

***Slobodan Popović\****

*Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade*

***Dragan Trailović\*\****

*Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade*

## **WHEN GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE MEETS PRACTICE – SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION\*\*\***

### **Abstract**

Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) was launched in Beijing on March 15, 2023, when China's President Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting. For the purpose of this article, we will analyse the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), since we understand this organization as one of the best examples of implementing the Global Civilization Initiative in practice. This paper argues that the SCO, through its emphasis on multilateralism, non-interference, and a shared vision of regional security and development, embodies key concepts of the GCI's proposed framework for international relations. By analysing the SCO's foundational principles, its evolving institutional mechanisms, and its responses to regional challenges, this paper demonstrates how the organization fosters a

---

\* E-mail: slobodan.popovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs; ORCID: 0000-0002-8094-8445

\*\* E-mail: dragan.trailovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs; ORCID: 0000-0001-9707-9867

\*\*\* The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project 'Serbia and challenges in international relations in 2025,' financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, during the year 2025.

“new type of international relations” characterized by dialogue, mutual respect, and a rejection of zero-sum approaches. The paper highlights the SCO’s role in promoting cultural exchange and civilizational diversity, thereby offering a practical example of how the GCI seeks to build a more inclusive and harmonious global order. We structured our research in this direction for several reasons. First, China launched both the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Global Civilization Initiative. Second, both are rooted in Chinese values, norms, and interpretations of international relations, security order, modernization, and the idea of building a shared future. Third, the SCO and GCI promote a framework in which civilizational differences are seen as drivers of mutual learning and solidarity, rather than as fault lines to justify the imposition of one’s own values, political systems, or economic models, or to fuel ideological confrontation. In this sense, both the SCO and GCI embrace cooperation as a guiding principle in shaping international relations. Both initiatives demonstrate that a strong sense of equality among actors contributes directly to a shared sense of togetherness. Last but not least, we consider it significant that both also serve China’s broader strategic interests – diplomatic, economic, security-related, developmental, and political.

**Keywords:** Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Global Civilization Initiative, diplomacy, China, community, shared future, true multilateralism

## INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, the world is changing. The dynamism of international relations is becoming perplexed, reaching the level of impossibility to predict any future trend. Simultaneously, this “catch me if you can” dynamism and “fast turning pages” trends are bringing many new opportunities, but an unknown imbroglio that requires creativity, resilience, fast and sustainable (re)actions. Individuals, states, regions, and the globe are facing daily challenges. These challenges require constant development of power to adapt to the unexpected novelties. In an era of uncertainty, resilience is the key to shaping the future. In the wider picture, and if we look at history, these challenges show deeper incongruences with the post-Cold War international order because it

was not built by following the manners of diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, it was built by abiding by the *realpolitik* principles of winner takes all, excluding and making other stakeholders feel unequal in the international order. This behaviour of preserving and reinforcing such an international order continued even after some states of the Global South reached the position of power that requires a redefinition of the North-South politico-economic relations.

Facing with the fact that its further development will be contained through institutions, geopolitical ambitions, military deployments, and geoeconomic restructuring of global production and supply chains by some states, primarily the political West, China's officials posed several priorities in employing its public and emancipatory diplomacy. As the first task, China's diplomatic apparatus must show the globe that China's diplomatic theory and practice, economic resources, and strategic beliefs are the wisdom that the international society lacks to better itself. Furthermore, Chinese wisdom is pivotal in transforming global governance into the space of equality, mutual learning, Mencius optimality, relationalism (Qin 2012, 70–84; Qin 2018; Qin 2020a), and togetherness. Furthermore, in threading global partnerships and networking the globe, Chinese leaders are insisting on the fact that the practice of its foreign policy is based on the position of a strong defender and active builder of international rule of law (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China [MFAPRC] 2014) and defender of international order and practitioner of Multilateralism (MFAPRC 2018).

Following this diplomatic practice, China initiated many political, economic, and security interconnecting, ambitious, and transformative initiatives (SCO, Belt and Road Initiative [BRI], Global Civilization Initiative [GCI], Global Development Initiative [GDI], Global Security Initiative [GSI]) as an extension of domestic affairs (MFAPRC 2014). At the same time, these initiatives show the Chinese will to become the architect of international cooperation, global development, security order, and a new wave of modernization. China reaffirmed that it abandoned the concept of the Central Empire for China and entered the “world of interdependence”.<sup>2</sup> Expectedly, China holds the stance that these initiatives are a crucial part and engines in China's emancipatory

---

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this perspective, consult Stefanović-Štambuk 2008.

<sup>2</sup> On this issue, useful insights can be found in Mitrović 1995.

diplomacy,<sup>3</sup> aimed towards liberating the international order from hegemonism, exclusivity, unilateralism, and inequality.

One such “liberating” initiative for bettering global governance is the Global Civilization Initiative. It was launched by the China’s President Xi Jinping during the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting held in Beijing on 15<sup>th</sup> of March. In his speech *Join Hands on the Path towards Modernization* delivered for this occasion, China’s president Xi Jinping declared that “all civilizations created by human society are splendid” (Xi 2023a).

For the purpose of this article, we analyse the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as we consider it one of the most illustrative examples of the Global Civilizational Initiative being put into practice. We develop this argument for several reasons, beginning with the evident fact that both the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Global Civilization Initiative were launched by China. Second, both are centred on Chinese values, norms, understanding of international relations, security order, modernization, and making the future together in joint hands. As the third reason, we are pointing out that the Chinese emphasize that both SCO and GCI are creating the context in which differences among civilizations will be used as engines for mutual learning, not as fault lines for imposing one’s own values or models on others and for stoking ideological confrontation (Xi 2023a). In other words, leaders of the Communist Party of China believe that China, by its behavior, stimulates coordination and cooperation with and within the international community in a manner that every challenge is diplomatized and inter-civilizational dialogue is further developed and grounded on proper values – Chinese wisdom.<sup>4</sup> Thus, both propose cooperation as the golden rule in weaving international relations. For Chinese scholar Qin Yaqing (Qin 2020b, 37), the history of human evolution is a history of cooperation. This is followed by the reason that both consider that the sense of equality fosters the sense of togetherness. Besides this, for the reason we are taking the obvious and legitimate fact that both GCI and SCO are in service of achieving China’s instrumental goals – diplomatic, economic, security, developmental, and political.

<sup>3</sup> On China’s emancipatory diplomacy, see also Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2024, 415–423.

<sup>4</sup> On this point, see also Zongze 2018.

