Is China Building a Rival International Order and How Would We Know?

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Abstract

Is China building a rival international order to challenge and potentially replace the existing one? The United States played a leading role in creating the institutions of what became known as today's liberal international order (LIO). Since then, China has emerged as a global power while the United States has reduced its commitment to global leadership. With growing evidence of a hegemonic transition, observers are increasingly debating whether Beijing is working to transform the existing international order by building a rival institutional framework. To investigate this possibility, we identify observable implications of Chinese rival institution building and assess them using an original systematic dataset of 93 cases of Chinese international institution building in the post-Cold War era. The evidence points to the gradual emergence of a China-built institutional order that is still primarily regional in scope but could in aggregate potentially rival those of the American-led LIO. At a time when the United States has turned on its own institutional order, the gradual emergence of a China-built alternative indicates that a hegemonic order transition is more advanced than often assumed.

> "You know, if China and Russia would decide to create a new order, I would be the first to join."
>
> —Rodrigo Duterte, President of the Philippines, 2016[1]

Introduction

The rise of China and the United States' retreat from international leadership have fueled perceptions of a global order in transition. As relative American power has waned, so has its interest in upholding an American-led international order. In recent years, the United States has withdrawn from and undermined numerous international organizations, questioned its alliance commitments, and initiated trade wars with its major trading partners and oldest allies. Such steps have led many to ask whether the American-led "liberal international order" is at an end (Ikenberry 2018; Stokes 2018; Mearsheimer 2019; Lake et al. 2021; Hyde and Saunders 2025) and seem to fit into a broader pattern of American "exit" from hegemony (Gilpin 1981; Kennedy 1987; Arrighi 1990; Wallerstein 2003; Layne 2009; Cooley and Nexon 2020). By contrast, as China has emerged as a global power, it has created a range of new global governance institutions and repeatedly signaled its commitment to international leadership. Xi Jinping has pledged that China will "resolutely uphold the authority and status of the United Nations", "actively fulfill China's international obligations and duties", and play an "active part in the reform and development of the global governance system" (Xi 2016; 2018).

Despite China's assurances, many scholars see China's institution building as a challenge to the existing international order. Rush Doshi has argued that regional institution building is part of China's "long game" to build a new global order and displace the American-led one (2021, 209). For Avery Goldstein, a core element of China's grand strategy of national rejuvenation is to reshape the international order (2020a, 182–87). Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon see China- and Russia-led international organizations as eroding the influence of Western-led ones and hastening global order transition (2020, 87–81). Karen Alter and Kal Raustiala expect China to engage in "counter-hegemonic" institution building (2018, 345; Ikenberry and Lim 2017), and see the Belt Road Initiative as potential stepping stone towards "new bilateral or multilateral arrangements—and even a new kind of global

[1] CBS News, 'Philippine leader hopeful of "new world order" under Russia, China'. Available from https://www.cbsnews.com/news/philippines-leader-rodrigo-duterte-new-world-order-russia-china-un-icc/, accessed 06 April 2023.

order" (2018, 345). Dawn Murphy argues that China is building regional spheres of influence "challenges the rules of the international system by constructing an alternative international order to facilitate interactions" (2022, 1). Alongside China's promotion of a global "community with a shared future for mankind", Elizabeth Economy concludes that "Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambition to remake the world is undeniable" (2024, 8; see also Rolland 2020). Amid an intensifying competition between China and the United States, a number of scholars today expect a growing polarization of international politics into rival China-led and American-led international orders (Buzan 2024; Ikenberry 2024; Owen 2021; Yan 2020; Mearsheimer 2019).

Many policymakers share this perspective. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, has warned that "the Chinese Communist Party's clear goal is a systemic change of the international order with China at its centre", and sees growing evidence of "China-led institutions set up to rival the current international system" (2023). Friedrich Merz, the Chancellor of Germany, has depicted China working together with Russia to "go on the offensive against the multilateral order" that was established after the Second World War (Merz 2025, own translation). Under the first Trump administration, the United States designated China a "revisionist power" (The White House 2017, 25), and under Biden, China was identified as the only competitor with both the means and the intent "to reshape the international order" (The White House 2022, 8). This point was reiterated by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, adding that "Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years" (Blinken 2022).

Is China really building a rival international order to challenge and potentially replace the existing order? In this article, we expose this idea to a theory-guided empirical test using novel comprehensive data on China's institution-building activities. We focus on the institutional level of international order as a key domain in which states cooperate and compete with each other (Ikenberry 2001; Mearsheimer 2019; Owen 2025) and which constitute a central element of international hegemonic orders (Cox 1983; Keohane 1984; Ikenberry 2011). Despite the significance ascribed to China's international institution building, our knowledge of China's role in building new institutions is still surprisingly incomplete. We therefore join the call for a more empirical approach to assessing China's intentions for international order (Johnston 2003; 2019; Kang et al. 2025). In this article, we investigate the extent of China's role in building new global governance institutions since the

end of the Cold War and assess whether this resembles the construction of a rival international order. Drawing on institutionalist approaches and hegemonic order theory, we develop six empirical indicators to assess the extent of China's involvement in constructing a rival institutional order. These indicators are evaluated using a novel dataset encompassing 93 global governance institutions established between 1990 and 2024, in which China has participated at least as a founding member.

Against an ideal-type characterization of a rival global institutional order, the empirical record shows a clear picture. China's institution-building since the post-Cold War era does not yet amount to a rival global order, but a rival, primarily regional order has already emerged and shows signs of growing ambition and reach. While most China-founded institutions remain regional or inter-regional, their scope is expanding across core domains of hegemonic orders such as trade, finance, and security. We further document a rise in Chinese leadership in institution building over time, and the termination of institutional co-founding with the United States. Overall, our results are consistent with the incremental emergence of a China-built order that is at least partly rivalrous to the existing one: a strategy of building on without breaking the established international order. Nonetheless, this China-built order looks set to gain in significance as the United States retreats from global leadership and disengages from existing institutions, paving the way for a hegemonic transition.

We proceed in four steps. First, we review traditional theories of power shifts and institutional change and explain the multiple logics that could drive a rising power such as China to build new institutions rather than simply reforming or replacing existing ones. Second, distinguishing between the *extent* and the *nature* of Chinese institution building, we formulate six explicit empirical indicators to empirically assess whether China is building a rival international order. These indicators serve as observable implications to provide a transparent and testable framework for the paper's empirical analysis. Third, we outline our empirical strategy for evaluating these indicators, utilizing an original dataset that captures China's institution-building activities in the post-Cold War era. Fourth, we discuss the significance of our findings and suggest how Chinese institutional order might develop in the future if the United States continues to withdraw from international leadership.

Power Shifts and Strategies of Institutional Change

The close link between dominant powers and the construction of international institutions is a common thread running through hegemonic theories of international order. According to theories of hegemonic stability and power transitions, established international institutions

reflect the interests of the dominant power, who after all played the decisive role in creating and sustaining them (Gilpin 1981; 2002; Organski 1968; Organski and Kugler 1980; Tammen et al. 2000; Mearsheimer 2019, 9). From this perspective, the existing institutional order should be understood as a product of American power at two historical junctures of international order building: the post-Second World War moment of the 1940s, and the post-Cold War era of the 1990s, when many of the institutions were founded that continue to structure world politics (Keohane 1984; Cox 1987; Arrighi 1990; Ikenberry 2001; Gilpin 2002).

Because international institutions reflect the interests of their hegemonic patrons, they are deeply sensitive to shifts in international power. This reflects what Robert Gilpin considered to be the fundamental engine of international political change: the emergence of a mismatch between the outcomes of the international system and the underlying distribution of power and interests (1981). Gilpin identified two principal pathways through which this mismatch can be resolved and the institutional order realigned with the new distribution of power.

