

The Fission of the Global Ideological Spectrum and 21st-Century Re-Globalisation

Since the twentieth century, modern political ideologies across the world have been mapped onto a left-right binary spectrum. This is a highly simplified abstraction, but it has effectively encapsulated the structure of political orientations and struggles both within and between almost every country and region for more than a century. An undergraduate in political science could place the political ideologies and values of all parties and regimes on this spectrum, thereby determining identity, establishing political alignments, and devising strategies for struggle. However, over the past two decades, as post-Cold War globalisation has declined from its peak, this ideological spectrum has fractured. The once-clear structure has become blurred, and political forces – both between nations and within them – have detached from the traditional left-right framework.

This article, after briefly outlining the structure of the traditional left-right ideological spectrum, seeks to analyse and interpret the processes and driving forces behind this fragmentation, as well as the emerging post-fission ideological ecology. It aims to observe and explore an emerging new ideological spectrum and propose some ideas regarding the 21st-century world order that China is helping to reshape.

From October Revolution to World Anti-Fascist War: The Grand Narrative of Left and Right

The October Revolution inaugurated the grand narrative of the 20th-century ideological spectrum. The 'Left' embodied the communist ideal, socialist institutions, and the internationalist worldview championed by the Soviet Union. Although it had been underpinned by more than half a century of Marxist thought, this 'Left' arose abruptly as a political force and product of the great October Revolution. The 'Right', as a counterforce, evolved over thirty years, beginning with the confrontation of capitalism and feudalism against the Soviet Union and ultimately culminating in fascism, which, with state capitalism as its economic foundation, came to occupy the far-right end of the spectrum.

Within this global grand narrative, the United States and certain Western European countries occupied an intermediate position: they opposed the communism of the left while also resisting the fascism of the right. Their domestic politics unfolded within a small 'left-right' narrative – namely, the struggle between the leftist camp influenced by the Soviet Union and representing labour interests, and the rightist camp upholding capitalism and representing the interests of capital. In this smaller narrative, post-war US politics shifted leftward; domestic policy eventually settled on Roosevelt's New Deal which protected labour, while the US allied with the Soviet Union to wage a decisive war against fascism.¹

During the same period, China's politics were positioned in an intermediate zone, but with a right-leaning tendency. Following the failure of Kuomintang-Communist alliance, the Kuomintang emerged as a political force firmly defending the interests of the dominant feudal and capitalist classes. Domestically, the Kuomintang government employed fascist methods to suppress the Communist Party of China (CPC). However, because it had to confront Japanese aggression and rely on US support, it was unable to pursue a fascist path internationally.

At that time, the vast majority of colonised and imperialised nations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia generally leaned to the left. Their leftist stance was primarily reflected in their anti-colonial and anti-imperialist positions, as well as in their struggle for national independence, with Marxism-Leninism serving as a critical ideological weapon against colonialism and imperialism.² From that era onwards, the notion of sovereignty transcended the left-right divide. Political forces in anti-colonial countries and regions engaged in left-wing struggles united against imperialism by fighting for sovereignty on a global scale. In the West, in opposition to predominantly leftist internationalism, far-right nationalism (including fascism) and right-wing sovereigntist factions emerged. In the United States, the political forces that opposed participation in the Great War and the World Anti-Fascist War and resisted joining the League of Nations belonged to the latter category.³

Overall, the left-right struggles of this era centred on the social upheavals set in motion by the Industrial Revolution and its disruptive impact across multiple dimensions. Within industrialised countries, the dominance of capital led to severe inequality, leaving large segments of the population without secure livelihoods. Internationally, the early industrialised Western powers engaged in unprecedented global plunder through force. Simply put, the right sought to protect the vested interests of capital and the state, while the left fought for the rights of workers and for the independence and liberation of peoples who had been plundered and colonised.⁴

China's left-right politics at that time mirrored this global pattern, characterised by the fusion of the communist revolution with the struggle for national independence – a combination that became a foundational element of modern China's state-building and has profoundly influenced its future trajectory.

The Cold War: Socialism or Capitalism?

After World Anti-Fascist War, the world swiftly entered a Cold War marked by confrontation between the two major camps led by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. The ideological spectrum between left and right became particularly clear in this period. During the half-century-long Cold War, the Warsaw Pact bloc, led by the Soviet Union, and the NATO-based Western bloc, led by the United States, shaped a distinct global left-right landscape. Many developing countries in the Third World chose sides, while some remained neutral. For instance, the Philippines and Argentina aligned with the right, whereas most African nations leaned towards the left. In this global landscape, the left was represented by socialism and internationalism led by the Soviet Union, while the right was represented by capitalism and 'sovereigntism' led by the United States.⁵

Within these two blocs, political dynamics oscillated along a smaller left-right spectrum. In the West, the 'left' encompassed welfare-state politics within a capitalist framework, featuring high taxation, robust welfare

systems, and labour protections, while the right represented a politics of protecting capitalist interests through low taxation and limited government. In the Soviet bloc, the left meant strict adherence to socialism and a planned economy, while the right was represented by advocates for introducing elements of a market economy within the socialist framework.

During the Cold War, China's international stance straddled the ideological spectrum, encompassing both left and right. From the founding of the People's Republic of China to the Cultural Revolution, China was clearly left-leaning, embracing a planned economy, internationalism, and opposition to revisionism. After the 1970s, however, China grew increasingly estranged from the Soviet Union, established diplomatic relations with the United States, and began to adopt the market economy framework led by the West. This was viewed as a rightward shift in many analytical frameworks. Some scholars have even classified Deng Xiaoping's economic policies as a form of neoliberalism.⁶

The Post-Cold War Era and Globalisation

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the global left-right landscape underwent profound changes. The grand left-right divide at the international level essentially disappeared, and the Western-dominated right of the Cold War era established an ideological unipolar hegemony on a global scale. The entire ideological framework of liberalism and neoliberalism transcended the traditional left-right divide, evolving into so-called 'universal values' and the 'end of history' thesis. Many scholars refer to this period as the 'unipolar moment'.⁷ This ideological framework repackaged the philosophical concepts of Europe's Enlightenment into a contemporary ideological complex of political, economic, and geopolitical ideologies which were aggressively promoted worldwide. This complex includes several core elements: the individual is the fundamental atomic unit of human society, endowed with inalienable rights; multi-party elections and the separation of powers with checks and balances are the only legitimate political systems; an independent judiciary, detached from politics, is the only legitimate legal framework; and the capitalist market economy is regarded as the sole effective economic system for the world. Within this framework, rights such as freedom of speech and the press, as well as racial, gender, and sexual orientation identities – and even the choice of gender identity – are viewed as tools and expressions of the ongoing expansion of individual sovereignty. The essence of liberal ideology lies in its claim to universality: liberals believe their values transcend all cultures, religions, nations, and even history, and that these values must ultimately be accepted by all of humanity and embedded in every country's political system, economic structures, and social institutions.

