschner. 2022. "China's Global Basing Ambitions: Defense Implications for the United States," RAND, December 08, 2022, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1496-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1496-1.html).

<sup>51</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2023: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

with China in the GSI. Although since independence, Bangladesh has carefully avoided taking sides in a global power struggle, previously in bipolarity; Bangladesh will be careful in navigating in this era of multipolarity.<sup>52</sup> Even though GSI commits peaceful resolution of disputes, it supports the Russian invasion of Ukraine. GSI in many regards remains only in concept rather than in reality. In many contexts, GSI has blamed prevailing US-led global order for the demise of the global governance and 'Promoting World Peace and Development and Building a Human Community with a Shared Future'.<sup>53</sup> Another factor for Bangladesh concerning the GSI is its capacity for implementation. The current geopolitical situations render such a level of global cooperation challenging. To actualise this vision, China must establish a robust structure for collaboration among its members. From the experience of BRI, Bangladesh can give its own thought and compare with GSI's prospect to resolve its own foreign policy interests in the long run. The BRI diminished in appeal more rapidly than expected, resulting in a deceleration in investments and project executions across several nations. Countries globally seeking an alternative to the US-led system may see GSI as a potential framework for international collaboration, contingent upon GSI's capacity and scope to address their crises.

The GSI, initiated by China in 2022, emphasises international security frameworks, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and the rejection of Cold War ideas. Bangladesh, owing to its strategic position in South Asia, may possess significant incentives to participate in this initiative. Given the nation's geopolitical context, economic aspirations, and commitment to world peace, Bangladesh's involvement in the GSI might achieve multiple objectives, including as fostering regional stability, strengthening bilateral relations with China, and augmenting its international standing. The followings are reasons behind Bangladesh's interest in the GSI:

#### *4.1 Strategic Geopolitical Position*

Bangladesh is located in an area characterised by intricate security issues, especially the Bay of Bengal, which serves as a vital maritime route for international commerce. This geographic position renders Bangladesh's susceptibility to regional security issues and wider global security factors. Through its participation in the GSI, Bangladesh might capitalise on the initiative to bolster maritime security and attain increased authority over regional security matters. The GSI's emphasis on multilateral

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<sup>52</sup> Emma Ashford Cooper and Evan, "Yes, the World Is Multipolar," *Foreign Policy*, October 05, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/10/05/usa-china-multipolar-bipolar-unipolar/>.

<sup>53</sup> Lucas Fiala, "Can Beijing Sell Its Global Security Initiative?" *The China Global South Project*, November 08, 2022, <https://chinglobalsouth.com/analysis/can-beijing-sell-its-global-security-initiative/>.

security discussions corresponds with Bangladesh's aspiration for regional collaboration, offering a forum for Bangladesh to confront security challenges while fostering stability in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

#### *4.2 Enhancing Bilateral Relations with China*

Bangladesh and China have maintained strong commercial and diplomatic links for decades. China is a main economic partner of Bangladesh, significantly contributing to infrastructure development, commerce, and investment. The GSI, as a premier security program of China, presents Bangladesh with an opportunity to enhance its strategic partnership with Beijing. By engaging with the GSI, Bangladesh might obtain additional economic and military support from China, especially in infrastructure development, technology transfer, and military modernisation. Moreover, by aligning with a significant Chinese endeavour, Bangladesh can diversify its strategic alliances, balancing its longstanding connections with India and developing partnerships with Western nations. This strategy may enable Bangladesh to uphold its motto of "friendship to all, malice towards none" while safeguarding its national interests in a multipolar global framework.

#### *4.3 Dedication to Peaceful Advancement and Multilateralism*

Bangladesh maintains a longstanding dedication to peaceful development and multilateralism. Bangladesh's involvement in GSI is firmly entrenched as one of the leading contributors to United Nations peacekeeping deployments. The GSI's focus on peaceful conflict resolution, dialogue, and collaboration is consistent with the values of Bangladesh's foreign policy. In a global security environment marked by escalating tensions, especially in the Asia-Pacific area, Bangladesh's endorsement of multilateral frameworks like the GSI solidifies its status as a responsible global participant. Furthermore, by participating in the GSI, Bangladesh can champion regional stability and advance its vision of a harmonious, inclusive global order.

#### *4.4 Economic and Developmental Considerations*

Bangladesh aspires to attain middle-income status, and its future development is significantly contingent upon sustaining a secure and stable environment. The GSI advocates for holistic security, encompassing military, economic, environmental, and cyber risks. This comprehensive security outlook may attract Bangladesh as it addresses issues including climate change, economic fragility, and food security.

Collaboration within the GSI framework may provide Bangladesh with opportunity to engage in efforts that tackle these non-traditional security issues.

#### *4.5 Manoeuvring Through an Evolving Global Framework*

The global security landscape is getting more intricate, characterised by escalating tensions among major countries and shifting regional security dynamics. As an emerging economy and regional player, Bangladesh must adeptly manoeuvre through these changing dynamics. The GSI provides Bangladesh with the opportunity to participate in an alternative global security discourse that prioritises collaboration rather than conflict. By doing so, Bangladesh may uphold its autonomous foreign policy position while striving to optimise its strategic interests in a landscape of rival power centres.

