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China's four 'global initiatives': Attempting to change the global order

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has established four initiatives aimed at aligning the international order with its preferences: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilisation Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative.
- Using these initiatives as 'pillars', the People's Republic of China (PRC) aims to challenge the United States (US)-led free and open international order. This includes expanding its influence in forums such as the United Nations and World Trade Organisation, and establishing alternatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS.
- The PRC advocates for greater influence for developing countries – referred to by the CCP as the 'Global South' – and positions itself as a member of the 'Global South family'. In doing so, it aims to align developing countries with its vision for a reshaped international order.

In June 2026, the State Council Information Office (SCIO) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) announced that in autumn that year, the PRC would host an inaugural Global Governance Forum to discuss reforming and improving global governance.[1] The Chinese government and its think tanks have long been in overdrive, as they promulgate the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) own views and aims for change in global governance.

Over the past five years, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CCP, has introduced and expanded upon the architecture of 'a community with a shared future for mankind' and its four supporting pillars. These are the **Global Development Initiative** (GDI), the **Global Security Initiative** (GSI), the **Global Civilisation Initiative** (GCI), and the **Global Governance Initiative** (GGI).

Xi considers reworking the international order and global governance an essential prerequisite for achieving the PRC's 'Second Centennial Goal', namely, by the centenary of the establishment of the PRC in 2049, becoming 'a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful' – in short, to become the leading global power. With some justification, the CCP sees the system established after the Second World War as benefiting the interests of, and aligning with the values of, the United States (US) and its allies. Without this changing, achieving the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' – a slogan encompassing the intent of the 'Second Centennial Goal' – will not be possible.

The intention is not to replace the United Nations (UN) and other global institutions, but to refashion them. By canvassing the support of developing countries – often referred to by the CCP as the 'Global South'[2] – the PRC is working to set up new regional and global organisations and groupings more closely aligned with its own interests and values. It also aims to have a major say in drawing up international regulations and norms in new areas, such as space, the polar regions, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The border between alignment and control is sometimes unclear.

This long Explainer uses CCP instructions and explanations to its own members to elucidate the architecture of the 'common destiny' and four global initiatives. Nevertheless, the terms retain a degree of woolliness. The CCP does this deliberately, both to allow flexibility in the present and to accommodate developments in the future.

As argued in previous papers by the Council on Geostrategy, anti-Americanism is the wellspring of the PRC's foreign policy, and also informs

[1] 'China to host inaugural Xiong'an Global Governance Forum', *Xinhua*, 17/06/2026, https://en.people.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026). At the time of writing no date has been announced, but it is likely to occur on 23rd-25th October 2026. The SCIO and the Central Propaganda Department are one and the same.

[2] The term 'Global South' was first used in 1969 by Carl Oglesby, an American writer and political activist, to denote developing countries – including the PRC. It has subsequently been embraced by a plethora of political actors, including the CCP. See: Carl Oglesby, 'Vietnamism has failed...The revolution can only be mauled, not defeated', *Commonweal*, 90 (1969).

much of its domestic policy.[3] The CCP believes – correctly – that the US is trying to contain and repress its rise, so that the PRC will be unable to attain 'national rejuvenation' or 'China's modernisation' (another codeword for the PRC becoming the world's dominant power). This study aims to show how, in the area of global governance, under the guiding principle of anti-Americanism, this intention is being translated into action in pursuit of long-term goals.
If liberal, democratic international norms and values are not to lose their 'dominant position' – a phrase that Xi uses to define his own ambitions – greater unity and purpose are required, not least because reforms of the global governance system are indeed needed. Free and open countries should also engage better in the propaganda war that the CCP has launched.

'Xi Jinping thought on foreign relations': The architecture

The CCP continues to refine 'Xi Jinping thought on foreign relations'. The overarching concept is to 'build a community with a shared future for mankind'. Initially, this concept was supported by three pillars, which, starting in 2022, emerged at the rate of one a year: the GDI, the GSI, and the GCI. Liu Jianchao, then Head of the International Department of the CCP (in practice, a more important body in setting the PRC's foreign policy than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA]), made this clear in 2023:

> From the perspective of historical logic, the 'three major global initiatives' are closely related to the three major themes of the progress of human society, and together constitute the 'three pillars' of the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.[4]

At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in September 2025, Xi announced a fourth pillar: the GGI. He has also talked of the Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative (GAIGI), but this lacks the status of the other four. At the BRICS summit on 12th-13th September 2026, Xi announced that 'China will

[3] Charles Parton, 'Anti-Americanism will remain the foundation of the PRC's foreign policy', Council on Geostrategy, 23/01/2025, https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/ (checked: 05/10/2026); and Charles Parton, 'The 15th Five-Year Plan: A geopolitical reading', *Observing China*, 03/03/2026, https://www.observingchina.org.uk/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[4] Liu Jianchao, 'Deeply grasp the inherent relationship between the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the "three major global initiatives"', *People's Daily*, 08/08/2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

be a pioneer in establishing a BRICS AI open-source community.'[5] He also proposed the 'BRICS initiative of AI-empowered new industrialisation'.[6] It would not be surprising if Xi were to announce a Global Technology Initiative in the future. Together, 'the four major global initiatives are organically unified and mutually reinforcing, collectively constituting important strategic measures for promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.'[7] This and other similar pronouncements do not mention the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI receives less emphasis than in the past, but it will not be allowed to disappear – not least because the CCP has managed to insert it into UN and other international documents. Reduced mention of the BRI may also reflect reduced willingness to pour the large sums of the past into future BRI projects. The newer GDI label fits the more targeted approach that the CCP has brought to projects abroad.

An arch and four pillars

The definitions of the 'community of a shared future' and the four global initiatives have evolved over time, retaining their degree of woolliness in order to cater for future global events. They are also important vectors for the CCP's propaganda war against the US and its allies.