The first pathway involves the adaptation of the institutional order through peaceful renegotiation. For Gilpin, "The most frequently observed types of changes are continuous incremental adjustments within the framework of the existing system" (1981, 45). When institutions are designed and safeguarded by an enlightened hegemon, they can facilitate the incorporation of rising powers that have benefited from the existing order (Ikenberry 2001; 2011). Given the common interests that continue to unite the major powers, the adaptation of existing institutions can be a mutually beneficial task of institutional renewal (Ruggie 1982; Chan 2008; Johnston 2003; Gu et al. 2008).

The alternative pathway resolves the mismatch through the critical juncture of a hegemonic war (Gilpin 1988; 1981, 186–210). Attempts at renegotiating the world order can turn out to be ineffective owing to institutional inertia and opposition from the incumbent hegemon (Lipscy 2016; Zangl et al. 2016). This produces a Gordian knot of acrimonious bargaining that must ultimately be cut with the sword. The resulting hegemonic wars have two transformational effects on institutional order. First, they wipe the institutional slate clean, creating a *tabula rasa* upon which new institutions can be designed. Second, they confer upon the victorious hegemon an overwhelming power advantage, enabling it to design

and consolidate a new institutional architecture against all opposition (Organski 1968; Gilpin 1981; Tammen et al. 2000; Ikenberry 2001).[2]

Neither of these traditional pathways, however, anticipates the possibility that an emerging power will construct its own institutional order alongside that of the erstwhile hegemon. Although institution building is traditionally regarded as rare and costly (Keohane 1984, 100), it may become increasingly attractive to a rising power as a power shift unfolds. Three logics underpin this strategy. First, power shifts can plunge existing institutions into deadlock and acrimony (Hale et al. 2013; Stephen and Parízek 2019). This makes it more attractive to build new ones, especially within like-minded groups where preference diversity is lower. The extent to which power shifts generate governance gaps and expose the underperformance of incumbent institutions provides a functional-efficiency rationale for a rising power such as China to engage in institutional creation. Second, multilateral institutions provide a legitimacy that unilateral measures lack by endowing outcomes with the aura of collective ownership and common deliberation (Claude 1966; Abbott and Snidal 1998, 18–19; Hurd 1999; Pouliot 2011). Consequently, building new institutions act as a mechanism for a rising power to acquire and project normative authority on the global stage. Third, the successful creation of new institutions can ultimately enhance a rising power's institutional power: its ability to shape rules, set agendas, and influence outcomes within the international system (Lipscy 2016; Voeten 2019; Barnett and Duvall 2005). This occurs by circumventing the entrenched advantages that legacy powers have built into existing institutions, both formal (e.g. voting rules) and informal (e.g. social influence). A power-driven strategy of institution building is likely to result in institutions that compete with or substitute established ones (Alter and Meunier 2009; Morse and Keohane 2014) and may cumulate to a rival institutional order (Doshi 2021; Murphy 2022; Economy 2024).

Existing theory therefore suggests multiple rationales for a rising global power such as China to engage in international institution building. At the same time, the multiple logics underpinning institution building highlights that simply creating new institutions does not necessarily signal an intent to challenge or overturn the established international order. Neither does the historical record indicate support for a purely power-driven explanation for hegemonic order building. Emergent hegemons in the past, such as the United States after the

[2] A *via media* approach is to disaggregate institutional order and focus on variation between specific institutions. In this view, whether an institution is challenged or can be renegotiated successfully depends on further contextual factors that explain inter-institutional variation (Goldstein 2007; Foot and Walter 2011; Ikenberry 2011; Stephen 2012; Kahler 2013; Lipscy 2016; Kastner et al. 2018; Johnston 2019; Stephen and Zürn 2019; Kruck and Zangl 2020).

Second World War, have established institutional orders for a range of geopolitical, economic, and cultural reasons (Keohane 1984, ch. 8; Cox 1987, ch. 7; Ikenberry 2001, ch. 6; Vucetic 2011, ch. 3; Cooley and Nexon 2020, ch. 2). It is therefore improbable that a single, overriding logic drives China's approach to institutional order. This makes it essential to specify what would constitute a rival international institutional order, and to identify the empirical criteria by which such an order could be identified. This requires a clear specification of the observable implications that indicate whether China's efforts amount to building a rival international order.

A Rival Institutional Order? Six Observable Implications

To assess whether Chinese institution building adds up to the construction of a rival institutional order, we draw on institutionalist and hegemony theory to formulate six observable implications that, together, are indicative of the extent to which China has been engaged in the construction of a rival institutional order. While inevitably imperfect, these indicators provide an observable and measurable means to assess the extent and nature of Chinese institution building in the post-Cold War era.

The first two observable implications address the *extent* of Chinese institution building, encompassing both issue scope and geographical reach. This is indicative of whether China is building an encompassing international order or rather a limited and partial regional order. The following four observable implications assess whether Chinese institution building reflects the logic of a "rival" international order—seeking to contest, bypass, or undermine the existing order—or is simply additive, resulting in institutions that are largely supplementary or complementary to the existing order (Stephen 2021, 817–24).

First, if China were constructing a rival international order, it would build novel institutions that address the full spectrum of issues central to the functioning of international hegemonic orders, most notably *security*, *trade*, and *finance*. Security institutions, in particular, play a central role in realist depictions of international order, and lay at the heart of the hegemonic orders created by the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Lake 2001; Mearsheimer 2019). International institutions in trade and finance are likewise widely recognized as pivotal for the construction of hegemonic orders as they have far-reaching consequences for the nature of international transactions and state behavior (Keohane 1984, 139; Gilpin 1981, 35; Cox 1996, 138). Such institutions not only affect market outcomes and growth rates but also shape the nature of economic interdependence and can potentially reconfigure the domestic coalitions of subordinate states (Ruggie 1982; James

and Lake 1989). *A rival, China-founded institutional order would need to be constructed in these core issue areas to wrest control away from Western powers and lay the foundations for an alternative order.*

Second, if China were building a rival *global* order, its institutions would need to include member states from around the world rather than remaining confined largely to a particular region. For John Mearsheimer, an international order by definition needs to include all the great powers, and ideally would contain all countries (2019, 11). The alternative is a geographically "bounded" order that does not constitute a new global system. Any challenger to US global hegemony would therefore need to create institutions that encompass states from multiple world regions, trying to leverage a global sphere of influence by building up institutions that are both open to global memberships and do, in fact, have members from around the world. Membership scope is they key feature distinguishing an international (global) order from a merely regional one. This leads to the observable implication that *a China-founded rival order would draw on members from around the world rather than being limited to its regional base in Asia.*

Third, given the prominent role of the United States in the established international order, partnering with the United States to build new institutions would contradict the logic of building a rival institutional order. It would also be strategically incoherent for the United States to lend its support to institutions designed to rival or erode its own influence. Rather than collaborating with the United States to create new global governance institutions together, we would expect China pursue what He (2008a) terms "exclusive institutional balancing": designing institutions to exclude the United States and erode its primacy.[3] As a form of "soft balancing" behavior (Pape 2005; Paul 2005), exclusive institutional balancing involves constructing novel international institutions to constrain the existing hegemon and enhance the cohesion and room for maneuver of other states (He 2008b, 496). *Accordingly, the third observable implication of a China-built rival order is the absence of the United States as a fellow founding member*.