The universalisation of an ideology rooted in fundamentalist liberalism, combined with neoliberal economic policies, became the overarching narrative dominating the world during this unipolar moment. The ideological spectrum effectively detached from the traditional left-right divide and the political orientation of parties and states came to depend on the degree of their alignment with this liberal grand narrative. Internationally, the United States stood at the most extreme end of liberalism, while the opposite extreme consisted of states such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran that rejected liberalism entirely. There were also cases like Russia, which swung from a full embrace of liberalism during the Boris Yeltsin era to resistance during the Vladimir Putin era. On the domestic front, political parties across countries selected elements from the 'menu' of liberalism and neoliberalism according to their interests and positions. For example, the Democratic Party in the United States leaned culturally towards identity politics and championed the continuous expansion of rights related to race, gender, and sexual

orientation, thereby advancing individual rights. For this reason, they were labelled as left-wing liberals; however, this 'left' had fundamentally diverged from the definition of 'left' in the 20th-century ideological spectrum. Economically, the Democratic Party moved ever closer to the Republican Party's neoliberal agenda, while both parties increasingly tilted towards the interests of capital. This orientation was termed right-wing conservatism, but it too had departed from the 'right' of the 20th-century ideological spectrum. In international politics, both the Democratic Party's liberal interventionists and the Republican Party's neoconservatives advocated the use of political, economic, and even military means to universalise liberalism.

In this era, China once again occupied an intermediate position. Economically, it embraced and advanced a market economy; politically, culturally, and geopolitically, it rejected liberalism and resisted neoliberalism in the economic domain. As a result, China's market economy is defined as a socialist market economy, its political system as a people's democracy led by the CPC, its rule of law as integrated with politics, and its culture as one that prioritises national sovereignty and collective interests over individualism. In the post-Cold War era, China rejected adherence to liberalism and neoliberalism while absorbing aspects of Western market economics, thereby becoming deeply integrated into globalisation and emerging as one of its most significant driving forces. In international affairs, China upheld the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and firmly resisted the universalisation of Western liberalism.⁸

The Ideological Fission Caused by the Transition to a Multipolar World

From the 2008 financial crisis that erupted in the United States and reverberated worldwide to Donald Trump's first term as president, globalisation in the West experienced a profound transformation, leading to an ideological fracture on a global scale. The wave of globalisation, which began in the early 1990s after the Cold War, peaked with China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in 2001 and started to recede with Trump's election in 2016. While this wave of globalisation was primarily led by the United States, which formulated the rules, it manifested through global trade and financial integration. Globalisation's underlying driving force carried a distinctly ideological dimension. At its core were the liberal political outlook and its economic offshoot, neoliberalism.⁹ China fundamentally rejected this ideological core; yet, it fully integrated into globalisation at the economic-structural level and, by adhering to the framework of globalisation, became an important participant and leader in the process.

Globalisation generated immense economic value: China vaulted to become the world's largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, while the overall wealth of the United States and the broader West also grew substantially. However, most countries and regions in the developing world saw limited benefits. More critically, the gains from globalisation were distributed in an extremely unequal manner within the US and across the West. Elite interest groups captured the lion's share of newly created wealth, while the middle and lower classes bore the heavy economic and social costs of deindustrialisation. At the same time, the cultural disruptions stemming from globalisation and liberal ideology inflicted severe damage on the social fabric of Western societies, undermining the political stability and social consensus established in the West after the World Anti-Fascist War.¹⁰

Meanwhile, US and NATO-led military alliances forcefully intervened in the political and economic affairs of

numerous countries and regions. These interventions ranged from economic measures via Western-controlled international institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund) to orchestrating colour revolutions and even wars. Such large-scale coercive interventions were driven both by strategic interests and ideological imperatives, culminating in what British historian Paul Kennedy has termed ‘imperial overstretch’.¹¹ This overstretch imposed enormous structural costs on the US and the West as a whole, deepening their internal social and political fractures.

Against this backdrop, the relatively stable left-right ideological spectrum of the 20th century underwent significant fission.

United States

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the grand left-right spectrum essentially disappeared within the United States and the broader West. The former right became the entirety of the political spectrum, within which a smaller left-right ideological divide encompassed all political debates. On this narrower spectrum, differences in economic and foreign policy diminished considerably. Economically, the left, represented by the Democratic Party, had, since the era of President Bill Clinton, largely abandoned labour interests and tilted towards neoliberalism – advocating for small government, reduced welfare, protection of capital, and free trade. At the socio-economic level, both parties sided with capitalist interests and promoted the deindustrialisation of the United States. Regarding immigration policy, both parties generally supported immigrant rights and adopted relatively lenient stances on illegal immigration, differing only in degree. In foreign affairs, the Democratic Party largely abandoned the dovish path previously associated with the left by advancing liberal interventionist policies, including the use of military force. Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair were representative politicians of this so-called ‘Third Way’ or ‘Middle Way’, with the former launching military interventions in Yugoslavia and the latter strongly supporting the Iraq War.¹²

The right was represented by the Republican Party which originated neoliberal economic policies. They supported small government, low taxes, limited welfare, the protection of capital, and free trade even more strongly than the Democrats. In foreign affairs, their policy orientation is guided by neoconservatism, which is essentially in the same vein as the Democratic Party’s liberal interventionist policies.¹³ Under this shared political direction, during the twenty-four years of the presidencies of Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, colour revolutions and military conflicts persisted without pause, and defence spending rose steadily.