Building a community with a shared future for mankind

First used by Hu Jintao, then General Secretary of the CCP, in the context of Taiwan at the Party Congress of 2007, the concept has been requisitioned by Xi as his own, not least in international speeches: in Moscow (March 2013), in New York (September 2015 at the UN), and in Geneva (January 2017 at the UN). Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC and Politburo member, set out its developed form in November 2025, listing six constituents:

1. Advocating a multipolar world of equality, order, and economic globalisation, which is universally beneficial and inclusive;

2. Deepening integration of development with neighbouring countries and safeguarding regional peace and stability;

[5] Xi Jinping, Statement: 'Cementing the Foundation for BRICS Cooperation and Bolstering the Strength of the Global South', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[6] Xi Jinping, Statement: 'Jointly Shouldering the Responsibility of the Times and Striving to Be a Pioneering Force', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[7] Xu Jian, 'Deeply Grasping the Significance and Contemporary Value of the Global Governance Initiative', *People's Daily*, 15/09/2025, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

3. Maintaining overall stability in major actor relations (e.g., with Russia, the US, Europe, and emerging nations);[8]

4. Deepening solidarity and cooperation with developing countries;

5. Implementing the four 'global initiatives';

6. Promoting the building of a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness and inclusiveness, and cleanness and beauty (i.e., environmental issues).[9]

Few would disagree with these six elements as a prescription for global stability and prosperity; all would want to know what they mean in practice. The four global initiatives provide more – but not full – elucidation.

The Global Development Initiative (September 2021)

According to the SCIO in September 2023, the fundamental aim of the GDI is to accelerate the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[10] Xi told the 'BRICS+' leaders' dialogue in Kazan in October 2024:

> We should play an active and leading role in the global economic governance reform, and make development the core of international economic and trade agenda.[11]

The SCIO echoed this sentiment in June 2026:

> With more than 130 countries and international organisations supporting participation in the initiative and over 80 countries joining the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative…China has signed more than 80 cooperation documents on implementing the initiative with other developing countries, international organisations, and financial institutions.'[12]

[8] Despite it being a continent, the CCP cites 'Europe' rather than identifying specific countries.
[9] Wang Yi, 'Promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind', *Qiushi*, 05/11/2025, https://www.qstheory.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[10] 'A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 26/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[11] Xi Jinping, Speech: 'Combining the Great Strength of the Global South To Build Together a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind', *Xinhua*, 24/10/2024, https://english.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[12] 'More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals, and Actions', the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, http://english.scio.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

In 2024, Xi claimed that since its introduction in 2021, the GDI had helped to make available nearly US$20 billion (£15.1 billion) of development funds and had launched more than 1,100 projects.[13] By June 2026, 'more than US$23 billion [£17.4 billion] of development funds of various types have been mobilised', and the PRC had 'launched more than 1,800 cooperation projects, and completed the training of 80,000 people within the framework of the initiative'[14] – representing a considerably lower commitment of funds in the past two years than the preceding three.

Such claims require caution: it is not clear how much funding represents new money as opposed to existing projects repackaged under the GDI label. Additionally, findings by AidData, an aid and development research institute, show that the PRC's grant aid (as opposed to loans) is a very small total of its foreign funding. Recently, the bulk of the PRC's overseas investment has gone not to developing countries but to *developed* ones, as the CCP pursues its aim of dominating new technologies.[15] In pushing the GDI, the CCP frequently attacks or stresses the contrast with the US, often referred to as 'some countries'.

The Global Security Initiative (April 2022)

Xi often draws on his predecessors' ideas, even if his burgeoning personality cult credits him alone for all aspects of the 'thought'. In the case of the GSI, Jiang Zemin, then General Secretary of the CCP, introduced the idea of a 'new security concept' in the late 1990s.[16] For Xi, ending international conflict and promoting joint international efforts to bring stability, peace, and development to the world are to be achieved via a sixfold commitment to:

1. A vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security;

2. Respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, non-interference in others' internal affairs, development paths, and social systems;

3. Abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, rather than indulging in 'Cold War mentality, unilateralism…bloc politics, and camp-based confrontation';

[13] Xi Jinping, Speech: 'Combining the Great Strength of the Global South To Build Together a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind', *Xinhua*, 24/10/2024, https://english.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[14] Xu Jian, 'Deeply Grasping the Significance and Contemporary Value of the Global Governance Initiative', *People's Daily*, 15/09/2025, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[15] Alex Wooley, 'China's massive overseas lending portfolio shifts course, as Beijing eyes the US, EU, and sensitive industries', AidData, 18/11/2025, https://www.aiddata.org/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[16] For a discussion, see: 'China Security Report 2014: Diversification of Roles in the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police', National Institute of Defence Studies, Japan, 2014, https://www.nids.mod.go.jp/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

4. Taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, and not at the expense of others;

5. Resolving differences and disputes between countries peacefully through dialogue and consultation, and not using 'double standards...unilateral sanctions and long-armed jurisdiction';

6. Maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity, and biosecurity.[17]

As with the other global initiatives, the GSI is sufficiently widely drawn that it can encompass any and every aspect of security that suits the CCP. Over 20 areas are grouped under three headings: traditional issues, such as peacekeeping, nuclear proliferation, and maritime security; regional issues, security cooperation mechanisms, and organisations; and non-traditional security issues, such as health, cyberspace governance, digital governance, nuclear security, maritime governance, and the environment.[18]

Providing training is a path well-trodden by the UK, the US, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and other countries. The CCP brings an anti-American approach, invested with its own values and interests. Part of the propaganda surrounding the GSI encourages countries to 'reject the Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say "no" to group politics and bloc confrontation.' The CCP's state press promulgates the view that 'the Global Security Initiative advocates that humanity is an indivisible security community, that the security of one country should not be achieved at the expense of the security of others.'[19] This stance begs large questions about the CCP's own behaviour, not least in its increasing support for Russia in its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, or its threats towards other countries in the South China and East China seas.