Bangladesh's interest in the GSI may arise from its aim to secure regional security, enhance bilateral relations with China, and participate in multilateral endeavours for global peace. Through participation in the GSI, Bangladesh can improve its security perspective, foster peaceful development, and affirm its position in influencing a collaborative global framework. Given the evolving global security landscape, Bangladesh's participation in efforts such as the GSI will be essential for addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by a transforming world.

### **5. A Future Outlook for Bangladesh**

In light of the discussion that took place earlier in this paper, some possible ideas for Bangladesh to advanced cooperations under the GSI are elaborated below. These might help the Government of Bangladesh develop an outlook for cooperation under the GSI umbrella. GSI has global implications and offers cooperation opportunities to solve problems that are global common challenges such as food security, environmental issues, data protection, artificial intelligence, etc. Such global collaboration provides developing countries on the road to access far-reaching resources and innovative solutions. Bangladesh is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events. In this regard, GSI can facilitate coordinated efforts to address environmental challenges, enhance disaster response capabilities, and implement sustainable practices globally.

The official GSI document draws a sharp division between the US alliance and the Western-led world order. Chinese perspectives towards "AUKUS," "QUAD," IPS, IPEF, etc. are negative. In short, the US alliance systems' diplomatic tools or alliance buildup are rejected by GSI. Bangladesh remains committed to the non-alliance-building principle and should continue to maintain balanced relations with

all the actors. Bangladesh believes in ‘Friendship towards all malice towards none’. Bangladesh has an enormous reputation as an impartial state to take part regularly in UN Peacekeeping missions. Bangladesh acts in the UN platform as the voice of the global south. GSI can be a platform for developing state to collectively work at global level and scale.

Regional cooperation is put into significance by the GSI concept paper. It mentioned Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, pacific island states, etc. as partners for China. According to Chinese sources, over 90 countries have expressed their support for the GSI.<sup>54</sup> If GSI initiated any project in South Asia, especially on non-traditional security cooperation, Bangladesh may think of engaging with such efforts. Countries like Cambodia,<sup>55</sup> Mongolia,<sup>56</sup> Cuba,<sup>57</sup> Uruguay,<sup>58</sup> Nicaragua, and Belarus<sup>59</sup>. have been engaged in high-level dialogues with Chinese officials regarding GSI as per Chinese news media. Different SCO members have endorsed the GSI (Russia,<sup>60</sup> Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iran<sup>61</sup>, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan)<sup>62</sup>. Pakistan is

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<sup>54</sup> People’s Daily, “共同迈向持久和平、普遍安全的美好明天” [Striding together towards lasting peace, universal security and a beautiful tomorrow], Qiushi, February 22, 2023, [http://www.qstheory.cn/qshyjx/2023-02/22/c\\_1129385969.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/qshyjx/2023-02/22/c_1129385969.htm); Foreign Ministry of the People’s Republic of China, “2023年2月21日外交部发言人汪文斌主持例行记者会” [On February 21, 2023, FMPRC Spokesperson Wang Wenbin chairs regular press conference], Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 21, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt\\_673021/202302/t20230221\\_11028718.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/202302/t20230221_11028718.shtml).

<sup>55</sup> MFA, “Xi Jinping meets with Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen,” February 10, 2023, Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/wshd\\_665389/202302/t20230211\\_11023982.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202302/t20230211_11023982.html).

<sup>56</sup> MFA, “President Xi Jinping holds talks with Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh,” Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 28, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/wshd\\_665389/202211/t20221128\\_10981916.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202211/t20221128_10981916.html).

<sup>57</sup> Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la Republica de Cuba, “Declaración Conjunta entre la República Popular China y la República de Cuba sobre la Profundización de las Relaciones Binacionales en la Nueva Era” [Joint Declaration between the PRC and the Republic of Cuba about the deepening of the bilateral relationship in the new era], November 30, 2022, <https://cubaminrex.cu/es/declaracion-conjunta-entre-larepublica-popular-china-y-la-republica-de-cuba-sobre-la>.

<sup>58</sup> J. Lau, “China Drums Up Support for Global Security Push in Latin America as US Looks to Asia,” South China Morning Post, May 22, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3178717/chinadrums-support-global-security-push-latin-america-us>.

<sup>59</sup> Belarusian Telegraph Agency, “Lukashenko Reaffirms Support for China’s International Security, Development Initiatives,” March 01, 2023, <https://eng.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-reaffirms-support-for-chinasinitiatives-in-international-security-development-157007-2023/>.

<sup>60</sup> MFA, “Wang Yi Meets with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, September 22, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202209/t20220922\\_10769825.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202209/t20220922_10769825.html).

<sup>61</sup> MFA, “Xi Jinping Holds Talks with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 14, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202302/t20230216\\_11025776.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230216_11025776.html).