This article relies on a qualitative and interpretative approach. The research is based primarily on the analysis of official documents of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (such as its Charter, declarations, and summit statements), speeches by Chinese political leaders, and relevant secondary scholarly literature. The method applied combines textual and discourse analysis in order to trace how the principles of the Global Civilization Initiative are reflected in the institutional development, diplomatic practice, and normative framework of the SCO. Such an approach enables not only the identification of conceptual overlaps between the Initiative and the Organization, but also an assessment of their practical implementation.

### DIFFERENCES AMONGST CIVILIZATIONS – FAULT LINES OR A GREAT WAY TOWARDS HARMONY

The world is changing. International order is changing. In a global village, differences are emerging, and at the same time they are converging into unified wholeness that shares a global future. The purpose and nature of war are changing. Manners of knitting the international order are changing. The nature and structure of security are changing.

Having in mind all these changes, we cannot help but question whether diplomacy possesses the capacity to sustain the world. Is diplomacy sustainable<sup>5</sup> in the world of dramatic changes, significant differences, but even bigger opportunities? Leaders of China understand that changes have reached an unseen scale in a century (State Council Information Office of China [SCIO] 2023) with obvious transformative capacity. Document *A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions*, released by the State Council of the People's Republic of China in 2023, details China's perspective on global changes as follows: "This is an era of promise, and an era of challenges. At yet another crossroads in history, we have to choose between unity and division, between opening up and closing off, between cooperation and confrontation. With the overall interests of humanity at stake, this choice tests the wisdom of all countries" (SCIO 2023).

Although this is a period of unprecedented changes, China defines it as a period of strategic opportunities.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in a speech delivered to

<sup>5</sup> For more comprehensive treatments of this theme, see Stefanović-Štambuk 2010a, 645–673.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Stekić 2023 and Lađevac 2020.

the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping, besides ushering in “five shoulds”,<sup>7</sup> recommended not to give up on China’s dreams because the reality is too complicated, and China should not stop pursuing its ideals because they seem out of reach (Xi 2017). However, it is expected that China uses the mentioned changes and period of strategic opportunities to internationalize Chinese solutions, bringing in the name of overcoming and translating these global changes/challenges into opportunities. Simultaneously, China is trying to translate these solutions into an international consensus, which should be another channel for broadening *and broadcasting* [added by the authors] China’s development path (Zongze 2018, 14–15). Leaders of China perceive the internationalization and globalization of Chinese wisdom as an urgent task for global stability. This would be a normal process of internalizing China, because China became independent and prosperous, with the obvious wish to share its wisdom. As China becomes stronger, its wish to better the world becomes even more powerful. For China, internationalization and globalization of its solutions are equal to sharing development opportunities with the world.

The USA, similar to China, shares the view that the world is changing and that the global environment is becoming even more puzzled. For example, in the document titled *2024 Annual Estimate of the Strategic Environment*, the USA recognizes that the international order is a complex and ever-changing global environment (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College 2024, 4). In the same document, one of the urgent tasks for securing global and national security is defined as the need for the US Army to stay in a condition of constant vigilance, strategic planning, and commitment to the forefront of military innovation (4). In this global complexity, China’s initiatives and strategic

---

<sup>7</sup> “Five shoulds” are: “We should respect each other, discuss issues as equals, resolutely reject the Cold War mentality and power politics, and take a new approach to developing state-to-state relations with communication, not confrontation, and with partnership, not alliance. We should commit to settling disputes through dialogue and resolving differences through discussion, coordinate responses to traditional and non-traditional threats, and oppose terrorism in all its forms. We should stick together through thick and thin, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, and balanced so that its benefits are shared by all. We should respect the diversity of civilizations. In handling relations among civilizations, let us replace estrangement with exchange, clashes with mutual learning, and superiority with coexistence. We should be good friends to the environment, cooperate to tackle climate change, and protect our planet for the sake of human survival” (Xi 2017, 52–53).

steps as a part of diplomatic theory and practice may trigger military conflict in potential hot spots in the Indo-Pacific (6–33).

Unsurprisingly, an analogous understanding of the international order and China's behaviour is shared by the NATO. Namely, in the document *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept* adopted at the NATO Summit in Madrid, 29 June 2022, this organization holds that the threats humanity faces are global and interconnected (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] 2022, 3). Among all the threats occurring during kaleidoscopic shifts, special attention is given to the diplomatic, economic, and security practices of China. According to the same document, China's global behaviour is defined by the features of the coercive policies that challenge NATO interests, values, and security (NATO 2022, 5). In that behaviour, China remains opaque about its strategy, intentions, and military build-up (5).

According to Huntington, some scholars in this new phase of accelerated global dynamism have eagerly offered visions of the future – the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between nation-states, and the decline of the nation-state under the conflicting pressures of tribalism and globalism – visions that catch aspects of the emerging reality (Huntington 1993, 22).

However, one of those phrases for catching the reality was also the hypothesis posed by Samuel Huntington. According to this hypothesis, “the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future” (Huntington 1993, 22).

Analyzing the hypothesis posed by this scholar, we can perceive that the role of civilizations and civilization identity will gain bigger importance in shaping the world's future, including the future of world politics, international society, global governance, global security, and developmental expectations and limitations. But, for the same scholar, differences amongst civilizations are not the tools to develop the trends of mutual learning, respect, mutual empowering, and development through togetherness. On the contrary, civilizational differences are sources that empower conflicts and deepen rifts among nations. The

same scholar believes that the ongoing interactions and continuous communication from personal to state level may only intensify pre-existing “[...] differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history” (Huntington 1993, 26). Guided by this Hegelian logic, the approach “one size fits all” was selected as the best solution for overcoming civilization differences and melting civilization richness into the pot of the Liberal International Order. Simultaneously, a civilization that did not fit into or fitted only partly into the values, norms, visions, and actions of the Liberal International Order was sanctioned in different ways, from defining the same civilization as a challenger and threat to global security, like Rogue State, or was marginalized when the rules of the international order were defined. This was the dominant practice and mentality when the network of global partnerships in the post-Cold War era was established.

