

The GIC Manifesto: The Pressing Need for Constructive Globalism

Introduction

At a time when the world agenda is overshadowed by great-power competition, globalism has become more relevant than ever before. Guided by the twin principles of mutual learning and cross-border learning, it offers the antidote to neo-nationalism and anti-capitalist nostalgia.

The real choice facing nations today is not between “globalism” and “sovereignty,” but between managed interdependence and unmanaged vulnerability. The claim that globalism aims to create the conditions for world government is a deliberate rhetorical diversion to evade that choice.

Constructive globalism relies on networks of overlapping and issue-specific coalitions among nations. Participation in any such coalition is voluntary, but a commitment, once made, should be real.

- **Most 21st century risks are structurally global**

Constructive globalism starts from two simple facts: First, the defining risks of the 21st century are all structurally global in character. Second, virtually all nations face them.

Those challenges include security, public health, balanced digital infrastructure, economic resilience and the governance of global public goods. They also include the need to protect against systemic shocks, whether those stem from AI, climate change, financial contagion, supply-chain fragility, erosion of democracy or irregular migration flows.

- **Globalism as a risk management strategy**

These risks and challenges respect neither national borders nor electoral cycles. That is why policy makers, business leaders and the public should regard coalitions based on mutual self-interest not as a “nice-to-have,” but as the core of any viable long-term risk management strategy.

Such coalitions also are force multipliers that can lower the cost of capital and strengthen the domestic and global impact of private and public action.

- **Future focus: The vitality of cross-border learning**

To find solutions to contemporary challenges, it is vital to look beyond national borders. Cross-border learning pursued via “The Power of Comparisons” has two distinct advantages.

First, it can help overcome domestic political stalemates. Second, it can stimulate more openness and create room for imagination and courage in the pursuit of smart policy innovations. Both advantages exist because cross-border learning reveals solutions that have already succeeded elsewhere.

- **Three design principles of constructive globalism**

First, constructive globalism is solutions-oriented, not ideology-driven. Meaningful cooperation begins with identifying concrete challenges at the national, regional and global levels and then moves to build the coalitions, standards and institutions needed to tackle them.

Second, it is variable in geometry. Not every country must sit at every table. Plurilateral arrangements, regional compacts and functional clubs can coexist and interlock, provided they are transparent and open to access.

Third, for constructive globalism to have real traction, there must be powerful mechanisms to contest overreach of or noncompliance with binding rules.

- **Focus on the viability of democracy**

Democracy in this era is perhaps most accurately defined as a system of governance in which political parties engage in the pursuit of “competitive overpromising.” The consequence is a steady erosion of support for democracy as decision makers consistently fail to deliver what they promised.

- **A global and a domestic focus**

To safeguard democracy requires understanding that constructive collective action on issues affecting the global commons is only part of the challenge.

A focus on the domestic equation inside each country is also crucial, especially regarding inequality of socioeconomic outcomes, which hampers not just sovereignty but also economic growth.

- **Why economic realism matters**

Any nation embracing a cooperative approach must make sure that economic realism is an integral part of any policy concept.

Pie-in-the-sky solutions, as they are often presented in Europe at the national and the EU levels, are just roads to nowhere. Policy formulation must acknowledge that budgets in the public and the private sectors are constrained.

- **All societies across the globe are under great strain**

At a time when most societies are operating under significant internal strain, transparent, cooperative problem-solving is the only credible antidote to global inertia.

For the public at large, a shift toward constructive globalism holds the promise of tangible benefits.

Constructive globalism can underpin higher and more secure living standards by reducing the frequency and severity of crises. This can be achieved, for example, by widening access to innovative technologies and medicines, and by creating shared guardrails for technologies that otherwise threaten jobs, privacy and security.

Most important, a newly conceived, constructive globalism offers citizens a pathway out of the false choice between national isolation or submission to the whims of self-declared “great powers.” Those two approaches achieve the opposite of what they promise — they increase, rather than reduce, vulnerability.

- **A final reflection: Constructive globalism and the imperial diversion**

Both the United States and China, contrary to their current pretensions, also have feet of clay and are sources of global instability.

The odds are that sooner or later they will understand attempts at autarchy are impossibly costly and that their competing concepts of great power unilateralism do not allow them to manage global risks.

For now, many Western nations are faced with the consequences of the United States' revision of its traditional alliances and its increasing openness to autocrats and long-time ideological adversaries.

However, this alliance trimming on the part of the United States has its benefits. First, Western nations realize that, rather than sailing under an American umbrella, they need to raise their own standards. Each must do more to protect its own future, whether militarily, economically, technologically, culturally or socially. The time to act is now.

That is why many nations have every incentive to pursue a strategy of multi-alignment. They require pragmatic governance choices and solutions-oriented cooperation well outside their immediate regional environs and beyond their long-held political alliances. These nations need methods and tools to secure their value-based preferences in cooperation with a broader range of new partners.

That is constructive globalism in action.

■