[17] 'More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals, and Actions', the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, http://english.scio.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[18] 'A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 26/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[19] Liu Xuelian, 'Global Security Initiative: Constructing a Holistic Vision of a New Security Theory', *People's Daily*, 26/08/2025, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

The Global Civilisation Initiative (March 2023)

In March 2023,

> Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilisation Initiative for the first time, profoundly pointing out that "peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common pursuit of people of all countries".[20]

The SCIO listed the four proposals under the GCI as 'jointly advocating':[21]

1. Respect for the diversity of civilisations: different countries' cultures are equal, none should dominate;

2. Common values of humanity, such as peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom, interpretations of which will differ from country to country. Imposing interpretations or stoking ideological confrontation must be avoided;

3. The importance of continuity and evolution of civilisations: Countries' histories and cultures are relevant to their development and modernisation;

4. Closer international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.[22]

These four proposals continue to form the backbone of the GCI, being repeated, for example, in the July 2025 Beijing Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on the Dialogue of Global Civilisations.[23]

The GCI is a statement about cultural influence. However, for all the blandness of its proposals, it is worth remembering that for the CCP, ideology is the prime constituent of culture. All would agree on the six concepts listed in the Foreign Relations Law as the pursuit of all countries (peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom),[24] but their definition is crucial. Indeed, as

[20] 'Always promote the common values of all mankind: The greatest common denominator for building a better world (part 2)', *People's Daily*, 24/03/2023, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[21] 'A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 26/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[22] A good definition of 'people-to-people relations' is set out in the original National Development and Research Commission BRI plan of March 2015. Areas of cooperation include exchanges and cooperation in academia, youth, culture, tourism, sport, health, science and technology, political parties, sister cities, and more. See: 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road', State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 28/03/2015, http://english.scio.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[23] 'Beijing Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on Dialogue of Global Civilisations', *People's Daily*, 12/07/2025, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[24] 'The Law on Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China', Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, 11/07/2023, https://en.moj.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

'Document No. 9' made clear in April 2013, Xi excoriates all the values that, for free and open democracies, stand behind justice, democracy, and freedom.[25]

The GCI sounds bland, but it is not. It aims to ward off attacks on the CCP's human rights record; its persecution of Uyghurs, Tibetans, and its own Han citizens:

> We need to respect the diversity of civilisations…Human rights for all is the shared pursuit of humanity. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' model for promoting and protecting human rights. All countries' independent choice of their own path of human rights development should be respected. Human rights have historical, specific, and practical contexts…Human rights issues should not be politicised or used as a tool, double standard should be rejected, and still less should human rights be used as an excuse to interfere in other countries' internal affairs or encircle and contain other countries as they pursue development.[26]

Going further, it represents a strong attack on the free and open model of governance and development led by the US. As Liu Jianchao, then Head of the CCP's International Liaison Department, said in 2023: 'No value should override all other values, and not only one model of national governance can achieve modernisation and civilisation progress.'[27] Other influential CCP figures have also linked the GCI to the development of the global governance system and modernisation.[28]

A dangerous contradiction stands at the heart of the GCI. The CCP attacks free and open nations' concept of 'universal values', while itself advocating 'common values'. Whatever the difference, 'common values' must have universal relevance to be meaningful. At present, 'common values' remain undefined. The danger they represent is that, however vague they are to start with, they undermine the current order and become accepted by many countries. With this achieved, the CCP can then flesh out 'common values' with content that better suits its interests. The final stage would be to exploit a range of economic, technological, or other dependencies, thus ensuring that other governments behave in accordance with the CCP's values and rules.

[25] Formally titled 'Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere', this internal CCP document was leaked. It is a harsh condemnation of 'Western' universal values and systems. For an English translation, see: 'Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation', *ChinaFile*, 08/11/2013, https://www.chinafile.com/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[26] 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[27] Liu Jianchao, 'Actively implement the global civilisation initiative and work together to promote the progress of human civilisation', *Qiushi*, 01/04/2023, https://www.qstheory.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[28] For example, see: Gao Xiang, 'Unveiling the Laws of the Rise and Fall of Civilisations, and Mapping the Path of Civilisational Development – The Theoretical Implications and Practical Value of the Global Civilisation Initiative', *Contemporary World*, 18/04/2023, translated by Centre for Strategic and International Studies, https://interpret.csis.org/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

The Global Governance Initiative (September 2025)

The GGI was announced by Xi on 1st September 2025 at the meeting of the SCO. It was no surprise that he added a fourth pillar to his foreign affairs construct: two years earlier, the MFA put out a 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance'.[29] The MFA's 'Concept Paper on the Global Governance Initiative' lists five core concepts of the GGI, commitments to:[30]

1. Sovereign equality (respect for all countries' sovereignty, freedom from external interference, equality, and a greater say for developing countries in global governance);

2. The international rule of law (to prevent 'some countries' imposing rules when it suits them, and disregarding them when it does not);

3. Multilateralism (global affairs decided by all, the governance system built by all, and the fruits of governance shared by all; building up the UN system, but also the SCO and BRICS);[31]

4. A people-centred approach (encompassing better shared and sustained development; responding to common challenges, such as climate change and health; and cultural and personnel exchanges);[32]

5. Real results (i.e., setting common goals and acting in concert.[33] Examples include the BRI, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund, and the New Development Bank).[34]

If this sounds somewhat woolly, that may be with purpose: it allows the CCP to refine the definition of the GGI as time and events develop. Among the priority areas listed were those 'where governance is in urgent need and scant supply, such