China, which nurtures an entirely different political, economic, and value system compared to the West, in this kind of architecture of the international order, in 1978 initiated the “reforms and opening up policy”.<sup>8</sup> Despite all these differences, China recorded tremendous results. West perceived this as China is taking off its silk gloves. However, China also faces with great and new challenges.<sup>9</sup> All those results and challenges, which were becoming more notable and more complex as an obvious manifestation of increasing China’s power, were gathered

<sup>8</sup> In the speech delivered during the First Session of the 13<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress on March 20, 2018, Xi Jinping defined the policy of reforms and opening up in the following way: Reform and opening up represented a great awakening for the CPC, an awakening that facilitated great theoretical and practical innovations for the Party. Reform and opening up is a great revolution in the history of the Chinese people and Chinese nation, one that propelled a tremendous transformation in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics (Xi 2023b).

<sup>9</sup> By analysing China’s advantages and disadvantages, its leaders during the Two Sessions gathering brought a new concept regarding China’s development – High Quality Development. This new type of development is based on new productive forces. According to official sources about new productive forces and new development we can read the following: “With innovation playing the leading role, new quality productive forces mean advanced productivity that is freed from the traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths, features high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and comes in line with the new development philosophy” (SCIO 2024).



in a holistic term known as “China Dream”<sup>10</sup> manifested through “Two Centenary” (Popović 2024, 48–50).<sup>11</sup>

China brought another shock to the Western world. China started its diplomatic revolution (Stefanović-Štambuk 2010b, 299–311) in 1996 when it initiated the Shanghai Five mechanism as the outrunner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Twenty years later, China is speeding up its diplomatic revolution. China believes that its diplomatic revolution is crucial in bettering the international order and pursuing the benevolent course of major country diplomacy. We are setting this commencement point for China’s diplomatic revolution, because that was the China’s very first materialization of its endeavors to multilaterally gather countries and established a new type of relationship. Gathering was done by using civilization differences not as the “fault lines”, but as the cornerstone of the Shanghai Spirit. In the article 4 of the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization* the Shanghai Spirit is defined in the following way: “The “Shanghai Spirit” formed in the process of the Shanghai Five development, described by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, joint consultations, respect for cultural diversity and aspiration for collective development, is an invaluable asset gained by the countries of the region over the years of cooperation. It will grow and in the new century will become a norm in relations among the states members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” (Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] 2001).

---

<sup>10</sup> China dream is a great rejuvenation of China’s nation. China’s leaders for the China dream state the following: “The pursuit of beautiful dreams resonates far and wide across countries and nations. The Chinese Dream is about pursuing strength of the country, rejuvenation of the nation and happiness of the people, and the dream of the world is about enduring peace and common prosperity. These two dreams can always be pursued together. The Chinese Dream, a dream about peace, development, cooperation, and win-win, is closely linked with the beautiful dreams of people in countries around the world. The Chinese people and people elsewhere in the world are bound together by the shared aspirations for a better life. Supporting and helping each other along the way, they are making progress hand in hand in realizing the dreams” (MFAPRC 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Two Centenary as a guiding principle of the Chinese development is defined as following: “China has set the Two Centenary Goals, one to be achieved around 2020, the centenary of the founding of the CCP, by doubling China’s GDP and per capita income from the levels of 2010 and comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society to the benefit of well over one billion people. The other is to develop China into a prosperous, powerful, democratic, civilised and harmonious socialist modernized country by the mid-21st century, i.e., the centenary of the founding of the PRC” (Ding 2016, 80).

Having in mind this kind of definition of the major norm of the SCO, the purpose of this article is more than obvious. Thus, we are analysing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as one of the best practices of implementing the Global Civilization Initiative in reality.

## **GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE – CHINA’S DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION FOR PUZZLING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER**

Global Civilization Initiative is the third initiative in China’s ambitions to share the wisdom, theories, and practice of emancipatory diplomacy (Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2024, 424–425). The first two announced were the Global Security Initiative and the Global Development Initiative, respectively. Hence, the GCI should be understood as the injection of fresh dynamism, that is, inter-civilizational dialogue into building and safeguarding global development cooperation and global security cooperation (Liu 2023). For some scholars, these three initiatives create a cornerstone for transforming the world into the garden of flourishing civilizations (Liu 2023).

When announcing the Global Civilization Initiative, Xi Jinping underlined a famous Chinese saying: *A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden* (Xi 2023a). Besides obviously insisting on diversity that has to be respected and nurtured through dialogue and consultations, Xi Jinping confirmed China’s official understanding that the future of all countries is connected (Xi 2023a). According to Chinese diplomatic practice, the world is big enough to accommodate the common development and progress of all countries. It is entirely possible for different civilizations to prosper together and inspire each other through mutual learning on an equal footing. The future is shared by and for all countries (Xi 2024b).

Hence, the whole of humanity has one home – our world. All civilizations together should treat it like the most beautiful garden. China advocates four action blueprints to make this view a reality: “[1.] We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations [... 2.] We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples [...3.] We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations [...4.] We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore

the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation” (Xi 2023a).

Analyzing these “four advocates”, we understand that China demonstrates the pattern of behaviour within the international community that promotes commonality, togetherness, and respecting the fact that all civilizations are rooted in their unique cultures (Xi 2023a). This diversity for China should not only be perceived as a richness in traditions and history, but also as a reality and vital quality for promoting inter-civilizational dialogue, mutual learning, global progress, and a people-centered approach. As such, differences among civilizations should not be securitized, i.e., presented as an existential threat to one’s own or any other civilization (Xi 2023a). Furthermore, the destiny and shared future of all civilizations is not to clash. Thus, China insists that these three global initiatives (GCI, GDI, GSI), from a holistic approach, bring the future to the globe which is already marching defuturism.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, having in mind that the world is, once again, on the crossroad of selecting the path between a shared and bright future, on the one side, and defuturism on the other, China is branding the GCI as a collection and unification of common aspirations of countries around the globe for promoting equality, inclusiveness and diversity of world civilizations when building a community of a shared future (Liu 2023). In the same style of its diplomatic theory and practice and for developing inter-civilizational dialogue, China underlines the fact that there is no country superior to another, and there is no such thing as an inferior or superior civilization, or a value above other values (Liu 2023). Thus, the illusion of some civilization pronouncing itself as a universal civilization or being more important than other civilizations will easily fall through. At the same time, this illusion refers to the moment when some civilization proclaims its values as universal values that must be shared by the whole world in the form they understand as the best. In the same context, using ideologies and values to draw lines will only serve to create divisions and confrontations. This kind of behaviour “[...] will only bring disastrous results upon the world and blemish the civilizations” (Liu 2023). This is an exceptional, or one scholar approach, regarding theoretical understandings of knitting relations amongst states, nations, and civilizations. For example, other Chinese scholars in their analysis also take the stance that civilizations: “should not be divided

---

<sup>12</sup> On the idea of defuturing, see Fry 2020.

into high or low, and civilization should not have a so-called universal model. Otherwise, if it is monopolized by the so-called unified way, then it is impossible for human beings to develop for a long time, and many tragedies and disasters will soon follow” (Xu, Li and Hu 2023).