Fourth, any rival China-led order would need to create alternatives to the major U.S.-led institutions that have underpinned American global hegemony since the Second World War. Most prominently, these include the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Through its influence over IMF financing decisions, the United States has exercised

[3] Of course, it takes two to tango, and the United States may also decline to join China in creating new institutions. Nonetheless, the absence of co-founding is consistent with rival order building.

patronage towards its allies and supporters (Dreher, Lang, et al. 2022; Dreher and Jensen 2007), and both Bretton Woods institutions have been instrumental in enabling the United States to exercise economic influence over foreign states and shape the rules of international finance and development (Wade 2002; Woods 2003; Stone 2011). This implies that *if China were intent on constructing a rival international order, we would expect it to establish institutions that challenge or bypass these American-dominated pillars of global economic governance.*

A fifth observable implication of a Chinese effort to construct a rival institutional order concerns the nature of its preferred partners. China's international ambitions have frequently been understood as seeking "a world safe for autocracy" (Weiss 2019), and many predict the emergence of a China-led authoritarian capitalist order to rival the U.S.-led order of liberal capitalism (Owen 2021; Lim and Ikenberry 2023; Yang 2024). "Autocratic" international institutions are seen as stabilizing authoritarian regimes and propagating favorable international norms (Cooley 2015; Libman and Obydenkova 2018; Debre 2022; Cottiero and Haggard 2023). The Belt and Road Initiative, for example, might be particularly attractive to non-democratic states Atkins et al. (2023). If China were building a rival order, it would likely seek partners with similar regime types and ideological proximity to counterbalance the influence of Western liberal democracy. Consequently, *China would prefer to partner with other autocratically governed states when building new international institutions.*

The sixth and final observable implication of a China-led rival order concerns the privileges Beijing would seek within its own institutions. Historically, hegemonic powers have safeguarded their core interests by embedding privileged positions in key institutions—such as the United States in the IMF (Voeten 2019). While institutional arrangements may allow for adaptation and flexibility, their sponsors typically ensure disproportionate influence over decision-making and agenda-setting in the most critical bodies. Extending this logic to China's institution-building efforts, *we would expect Beijing to secure such privileges in the leading institutions it establishes*. Table 1 summarizes these observable implications.

Table 1: Indicators of a Rival Institutional Order

Indicator	Description	Observable implications

1. Coverage of core issue areas	China creates institutions in these areas that reshape global rules and behaviors	Institutions are established in all issue areas and key hegemonic domains: security, trade, and finance
2. Global membership	Institutions are open to and include members from multiple regions	China-founded institutions have members from multiple world regions
3. Hegemonic exclusion	China-founded institutions are designed to exclude the United States and erode its primacy	The United States does not join China in creating new institutions
4. Displace or bypass	China-founded institutions are designed to displace or bypass U.S.-led institutions (e.g., IMF, World Bank)	New institutions directly compete with or offer alternatives to Western-led organizations
5. Autocratic alignment	China partners predominantly with autocratic regimes	Co-founders of institutions predominantly non-democratic
6. Institutional privileges	China secures formal or informal privileges in its institutions	Governance structures favor Chinese interests (e.g., voting power, veto rights)

Together, these indicators provide an observable and measurable basis upon which to examine whether China is building a comprehensive rival order or simply extending global governance by building additional institutions. The indicators imply a distinction between four ideal types of Chinese institution building: a rival global order, a complementary global order, a rival regional order, and a complementary regional order (see Table 2). The ideal-typical rival international order is captured in the upper left quadrant and represents an outcome with high values on each of the observable implications. This constitutes a "maximal" concept of a rival institutional order against which the empirical reality of Chinese institution building can be assessed (Gerring 2012, 136–37). The more Chinese institution building reflects these indicators, the more plausible it is to speak of the emergence of a rival international order. This benchmark also provides a basis for tracking and interpreting changes in Chinese institution building over time.

Table 2: Typology of Chinese Institution Building

		Strategy	
		Rival	***Complementary***
Scope	***Global***	**Rival Global Order** China builds institutions across core issue areas, worldwide membership, excludes U.S., bypasses Bretton Woods, privileges itself	**Complementary Global Order** China adds institutions globally but in niche areas, cooperative with U.S., no systemic challenge
	Regional	**Rival Regional Order** China creates Asia-focused institutions that exclude U.S., challenge regional dominance, embed privileges	**Complementary Regional Order** China builds regional institutions that supplement existing ones without undermining U.S. leadership

While imperfect, these indicators do offer an explicit and transparent approach to capturing whether Chinese institution building is laying the institutional foundations of a rival international order. The next section outlines our empirical strategy to assess them.

Investigating Chinese Institution Building: Research Design and Data

To assess the nature and extent of Chinese institution building, we investigate all cases of Chinese institution building since 1990. Compiling original data on China's role in building new international institutions in the post-Cold War period uncovered a largely uncharted landscape of 93 institutions that China has been involved in creating. Some, such as the International Copper Study Group and the International Bamboo and Rattan Organization, remain virtually unknown to scholars; others, like the G20 and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, are widely recognized, even while China's role in their founding has often been overlooked.

This empirical approach has three advantages. First, it provides a more comprehensive picture of Chinese institution building in the post-Cold War era and helps to avoid the selection bias of focusing only on high-profile cases that may exaggerate or distort China's role. Second, it highlights the many "minor" institutions governing technical or niche policy areas that often shape global rules indirectly but may accumulate significance over time. Third, it measures deeds rather than words. Many authors have sought to infer China's intentions from leaders' speeches and discourses (Legro 2007; Schweller and Pu 2011;

Goldstein 2020b; Rolland 2020; Doshi 2021; Liu et al. 2023), but institution building is a more costly, credible, and less ambiguous basis to infer Chinese preferences for world order.

Empirical Strategy

The empirical strategy can be briefly summarized briefly.[4] We focus on China's role in the creation of novel international institutions between 1990 and 2024. Because many China-founded institutions are informal in nature, lacking either a legal treaty or a secretariat (Vabulas and Snidal 2021; Roger and Rowan 2022), we refer to them broadly as *global governance institutions*. Drawing on established definitions in the literature,[5] we define global governance institutions as (1) stand-alone institutions that (2) involve regular participation from at least three governments and (3) perform tasks that are related to governing transnational issues. Moreover, they (4) must do so on an ongoing basis through recurrent interactions and meetings.[6] As such, global governance institutions can be formal or informal, intergovernmental or transnational (but cannot be purely private), and can involve both high-ranking and low-level governmental participation. The category of global governance institutions is intended to capture the myriad of international or transnational institutional formats by which states manage their common affairs.[7]

We focus on global governance institutions (GGIs) in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) can be publicly identified as a founding member. For treaty-based IGOs, this implies that China was a contracting party; for less formal institutions, that it played a visible role in their establishment, at a minimum by becoming a founding member. To capture variation in China's role, we code each institution according to whether China can be identified as the original institutional sponsor (3), as playing a leading but not unique role (2), or as simply acting as a founding member (1). Our estimates of Chinese leadership are deliberately conservative: we err on the side of caution in assigning values higher than 1 and only do so with clear evidence that China played a leading role in institutional creation.

[4] The details of our dataset construction are spelled out in the appendix.
[5] On formal IGOs, see (Wallace and Singer 1970; Pevehouse et al. 2020). On informal IGOs, see (Vabulas and Snidal 2021; Roger and Rowan 2022). On transgovernmental policy networks, see (Abbott and Kauffmann 2018; Slaughter and Hale 2011; Keohane and Nye 1974). On transnational public-private partnerships and multistakeholder initiatives, see (Schäferhoff et al. 2009; Westerwinter 2021; Schneiker and Joachim 2018; Andonova 2017).
[6] A lengthier discussion of these criteria and their operationalization is provided in the Appendix. We note, however, that this definition excludes *bilateral* institutions (Thompson and Verdier 2014), purely non-governmental or private governance institutions (Pattberg 2005; Graz and Nölke 2007), and *non-institutionalized* multilateral interactions such as one-off multilateral summits.
[7] The Commission on Global Governance defined governance as "the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs" (Commission on Global Governance 1995, 2).