<sup>62</sup> Carla Freeman and Alex Stephenson, “Xi Kicks Off Campaign for a Chinese Vision of Global Security,” United States Institute of Peace, October 05, 2022,

the only South Asian state to endorse the GSI.<sup>63</sup> Through regional platforms, Bangladesh might work with GSI. 'Inclusiveness' is a major appeal for GSI as it says, "Mankind has a shared future, and the interests of all countries are closely linked."<sup>64</sup> Chinese diplomacy will continue to invest primarily in the consolidation of its ties with 'developing countries.'<sup>65</sup> There lies the scope for Bangladesh to act along with a large group of LDCs or developing states to cooperate under the umbrella of GSI. It is argued that Bangladesh has many choices and can work to build better security apparatus.<sup>66</sup> Number one is to work with neighbours, which is most important in this case, as neighbours are India and Burma, but China is not far away; therefore, a bilateral, trilateral, or even multilateral mechanism can form. It is suggested that Bangladesh must not become the silent majority, have a voice in regional issues and work with GSI collectively with different countries. It should be well aware of joining in security arrangements. Thus, Bangladesh can explore the scope of any commercial benefit to be drawn out of the GSI. Bangladesh must carefully watch the evolution of the GSI and keep the Chinese intention out of the GSI in mind before engagement. Another Chinese expert mentioned that the weapons or most defence consignments to Bangladesh are defensive in nature; thus, this cooperation enhancement will not trigger any alarm for neighbouring countries. China believes in three mutuals (i) mutual respect, (ii) mutual interest and (iii) mutual cooperation. GSI is no different; thus, Bangladesh can engage with the initiative.<sup>67</sup>

GSI is not an alliance or an organisation yet. It is a vast and unclear program that necessitates continuous observation and participation in particular global issues. Western nations are unlikely to accede to the GSI in its entirety, and it is unwise to shun participation in matters of common global concern. Instead, crucial is to concentrate on particular issues where there is a need for more multilateral collaboration, where consensus is needed regarding conflicting claims, and where China and the West take different approaches. The goals of the GSI are admirable and

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<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/10/xi-kicks-campaignchinese-vision-global-security>.

<sup>63</sup> "President Xi Jinping Meets with Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, accessed October 23, 2024, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202211/t20221102\\_10797417.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221102_10797417.html).

<sup>64</sup> Yiwei Wang, "Global Security Initiative and Global Development Initiative: Two Wings for Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," Boym Institute, May 19, 2023, <https://instytutboyma.org/en/global-security-initiative-and-global-development-initiative-two-wings-for-building-a-community-with-a-shared-future-for-mankind/>.

<sup>65</sup> Alice Ekman, "China's Global Security Initiative," *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, 2022, DOI 10.2815/887184.

<sup>66</sup> The author interviewed an expert on International Relations in Shanghai, China.

<sup>67</sup> The author interviewed a Chinese expert on South Asia Relations in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

inclusive, and Bangladesh might want to participate in these discussions and help shape them while also keeping an eye out for feasible answers to urgent issues.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

China's rise to prominence within the multipolar international order, power competition, a deficiency in comprehensive strategy, and a distinct GSI has emerged in comparison to China's earlier involvement in the international arena. Although China has rejected the mentality of the Cold War, the GSI values that China has adopted aim to compete with the Western system. China's plan to compete with the United States and its security alliances in the Indo-Pacific region is the impetus behind the ideas made by the GSI. These proposals advocate for the rejection of group politics and bloc confrontation, as well as criticism of tiny circles. China is given a position of dominance and the United States is pushed out of the Indo-Pacific area as a result of the GSI's assumption that Asian nations should be responsible for tackling concerns that are special to Asia. In spite of the fact that power politics and contradictions are at the core of the GSI, it is quite probable that the GSI will garner substantial support in places such as the Middle East and Africa. The global landscape is becoming increasingly politicised, and countries like Bangladesh may utilise this technique in order to gain from both sides of the argument. Despite the fact that the direct and immediate geostrategic repercussions of the GSI for Bangladesh might not be immediately evident, there are always opportunities to profit from such a multinational and ambitious project. It would be unwise to completely disregard the possibilities that the GSI presents. Therefore, prior to participating in the GSI, it is essential for Bangladesh to have a comprehensive understanding of China's global goals, to be able to anticipate China's objectives, and to maintain oversight of the progress of the project.

In order to effectively respond to the GSI, Bangladesh should prioritise global challenges including food security, environmental issues, data protection, and artificial intelligence. The programme has the potential to grant developing nations access to resources and cutting-edge solutions, especially in mitigating the effects of climate change. It is imperative for Bangladesh to uphold balanced relations with all stakeholders and preserve impartiality in UN peacekeeping operations. The GSI concept paper emphasises the cooperative efforts with China at the regional level, garnering support from more than 90 countries. Bangladesh could interact with the GSI through regional forums, namely in non-conventional security collaboration. For Bangladesh, the inclusiveness of the GSI is appealing since it highlights the common destiny and the interests of all nations. Prior to engaging, Bangladesh should meticulously observe the development of the GSI and evaluate the commercial

advantages. While the GSI is neither an alliance or organisation, its primary objective is to concentrate on particular global challenges that require multilateral cooperation and the resolution of opposing claims. Bangladesh can actively engage in deliberations and contribute to the formulation of the GSI's objectives while advocating for practical resolutions to pressing concerns.