[29] 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[30] 'Concept Paper on the Global Governance Initiative', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 01/09/2025, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[31] Content in brackets taken from: Xu Supei, 'Upholding International Rule of Law is the Fundamental Guarantee – Building a More Just and Reasonable Global Governance System (Part 3)', *Xinhua*, 14/09/2025, https://www.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[32] 'More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals, and Actions', the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, http://english.scio.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Content in brackets taken from: Xu Supei, 'Upholding International Rule of Law is the Fundamental Guarantee – Building a More Just and Reasonable Global Governance System (Part 3)', *Xinhua*, 14/09/2025, https://www.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

as the reform of the international financial architecture, AI, cyberspace, climate change, trade, and outer space.'[35]

The GGI will no doubt accrete more tasks as it matures. In December 2025, Hua Chunying, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, commented that the GGI had offered valuable guidance for strengthening international anti-corruption cooperation.[36]

Behind the rhetoric: Reforming the global governance system

The overarching concept of the community of shared destiny and the four global initiatives make for good slogans. At the UN in May 2026, Wang Yi elaborated by listing nine 'directions for reforming and improving global governance':

1. Promoting the effectiveness of UN reform;
2. Enhancing the authority and capacity of the UN Security Council;
3. Ensuring peacekeeping operations keep pace with the times;
4. Building international consensus on accelerating development;
5. Correcting the direction of international human rights governance;
6. Deepening the reform of the economic and financial system;
7. Establishing rules for AI management;
8. Strengthening governance in new domains such as cyberspace and outer space; and
9. Promoting exchanges among civilisations and achieving inclusive mutual learning.[37]

These can in turn be boiled down into four main components.

Component 1: Reforming and seeking a greater say in existing organisations and institutions

The CCP does not want to dispense with existing organisations and institutions. Like a redeveloped historic building, the façade will stay the same, but the insides must be repurposed to suit CCP interests and values better. As noted by the SCIO,

[35] Content in brackets taken from: Xu Supei, 'Upholding International Rule of Law is the Fundamental Guarantee – Building a More Just and Reasonable Global Governance System (Part 3)', *Xinhua*, 14/09/2025, https://www.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[36] Zhao Jia, 'China willing to advance just and equitable global anti-corruption system', *China Daily*, 15/12/2025, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[37] 'Wang Yi Attends Meeting of the "Friends of Global Governance Group"', *People's Daily*, 29/05/2026, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

'resolutely upholding the UN's authority and status is fundamental to the effective implementation of this [global governance] initiative.'[38] In the words of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

> The UN is the most universal, representative, and authoritative intergovernmental organisation in today's international system and a key pillar underpinning the stable functioning of the global governance system.[39]
>
> ...The various confrontations and injustices in today's world do not arise because the purposes and principles of the UN Charter are outdated, but rather because these purposes and principles are not effectively followed. China maintains that for the world, there is only one system, which is the international system with the United Nations at its core...[40]

Section 5 of the 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance', put out in September 2023, is titled 'Strengthening the core role of the UN and advancing the reform of the global governance system, increasing the voice of developing countries in international affairs, and boosting the enforcement capacity and management efficiency of UN agencies'.[41]

A key element is reform of the UN Security Council 'to boost its authority and efficiency, enhance its capacity to tackle global threats and challenges, and let it better fulfil its mandate prescribed in the UN Charter'.[42] Wang Yi has advocated that the PRC should:

> ...effectively increase the representation of Global South countries, allow more developing countries, especially small and medium-sized countries including those in Africa, to participate in Security Council decision-making.[43]

However, while 'China supports making special arrangements to meet Africa's aspiration as a priority', it has not endorsed the idea of giving the African Union a permanent seat on a reformed Security Council. Nor is the PRC likely to

[38] 'More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals, and Actions', the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, http://english.scio.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[39] 'Upholding International Justice and Jointly Addressing World Turbulence – Focusing on China's Solution to Global Governance', Xinhua Institute, 24/02/2026, https://f1.xhinst.net/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[40] 'A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 26/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[41] 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[42] Ibid.
[43] 'Wang Yi speaks about China's views on reform of the Security Council', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 27/09/2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

support a greater role for Japan or India as part of Security Council reform, which in turn rules out greater German or Brazilian influence.

Where the PRC has been successful within the UN system is ensuring that more UN posts go to Chinese officials. For example, since the appointment of Qu Dongyu as Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in 2019, the number of Chinese directors has risen from two to six, with authority over important positions involving personnel, budgets, and representing the FAO at the UN.[44]

The UN Human Rights Council is another area where the CCP has invested much effort in changing the terms of debate to align it more with its own values and interests. Here, it has succeeded in voting down motions put forward by free and open nations.[45]

These and other successes come as a result of the investments made in smaller countries, as well as the PRC's ability to mobilise them to vote in line with the CCP's wishes. Another sign of the resources devoted to changing the direction of UN debates and actions is a near doubling in the number of Chinese organisations accredited to UN organisations since 2018.[46]

Another important existing organisation to be upheld and reformed is the World Trade Organisation (WTO), from whose provisions the PRC has benefited so much since joining. When introducing the white paper on global governance in June 2026, Wang Yi said 'we must uphold the correct direction of open development. We must firmly defend the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core.'[47]

Component 2: Building new multilateral organisations and platforms in line with the four global initiatives

Establishing new multilateral organisations, financial bodies, and institutions for regulating emerging areas of international concern is also on the menu, as the 15th Five-Year Plan makes clear:

> Promote the G20 [Group of 20] in playing its role as the premier forum for international economic cooperation. Promote expanding the influence of cooperation mechanisms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Actively participate in APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic

[44] Eddy Wax, 'Chairman FAO: Western powers pressure China's UN food boss to grip global hunger crisis', *Politico*, 23/12/2022, https://www.politico.eu/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[45] James Kynge, 'China's blueprint for an alternative world order', *Financial Times*, 22/08/2023, https://www.ft.com/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[46] Greg Miller, Jelena Ćosić, and Tamsin Lee-Smith, 'China deploys NGOs to quash criticism at UN organisations in Geneva', *Washington Post*, 28/04/2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[47] 'Wang Yi was speaking at the SCIO press conference introducing the white paper on "Building a More Just and Equitable Global Governance System: China's Concepts, Proposals, and Actions"', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

> Cooperation] cooperation [*sic*] and advance the building of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.[48]

The 'Global Security Initiative Concept Paper' of February 2023 talks of 'leveraging the roles of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS cooperation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, the "China+Central Asia" mechanism...' and of

> ...supporting the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang), and other international dialogue platforms.[49]

There are plenty more organisations alongside those listed, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. The two most often cited and most representative of CCP aims are the SCO and BRICS. The establishment of both predates Xi's becoming General Secretary of the CCP, but he has greatly promoted their expansion.

The SCO grew out of the 'Shanghai Five' (the PRC, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), a grouping set up in 1996. Uzbekistan joined them when the SCO was formally established in 2001. Subsequent years have seen Xi broadening the areas of cooperation from trade and economic cooperation and collaboration on terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism to energy links between producers and consumers, and more recently drugs and organised crime, as well as digital, biological, and space security.[50] In September 2025, an SCO Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Centre was set up.[51] With the addition of Uzbekistan, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Belarus, the SCO now has ten members. A further 16 countries have observer or dialogue partner status.

The BRICS grouping of countries was set up in 2009. Apart from the original acronym countries (Brazil, Russia, India, the PRC, and South Africa), its membership includes Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia, with Saudi Arabia also considering joining. There are a further ten 'partner countries', three of which are also members of the SCO. The CCP's intention is that it should not be as exclusive as the Group of Seven (G7), or eventually, even the G20. If free and open powers have the G7, countries not aligned with them or not sufficiently economically powerful can join the BRICS grouping.

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[48] 'China's 15th Five-Year Plan', State Council on the People's Republic of China, 13/03/2026, https://english.www.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[49] 'The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper', *Xinhua*, 21/02/2023, https://english.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[50] 'Xi attends SCO summit, calls for unity, coordination', *Xinhua*, 05/07/2023, https://english.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[51] 'Wang Yi introduced the eight major achievements of the SCO Tianjin Summit', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 01/09/2025, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

BRICS could be seen as an example encouraging a different approach to global governance. It aims to drive 'restructuring in the international system and goes beyond economic and financial collaboration to include joint efforts in global governance reform, technological innovation, and social development'.[52] However, there is a sharper edge too: 'As a collective action of developing countries and emerging economies, the BRICS mechanism breaks the Western monopoly on rule-making.' These words by Shen Yi, Director of the BRICS Research Centre at Fudan University (one of the PRC's top colleges), can be taken as authoritative.[53]

In 2023, Huan Yuping, an important commentator in the CCP's official newspaper the *People's Daily*, said that 'BRICS is the most important platform for unity and cooperation among developing countries, serving as the core mechanism representing countries from the Global South'.[54] The idea that BRICS countries should 'better represent and safeguard the Global South's common interests and play a greater role in reforming and improving global governance'[55] moved to centre stage at the September 2026 BRICS summit. The words 'Global South' appeared no fewer than 24 times in a relatively short article recording Wang Yi's comments on the summit.[56] In particular, Xi's proposal is that the Global South should have greater access to technology – Chinese technology.

Component 3: Emphasis on new financial organisations

As Xi said at the September 2026 BRICS meeting, 'the international financial architecture must be reformed and improved to increase the representation and voice of developing countries.'[57] Building new global financial architecture, less reliant upon the US and its allies, is vital to the PRC's ambitions.

Pan Gongsheng, Head of the People's Bank of China, has talked of internationalisation of the renminbi (RMB); greater use of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Special Drawing Rights; cross-border payment systems; crisis prevention systems; improving the governance of other international financial organisations (less weight for the UK, US, and EU, more for the Global

[52] 'Shen Yi: BRICS Welcomes the New Year, the "Global South" is More Vibrant', *Global Times*, 01/01/2025, https://opinion.huanqiu.com/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[53] Ibid.
[54] 'Let the world hear more of the BRICS voice and witness a greater role for BRICS', *People's Daily*, 22/08/2023, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[55] 'Gathering Strength for the Global South, Embarking on a New Journey of BRICS Cooperation – Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister, Discusses President Xi Jinping's Attendance at the 18th BRICS Summit in India', *Xinhua*, 13/09/2026, https://www.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[56] Ibid.
[57] Xi Jinping, Statement: 'Cementing the Foundation for BRICS Cooperation and Bolstering the Strength of the Global South', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

South); and expediting quota-share realignment at the IMF to improve governance and enhance its legitimacy and representativeness.[58]

The period 2014-2016 saw the setting up of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB). The CRA provides its members, when under financial pressures, with short-term liquidity, reducing reliance on the IMF. The AIIB is not designed as an alternative to free and open nations' institutions – while the US is not a participant, many democracies are – but it is not unduly cynical to suggest that, in addition to meeting the regional need for infrastructure funding, the CCP uses it to learn lessons in global financial governance – a kind of parallel to its use of joint ventures to master industrial processes and businesses. The NDB has lent the vast majority of its funds to the five founding members (i.e., the BRICS countries). With the expansion of membership to 11, other countries will now benefit. The aim is for lending to be conducted increasingly in local currencies. This is in line with the CCP's ambition to move away from the dominance of the US dollar and to blunt the power that it gives the US, both financially and geopolitically.