The universe of cases includes all GGIs founded since 1990 in which China was a founding member. This institutional focus of course excludes other aspects of international order building, such as reforming existing institutions (Kastner et al. 2018; Foot 2020; Johnston 2019), reshaping international law (Posner and Yoo 2006; Cai 2013; Burke-White 2015), signing memoranda of understanding (Callahan 2016; Wang 2020), or creating private governance mechanisms (Bush 2021; Kennedy 2008). Nonetheless, it offers a clearly defined and operationalizable unit of analysis for assessing China's institutional statecraft. To ensure comprehensiveness, we drew on multiple datasets and supplemented these with Chinese- and English-language secondary literature and discussions with experts and scholars.[8] As existing datasets do not include data on founding membership, this was collected manually through additional research, which was partly carried out by a team of graduate research assistants including Chinese language skills.[9] Many of the institutions provide more information on their Chinese-language websites.[10]

Each of the 93 institutions we identified was coded for 28 variables related to their design and membership, including China's role in institutional creation, membership, issue area, degree of formal institutionalization, and institutional type. Additional information on the coding procedure is available in the project codebook, where qualitative reports, each ranging from three to five pages for each of the 93 institutions, document mini case studies with explanations and justifications for each coding decision. We believe this dataset to constitute the most comprehensive empirical picture of China's role in institution-building to date.

[8] We began with the *Yearbook of International Organizations* of the Union of International Associations, identifying all organizations coded as "intergovernmental" created since 1990. Specifically, we searched for all institutions with Type I codes of 'A' through 'H' and Type II code of 'g'. An organization is considered "intergovernmental" (Type II code 'g') by the Yearbook editors "if it is established by signature of an agreement engendering obligations between governments, whether or not that agreement is eventually published." After examining alternative search methods, we considered this definition sufficiently broad not to exclude a non-trivial number of potentially relevant institutions. A limitation of Yearbook data is that the most recent version available at the time of coding terminated in 2017. Of a global total of 1,136 organizations, 152 were identified with Chinese membership. In other words, there was Chinese membership in 13.4 percent of all organizations created since 1990. For comparison, the corresponding membership rate for other selected countries were: DR Congo 7.7 percent, France 26.1 percent, Germany 24.1 percent, India 11.2 percent, Japan 13.5 percent, New Zealand 7.7 percent, Russia 17.0 percent, United Kingdom 25.3 percent, United States 17.0 percent. Additional sources for the dataset include the Correlates of War IGO Version 3.0 dataset (Pevehouse et al. 2020), Vabulas' and Snidal's Informal IGO 2.0 dataset, including Appendix Table 2 of "Close Calls" (2021), Roger and Rowan's dataset on informal IGOs (Roger and Rowan 2022), and Westerwinter's dataset on transnational public-private governance initiatives (2021).

[9] Some institutions considered during our research are interesting cases but do not meet all our criteria to qualify. A partial list of the institutions not included in the dataset is provided in the Appendix table "List of Institutions Not Included in the Dataset", which provides reasons that the institutions did not meet our criteria for inclusion.

[10] We thank Yushu Soon, Helene Prinz and Lisa Scheuch for excellent research assistance in coding.

Findings: China's Institutional Order

Before evaluating whether China is building a rival order, the data reveal several findings that illuminate the evolution of China's general institutional posture.

First, China has been an active founder of new institutions throughout the Cold War period. It is sometimes argued that China has a general aversion to multilateralism and institutionalization. Lim and Ikenberry write that any Chinese hegemony "would be an order organized around bilateral inter-regime ties rather than multilateral interstate relations" (Lim and Ikenberry 2023, 31), and Barma et al. see China as part of a "World Without the West" that "eschews traditional international institutions" (Barma et al. 2009, 542). Likewise, China's interest in institution building is also often portrayed as a recent phenomenon, signaling China's shift from an international rule taker to rule maker (Stephen and Skidmore 2019; Wang 2020; Liang 2021; Doshi 2021, 208–34). But our findings show that China has consistently engaged in institutional creation since 1990, founding at least 93 global governance institutions in this period (see Figure 1 and the Appendix for the full list). The number (averaging 27 institutions per decade) already indicates that China's institution-building extends far beyond the high-profile cases that dominate scholarly debate. This institutional activism is hard to reconcile with the picture of China as averse to multilateral institutionalization.

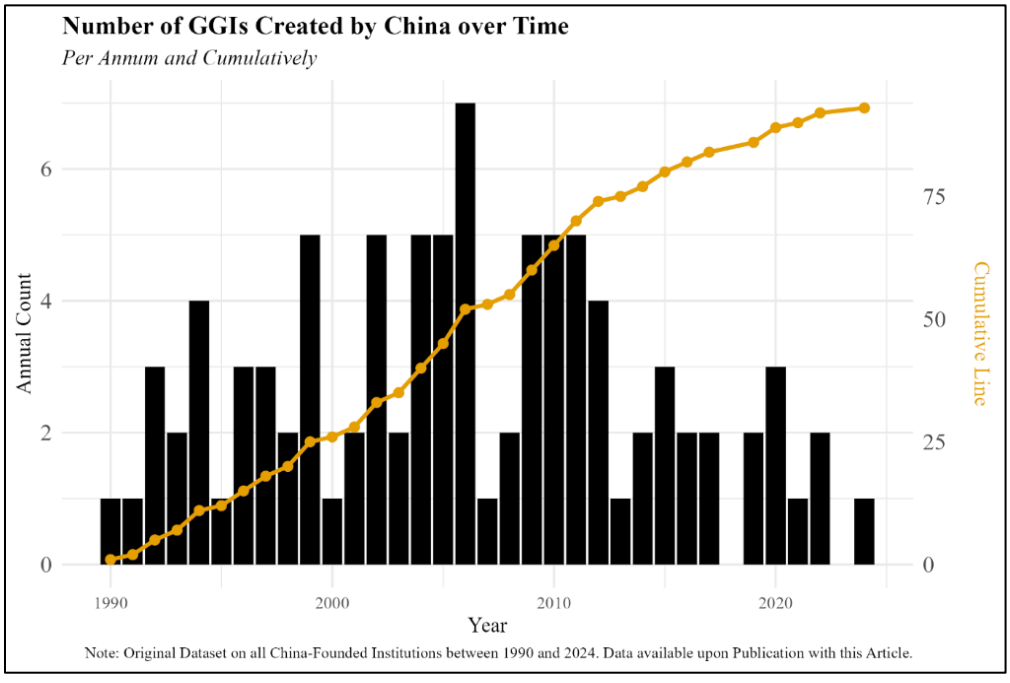

Figure 1: Cumulation of China-founded institutions since 1990

Second, not all of these institutions can be considered examples of "contested multilateralism" (Morse and Keohane 2014) or attempts to engage in "counter-institutionalization" (Alter and Raustiala 2018). Far from it. Many institutions, such as the International Bamboo and Rattan Organization, the International Copper Study Group, or the Asia-Pacific Legal Metrology Forum, neither reflect strong Chinese leadership nor challenge existing institutions. Such institutions exemplify a form of Chinese institution building that is frequently overlooked in discussions of international order transitions—collaborating across borders to meet the practical needs of global economic integration.

Third, China's role in creating international institutions has evolved significantly over time. Overall, we identified 16 institutions where China exercised unique leadership, 27 where it played a leading role, and 50 where its involvement was limited to being a founding member. While China has often contributed to institution-building, it has typically acted as a "team player," collaborating with other states rather than exercising sole leadership. However, this pattern has shifted over time. In the 1990s, China did not sponsor any new institutions independently, with Chinese leadership in institutional creation largely emerging in the Xi era (see Figure 2). This aligns with previous research tracing China's push for a leading role in global governance to events such as the 2008 global financial crisis and Xi Jinping's leadership since 2012 (He 2018; Doshi 2021). Given the high economic costs and political risks of initiating new institutions, China's actions represent a significant realization of its stated ambition to play a leading role in the reform of global governance.