GCI reflects China’s diplomatic theory and practice based on civilizational inclusiveness and respecting civilizational diversity on a global level. Furthermore, it represents how China intertwines its values and civilizational identity into international society (*Beijing Review* 2024). By doing so, China is creating a strategic context in which its civilizational identity and values will be perceived as a tool for diplomatizing regional and global security challenges and a pivotal engine for economic development, which is craving for new capital. Staying on the level of strategic thoughts, China is creating a convenient environment for its cherished peaceful development as a pivotal part of the major country diplomacy.

Recognizing China’s unselfish efforts in making the inter-civilizational dialogue a question of global importance was confirmed when China proposed, and the UN General Assembly during the 78<sup>th</sup> Session held on June 7, adopted resolution A/78/L.45. The same resolution stipulated June 10 for the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. When making the text of resolution Chinese officials recalled the “[...] previous resolutions of the General Assembly on promoting understanding, development and exchange among civilizations and cultures, in particular its resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998, by which the Assembly proclaimed the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and its resolution 56/6 of 9 November 2001 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and the Programme of Action and its objectives [...]” (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA] 2024). Besides that, recalling to the previous documents included following documents: “resolution 51/95 of 12 December 1996, by which the Assembly proclaimed 16 November as the International Day for Tolerance, its resolution 72/130 of 8 December 2017, by which it declared 16 May as the International Day of Living Together in Peace, its resolution 75/200 of 21 December 2020, by which it proclaimed 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity, and its resolution 75/309 of 21 July 2021, by which it proclaimed 18 June as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech” (UNGA 2024).

The very text of the resolution underlined the following: “all civilizations celebrate the unity and diversity of humankind and are enriched and have evolved through dialogue with others, respect for human rights as well as the need to acknowledge and respect the richness of all civilizations and to seek common ground among civilizations in order to address comprehensively challenges facing humanity” (UNGA 2024).

Analysing the text of the resolution, with particular focus on this part, we notice considerable similarities with the speech of Xi Jinping when he institutionalized the Global Civilization Initiative as the Chinese wisdom in threading inter-civilizational dialogue. Both resolution and speech emphasize the importance of dialogue, consultation, and mutuality as means of nurturing diversity and commonality whilst holistically addressing dynamic challenges facing humanity. Both document and speech underline that civilizational diversity improved the evolution of humankind. Hence, civilizational diversity contributed to the development of different types of protection and diverse, rich understandings about the same concepts – human rights, democracy, development, and sustainability, to name a few.

Since the GCI, as its name suggests, extends to the global scale, China expressed its will to be more active and innovative regarding the reforms of global governance. According to Chinese diplomatic practice, this reform is equal to bettering the international order and making it the “environment of equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all” states, regardless of size and power (Xi 2023a). Since, there is one planet Earth and that China is not isolated from the shared future of the humanity, Chinese leaders considered as a high priority obligation “[...] to provide new opportunities for world development, add new impetus to humanity’s exploration of paths towards modernization, and make new contributions to the theory and practice of humanity’s modernization” (Xi 2023a). All these efforts follow China’s new progress in its modernization (Xi 2023a). However, to be done in the most suitable way, China must not change its nature, abandon its system, or be trapped in a “one size fits all” approach. For China, its activity and steadiness are the “[...] key to the opening up of a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures” (Xu, Li and Hu 2023). Chinese President Xi Jinping insists that China must “stay committed to the right direction, right theories and the right path” (Xi 2023a).

Of course, some scholars proposed an understanding of the Global Civilization Initiative as the reinvigoration of the Sino-centric system and anti-democratic values, alarming the world by bringing to the forefront the China threat theory. For Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović: “In truth, the “China threat” theory is hardly a theory. It is more of a label for a body of thoughts, less theoretically based, and vastly ideologically biased, put up to inform, activate, and issue a rallying call to close ranks behind the US and tighten the sense of (Western) identity around its core values allegedly under jeopardy from Chinese ambitions to ignite the joint re-evaluation of the decaying base of international politics” (Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2022, 9–10). However, scholar Evan Ellis (Ellis 2023) in the online journal *Diplomat* stated that the GCI is a synonym for ambiguity. This scholar criticized Xi’s speech in the sense that the Chinese president was speaking about the “common aspiration” of humanity and not rights when he was talking about “peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom” (Ellis 2023). He presented this as an obvious part of the China threat theory since the GCI advocates against a world in which those concepts can have meaning through united efforts to call out and collectively act against those who violate them (Ellis 2023). It is very particular in his research that he criticized what are the common aspirations for China to be a legitimate obligation for which countries must refrain from imposing their own values or models on others (Ellis 2023). There is an impression that every country has a duty to impose its values and beliefs on other countries as the legitimate right in spreading its power, strategic ambitions, diplomatic practice, geopolitical vectors, and geoeconomic interests. Compared to this, the GCI promotes relativism of values (Ellis 2023). As a self-serving effort, it is in service of achieving Chinese ambitions to dismantle the “rules based international order” (Ellis 2023) and promotes inter-civilizational dialogue without a “one size fits all” approach.

## **GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE IN PRACTICE - SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was born in June 2001. It was born when Islam Karimov, then President of Uzbekistan, signed the document of accession of this country to the Shanghai Five mechanism. This historical moment happened on June 15, 2001, during the meeting of the heads of state of the then members of the Shanghai Five mechanism.

This signature included not only Uzbekistan in the teamwork along with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan: it was also the very first step in creating a new reality and interconnectedness in the space of Central Asia. Through institutionalization of diplomatic, economic, and infrastructural unlocking the landlocked geopolitical character of Central Asia, China brought completely new dynamism and understandings of geopolitical concepts, Heartland and Rimland (Popović 2024).

As the years passed, the SCO expanded its influence and power regarding geography, scope, form, and content. SCO started to dispose of the types of power that were earlier exclusively reserved for the West. As the disposal of power and influence increased, SCO promoted innovative theory and practice of creating a new type of international relations based on dialogue, consultation, shared security, equality, fairness, and justice. SCO and its guiding principle, the Shanghai Spirit, were recognized as sources of innovative theory and practice in establishing contemporary international relations. Contemporary international relations is the non-confrontational model. This kind of model of the international relations calls for discarding the Cold War mentality, bloc politics, and transcending ideological differences (SCO 2006). This is a simultaneous and direct implementation of the Shanghai Spirit in developing the inter-civilizational dialogue within the SCO region.