For some years, the CCP has wanted to set up an SCO bank. Since 2005, the SCO Interbank Consortium has linked up its members' major banks, but SCO countries have always shied away from setting up an NDB equivalent. In September 2025, the PRC eventually secured political agreement to establish an SCO development bank, but it may be some years before this is translated into concrete reality (the August 2026 SCO meeting in Bishkek made no external mention of the bank, perhaps because of Indian opposition in particular).[59] Again, this is part of the CCP's push to move away from use of the US dollar to national currencies and especially the RMB. It would also boost use of the PRC's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), helping a shift away from the American Clearing House Interbank Payments System (CHIPS).

Component 4: Looking towards new fields (ocean, polar regions, space, AI)

In the 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance',[60] Section 4 was titled 'Developing global governance of new frontiers and building a governance framework for the future'. It noted that the deep sea, polar regions, outer space, cyberspace and digital technology, and AI had become new frontiers for global governance. Biosecurity governance and maritime order also featured.

[58] Pan Gongsheng, 'Steadfastly Practising the Global Governance Initiative and Continuously Advancing Reform and Improvement of Global Financial Governance', *Qiushi*, 16/09/2025, https://www.qstheory.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[59] 'Wang Yi introduced the eight major achievements of the SCO Tianjin Summit', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 01/09/2025, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[60] 'Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13/09/2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

A month later, Xi proposed the 'Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative' (GAIGI), with the fivefold aim of promoting AI connectivity; promoting AI in industry; strengthening AI literacy and talent training; improving AI data security and diversity; and ensuring that AI is safe, reliable, and controllable.[61] However, it is not clear whether the GAIGI has been subsumed into the GGI, or whether it might appear in the future as perhaps a 'Global Technology Initiative'. The CCP feels that the PRC missed out on setting the rules for the post-Second World War global order. It intends to have its say in developing areas in line with its theme of 'fairer global governance'.[62]

The PRC has also called for 'the establishment of a World AI Cooperation Organisation, ensuring that AI develops for the good of humanity'.[63] On 16th July 2026, 29 countries signed an agreement to establish the headquarters of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation in Shanghai.[64] Technological powers, such as the UK, US, EU, and Japan, were not signatories.

Other moves by the CCP include the establishment in May 2025 of the International Organisation for Mediation in Hong Kong, and Xi's determination that the PRC 'will deeply participate in global ocean governance'.[65] The PRC has applied to have the secretariat of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity located in Xiamen, 'striving to make a greater contribution to global ocean governance'.[66]

Cyberspace is another area for reformed global governance. According to Zhuang Rongwen, Director of the Cyberspace Administration of China and Deputy Head of the Propaganda Department:

> Cyberattacks and cyber terrorism are increasingly becoming global hazards, and hegemonism and power politics in cyberspace still exist. This requires us to shoulder the responsibilities of a major country, provide Chinese solutions, contribute Chinese wisdom, promote the global internet governance system toward a more just and reasonable direction, and jointly build a community with a shared future in cyberspace.[67]

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[61] 'Promoting inclusive development and bridging the intelligence divide', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 26/09/2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[62] For example, see: 'Xinhua Commentary: Promoting int'l [*sic*] rule of law for fairer global governance', *Xinhua*, 14/09/2025, https://english.news.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[63] Ibid.
[64] 'Twenty-nine countries sign agreement to establish global AI cooperation body', *Reuters*, 16/07/2026, https://www.reuters.com/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[65] Xi Jinping, Speech: 'Promoting high-quality development of the marine economy', *Qiushi*, 01/07/2025, https://www.qstheory.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[66] 'Wang Yi was speaking at the SCIO press conference introducing the white paper on "Building a More Just and Equitable Global Governance System: China's Concepts, Proposals, and Actions"', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[67] Zhuang Rongwen, 'Anchor the Strategic Goal of Building a Cyber Superpower to Promote a Good Start for Cybersecurity and Informatisation Work in the "15th Five-Year Plan" Period', *Qiushi*, 25/02/2026, https://www.qstheory.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

The interests of the CCP in controlling internet governance are discernible in such calls.

Importance of the Global South

In changing global governance, the CCP sees developing countries as a major tool. It continually emphasises not just the PRC's shared interests with these nations, but its membership of that family, a point made forcibly by, among others, Liu Jianchao in 2023:

> General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised during the 15th BRICS Leaders' Meeting in South Africa in August 2023 that China is a natural member of the 'Global South'...China will never forget its roots and soul, and will always be a member of the Global South family and a developing country.[68]

The message put out to developing countries is an attractive one:

> Currently, the weight of the Global South in the international landscape continues to grow, but their voice and representation in international affairs have not increased accordingly, leading to a 'representation deficit' in the global governance system...The Global Governance Initiative not only affirms the values of international fairness and justice but also offers a feasible and operational Chinese solution to the global governance dilemma.[69]

Wang Yi played upon this theme at the press conference introducing the white paper on building a more just and equitable global governance system. The CCP's stance is that developing countries must play a bigger role in current global institutions:

> We must...advance reform of the IMF, the World Bank, and other institutions, and continuously enhance the voice and representation of the broad developing countries in international affairs. We must support Global South countries in hosting multilateral summits and advancing multilateral agendas, pooling the synergy of the South.[70]

[68] Liu Jianchao, 'Work together to build a modern Global South', *Aisixiang*, 26/11/2026, https://www.aisixiang.com/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[69] Xu Jian, 'Deeply Grasping the Significance and Contemporary Value of the Global Governance Initiative', *People's Daily*, 15/09/2025, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[70] 'Wang Yi was speaking at the SCIO press conference introducing the white paper on "Building a More Just and Equitable Global Governance System: China's Concepts, Proposals, and Actions"', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

The CCP intends that its support for developing countries should be matched by their support for CCP initiatives, a point made by Miao Deyu, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs:

> To achieve this goal, we must support the Global South in seeking strength through unity, build and make good use of important cooperation platforms such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the 'Group of 77 and China', and make bigger and stronger emerging financial institutions such as the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, injecting strong southern momentum into the cause of world peace and development.[71]

The underlying reasoning is clear: if developing countries should have a greater say in global governance, then the PRC, as the (leading) member of the 'Global South family', should also have a greater say. To bring that about, developing countries are encouraged to support the PRC in international forums such as the UN, where each country has one vote regardless of its size.