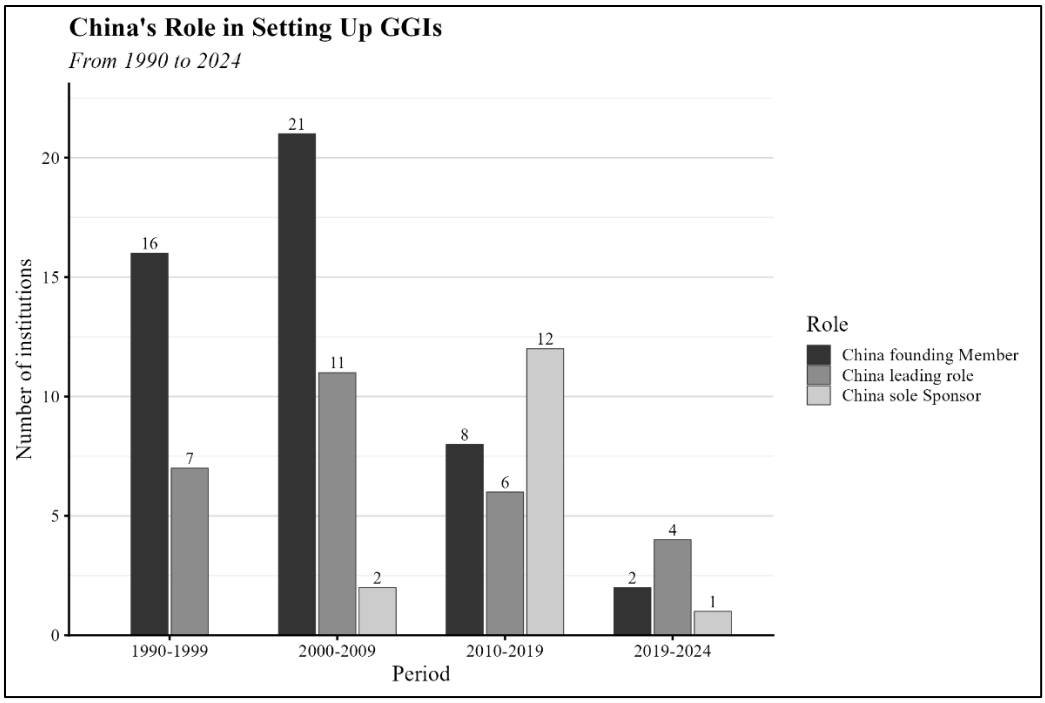

Figure 2: China's changing role in institutional creation

Fourth, there is considerable variation not only in the extent of China's role in institutional creation, but also in terms of institutional design. We classified the institutions into three categories: formal intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), informal IGOs, and other forms such as transgovernmental networks and policy forums. In total, we identified 31 formal IGOs, 56 informal IGOs, and six additional institutions. These institutions also differ in political significance. High-profile examples like the AIIB and BRICS attract global attention, while others—such as the International Bamboo and Rattan Organization or the Pan-Beibu Gulf Economic Cooperation Forum—remain niche organizations of interest primarily to specialists. China's leadership role likewise varies. If Chinese institution-building signals the gradual emergence of a China-led order, this claim must be qualified: China has also often acted as a co-creator alongside other states rather than taking the initiative in building new institutions.

Observable implication 1: Coverage of core issue areas

If China were attempting to construct a rival international order, we would expect it to establish new institutions covering the full range of functions essential to hegemonic systems—particularly in the areas of international security, trade, and finance. There is some evidence that this is the case. To capture the range of policy areas addressed by China-

founded institutions, we used a non-exclusive coding scheme of issue area, recognizing that many institutions operate across multiple domains. While social, technical, and development issues dominate, the overall distribution reveals a wide issue coverage of China-founded global governance institutions (see Figure 3, left). To determine the primary focus of each institution, we also assigned a more demanding "main" policy area to each institution (using the "multiple" category only for genuinely multi-purpose institutions) (see Figure 3, right). China-founded GGIs often exhibit broad policy mandates, as reflected in the fact that 26 percent fall into the "multiple" policy area category. Intergovernmental formats such as SCO, ASEAN Plus Three, BRICS, and the various China-led regional forums all fit into this category, and place issues of security, trade, and finance at the center of their agendas. Looser formats such as the Boao Forum for Asia are also captured by this category, which was the platform chosen by Xi Jinping to announce China's Global Security Initiative as a novel Chinese normative framework for global security (Arase 2023).

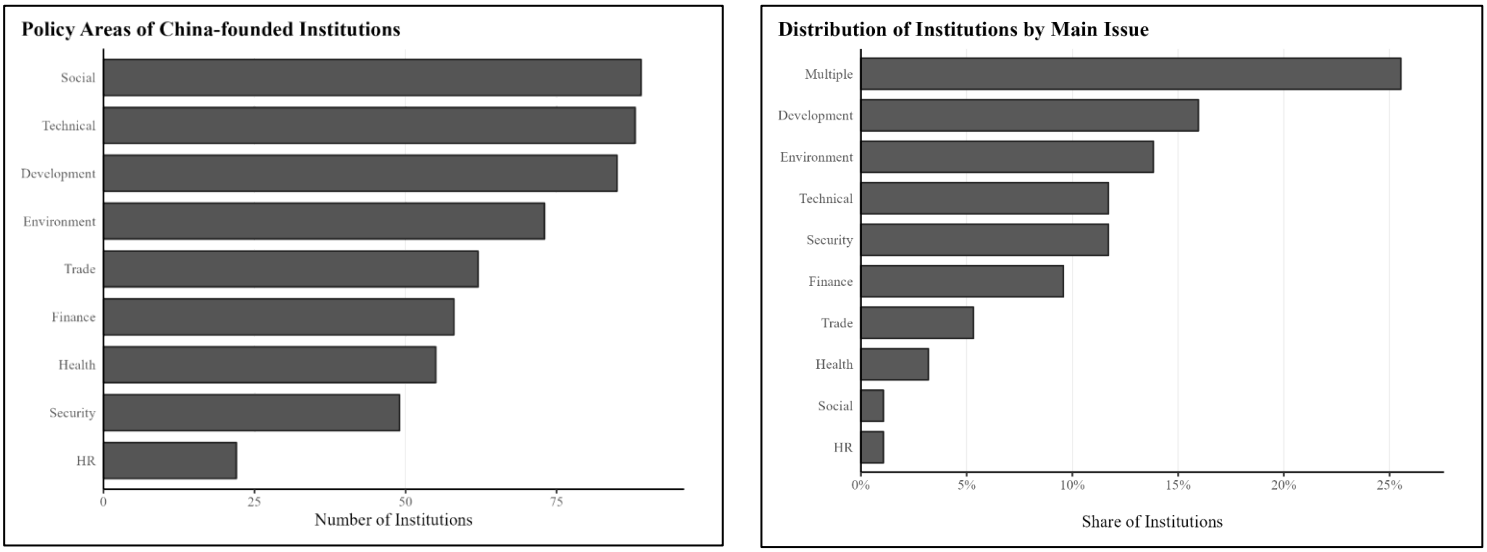

Figure 3: China-founded GGIs by policy area. Non-exclusive (left) and exclusive (right) coding.

In security, China has championed institutions such as the SCO, and the Conference on Interaction & Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), as well as building up the lesser-known Lancang-Mekong Integrated Law Enforcement & Security Cooperation Centre (LM-LECC). Such bodies provide an amenable institutional infrastructure for China to promote its vision for international security. In trade, China has pursued ameliorative

institution building by founding, together with other major trading economies, the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA), a temporary mechanism for resolving trade disputes pending the restoration of the WTO Appellate Body. Its flagship regional trade agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), ranks among the world's largest and includes regular ministerial meetings and joint committee sessions of senior trade officials. In finance, China has built up a range of institutions including the New Development Bank (NDB), AIIB, the Belt and Road Forum (BRF), and the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance (MCDF), while the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) also provides macroeconomic surveillance and emergency liquidity support in Asia by administering the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation.

Considered as a whole, these developments indicate that China's institution building spans a wide array of policy domains, and includes institutions that concentrate on security, trade, and finance—core pillars of any prospective alternative international order.