Within this smaller left-right spectrum, the differences between the left-leaning Democrats and the right-leaning Republicans were concentrated more in cultural values, racial politics, and environmental or climate policies. The two sides clashed sharply on values: Democrats insisted on the legalisation of abortion, while Republicans sought to restrict it; Democrats aimed to regulate private gun ownership, while Republicans viewed gun rights as constitutionally guaranteed. Democrats advocated for so-called multiculturalism, advancing identity politics for ethnic and sexual minorities. In policy, they implemented what is known as proactive affirmative action, continually demanding preferential treatment for ethnic minorities and sexual minority groups in school admissions and the job market. Over years of evolution, these political propositions have developed into what is known as ‘wokeism’. Most Republicans oppose these identity-based political agendas and advocate for the preservation of a more classical form of individualism. It is worth noting that the

identity politics championed by Democrats is not collectivism but rather a manifestation of amplified individualism – aimed at helping individuals within certain identity groups overcome traditional social values seen as barriers to personal development. The ideological lineage of wokeism stems from an extreme form of modern liberalism.¹⁴ On environmental and climate issues, Democrats typically advocate for stricter regulation of businesses and more stringent environmental laws, while Republicans tend to favour free markets and fewer business restrictions.

This small left-right framework was completely shattered in 2016. At one end of the new spectrum is the entirely new ideology represented by the ‘Make America Great Again’ (MAGA) movement, and at the other is the liberal ideology that spanned the centre-left and centre-right throughout the post-Cold War era. Many media outlets categorise the Trump-led MAGA movement as right-wing or even far-right. Although some of MAGA’s political stances – such as opposing the legalisation of abortion – align with the right in the old small left-right spectrum, this classification is misplaced. Many of MAGA’s core political positions, such as trade protectionism and reindustrialisation, are in fact closer to the left in the Cold War left-right spectrum.

The ideological turbulence caused by MAGA was starkly revealed in the political alignments during the 2024 presidential election. Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris received and welcomed the endorsement of former Republican Vice President Dick Cheney, while Cheney’s daughter, Liz Cheney, a Republican congresswoman, actively campaigned for Harris. Cheney has long been a right-wing politician deeply despised by the Democratic Party. Many establishment figures entrenched in the Republican Party, including George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, have strongly opposed Trump and the MAGA movement since 2016. Contemporary Western academia, political elites, and mainstream media often label MAGA and its European counterparts as ‘populism’. However, the definition of populism here remains vague. This is essentially a negative label applied by the Western establishment to brand a movement that is fundamentally challenging the foundations of liberal ideology as mere ignorance and anti-intellectualism.

The true significance of MAGA extends far beyond what is termed populism; it is dismantling the old small left-right framework and may be creating a new grand political spectrum in the US – and potentially across the entire Western world. In political discourse and theoretical terminology, revolutionary forces are often placed on the left, while conservative forces are placed on the right. Since MAGA is clearly an anti-establishment movement, with its opposing force being the relatively conservative establishment that seeks to preserve the liberal order, it could tentatively be positioned on the left of this emerging political spectrum. Meanwhile, the liberal establishment within both the Republican and Democratic parties could be positioned on the right.

The MAGA faction has now entered the White House, gained majorities in both chambers of Congress, and has a majority of Supreme Court justices who lean toward its political stance. Their domestic policy orientation runs counter to the bipartisan consensus that has taken shape over decades across the small left-right spectrum. In terms of cultural values, the MAGA faction has overturned the mainstream politics of recent decades, swiftly and assertively dismantling numerous woke policies across government and society and attempting to culturally reinstate traditional Christian values. It is also enforcing more stringent anti-immigration measures. In social and economic governance, the MAGA faction embraces a pronounced form of libertarianism, with Elon Musk being a representative figure. It is crucial to note that libertarianism and liberalism are fundamentally different – and in many respects even oppositional. Libertarian freedom is a freedom devoid of liberal values; it is amoral.¹⁵ In foreign policy, the MAGA faction has rapidly and

comprehensively discarded the liberal establishment's entire policy framework. Perhaps the most significant short-term shift is the move from staunchly supporting Ukraine against Russia to largely accepting Russia's narrative of the conflict, bypassing Europe and Ukraine to pursue negotiations for a ceasefire and moving toward rapprochement with Russia. MAGA's foreign policy vision appears to combine isolationism with expansionism. While this may seem contradictory, it need not be. The MAGA faction's political trajectory is likely to resemble Theodore Roosevelt-style hardline expansionism, but this time focused on the Western Hemisphere, primarily driven by realist interests with little ideological content. There is a substantial likelihood of reduced US military presence in the Western Pacific and even Europe. Moreover, MAGA's libertarian tendencies are sharply reducing the ideological component of US foreign policy; interventions in other countries' internal affairs on the grounds of 'universal values' are likely to diminish significantly. Within the first hundred days of his administration, Trump dismantled several major institutions that had driven ideological propaganda for 'colour revolutions' abroad for decades.¹⁶

The most significant developments lie in the ideological domain. The formation of the MAGA movement is rooted in deep social, economic, and historical conditions. During the post-Cold War era, liberal political forces gained dominance within both the Republican and Democratic parties, seizing control of the power mechanisms of the US political system and societal discourse. Their promotion of capitalist globalisation, extreme individualist woke politics, and the global propagation of universal values eroded the internal cohesion of US society, resulting in an internal division unprecedented in nearly a century. Looking back over the ideological trends within the US over the past two decades, the real fault line does not lie between traditional Democratic and Republican politics but between the forces defending the post-Cold War liberal order and the collective backlash of groups disadvantaged by that order. The latter now appears to have taken control of the Republican Party, while the Democratic Party remains firmly in the grip of the liberal establishment. Liberals within the Republican Party are now either silent or openly aligning with the Democrats.

The same applies at the international level. Vice President J. D. Vance's speech at the Munich Security Conference¹⁷ and the late-February confrontation between Trump, Vance, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House clarified that the US position on the global ideological spectrum has undergone a qualitative rupture, placing it in direct opposition to forces that support the liberal ideological order. The illiberal political forces that had been marginalised in Europe during the post-Cold War era – such as President Viktor Orbán in Hungary and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) – have suddenly found a powerful new standard-bearer. The US is now abandoning the bipartisan consensus of liberal interventionism and neoconservatism that defined the post-Cold War small left-right spectrum, repositioning itself as a proponent of illiberal realism. This shift is exemplified by the tariff-based trade wars launched by the Trump administration. In the past, establishment-driven economic offensives against China were ideologically framed. For example, the Biden administration placed great emphasis on uniting liberal countries that share US values to jointly contain China's economic rise. In contrast, Trump's tariff wars target all countries, including liberal Western allies, with a pragmatism where interests override ideology. On the ideological spectrum of US foreign policy, the new divide can be described as follows: on the left, the illiberal realist 'revolutionary' faction, and on the right, the liberal conservative establishment faction.