Many developing countries – or their leaders – will find the propaganda surrounding the four global initiatives persuasive. The concepts are kept woolly precisely so that they will appeal. The contrast with 'Western powers' is often explicitly drawn out. It is a carefully constructed appeal, not least with disparaging references to the free and open countries and promises of a different approach, which, unlike the past, will bring benefits to developing countries. The emphasis is on modernisation and the common dreams of all people. Xi's speech at the High-Level Dialogue between the CCP and World Political Parties on 17th March 2023 exemplifies the line promulgated:

> Looking back at history, when the Western powers took the lead in modernisation along with foreign expansion and plunder, while the majority of developing countries struggled and encountered setbacks on the road to modernisation. The myth that modernisation equals Westernisation once shrouded the world.[72]

[71] 'Wang Yi was speaking at the SCIO press conference introducing the white paper on "Building a More Just and Equitable Global Governance System: China's Concepts, Proposals, and Actions"', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 17/06/2026, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[72] Yang Yijun and Wang Bin, 'Jointly Drawing a New Picture of Modernisation for Human Society with a Hundred Flowers Blooming', *People's Daily*, 17/03/2023, http://politics.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

Anti-Americanism: The backdrop to Xi's foreign policy design

The four global initiatives are built upon a base of opposition to the US and upon the CCP's ambition to replace it as the dominant world power and arbiter of values.[73] Sometimes mentioned, sometimes unnamed, the US and its allies are presented as the antithesis and nemesis of the PRC and developing nations in almost all CCP speeches, meetings, and articles on the global initiatives. Xi's speech at the closing ceremony of the BRICS Business Forum in August 2023 is a good example of a sustained attack on the US and its allies:

> Should we work together to maintain peace and stability, or just sleepwalk into the abyss of a new Cold War? Should we embrace prosperity, openness, and inclusiveness, or allow hegemonic and bullying acts to throw us into depression?[74]

Frequent themes include the colonial pasts of free and open nations, as well as the 'unilateralism and protectionism…severely impacting international rules and order'.[75] This was echoed further in a *People's Daily* article:

> Instead of following the old path of a traditional power rising through war, colonisation and plunder, China has taken a new path of state-to-state relations featuring dialogue rather than confrontation and partnership rather than alliances.[76]

The PRC is not just trying to sell the attractiveness of the 'China model'. It is also urging the rejection of a liberal, democratic model by highlighting and exaggerating its deficiencies.

[73] Charles Parton, 'Anti-Americanism will remain the foundation of the PRC's foreign policy', Council on Geostrategy, 23/01/2025, https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[74] Xi Jinping, Speech: 'Enhancing Solidarity and Cooperation to Overcome Risks and Challenges and Jointly Build a Better World', Ministry of Publish Security of the People's Republic of China, 23/08/2023, https://www.mps.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[75] Li Qiang, 'Guiding principles for economic and social development during the 15th Five-Year Plan period', *People's Daily*, 30/10/2025, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[76] 'Building a Better World Together – On the 10th Anniversary of President Xi Jinping's Proposal of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind', *People's Daily*, 23/03/2023, http://politics.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026). A more recent example of the CCP pushing hard the contrast between its approach and its characterisation of the US' approach can be seen in: 'China-Africa Changsha Declaration On Upholding Solidarity and Cooperation of the Global South', State Council of the People's Republic of China, 11/06/2025, https://english.www.gov.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026). This was clearly drafted by the CCP.

The effectiveness of the CCP's appeal

It is not hard to pick holes in the CCP's claims of a superior model. A good example is global health, especially the Covid-19 pandemic, where Chinese refusal to allow access to information not only caused more deaths globally, but continues to hamper defences against future pandemics. Propaganda also hides the PRC's historically minuscule contributions to the World Health Organisation (WHO), although following the withdrawal of American funding, the contraction in the WHO budget, and a Chinese pledge of US$500 million (£378.4 million) over five years – assuming fulfilment – in 2026-2027, the PRC is the fourth biggest contributor, marginally ahead of Britain.[77]

Hypocrisy is rife, such as the GSI's principle of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and non-interference in others' internal affairs. Support for Russia over Ukraine, the activities of the United Front and transborder repression in other countries jar with the propaganda. Even the condemnation of 'bloc politics and camp-based confrontation' sits uneasily with the CCP's overall approach. The PRC may not conclude formal alliances, but it is attempting to weave a web of agreements into an opposition to the developed countries. Yet, perceptions can be more powerful than the underlying – but often unknown or ignored – facts.

The historical references to colonialism, Cold War blocs, lack of say for developing countries, and more resonate with developing countries. Xi meets with all leaders who pass through Beijing, no matter how small their country, and there is a vigorous programme of top Chinese leaders visiting foreign countries, unmatched by the US or European nations. That the PRC provides aid and loans not tied to demands relating to human rights and democracy is welcomed by many.

Recent American actions have also helped CCP efforts. The imposition of tariffs, disbandment of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), cutting of funds to UN organisations, and withdrawal from climate change agreements – to say nothing of actions in Venezuela and Iran war – have been gifts to the CCP's propaganda machine. Building a different world order than the one it says the US is exploiting will appeal to many countries.