Observable implication 2: Global membership

To what extent has China participated in the construction of a new institutional order that is global in scope, rather than regional? One indicator is the simple membership size of the institutions China helped to create. The average (mean) membership count of China-founded global governance institutions is 28, ranging from the minimum of three (such as the Russia-India-China Trilateral and the Asia-Pacific Multilateral Cooperation in Space Technology and Application) to near-universal institutions such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (193 members) and the Global Environment Facility. Yet, among cases where China played a leading role in institutional creation, only the AIIB approaches global reach, with 110 members. The next largest, the Belt and Road Forum (BRF), is loosely institutionalized and its membership fluctuates between summits. Beyond these, China's most significant institutions remain regional: the China–CELAC Forum (34 members), the China–Arab States Cooperation Forum (22), and the troubled China–CEEC Forum (15).

These membership patterns thus suggest that China's institutional order is primarily regional, albeit with global or trans-regional linkages. The primarily regional nature of China-founded institutions is reinforced by the identities of the countries that most frequently partner

with China in institutional creation. As Figure 4 shows, these are almost all Asian or Asia-Pacific countries.[11]

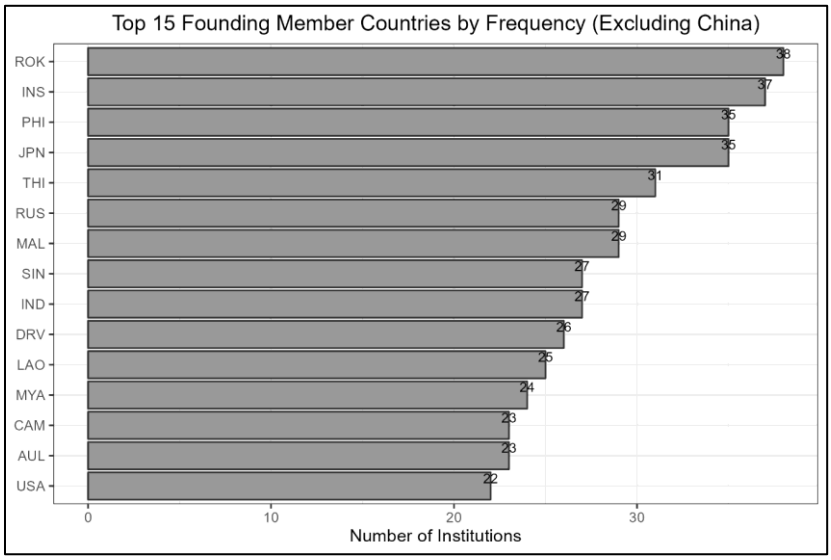

Figure 4. Top fifteen founding member states by frequency (excluding China),

To probe membership dynamics further, we applied network analysis to calculate each co-founding state's network centrality (eigenvector and betweenness centrality) (Csárdi and Nepusz 2006). This reveals which states most often partner with China and which institutions serve as key links between members. Figure 5 visualizes this network, restricted for clarity to the top 20 states and institutions where China played a leading role or was sole founder: institutions which can be described as products of Chinese leadership.

[11] Here we exclude the least formal category of "other" institutions from the discussion, where owing to their informal nature it is inappropriate to speak of state "membership" as distinct from participation. Interestingly, countries such as Australia and the United States can be seen in the top 15 of co-founding states. This is a product largely of institution building in the 1990s.

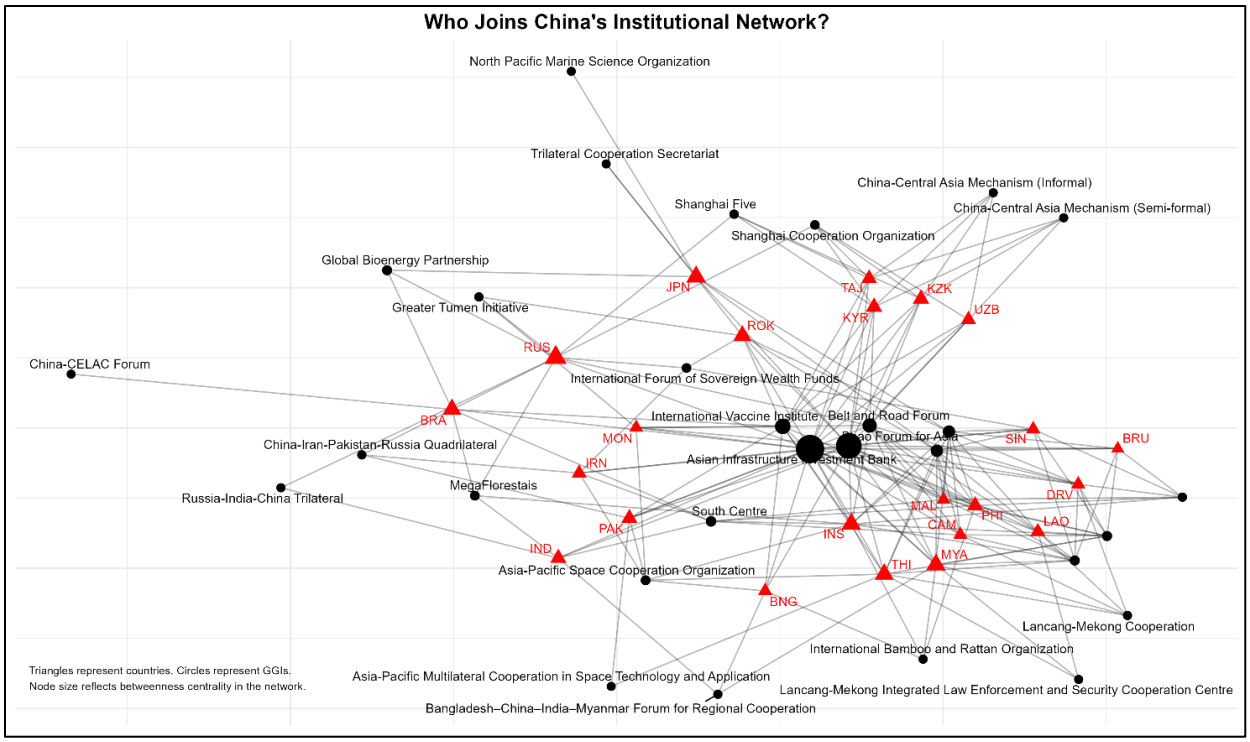

Figure 5. Network structure of China's institutional order. Note: Triangles represent countries, circles represent GGIs, and node size reflects betweenness centrality.

At the core of China's institutional network lie a handful of institutions that act as brokers linking otherwise regional clusters. The AIIB exhibits by far the highest betweenness centrality (a value of 274), followed by the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA, 238). Most other institutions score in the single digits, underscoring their regional memberships. These institutional hubs form a backbone connecting two dense regional clusters: an ASEAN/Mekong complex and a Central Asia–Eurasia complex. The former is made up of institutions such as the ASEAN–China Centre (ACC), the China–ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center (CAEC), the Lancang–Mekong Cooperation (LMC), the Lancang–Mekong Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Centre (LM-LECC), the Pan-Beibu Gulf Economic Cooperation Forum, ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO), and the East Asia Summit (EAS). The latter includes the SCO, the China–Central Asia "C+C5" mechanisms, and the China–Iran–Pakistan–Russia Quadrilateral (CIPR), which link China to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia. Cutting across these blocs are a few issue-specific platforms—such as AIIB, the International Vaccine Institute, and the South Centre—that draw in actors from Latin America and beyond.

Regarding state members, China's closest partners are a mix of ASEAN members and larger regional powers. Russia clearly stands out with the highest betweenness score (around 104), followed by Indonesia and Japan (~80 each), Myanmar (78), Thailand (73), Brazil (71), and South Korea (~66). Smaller ASEAN members are densely connected to China but occupy more peripheral positions. In sum, China's institutional network is not global but regionally anchored. It consists of two tightly knit Asian clusters and a looser Global South extension, with a few cross-regional linkages. Rather than a globe-spanning order, China has built a primarily Asia-centric network of institutions.

Taking the first and second observable implications together, the evidence points to Chinese institution building being broad in issue scope, including domains critical to hegemonic orders. Yet its membership is largely regional, being concentrated in the Southeast Asian and Central Asian spaces, with Russia standing out as a key institutional partner. This is more consistent with the construction of a regional or inter-regional order than a truly global one.