The MAGA movement's impact on China is undoubtedly profound. Given the central role of US-China relations in shaping the 21st-century global order, its implications for the world are enormous. At present, US policy toward China is undergoing a rapid shift – from the Biden administration's comprehensive strategy of

ideological, political, economic, and military alignment aimed at containment to a more unilateral economic confrontation driven by US interests. Whether this shift will persist remains to be seen. China's current approach appears to be measured counteraction while closely observing the evolving situation.

Europe

A similar ideological fission that occurred in the US is unfolding in Europe, albeit with varying intensity and for both overlapping and distinct reasons. Intellectually, many European nations have been reflecting on liberalism for years. Europe's welfare state model has served as a partial counterbalance to the inequality and fragmentation caused by US-style capitalism. However, in many social and cultural domains, the EU's transnational politics and the large influx of immigrants – especially from Muslim-majority countries – are also reshaping the original political fault lines within European nations.¹⁸ Some countries have moved ahead of the US MAGA movement in seizing power and reshaping their socio-ideological structures, with Hungary and Poland being prominent examples and Italy potentially following suit. In major European nations, anti-liberal and illiberal political forces are steadily gaining ground. France's National Rally, Germany's AfD, and the political forces that emerged from Brexit in the United Kingdom command significant popular support and have the potential to seize national leadership. Similar trends are visible in several medium-sized states such as the Netherlands' Party for Freedom, Slovakia's Direction – Social Democracy, Austria's Freedom Party of Austria, as well as Romania, where Călin Georgescu (who was barred from running for the May 2025 elections) and George Simion (who won the first round of the election) have garnered notable influence. It is worth noting that the path to power for Europe's anti-liberal and illiberal forces differs from that in the US, where the MAGA movement rose to power by taking over the Republican Party. In contrast, in Europe, these forces are often building new parties from the bottom up – a factor that may result in greater resistance faced by illiberal and anti-liberal forces in Europe.

Due to Europe's diversity and number of countries, there has not yet emerged a political movement or organisation comparable to MAGA that spans the entire continent. For the time being, we may borrow Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's term 'illiberalism' to describe this political force that may be in the process of subverting Europe's liberal ideology and institutional framework.¹⁹ Despite operating within very different domestic political environments, these parties share highly similar stances on many political and policy issues. They are united in calling for stricter immigration policies; for them, immigration is not merely an economic issue but, more importantly, a matter of culture and identity. The perceived dilution and erosion of European culture and society caused by large-scale Muslim immigration has been a critical source of illiberal thought in Europe for decades. At the same time, these parties reject wokeism, which largely originates in the US, insisting that Europe must uphold its Christian cultural foundations. This sense of crisis stemming from the perceived erosion of Western culture has led to an interesting phenomenon: some liberal political forces in European countries have, at least formally, diverged from the US brand of identity-based liberalism when it comes to so-called multiculturalism. Some even advocate for enforcing societal secularism through legal measures, such as France's legislation banning Muslim women from wearing face veils in public.

Meanwhile, the determination of European illiberals to preserve cultural authenticity has made most illiberal parties and organisations across various countries oppose the expansion of the EU's political power and the liberal ideology behind it, advocating instead for the preservation of national sovereignty, cultural integrity, and social structures. In foreign affairs outside the EU, the most significant common ground among Europe's illiberal forces is their pro-Russian stance. With the exception of Italy and Poland, nearly all illiberal parties

advocate rapprochement with Russia and, to varying degrees, oppose continued support for Ukraine.

Trump's re-election in 2024 has provided a strong boost to illiberal thought and politics in Europe. Whether these forces will be able to capitalise on this momentum to expand their influence and capture more governments in the coming years – or whether they will instead be constrained by the negative impact of the Trump administration's interest-driven 'America First' policies – remains to be seen.

For China, Europe's illiberal ideology and politics have a longer history than in the US, offering valuable points of reference. A clear pattern is that several major illiberal parties and states are particularly friendly towards China. Hungary stands out as the most pro-China government in Europe, and Serbia shares a similar orientation. Germany's AfD has also maintained a consistently positive stance toward China over the years. Of course, there are illiberal parties that are more hawkish on China, such as those in Poland and Italy, but even these have not been more hardline than the liberal regimes – including the EU itself – toward China. Likewise, some traditional liberal governments have been relatively moderate, such as Spain, which maintains a strong relationship with China.

Russia and Other Western Illiberal Forces

In the ongoing fission and evolution of the global ideological spectrum, Russia is unquestionably a central player. If we were to place countries on the emerging grand left-right spectrum, Russia would undoubtedly fall on the far-left end among the anti-liberal revolutionary forces. In the global transformation of the ideological spectrum, Russia stands out as the worthiest subject of study and analysis. In the post-Cold War era, Russia has experienced one of the most complete cycles of national transformation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's ideology tilted wholly toward Western liberalism: its political system, economic structure, and socio-cultural values were comprehensively modelled on those of the West. Economically, Russia's neoliberalism has gone even further than that of the US. However, during Yeltsin's decade in power, the Russian state suffered a dramatic decline, slipping from a global superpower to something close to a failed state. Even so, when Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in 2000, he initially continued along the path of Westernisation, even expressing Russia's willingness to join NATO.²⁰

Yet, Russia stands in sharp contrast to the other former Soviet states. While some smaller Eastern European countries fully embraced liberalism and were subsequently economically, culturally, and structurally absorbed into the Western order, Russia's size and historical trajectory made such swift integration unfeasible. What cannot be integrated must be guarded against. In the more than two decades following the Cold War, the West abandoned the posture and promises made to not expand NATO after the end of the Cold War.²¹ Instead, NATO expanded eastward to include most former Warsaw Pact countries and many former Soviet republics, thereby pressing up against Russia's borders.

At the same time, Russia's own situation underwent significant changes. Putin led Russia to a broad economic and social recovery through the centralisation of power and by effectively leveraging the rise in energy prices brought about by global economic growth. Russia's international status correspondingly improved. During this process of collapse and recovery, Russia's elites and various social strata began to reflect on the comprehensive Westernisation that followed the Cold War.²² Politically, Russia could not immediately break through the liberal constitution established after the end of the Cold War. However, Putin's administration used various legal mechanisms to bypass the liberal intent of the constitution and achieve the

illiberal political outcomes that Russia required. The most striking example is Putin's continued hold on power through the strategic swapping of presidential and prime ministerial roles with Medvedev. Socially, Putin consolidated the once highly fragmented liberal civil society which had been in opposition to the government and reshaped it into a relatively unified social structure. The media has also gradually shifted from its previous liberal orientation to an ecosystem largely aligned with the state's overall interests. The economic dimension is relatively complex. In the decade following the Cold War, privatisation led to Russia's economy becoming controlled by Western capital and oligarchs, effectively transforming it into an extreme neoliberal economy. After coming to power, Putin eliminated oligarchs with political ambitions, consolidated those willing to develop under the authority of the state, and rebuilt several state-owned enterprises, primarily in the energy sector.²³ Russia's economy recovered relatively rapidly during Putin's first two terms.