In the rich spectra of the SCO activities, promoting cultural, religious, and civilizational diversity was highly positioned and prioritized since the very foundation of the organization. This was also institutionally and normatively supported by the Shanghai Spirit. In such a manner, diversity is presented as a tool of mutual learning and developing dialogue. As such, diversity nurtured in the SCO practice is the channel for creating a sense of togetherness and equality. For example, according to the Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the founding of this international organization is based on historically established ties between its peoples (SCO 2002). Ties are used for making the knots, not battlefields. Understanding that it is better to invest money in development instead of in wars, member states, as one of the goals set, strengthen mutual trust, friendship, and good neighborliness in the SCO Region (SCO 2002). This stance was encouraged through decades-long practice of development of the SCO system of diplomatic theory and practice in making the SCO region of the space of indivisible security (SCO 2015). There are strong pledges in



many documents that the SCO member states will remain friends from generation to generation and will never be enemies against one another (SCO 2006). Member states constitute peace by upholding consultations, dialogue, and diversity instead of stimulating a weapons race. However, the newest events between India and Pakistan questioned the feasibility of the given pledges and the viability of the SCO in real time and space.

This understanding of the interstate relations in making the SCO region a space of peace was once again accentuated in the Declaration of the member states of SCO issued for the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the SCO in 2006: “Diversity of civilization and model of development must be respected and upheld. Differences in cultural traditions, political and social systems, values and model of development formed in the course of history should not be taken as pretexts to interfere in other countries’ internal affairs. Model of social development should not be ‘exported’” (SCO 2006).

In its work, we can see that the SCO is not imposing animosity and uniformity as a prerequisite for cooperation, mutual respect, making peace, and protecting sovereignty. Instead, this is done by encouraging diversity, harmonization of interests, and the diplomatization of security issues. SCO member states found these to be the most suitable ways to minimize the possibilities of misunderstandings that can be transformed into skirmishes. An outbreak of any scuffle between the SCO members can jeopardize the stability of the SCO Region by questioning the SCO cooperative system and the SCO norms that make the SCO Region a space of predictable dynamism. Besides this, any misunderstanding that can reach the level of diplomatic conflict opens the door for third-party involvement not only in the SCO affairs, but also in the domestic affairs of the SCO member states. Although SCO, as an organization that shares the norms of collectivity and values of inclusion, has strategic interests primarily mirrored as preventing the strategy of containment of Sino-Russian interests that the USA, through the model of hub and spokes and military alliances, is developing in the Asia-Pacific region (Shambaugh 2004, 72–77). Thus, and completely expected, strategic interests are intertwined with the Shanghai Spirit as the workflow of the SCO and the development of the SCO model of diplomacy. In mutuality, American interests cannot take the lead; they will be intertwined into the network of interests of the SCO region if we follow the typology of the SCO documents. Making the organization’s space a region of peace, cooperation, sustainable development, prosperity, and harmony must be



understood as the crucial strategic interest (SCO 2021). If this strategic interest is not achieved, the direct SCO contribution to the respect of cultural and civilizational variety of the modern world (SCO 2007) will be questioned. SCO's credibility will also be questioned.

Throughout time, states that established different political and economic systems on their territories, followed by different systems of values and rooted in different cultures, took different types of participation and cooperation with the SCO member states, dialogue partners, and observer states. So far, there are nine SCO member states – the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. At first glance at the organizational structure of the SCO and the pace of inclusion of new member states, we can conclude that respecting diversity is entrenched in the SCO workflow and the SCO diplomatic system. Thus, SCO does not support the “one size fits all” approach. On the contrary, establishing such an organization to institutionally develop and harmonize the interests of many countries in spectacular SCO diversity, implies not only that the inter-civilizational dialogue, valuing civilizational beauty, and richness and equality are highly positioned and requested as the manner of doing relations within the SCO Region, but that big number of states cherished these values for doing the interstate relations.

From the above, we can see that the SCO membership structure is very complex. It includes states that have fought direct wars throughout history. Some of the SCO member states are permanent member states of the OUN Security Council, and some of them are recognized and non-recognized nuclear powers. The religion map of the SCO is also sundry, since it embraces Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and citizens who follow the rules of Confucianism. From the economic perspective, SCO consists of the world's biggest trading countries, the world's biggest emitters and receivers of FDI, both close USA partners, its fiercest opponents, and America's biggest trading partners, the world's biggest energy producers and consumers. From the point of view of physical facts, SCO includes the world's most populous countries and countries with the vastest territories in the world. We are listing all this evidence to demonstrate the level of complexity with which the SCO developed its institutional capacities and rebutted Western predictions of the end of history and clash of civilizations. SCO diplomatic theory

and practice express that diversity and not uniformity create a shared future. Uniformity brings us to the defuturism. For the SCO member states, developing the inter-civilizational dialogue is a bottom line of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, because real security is premised on the security of all countries (Xi 2024a). We are witnessing states voluntarily searching for ways to limit their powers, institutionalize their power, and employ it to make the SCO Region a space of predictability. The normative framework for this was provided by the Shanghai Spirit.

So far, it is apparent that the activities of the SCO, to a large extent, are in line with the ideas, values, and activities of the proposed GCI. Notably, on the level of adopted documents, SCO is giving wide support to achieving the GCI goals, and making the context in which GCI will become a reality. For example, during the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the intention of member states to promote the proposal for the adoption of a Resolution by the UN General Assembly in connection with the SCO Initiative “On World Unity for a Just Peace, Harmony and Development” was reaffirmed. Along with this, SCO member states buttressed the propagation of dialogue on the idea of “One Earth. One Family. One Future” (SCO 2024a; SCO 2024b). Besides that, SCO members supported strengthening the global dialogue between religions and cultures within the framework of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions (SCO 2024b). In this place, and once again, we notice that the SCO is giving a great support to the realization of the GCI. From the aspect of China’s diplomacy, this means making a wider audience for sharing and perceiving China’s story as an engine for global development and securing global security. Simultaneously, it means making a more stable context within which China’s strategic actions will be understood as a part of peaceful development and not reinvigoration of a China Threat Theory. In this one earth, one home, one future, SCO members are continuously showing their unwavering commitment to respect preserved traditional values and cultural and civilizational diversity, as well as the need to further deepen cooperation in the humanitarian field by introducing new formats of interaction in education, culture, tourism, and sports.