Observable implication 3: Hegemonic exclusion

A prerequisite for the construction of a rival international order is to exclude the established hegemon from the new institutional network and erode its primacy. The evidence on the extent to which China has been engaged in this form of "soft balancing through institution building" reveals a mixed picture, with a shift towards more exclusive institution building over time.

China and the United States have jointly established 22 global governance institutions in the post-Cold War era: a significant number that underscores their significant past cooperation. Prominent examples include the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Global Environment Facility, and the G20 as a head-of-state organization. Yet, China did not play a leading role in the creation of any of these institutions, many of which were products of American and more broadly Western institution building than Chinese. Moreover, almost all instances of China–U.S. co-founding occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s, coming to a halt in the Xi era. The most recent case of a U.S.-China co-founding, the creation of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission in 2012, took place one year after the announcement of the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" and one year prior to Xi Jinping's consolidation as China's premier leader. Since then, there has been a shift from associative to dissociative institution building between China and the United States. China has

spearheaded the establishment of new institutions without U.S. involvement, and in some cases, such as the AIIB, the United States has actively opposed these initiatives (although China invited the United States to join). Since Xi Jinping's ascension as supreme leader, U.S.-Chinese co-sponsoring of new institutions has ceased. Overall, a majority of China-founded institutions do exclude the United States, and none of the institutions where China has played a leading role include it as a co-founder. Over the past decade, co-founding has given way to institutional dissociation, which is quite consistent with the logic of hegemonic exclusion.

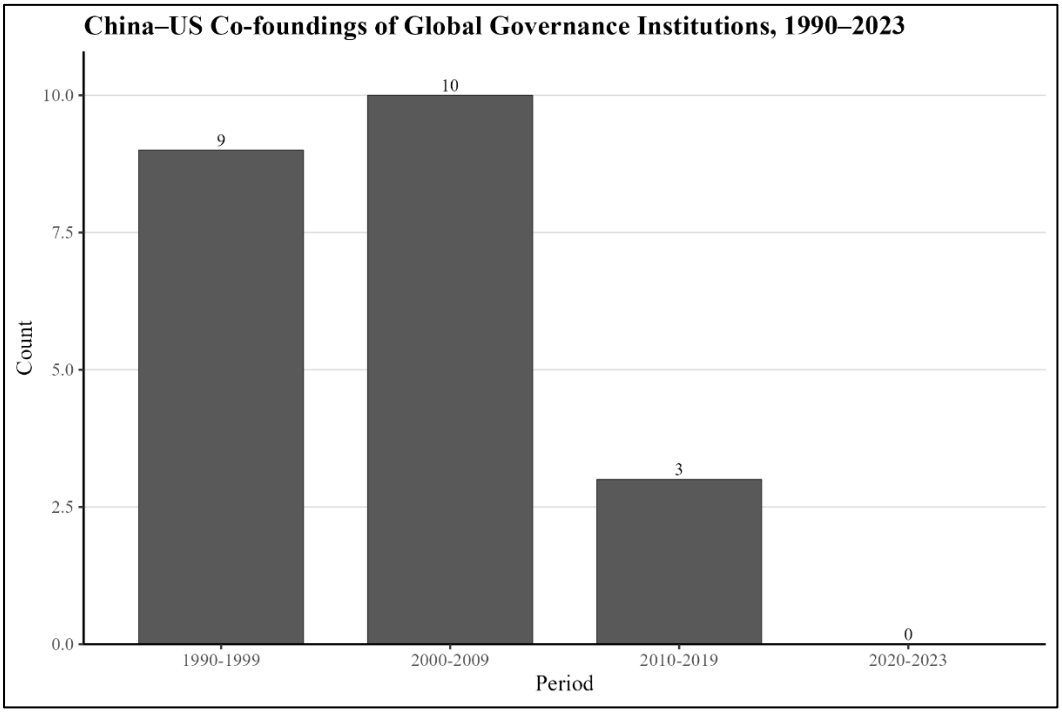

Figure 6. U.S.-Chinese Institutional Co-Sponsoring over Time.

Observable implication 4: Bypass and displacement

The fourth indicator asks whether China has created new institutions to bypass or displace the economic and security institutions associated with American hegemony. In international security, China has eschewed the creation of collective defense alliances on the model of the United States' NATO or the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact. China has so far extended formal security guarantees only to North Korea. But there are other signs of China building international security institutions that provide an alternative platform and normative framework for international security cooperation. China was a founding member of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building- Measures in Asia (CICA), which held its first ministerial-level meeting in Kazakhstan in 1999 and has developed into a formal

intergovernmental organization to promote security and stability in Asia. CICA's Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures (adopted in 2021) has become a major norm-setting instrument in Asia. China has played a more prominent role in the organization since hosting its fourth summit in 2014, and has used the forum to promote a pan-Asian security concept that offers an alternative to both the American-led alliances system and ASEAN-centered forums (Doshi 2021, 226). China played a leading role in upgrading the Shanghai Five (originally a Kazakh initiative) and launching the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a formal IGO in 2003. China has since supported the expansion of the SCO to include new members and observers, and promoted its vision for "true multilateralism" and indivisible security (Seiwert 2023; Yuan 2023). Alongside China's promotion of the Global Security Initiative as a new framework for international security (Ekman 2023), these institutions do not replicate Western institutions but create an alternative institutional infrastructure, especially in Eurasia.

There are also mounting signs that China has played a key role in building new multilateral institutions that replicate the policy tasks of Western-dominated financial institutions. While China remains deeply invested in both the World Bank and IMF and has not called for their replacement, China has grown increasingly frustrated with what it perceives as its grievous under-representation in these institutions (Wade and Vestergaard 2025). There is evidence that China has created new institutions, at least on a regional basis, that circumvent these legacy institutions of American hegemony (Qian et al. 2023; Bader 2021; de Castro and Santiago 2025). These include the NDB, AIIB, AMRO, and the MCDF. With over 120 members, the AIIB now ranks as the second-largest multilateral development bank after the World Bank. While still strongly linked to the Bretton Woods institutions in terms of membership and even co-financing, these Chinese-led institutions represent an alternative development finance architecture that prioritizes infrastructure investment, "south-south" cooperation, and governance models less dominated by Western conditionality or liberal norms.

Moreover, a range of China-led regional forums[12] as well as the Belt and Road Initiative allow China to conduct financial diplomacy outside of Western multilateral frameworks (Dreher, Fuchs, et al. 2022). One study shows that China has emerged as a major lender of last resort for developing countries via a combination of central bank swap lines and

[12] Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (China–CELAC) Forum, China–Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF), China–Central Asia Summit, Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (China-CEEC).

loans through state-owned banks and enterprises (Horn et al. 2023, 4). The authors conclude that China is following a similar historical trajectory to the United States in the first half of the twentieth century (Horn et al. 2023, 15). While far from constituting an alternative to the global crisis lending roles of the IMF and the US Federal Reserve, China's institution building indicate the gradual accumulation of infrastructure that bypasses the core instruments of American economic hegemony.

Observable implication 5: Autocratic alignment

Is China constructing an authoritarian international order in concert with other autocratic states? The evidence for this is limited. The network analysis above has shown that while some prominent autocracies feature at the core of China's institutional order (e.g. Russia and Kazakhstan), several consolidated democracies are also prominent members (e.g. South Korea and Japan). China's institutional order is not primarily or exclusively composed of autocracies. Of the fifteen countries that have most frequently partnered with China to found new institutions, nine can be classified today as closed or electoral autocracies, while seven can be classified as liberal or electoral democracies (Nord et al. 2024). This share of autocratic partners is somewhat higher than the current global share of autocracies of approximately 50 percent, but not dramatically so. This pattern suggests that China's institution building is driven more by pragmatic considerations of regional proximity, which happens to be overpopulated by autocracies, than by a drive for an ideologically cohesive authoritarian bloc.