In terms of cultural values, the Putin era witnessed the re-establishment of Russia's core traditional culture. Russian Orthodox Christianity has come to shape a comprehensive sense of identity across all aspects of the country's political and social structures. From the collapse of Soviet ideology, through a phase of wholesale liberal transformation, to a return to its thousand-year-old religious and cultural traditions – and building sustainable social cohesion on this foundation – Russia has achieved a remarkable transformation. In terms of cultural values, Russia has become an ideologically emblematic state for non-liberal and anti-liberal forces across the world. Many of Russia's 'anti-woke' policies strongly resonate with non-liberals in the West.²⁴ Non-liberal political movements in various European countries generally regard Russia as an ideological ally, a sentiment shared by numerous anti-liberal institutions and anti-woke figures in the US as well.²⁵

From NATO's plan for continued eastward expansion in 2008 to the Crimea conflict in 2014, the tensions between Russia and the US-led Western military alliance reached a boiling point during the Ukraine conflict in 2022, culminating in a complete rupture. Building on its political, economic, and cultural foundations, this break with the West has made Russia the world's foremost non-liberal or anti-liberal power, occupying a distinct and pivotal position on the emerging new grand left-right ideological spectrum and continuing to shape its evolution worldwide.

Ideologically, Hungary is now the country most closely aligned with Russia. Under Viktor Orbán's leadership, Hungary has undergone a comprehensive political, cultural, and social transformation, laying claim to a model of governance and an ideological identity characterised as illiberal democracy.²⁶ With the continued rise of the MAGA movement, non-liberal forces in Western societies are likely to emerge in greater numbers, and some may gain political power. This will further promote and solidify the formation of the new grand left-right ideological spectrum at a practical level.

The trajectory of Russia's ideological evolution and development has profound implications for China, and vice versa. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequences of its wholesale liberalisation deeply influenced China's political and intellectual circles. China's engagement with globalisation after the 1990s – while maintaining Communist Party leadership and the ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics – was, to a large extent, shaped by lessons drawn from the Soviet and Russian experiences. Over the past decade, China and Russia have stood united in resisting the unipolar dominance of Western liberal ideology despite their own differences in ideology and political systems. The close partnership forged between China and Russia in the post-Cold War era, together with China's remarkable developmental success, has provided Russia with a powerful example for its own reflection on liberalisation.²⁷

The Global South

The Global South encompasses the vast majority of countries and regions outside the Western nations and Japan. It includes the poorest African states, the wealthiest West Asian oil powers, military powers such as Russia, and, of course, the two major developing countries, China and India. The Global South is highly diverse, with vast differences in culture, religion, history, ethnicity, economic foundations, and social structures. Ideologically, many countries in the Global South were once caught within the 20th-century left-right political spectrum for various reasons. Some were former Western colonies, heavily influenced by Western political systems. Others took sides during the Cold War, adopting either the Soviet Union's leftist ideology or the capitalist systems and values of the US and the West. Most importantly, after the Cold War, most developing countries embraced the 'end of history' thesis, transplanting Western liberal political systems wholesale into their own countries – many even copying constitutions verbatim.²⁸ This led to the artificial replication of the Western 'small left-right' spectrum in many Global South nations.

As this post-Cold War 'small left-right' spectrum rapidly collapses, the trajectory of the Global South deserves close attention. Most Global South countries will gradually disengage from liberal ideology and shift toward the non-liberal and anti-liberal side of the new grand left-right spectrum. There are two main reasons for this. First, most Global South countries inherently lack the ideological 'genes' of liberalism; their liberal values and systems were transplanted rather than homegrown. Many of these countries' cultures and values are fundamentally anti-liberal. The Islamic world is a striking example: countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, despite their close economic and security ties with the United States, have successfully resisted liberal politics and values at the ideological level. Most Islamic countries – such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey – are likely moving in a non-liberal or even anti-liberal direction. The second reason is that the post-Cold War embrace of liberal ideology and institutions yielded disappointing results and unsatisfactory economic development. In stark contrast, China, which rejected liberalism, has emerged as the winner of globalisation – a fact whose significance has become increasingly clear.²⁹

The ideological relationship between China and the Global South has evolved through three eras. After the founding of the People's Republic, China actively participated in and helped lead Third World political thought. Beginning with the Bandung Conference, China was a core member of the Non-Aligned Movement. Although its stance differed from that of the Soviet Union within the Cold War framework, China's orientation was clearly leftist and socialist. In the post-Cold War era, China became ideologically estranged from the former leftist Third World countries while economically integrating into the Western-led globalised economy. Politically, however, China rejected the liberal ideology that the West sought to universalise, while the vast majority of developing countries adopted liberalism and implemented political systems based on it. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, China's relationship with the Global South has entered a third stage. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Three Global Initiatives, and the vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity, China and the broader Global South are shaping an entirely new era of political thought – one that will be inherently non-liberal and transcend the 20th-century left-right spectrum.

The New Grand Ideological Spectrum: Liberalism

versus Illiberalism

Across global media, academia, political circles, and even corporate and financial sectors, a new grand left-right ideological spectrum appears to be emerging. The right consists of the universalist liberal unipolar camp, while the left is composed of non-liberal and anti-liberal multipolar forces. On the ideological front, right-wing representatives continue to uphold the liberal unipolar structure of the post-Cold War era and persist in promoting the universalisation of liberal ideology and political systems worldwide. The most influential political forces within this camp are the still-powerful US establishment, followed by the other Five Eyes countries, US allies in the Pacific, and mainstream political forces within the European Union. The left, by contrast, consists of a broad camp of diverse illiberal and anti-liberal governments and political forces. While the internal differences within the right lie mainly in degrees, the left exhibits a much greater diversity. What unites the right is a shared interest in maintaining liberalism's ideological dominance in the world, albeit to varying extents. What unites the left, on the other hand, is a shared interest in rejecting liberal unipolar hegemony – though their visions for the future differ.