Leaders of the member states understood that sport plays a great part in developing inter-civilizational dialogue, sharing and adopting different cultural heritages, developing an atmosphere of togetherness, and creating

a spirit of fair play. For that aim, Heads of Ministries and Departments responsible for the development of physical culture and sports in the SCO Member States, during the meeting held in Almaty, 24 May 2024, agreed to establish a Working Group on Physical Culture and Sports and hold the SCO Sports Games (SCO 2024b). These results were recognized as the impulse for different initiatives to establish the Association of SCO Sports Organizations. Besides the annual SCO Marathon, the idea to hold the “Silk Road” mini-football tournament for the SCO Member States Cup in futsal on December 9–18, 2024, in Tehran, was unanimously accepted (SCO 2024b). The unique role of physical culture and sport in strengthening solidarity, peace, and inter-civilizational dialogue was recognized. The representatives of the member states will actively work on “promoting development of international sports cooperation on an equal and depoliticized basis, oppose discrimination against athletes on any grounds, including nationality, language, political and other beliefs, national or social origin” (SCO 2024b).

Regarding tourism, member states in Samarkand in 2022 signed the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on the Development of Cooperation in the Field of Tourism and the SCO Joint Plan of Action in the Field of Tourism for the period 2024–2025. This was a great impetus to institutionalize touristic development and cooperation as one of the economic sectors expected to grow. In line with that, in 2023, a Forum was held in Urumqi when the SCO announced that year for the “SCO Year of Tourism”. The discussion was focused on the four thematic areas: tourism potential of the SCO space; tourism potential of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region; promotion of sustainable tourism; development of tourism as a way to reduce poverty (SCO 2023).

In regard to cooperation in education, member states, along with dialogue partners and observer states, knitted the network of universities within the SCO Region. This network is known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization University (SCOU). On the official website which is not updated properly, following goals are recognized to be achieved: strengthening mutual trust and good-neighbourly relations between the SCO member countries; development of integration processes in the field of education, science and technology; giving new impetus to the expansion of multilateral educational, scientific and cultural cooperation; expanding opportunities for young people to receive high-quality modern education, and for teachers and scientists to develop scientific contacts; promoting effective cooperation between

the Organization's member countries in the political, trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural fields (Университет Шанхайской организации сотрудничества n.d.).

For the main tasks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization University network, representatives of the educational institutions of the SCO Region defined following: expansion of the exchange of pupils, students, postgraduates, doctoral students and research and teaching staff; increasing scientific and academic cooperation; implementation of modern educational methods and technologies; creation of mechanisms for recognition and equivalence of educational documents of the SCO University by SCO member states and the global educational community (Университет Шанхайской организации сотрудничества n.d.). Furthermore, ministers of education of the SCO member states held in Moscow on April 18, 2024, agreed to give priority to building up cooperation within the SCO University, the development of cooperation in the field of academic exchanges, joint scientific work, the organization of vocational education, language training, enhancing youth interaction, as well as digitalization in the field of education in the SCO interested Member States (SCO 2024b).

We can see that institutionally, SCO, as one of the crucial factors in Eurasian security and development, strongly supports the constant communication, flow of people, and sharing of knowledge as the essential parts of the *people-to-people diplomacy*. For such a kind of diplomacy, they hold that contributes to strengthening mutual understanding and cultural and humanitarian ties within the SCO (SCO 2024b). It is raising the level of trust among the member states. Thus, for the SCO member states, it is important not only to have physical connections in the form of infrastructure but also in the form of institutional capacities, sense of togetherness, equality, and respect for diversity. All these different types of interconnectedness in threading relations are forming the intercivilizational dialogue and psychological bonds in people-to-people diplomacy. Strategically, it contributes to raising the level of predictability of behaviour, stipulating and internalizing the SCO norms into the domestic system of values. Besides this, SCO strategic calculations are becoming part of the strategic interests of the member states. Observer states and dialogue partners are becoming more familiar with the workflow of the SCO. The internalization would be easier. But it is also one of the ways of reinforcing control of surveying methods justified by the need to fight three evils – terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism.

## CONCLUSION

By its power and innovative diplomatic theories, China brings new dynamism to international affairs, new impulses into the democratization of global governance, and emancipation of international society.<sup>13</sup> This dynamism is focused on respecting the world's diversity" (Jiang 2012, 40). China's leaders believe that in this way, China is mirroring and transferring its wisdom and managerial skills to better the globe and make new and stronger bonds between man and nature.

China views the current global context as one of accelerated transformation and instability, marked by changes of historic magnitude. These dynamics present humanity with unprecedented challenges, often framed as choices between unity and division, peace and conflict, or cooperation and confrontation. For China, the answer to this riddle is the following: "the people's wish for a happy life is our goal, and peace, development and win-win cooperation are the unstoppable trends of the times" (Xi 2023c).

For the purpose of this article, we demonstrated that the SCO is not only one of the strongest forces in giving birth to the Global Civilization Initiative, but also one of the best practices in implementing the principles and ideas defined within the Global Civilization Initiative. These results were obtained by doing an analysis of the principles and values of the SCO diplomatic theories and practice, and the development of institutional capacities of the same organization. The results of our research also demonstrated that SCO's institutional flaws can be improved by developing new institutional capacities and innovative diplomatic practices and theories.

Strengthening exchanges, constant communication, mutual learning and forging people-to-people diplomacy within the SCO Region, so far, has been positioned as the task of the high priority on the agenda of the SCO institutional development (Xi 2023c). This task is highly prioritized, since all nations in the region aspire to see the harmonious development of different civilizations. This kind of civilizational development contributes to creating the atmosphere of togetherness in diversity. Thus, SCO member states welcome the efforts of all sides to work together in implementing the Global Civilization Initiative, to promote inclusiveness and coexistence among

---

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Stefanović-Štambuk and Popović 2024, 415–423.

all civilizations, and to increase mutual understanding and friendship among all nations (Xi 2023c).

Considering that the world is at a crossroads of unprecedented changes, the SCO will be affected. However, this gives a great opportunity to the SCO to update existing and develop new institutional capacities and diplomatic theories and practices, which can be done in a more suitable and sustainable manner to nurture inter-civilizational dialogue and civilizational harmonious development, because “all civilizations created by human society are splendid” (*China-India Review* 2023, 41), and people-to-people diplomacy.