The picture changes somewhat when we focus on institutions that more clearly reflect Chinese sponsorship. Among the fifteen most frequent co-founding partners in these cases, only three can be classified as democratic. This pattern might suggest a tilt toward autocratic partners, but, again, the regional context of Chinese institution building also matters: because the majority of states in Asia are autocratic, the prevalence of autocracies among China's closest institutional partners may still reflect regional composition rather than ideological affinity.

Overall, there is mixed evidence that China is deliberately constructing an autocratic institutional order. Relative to global or regional averages, the pattern appears driven more by geographic proximity and shared regional interests than by regime type.

Table 3. Top 15 Partnering Countries, where China plays "a leading Role" in Institutional Setup (sorted by frequency of co-foundings)

Rank	Country	Frequency	Regime Type
1	Thailand	46	Electoral autocracy
2	Indonesia	43	Electoral democracy
3	Myanmar	41	Closed autocracy
4	Philippines	40	Electoral autocracy
5	Vietnam	39	Closed autocracy
6	Malaysia	38	Electoral democracy
7	Laos	36	Closed autocracy
8	Singapore	35	Electoral autocracy
9	Cambodia	31	Electoral autocracy
10	Japan	26	Liberal democracy
11	South Korea	26	Liberal democracy
12	India	20	Electoral autocracy
13	Russia	20	Electoral autocracy
14	Brunei	19	No data
15	Pakistan	17	Electoral autocracy

Source: own data, (Nord et al. 2024 (regime type 2023))

Observable implication 6: Institutional privileges

Does China control, formally or informally, the institutions it founds? As a major power, China is expected to wield significant influence in international organizations it considers politically salient. Several China-founded institutions clearly embed a leading role for Beijing. These include China-led regional forums such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the Forum of China and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which are structured as interactions between China and an entire region (Sohn 2012), and informal policy platforms hosted exclusively by China, such as the World Internet Conference (until 2022) and the Lanting Forum. The informality of such institutions allows China to position itself as the central actor, reflecting a China-centric logic rather than a strictly hierarchical one. Due to their informal nature, such influence is exercised through hosting and agenda-setting rather than formalized institutional privileges.

Only one China-founded institution enshrines a formal leading role for China: the AIIB. China's large voting share, de facto veto power, and the location of the bank in Beijing are all indicative of an outsized Chinese role in decision-making. The impression that China holds disproportionate influence over the AIIB was reinforced when the bank selected Zou Jiayi, a CPC Central Committee member, as the successor to Jin Liqun as President (Kawase 2025). By contrast, other institutions where such privileges might be expected have avoided institutionalizing Chinese privileges. The NDB is based on equal voting shares amongst is five founding members, and the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office has been carefully calibrated such that China and Hong Kong's vote share exactly equals that of Japan.[13] China exerts considerable influence in the "bi-multilateral" regional forums and transnational policy forums it hosts, but among formal treaty-based IOs in the dataset only the AIIB grants it special voting privileges.

In short, while China exerts considerable informal influence in regional and transnational forums it hosts, formal privileges are rare. Among treaty-based IGOs, only the AIIB enshrines special voting rights for China, underscoring a pattern of selective institutional control rather than systemic dominance.

Discussion and Conclusion

There can be little doubt that China has been an active builder of international institutions in the post-Cold War era, and especially in the Xi era, China has taken the lead in initiating a range of primarily Asian and Eurasian institutions that, in aggregate, might be described as a rival regional order. Key initial steps on this path included the creation of a series of regional forums such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (2000), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (2002), the Russia-India-China Trilateral (2002), the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (2004), the China-Central and Eastern European Countries format (2012), the China-CELAC Forum (2015), and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council (2022). These mostly informal, intergovernmental institutions provide China with amenable and autonomous mechanisms for engaging in multilateral and bilateral diplomacy with countries in its region and beyond. Institutions such as the AIIB and the SCO stand out as the two institutions which are both highly formalized and in whose establishment China played an essential role. Beijing's recent proposal to establish a World Artificial Intelligence

[13] https://amro-asia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CMIM-Members-Contribution-and-Voting-Powers.pdf

Cooperation Organization (WAICO) represents the continuation of a process of institution building that has long been underway (Gibney 2025).

China-founded institutions are also present in every world region, although the extent of this presence varies greatly. China-founded institutions with truly global memberships, such as the AIIB, remain a rarity, indicating that Chinese institution building has so far taken place primarily at regional levels, with two strong clusters emerging in the Southeast Asian and Central Asia-Eurasian spaces. The AIIB lies at the heart of China's institutional network, and the SCO forms a node in the Central Asia-Eurasia regional cluster. The fact that Russia occupies the most central position in China's institutional network reinforces the role of the China-Russia partnership in these two challengers to Western hegemony. Over time, China's institutional network has grown in membership, issues covered, and geographical extent, as well as reflecting a higher level of Chinese leadership in the Xi era. While far from constituting a coherent rival global order, this could plausibly be described as a *rival regional order* that has also expanded beyond China's immediate region. In sum, a trend can be detected towards an increasingly global China-founded institutional order from an already institutionalized regional core.

The nature of Chinese institution building has also changed over time. There is a clear trend of increased Chinese leadership in the process of institutional creation, as well as a shift from co-founding together with the United States, to institutional dissociation, in which China and the United States increasingly build institutions that exclude the other, providing evidence consistent with the idea of a polarization of international order (Owen 2021; Mearsheimer 2019; Yan 2020). New financial and security institutions are indicative of a shift from complementary to rivalrous institution building. Whether China-founded institutions will be able to bypass the institutions central to American hegemony—particularly the Bretton Woods institutions—is far from assured, even if a significant institutional infrastructure has developed by which China can exercise global financial influence. If China is constructing a novel institutional order, there is only mixed evidence that this is driven by a logic of autocratic affinity. Rather, it seems to be the case that Chinese institutional founding relies more on regional proximity, and in this region of the world, autocracies are overrepresented compared to the global average. While many of China's institutions can be regarded as Sinocentric, Chinese attempts to attain explicit institutional privileges remain an exception. In short, the development over time is towards an increasingly dense and geographically expansive China-founded institutional order that translates Chinese power into institutional

influence—so far, without the disruption or critical juncture associated with hegemonic conflict.

These findings have several implications for scholarship and policy. First, they underline that there is little to be gained from categorizing China as either a joiner or a challenger of the existing international order. Rather, we should recognize that China is building its own order alongside and in addition to the traditionally Western-dominated institutions of the post-war era. Just as China's approach to existing international institutions displays great variation across the various domains of international order (Johnston 2019), so the institutions founded by China display enormous variation regarding the extent of Chinese leadership, their institutional design features, and whether they become rivalrous or complementary to existing institutions. Greater attention to systematic, empirical, and longer-term data is essential, as this can reveal patterns and trends that are easily missed when focusing only on headline-grabbing cases.

Second, these results are not in line with traditional hegemonic transition approaches to international order change (Gilpin 1981; Ikenberry 2001; Tammen et al. 2000). Scholars should pay closer attention to gradual and piecemeal modes of change that, when aggregated, may turn out to be equally significant in generating change in international order. The depth of institutionalization at regional rather than global levels also suggests that the emerging great power contest to reshape international order is likely to be strongly mediated by regional, inter-institutional, and gradual dynamics.

In light of the ongoing reconfiguration of world order, a real opportunity has emerged for China to build on its already significant institutional achievements and fulfil its declared goal of playing a leading role in the reform of global governance. The abdication of global leadership by the United States under the Trump administration has arguably done far more to challenge and undermine the established international order than anything China has been able or willing to achieve. With its shift from ambivalence to hostility towards international institutions, the United States opens a path for China not only to build on its own institutional order but to repurpose the existing one. States seeking stability, market access, and great power patronage will increasingly turn towards Beijing, reinforcing Chinese leadership and pushing international order further along the road of hegemonic transition.

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