Most of all, money talks – not least when amounts of it flow into projects in leaders' voting districts or their personal bank accounts.

At the same time, however, there are limits to the effectiveness of the organisations that the CCP is trying to build, particularly if they wish to emphasise geopolitical changes more than economic and development advances. Within BRICS, the PRC and India are suspicious of each other, while Brazil and South Africa have different systems from the PRC, whose economy dwarfs all the others. In the SCO, Pakistan and India are enemies, while Iran and potential member Saudi Arabia

[77] See: 'Contributors', World Health Organisation, No date, https://open.who.int/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

are mutually hostile. As expansion occurs, the awkwardness of bedfellows may increase.

The instinct and interest of many countries is to try to ride both horses, to maintain relations with both the PRC and free and open nations on as wide a front as possible. How easy that will continue to be depends on the dependencies (for example, technology, industry, telecommunications, critical resources, and AI) that the PRC develops, and how severely it exploits them. To quote Huan Yuping in the *People's Daily* again:

> BRICS cooperation is an innovation that transcends the conventional approach of political and military alliances, establishing a new relationship of partnership rather than alliances. It transcends the old thinking of drawing lines based on ideology and instead follows a new path of mutual respect and common progress. It breaks free from the old notion of zero-sum competition, embracing a new philosophy of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. BRICS countries have become a model for emerging market countries and developing countries to carry out South-South cooperation and achieve unity and self-improvement.[78]

The hope is pious, but it may crash on the rocks of reality.

Conclusion

The intention of this long Explainer is to promote awareness of the CCP's intentions, not to prescribe detailed policy. However, a few comments are in order. The first is to take a leaf out of the CCP's book: free and open nations' governments need their own central propaganda departments. They are losing the 'public diplomacy' war.

Take European development aid, trade, and investment in Africa for example. It is beyond the scope of this study to look at the different models of development aid and ongoing changes of development policy, but the idea that the PRC is the main dispenser of these to Africa is out of step with reality.[79] Similarly, in the Pacific region in 2024, Australia provided around five times the amounts of grants and loans dispensed by the PRC.[80] Most Chinese money comes not as aid, but as

[78] 'Let the world hear more of the BRICS voice and witness a greater role for BRICS', *People's Daily*, 22/08/2023, https://paper.people.com.cn/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[79] See: Alicia García-Herrero, 'While Africa's economic relations with China are hyped, its relationship with the EU is more favourable', Bruegel, 22/07/2024, https://www.bruegel.org/ (checked: 05/10/2026); and Sergei Cristo, 'The Failure of the EU's Strategic Partnerships in Africa: What's Behind the Lost Ground to China and Russia?', Sergei Cristo, North Atlantic Policy Forum, 08/10/2025, https://www.napforum.org/ (checked: 05/10/2026).
[80] Riley Duke, Roland Rajah, and Jack Xu, '2026 Pacific Aid Map in five charts', Lowy Institute, 28/07/2026, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

commercial loans – often with the risk of unsustainable debt burdens (to be fair, a phenomenon not unknown with loans from free and open nations).

Chinese investment has fallen in recent years. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates the PRC's 2024 bilateral international development cooperation (aid and loans) at US$3.5 billion (£2.65 billion), or around 0.02% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[81] This compares to the UK's (reduced) target of 0.3% of its GDP for overseas development (largely in grant aid form). Overall, the financial total of Chinese cooperation is far less than that of the EU's institutions and its 27 member states. One of the successes of Xi's trumpeting of the GDI is that most countries ascribe greater involvement to the PRC than to the European powers.

Free and open nations have also failed to counter the narrative behind the GGI. The CCP is right in asserting that global governance needs reform and that the Global South deserves a greater say. Free and open countries have failed to produce an agreed and coherent plan for change. Even if unity involving a US led by the Trump administration is currently unattainable, other middle powers need to agree on and push for reforms if they hope to gain the longer-term support of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America for a different vision to that being advanced by the CCP.

The CCP's top priority is staying in power. This underpins both domestic and foreign policy. In external policy, the aim is not simply to become a replacement for the US. The PRC will not become a global policeman – even if it had an economy capable of supporting such a role, which it does not. The CCP wants a world that is safe for its form of governance; regional dominance free of American influence; more – if not decisive – influence in defining global rules; and minimal challenges to its interests and values.

While there is unlikely to be a blueprint setting out in advance how to ensure a different world order, the 'common destiny' and four global initiatives do represent an ambitious framework for building a different global system. Over time, the accumulation of power, institutions, and dependencies may come to approximate to the old Chinese notion of '*tian xia*' (天下): the PRC as the centre of the world with other countries acknowledging that centrality, ruling themselves according to their histories and cultures, but not going against the PRC's interests or values. Perhaps the best parallel is 'suzerainty'; that is, having supremacy and dominant influence over the foreign policy and economic relations of another subordinate party.

However, caution is warranted: appetites grow with eating. Empires emerge not from a long-term strategic plan, but from an accretion of reactions to incidents and circumstances. The 'shared community' tone of current pronouncements works well as a rising power contests the established order. Later, though, it may

[81] 'Development Cooperation Profiles: China', Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation, 16/06/2026, https://www.oecd.org/ (checked: 05/10/2026).

give way to a harsher reality as the PRC exercises greater power and utilises deeper dependencies.

If the Chinese economy does not decay and free and open nations continue their failure to unite and protect their interests, the PRC might stumble into empire. Certainly, it would be a different form of imperium from the past: a mixture of new governance, technological and industrial dependency, and subservience – 'a community of a shared future for mankind' perhaps, but not one as honeyed as the propaganda wishes the world to believe.

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