China has been actively shaping a vision for international relations that champions diversity and mutual respect. At its core, this vision emphasizes a profound respect for civilizational diversity, advocating for the acknowledgment of numerous distinct cultures and societal models, rather than imposing a singular set of “universal” norms. This leads to a perception, which China frequently articulates, of a “normative monopoly” where non-Western states may feel pressured to conform to Western-derived frameworks. China perceives a significant disparity between the stated pluralism of the current world order and its de facto governance by Western powers. Through its various global initiatives, Beijing actively seeks to bridge this gap, promoting alternative forums, funding mechanisms, and a more inclusive normative language, even while engaging with the very institutions it critiques.

## REFERENCES

- Beijing Review*. 2024. “Dialogue Among Civilizations.” *China Focus*. June 18, 2024. Dialogue among Civilizations. <http://www.cnfocus.com/dialogue-among-civilizations/>
- China-India Review*. 2023. “Building China into a Great Modern Socialist Country.” *Embassy of The People’s Republic of China in the Republic of India*. January–March 2023. <https://in.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/zgwxw/202304/P020230411529354579726.pdf>
- Ding, Lu. 2016. “China’s “Two Centenary” Goals: Progress and Challenge.” *East Asian Policy*, 8 (2): 79–93. DOI:10.1142/S1793930516000222
- Ellis, R. Evan. 2023. “The Trouble with China’s Global Civilization Initiative.” *The Diplomat*, June 1, 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/06/the-trouble-with-chinas-global-civilization-initiative/>

- Fry, Tony. 2020. *Defuturing: A New Design Philosophy*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 (3): 22–49.
- Jiang, Zemin. 2012. *Selected works of Jiang Zemin, Volume II*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Lađevac, Ivona. 2020. „Odgovor Kine na novi bezbednosni izazov.” U *Čovek, prostor, tehnologija, ideje: međunarodna bezbednost u trećoj dekadi 21. veka*, ur. Vladimir Ajzenhamer i Nebojša Vuković, 126–151. Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Univerzitet u Beogradu – Fakultet bezbednosti.
- Liu, Jianchao. 2023. "Work Actively to Implement the Global Civilizational Initiative and Jointly Advance Human Civilizations". *China Daily, Hong Kong Edition*. April 13, 2023. [https://campus-cdhk.oss-cn-hongkong.aliyuncs.com/store\\_manager/epaper/0/106/91/616601/page.pdf](https://campus-cdhk.oss-cn-hongkong.aliyuncs.com/store_manager/epaper/0/106/91/616601/page.pdf)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China [MFAPRC]. 2014. "Wang Yi: China, a Staunch Defender and Builder of International Rule of Law." October 24, 2014. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzb/wjzb/jh/202405/t20240527\\_11312100.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzb/wjzb/jh/202405/t20240527_11312100.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China [MFAPRC]. 2018. "Wang Yi: China is a Defender of the International Order and a Practitioner of Multilateralism." September 29, 2018. [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjzb/zzjg\\_663340/gjs\\_665170/gjsxw\\_665172/202406/t20240606\\_11402008.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjzb/zzjg_663340/gjs_665170/gjsxw_665172/202406/t20240606_11402008.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China [MFAPRC]. 2022. "The Chinese Dream Is a Dream of the People." August 26, 2022. [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/zggcddwjw100ggs/xsd/202406/t20240606\\_11377988.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/zggcddwjw100ggs/xsd/202406/t20240606_11377988.html)
- Mitrović, Dragana. 1995. "The People's Republic of China at the Threshold of the New Century." *The Review of International Affairs* XLVI (1033): 28–32.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO]. 2022. "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept." June 29, 2022. <https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/290622-strategic-concept.pdf>
- Popović, Slobodan. 2024. *Zagonetka u mozaiku poretka „kineskog sna”*: Šangajska organizacija za saradnju. Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu.



- Qin, Yaqing. 2012. "Culture and Global Thought: Chinese International Theory in the Making." *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 100: 67–90.
- Qin, Yaqing. 2018. *A Relational Theory of World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Qin, Yaqing. 2020a. "Diplomacy as Relational Practice." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15 (1-2): 165–173. DOI:10.1163/1871191X-15101092
- Qin, Yaqing. 2020b. "Cooperation: An Iron Law for a Community with a Shared Future." *China International Studies* 82: 34–42.
- Shambaugh, David. 2004. "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order." *International security* 29 (3): 64–99.
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2001. "Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." June 15, 2001. Organization. <https://eng.sectsco.org/images/07e8/0c/17/1626669.pdf>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2002. "Charter on Shanghai Cooperation Organization." June 7, 2002. <https://eng.sectsco.org/images/07e8/0c/14/1625960.pdf>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2006. "Declaration on the Fifth Anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." June 15, 2006. <https://eng.sectsco.org/images/07e8/0c/17/1627730.pdf>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2007. "Agreement on long-term neighborliness, friendship and cooperation of state members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." *CIS Legislation*. August 16, 2007. <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=20606>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2015. "Ufa Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." July 10, 2015. <https://eng.sectsco.org/images/07e8/0c/17/1628168.pdf>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2021. "Dushanbe Declaration on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SCO." September 17, 2021. <https://eng.sectsco.org/20210917/782639.html>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2023. "SCO Year of Tourism 2023 forum." November 28, 2023. <https://eng.sectsco.org/20231128/1192922.html>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2024a. "Astana Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation." July 9, 2024. <https://eng.sectsco.org/20240709/1438929.html>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]. 2024b. "Joint Communiqué of the twenty-third Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." October 16, 2024. <https://eng.sectsco.org/20241016/1574921.html>