The differences within the right can be broadly categorised into two camps: the universalist hardliners and the advocates for multipolar coexistence. The former Biden administration and the EU's mainstream political forces are aligned with the universalist hardliners, as evidenced by their stance toward China. In recent years, the US, the Five Eyes alliance, NATO, Australia, the EU establishment, and certain EU member states have increasingly positioned China as a strategic competitor or adversary. In their policy documents, beyond highlighting conflicts of interest with China, they consistently cite ideology as one of the primary criteria for designating China as an adversary.³⁰ When calling on allies to unite in containing China – whether for trade-related or military interests – they routinely invoke shared values as a key rallying cry. The multipolar coexistence advocates are the moderates within the right. While they believe in liberal values and support policies and laws based on liberal ideology domestically, they take a more moderate approach toward universalising liberalism. They oppose the aggressive imposition of liberal ideology on other nations through economic or military means and instead favour peaceful coexistence with non-liberal countries and societies. Spain's Sánchez government, France's left-wing party led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, New Zealand within the Five Eyes group, and US Asia-Pacific allies such as South Korea and Japan can, to varying degrees, be classified as advocates of multipolar coexistence. Argentina's right-wing Milei administration is ideologically aligned with extreme liberalism – particularly in its embrace of radical neoliberal economic policies. While initially highly antagonistic toward China, it has adopted a relatively more moderate stance after taking office and can likely be classified as part of the multipolar coexistence camp.

The left wing of the new grand left-right spectrum is also fragmented and can tentatively be categorised into three main groups: anti-liberal political forces emerging within the West, major powers that have undergone their own transformations, and explorers seeking new paths of progress. The first group consists of the US MAGA movement and various non-liberal and anti-liberal governments and parties in Europe. The second group comprises China and Russia. The third group includes the majority of developing countries in the Global South. The differences among these three groups lie in the distinct driving forces behind their non-liberal or anti-liberal orientations.

The first group includes the continually emerging anti-liberal political forces within the US and various European countries. Their ideological struggle targets their own liberal establishment elites, and they believe that the liberal global order established by these elites has betrayed the interests of their own people and sold

out national sovereignty for the benefit of their own class. Economically, they generally oppose neoliberalism, arguing that extreme market fundamentalism has hollowed out domestic industries, concentrated wealth in the hands of a tiny elite, and eroded social structures. At the same time, they feel that the liberal values of the elite have evolved into extreme wokeism and immigration policies that promote openness to foreign cultures, leading to the erosion of traditional national cultures.

In the second group, China and Russia have had fundamentally different experiences under the liberal order. China achieved rapid development within the framework of Western-led globalisation while preserving its political system. Russia, by contrast, adopted Western political systems but suffered severe, near-fatal blows to its economy and security. China is seeking to build on its success and continue developing but it faces dual obstructions from the US and the West. Liberal political forces view China as an ideological and strategic adversary while anti-liberal political forces see China as a rival primarily due to economic interests. Trump's trade war was primarily driven by the latter. Russia, having learnt from its experience, has ideologically parted ways with liberalism, becoming the epicentre of global anti-liberal ideology and a primary target of the Western establishment. This conflict is irreconcilable and leaves no room for compromise. However, the Western anti-liberal forces in the first group do not have fundamental ideological disputes with Russia; in many areas, they even share commonalities. While their interests are not fully aligned with Russia's, they are not entirely opposed either. This tacit ideological understanding and the space for compromise on interests are clearly reflected in the current positions of the US and Russia on the conflict in Ukraine. However, whether their relationship will move toward compromise or further conflict remains to be seen.³¹

The third group, composed of developing countries in the Global South, is both large and highly diverse. Most of these countries saw disappointing developmental outcomes following the adoption of liberal political systems after the Cold War. Many nations in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America span the traditional left-right political spectrum, yet their development has been constrained by the liberal political framework. As a result, they are all exploring new ideas and alternative models. Examples include Argentina's government, which emerged from the traditional right; South Africa's government, rooted in the traditional left; and Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and India, each with unique cultural and religious traditions. All are experimenting with non-liberal governance approaches within the frameworks of their post-Cold War liberal political systems. Additionally, some countries that have outright rejected liberal ideology and political systems – such as major Islamic states like Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as traditionally leftist countries like Venezuela – are also actively exploring and experimenting with ideologies and institutions suited to their survival and development in the post-grand left-right spectrum era.

Despite their vast internal diversity, the countries within this group share a common feature: a refusal to accept a universal ideology, political system, or unipolar global order imposed upon them or transplanted from outside. This rejection of universality and unipolarity defines a new illiberal bloc within the Global South – one that can be positioned on the left of the new ideological spectrum.

Multipolarism and 21st Century Re-Globalisation

The world is undergoing a profound transformation marked by fragmentation on all fronts. Observing the present and predicting the future is as difficult as viewing the Big Dipper from due south. I propose a hypothesis: the global ideological spectrum is in transition. The left and right wings of the new spectrum are divided by their differing visions for the future of the world order. The left seeks a multipolar world order

(multipolarism) while the right aims to preserve a unipolar world order (unipolarism). The ideological core of unipolarism is liberalism, which encompasses the full set of liberal values along with their claims to universality and singularity. The left, by contrast, is extremely diverse, encompassing all ideologies and values beyond liberalism, as well as certain political forces that hold liberal values but reject their universalisation. The left includes both anti-liberal and non-liberal elements; the latter merely oppose the universal and monolithic nature of liberalism. The ideologies of the left are highly varied, rooted in different religious, cultural, and political traditions. Their interests also differ greatly and sometimes even clash. Nevertheless, their greatest common denominator is opposition to liberal unipolarity. We can attempt to locate all nations, political parties, or other forms of political power on this new left-right spectrum.

Within this framework, the tension between multipolarism and unipolarism will constitute the primary contradiction in the first half of the 21st century. Historically and in practice, China is destined to be a major force in favour of multipolarism. At the practical level, the past few decades of globalisation have been built on an ideological foundation of liberalism. However, today's unipolar model of globalisation has become unsustainable. Interestingly, it is the Trump-led MAGA administration in the United States that is now working hardest to dismantle the unipolar world order, believing that unipolarity does not serve the interests of the populace it represents. While MAGA regards China as a rival, the world it envisions is also multipolar, much like China's vision. MAGA promotes a multipolar world through de-globalisation, which, however, conflicts with China's objectives.