- State Council Information Office of China [SCIO]. 2023. "Full Text: A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions." September 26, 2023. [http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2023-09/26/content\\_116710660\\_3.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2023-09/26/content_116710660_3.htm)
- State Council of the People's Republic of China [SCIO]. 2024. "Xi's 'two sessions' messages highlight China's high-quality development in crucial year." March 11, 2024. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202403/11/content\\_WS65efa5fbc6d0868f4e8e4ffc.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202403/11/content_WS65efa5fbc6d0868f4e8e4ffc.html)
- Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica. 2008. *Diplomatija u međunarodnim odnosima*. Beograd: Čigoja Štampa.
- Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica. 2010a. „Da li je diplomatija danas održiva?” *Međunarodni problemi* 62 (4): 641–677. DOI:10.2298/MEDJP1004641S
- Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica. 2010b. „Predviđanja težišnih pravaca međunarodnih odnosa posle globalne krize.” *Srpska politička misao* 2 (28): 297–333. DOI: 10.22182/spm.2822010.15
- Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica, and Slobodan Popović. 2022. ““A Thousand Miles” and “a Thousand Tasks”: China's Diplomatisation of Multifaceted Russia-Ukraine Conflict and Global Security.” *The Policy of National Security* 23 (2): 7–31. DOI: 10.22182/pnb.2322022.1
- Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica, and Slobodan Popović. 2024. “China's Emancipatory Diplomacy for a Peaceful, Democratic, and Sustainable Global Community.” *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 405–436. DOI:10.18485/iipe\_ria.2024.75.1192.5
- Stekić, Nenad. 2023. *A Hesitant Hegemon: Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics.
- Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. 2024. *2024 Annual Estimate of the Strategic Environment*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: USAWC Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep62232>
- United Nations General Assembly [UNGA]. 2024. “Resolution A/78/L.75 International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations.” May 29, 2024. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ldt/n24/150/94/pdf/n2415094.pdf>
- Xi, Jinping. 2017. “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.” *Xinhua*. October 18, 2017. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi\\_Jinping's\\_report\\_at\\_19th\\_CPC\\_National\\_Congress.pdf](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf)
- Xi, Jinping. 2023a. “Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting”. *State*

- Council of the People's Republic of China* [SCIO]. March 16, 2023. [http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content\\_85171478.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content_85171478.htm)
- Xi, Jinping. 2023b. *Chinese Modernization*. Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press.
- Xi, Jinping. 2023c. "Full text of Xi's address at SCO summit." *State Council of the People's Republic of China* [SCIO]. July 4, 2023. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202307/04/content\\_WS64a42528c6d0868f4e8dd7d3.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202307/04/content_WS64a42528c6d0868f4e8dd7d3.html)
- Xi, Jinping. 2024a. "Full text of Xi Jinping's speech at 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus' Meeting in Astana." *State Council of the People's Republic of China* [SCIO]. July 4, 2024. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202407/04/content\\_WS6686c48ac6d0868f4e8e8e25.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202407/04/content_WS6686c48ac6d0868f4e8e8e25.html)
- Xi, Jinping. 2024b. "Full Text: Address by Chinese President Xi Jinping at conference marking 70th anniversary of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." *Xinhua*. June 28, 2024. <https://english.news.cn/20240628/71733dd6f26441d4965dbb1a937e21ef/c.html>
- Xu Liuliu, Li Qian, and Hu Yuwei. 2023. "The Global Civilization Initiative full of Chinese wisdom, injects fresh momentum into bright shared future - The way of civilization." *Global Times*. April 17, 2023. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202304/1289306.shtml>
- Zongze, Ruan. 2018. "Building Community with Shared Future: Meliorating the Era of Strategic Opportunity in China." *China International Studies* 69 (2): 5–27.
- Университет Шанхайской организации сотрудничества. n.d. „Цели и задачи”. Дата обращения 15 июня 2025. [https://www.uni-sco.ru/stat/2/stat\\_2.html](https://www.uni-sco.ru/stat/2/stat_2.html)

**Слободан Поповић\***

*Институт за међународну политику и привреду, Београд*

**Драган Траиловић\*\***

*Институт за међународну политику и привреду, Београд*

## **КАДА ГЛОБАЛНА ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЈСКА ИНИЦИЈАТИВА СРЕТНЕ ПРАКСУ – ШАНГАЈСКА ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА ЗА САРАДЊУ\*\*\***

### **Резиме**

Рад се бави Шангајском организацијом за сарадњу (ШОС) као једним од најрепрезентативнијих примера практичне манифестације кинеске Глобалне цивилизацијске иницијативе (ГЦИ), покренуте 2023. године. Предмет рада је испитивање начина на који принципи и вредности ГЦИ, као што су прави мултилатерализам, равноправност, поштовање разноликости и одбацивање конфронтације, налазе своје институционално и практично утемељење у раду ШОС-а, као и какви су њени одговори на регионалне и глобалне изазове. Циљ рада је да покаже да ШОС својим институционалним развојем, механизмима сарадње и дипломатском праксом у великој мери остварује замишљене оквире Глобалне цивилизацијске иницијативе (ГЦИ), чиме се гради „нови тип међународних односа” заснован на дијалогу, међусобном поверењу и солидарности. Рад се заснива на квалитативном и интерпретативном приступу, уз ослањање на анализу докумената ШОС-а, званичних говора кинеских лидера и релевантне научне литературе. Резултати анализе показују да је ШОС кроз Шангајски дух институционализовао међуцивилизацијски дијалог, да

\* Имејл: slobodan.popovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs; ORCID: 0000-0002-8094-8445

\*\* Имејл: dragan.trailovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs; ORCID: 0000-0001-9707-9867

\*\*\* Овај рад представља резултате студије развијене у оквиру истраживачког пројекта под називом „Србија и изазови у међународним односима 2025. године”, који је финансирало Министарство науке, технолошког развоја и иновација Републике Србије, а спровео Институт за међународну политику и привреду у Београду током 2025. године.

промовише разноврсност култура и система вредности, и настоји да успостави регион поуздане предвидивости у понашању њених чланица и заједничке безбедности. Истраживање истиче и развој нових форми сарадње и то у области образовања, туризма, спорта и културне размене, које додатно ојачавају људске и институционалне везе међу државама чланицама. Иако постоје изазови у пракси, посебно у односима појединих чланица, досадашњи рад ШОС-а сведочи о снажној способности да цивилизацијске разлике претвара у фактор стабилности, а не у линије подела. На тај начин, ШОС се позиционирала као важан оквир у којем различите државе и културе, од великих и регионалних сила попут Кине, Русије и Индије, до мањих држава Централне Азије, могу усаглашавати интересе и креирати заједничке политике. Закључак рада је да Шангајска организација за сарадњу представља један од најуспешнијих облика примене Глобалне цивилизацијске иницијативе у пракси, потврђујући значај кинеске дипломатске праксе и мисли у обликовању алтернативног, инклузивног и хармоничног модела глобалног поретка.

**Кључне речи:** Шангајска организација за сарадњу, Глобална цивилизацијска иницијатива, дипломатија, Кина, заједница, заједничка будућност, истински мултилатерализам

---

\* This manuscript was submitted on July 23, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on November 10, 2025.