China and the overwhelming majority of countries in the Global South must continue to develop, which requires further enhancing connectivity. Meanwhile, humanity faces existential global challenges – including climate change, nuclear proliferation, artificial intelligence, and others – which require cooperation among nations. Under the current wave of de-globalisation promoted by the US and the West, China and the Global South must champion a re-globalisation grounded in a multipolar ideological narrative, seeking both sustained development and solutions to humanity's existential crises. Historically, China has been both the originator and advocate of a multipolar world order. In March 1990, Deng Xiaoping became the first political leader in the world to formally introduce the concept of 'multipolarity'.³² At a time when the global order was transitioning from bipolarity to unipolarity, Deng's vision of a multipolar world was remarkably farsighted. Since then, the pursuit of multipolarity has become a cornerstone of China's international political theory and strategy.³³ In 1997, a new global order based on multipolarity was formally introduced to the world stage through a joint Sino-Russian statement.³⁴

Fast forward thirty years and China has proposed major global initiatives that concretise and strategise the vision for a multipolar world across three key dimensions: development, security, and civilisation.³⁵ These initiatives articulate China's vision of an inclusive and pluralistic multipolarism, which stands in stark contrast and opposition to the liberal unipolar world. They represent the only viable path for humanity to sustain development and overcome existential crises. China is also the most capable nation today of actively leading the construction of a multipolar order. Its experience of successfully engaging in globalisation while maintaining its own political system and path offers valuable lessons for many nations in the Global South. In modern times, China combined communist ideology with the struggle for national liberation to achieve the founding of the modern state. In contemporary times, it has further integrated Marxism and the market economy with traditional Chinese culture.³⁶ This represents a key embodiment and example of the pluralistic foundations needed for re-globalisation. To achieve the vision of a multipolar world order, China's strategic

interest lies in uniting all forces that can be united ideologically. Contradictions are inevitable among multipolar states and political forces, and they will undergo phases of tension, conflict, and compromise. However, the principal contradiction in today's world is between multipolarism and unipolarism. Only the victory of multipolarism can achieve a 21st-century re-globalisation – aligned with the long-term interests of both China and the world – and pave the way for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Notes

¹ Richard Polenberg, *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

² Sanjay Seth, 'Lenin's Formulation of Marxism: The Colonial Question as a National Question', *History of Political Thought* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 99–128.

³ Jennifer Mittelstadt, a historian at Rutgers University in the United States, conducted the research project titled 'Sovereignty and Subversion: The Global Agenda of the Grassroots Right', which offers an in-depth study of Western right-wing sovereignty movements. Her op-ed in *The New York Times* presents a systematic overview of the American right-wing sovereignty movement. See: 'Why Does Trump Threaten America's Allies? Hint: It Starts in 1919', *The New York Times*, 2 February 2025.

⁴ Jake Altman, *Socialism before Sanders: The 1930s Moment from Romance to Revisionism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁵ This notion of sovereigntism differs from the 'sovereignty faction' discussed earlier. It refers to a doctrine of national sovereignty promoted by the United States after the World Anti-Fascist War, in opposition to Soviet internationalism. A representative strategist of this thinking was Hans Morgenthau. See: Hans Morgenthau, 'The Problem of Sovereignty Reconsidered', *Columbia Law Review* 48, no. 3 (April 1948): 341–365.

⁶ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Cornell University Press, 2016).

⁸ Editor's note: The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were first outlined in the 1954 Sino-Indian Agreement, known in Hindi as *Panchsheel*. These principles include: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and co-operation for mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.

⁹ In September 1993, Anthony Lake, then Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, delivered a speech titled 'From Containment to Enlargement', which marked a strategic shift in US foreign policy from the Cold War-era doctrine of containment to a more proactive strategy of enlargement. This new approach emphasised support for liberal democracy and market economies and aimed to shape a world order aligned with US values and interests through economic power and multilateral cooperation. See: 'Remarks of Anthony Lake: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs: From Containment to Enlargement',

Johns Hopkins University, 26 September 1993.

¹⁰ The following works analyse the internal disruptions that globalisation has caused within Western societies: Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Harvard University Press, 2014); Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (Forum Books, 2013); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon and Schuster, 2000); J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (HarperCollins, 2016).

¹¹ British historian Paul Kennedy proposed the theory of ‘imperial overstretch’, arguing that hegemonic states in history often declined due to an imbalance between external commitments and internal resources. He warned that the United States might follow a similar trajectory. This perspective sparked intense debate among strategists and politicians in the United States during the final years of the Cold War. See: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Vintage, 1988).

¹² Flavio Romano, *Clinton and Blair: The Political Economy of the Third Way* (Routledge, 2005); Hubert Zimmermann, *The End of the Age of Military Intervention: Liberal Interventionism and Global Order Since the End of the Cold War* (Routledge, 2023).

¹³ Justin Vaïsse, ‘Neoconservatism and American Foreign Policy’, *Brookings Institution*, 3 August 2010.

¹⁴ Eric Kaufmann, ‘Left-Modernist Extremism’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Left-Wing Extremism*, vol. 2, ed. Jens Rydgren (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023), 295–311.

¹⁵ Samuel Freeman, ‘Illiberal Libertarians: Why Libertarianism Is Not a Liberal View’, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30, no. 2 (April 2001): 105–151.

¹⁶ Tyler Pager, ‘Trump Orders Gutting of 7 Agencies, Including Voice of America’s Parent’, *The New York Times*, 15 March 2025.

¹⁷ J. D. Vance, ‘Remarks by the Vice President at the Munich Security Conference’, *Office of the Vice President of the United States*, 14 February, 2025.

¹⁸ Since the 2008 global financial crisis, Europe has seen a surge of political and intellectual works reflecting on liberalism, expressing concern over multiculturalism, globalisation, and the erosion of national identity. For example, French right-wing commentator Éric Zemmour harshly criticised liberalism and immigration policy in *La France n’a pas dit son dernier mot* (2021). Former German Bundesbank board member Thilo Sarrazin argued in *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (2010) that large-scale Muslim immigration would undermine Germany’s culture, education, and social cohesion.

¹⁹ On 26 July 2014, at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp, Viktor Orbán introduced the concept of ‘illiberalism’, stating that Hungary was building an illiberal state. He cited countries such as Singapore and China as successful models that had achieved economic development without being

liberal states.

²⁰ Following the 9/11 attacks, Vladimir Putin swiftly declared in a televised address his support for the US-led anti-terror coalition. He expressed Russia's willingness to assist the Northern Alliance, permit US military access to Central Asia, and signalled interest in securing American concessions on trade and security in exchange for counterterrorism cooperation. These included lifting Cold War-era trade restrictions, debt restructuring, accession to the World Trade Organisation, and – most crucially – a postponement or cancellation of NATO's eastward expansion. Putin even left open the possibility of Russia eventually joining NATO. See: Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* (Scribner, 2005), 83–84.

²¹ In 1990, then US Secretary of State Baker made an informal assurance to Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand 'one inch eastward'. In the decades that followed, however, NATO expanded steadily and initiated 'intensive dialogues' with Ukraine and Georgia, bringing military borders closer to Russia's doorstep. To many Russian elites, this was a fundamental violation of the postwar European security consensus. The resulting strategic squeeze intensified Russia's sense of insecurity. See: Timothy J. Colton, *Russia: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 121–125.

²² For example, Alexander Dugin, a leading figure of 'neo-Eurasianism', argued that Russian civilisation is distinct from both East and West and should be founded on the values of state, nation, and religion to resist Western cultural and political encroachment. Yevgeny Primakov promoted the idea of a 'multipolar world', emphasising that Russia should act as an independent great power in international affairs, rather than follow a US-led unipolar order. See: Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, vol. 1 (Arktos, 2012); Yevgeny Primakov, *Russian Crossroads: Toward the New Millennium* (Yale University Press, 2008).

²³ David M. Kotz and Fred Weir, *Russia's Path from Gorbachev to Putin: The Demise of the Soviet System and the New Russia* [《从戈尔巴乔夫到普京的俄罗斯道路：苏联体制的终结和新俄罗斯》], trans. Li Xiuhui [李秀慧译], (China Renmin University Press [中国人民大学出版社], 2015).

²⁴ In his 2013 speech at the Valdai Discussion Club, Putin explicitly criticised European countries for 'rejecting their roots, including Christian values' and emphasised that Russia must defend values that have developed over millennia. In the same year, Russia passed an anti-LGBTQ law, which banned 'promoting non-traditional sexual relations' to minors. In 2023, Russia implemented a full ban on legal gender change for transgender people and imposed restrictions on related medical interventions.

²⁵ For example, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene of the MAGA camp publicly praised Russia as 'a staunch defender of Christianity'. Former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn also repeatedly lauded Putin in public speeches for 'defending God and family'. In 2024, prominent US media personality Tucker Carlson travelled to Moscow to interview Putin in person, further amplifying Russia's symbolic role as an 'anti-woke culture ally'. See: 'Marjorie Taylor Greene Applauds Russia for "Protecting Christianity"', *Newsweek*, 8 April 2024; 'Mike Flynn Lauds President Putin's Words on "Family & God as Strong Values West is Destroying"', *Sputnik*, 23 February 2023; 'Interview to Tucker Carlson – President of Russia', *Kremlin.ru*, 8 February 2024.

²⁶ Zsuzsanna Szelényi, *Tainted Democracy: Viktor Orbán and the Subversion of Hungary* (Hurst Publishers, 2022).

²⁷ Sergei Glazyev, then economic advisor to the Russian president, argued that China's success – characterised by state-led development, long-term industrial policy, and a global strategy centred on the Belt and Road Initiative – offered a viable institutional model for Russia. In a speech at the Moscow Economic Forum, he emphasised that China's experience in channelling credit to the real economy and curbing financial bubbles is worth emulating as Russia pursues its own modernisation. See: Sergei Glazyev, *Leaping into the Future: China and Russia in the New World Tech-Economic Paradigm*, (Royal Collins Publishing Company, 2023); 'МЭФ-2023: № 2. «Китай. Опыт модернизации для России»', *Moscow Economic Forum*, 2023.

²⁸ Eric Li, *Party Life: Chinese Governance and the World Beyond Liberalism* (Springer Nature, 2023), 18–21.

²⁹ Li, *Party Life: Chinese Governance and the World Beyond Liberalism*, 37–45.

³⁰ For example, the National Security Strategy of the United States (2022) stated that China is 'the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective'. In 2019, the European Commission published *EU-China: A Strategic Outlook*, which for the first time labelled China a systemic rival and competitor attempting to promote alternative models of governance.

³¹ From an ideological perspective, the Trump administration aligned its narrative more closely with Russia and, in pursuit of strategic interests, was willing to sacrifice Ukraine in exchange for détente with Moscow. However, liberal establishment forces within the United States and the European Union strongly opposed this position.

³² Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, vol. 3 [《邓小平文选》第三卷] (People's Publishing House [人民出版社], 1993), 353.

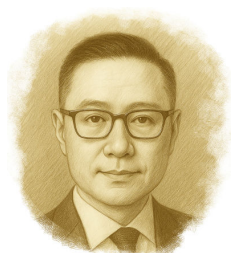
³³ Yu Sui, 'We Must Uphold the Central Committee's Theory of World Multipolarisation' ['必须维护党中央的世界多极化理论'], *China Strategic Review* [《中国战略观察》], no. 3–4 (2022).

³⁴ Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on World Multipolarisation and the Establishment of a New International Order [《中华人民共和国和俄罗斯联邦关于世界多极化和建立国际新秩序的联合声明》], 23 April 1997.

³⁵ In the Global Development Initiative, China emphasises principles such as 'development first' and 'technology for all', aiming to restructure the global centre-periphery model and reduce developing countries' dependence on a single financial and technological system. The Global Security Initiative advances concepts like 'common security', 'indivisible security', and 'regional leadership', with the goal of promoting multicentric and coordinated global governance. Meanwhile, the Global Civilisation Initiative advocates civilisational diversity and equality, criticises value exportation, cultural hegemony, and ideological demarcation; and seeks to break the liberal paradigm's monopoly over global discourse. Together, the three initiatives constitute a

trinitarian vision of global governance with Chinese characteristics, reflecting a vision of international order centred on decentralisation, multipolarity, and de-ideologisation.

³⁶ In his speech marking the centenary of the founding of the CPC, President Xi Jinping proposed a major theoretical proposition: to integrate the basic principles of Marxism with China's concrete realities and with fine traditional Chinese culture – a formulation known as the Two Integrations.



Eric Li

Eric Li (李世默) is a venture capitalist and political scientist based in Shanghai. He is the founder and chairman of *Guancha*, one of China's largest media platforms. He is a trustee of Fudan University's China Institute and chairman of its advisory council, a trustee of Asia Society Hong Kong, and a member of the board of the SciTech Business School at the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC). He is a frequent contributor to international media platforms.