

# China's Global Initiatives Quartet: Weaponising Development, Security, Civilisation, and Governance

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## Abstract

*This article examines China's recently launched Four Global Initiatives (4GIs)—the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI), and the Global Governance Initiative (GGI)—introduced between 2021 and 2025. These initiatives signal the gradual strategic shift from the debt-laden Belt and Road Initiative towards a more comprehensive and self-reinforcing framework that subtly advances Beijing's global influence by systematically challenging the Western liberal order through institutional and normative reshaping rather than direct disruption. Framed as President Xi Jinping's vision of a 'Community with a shared future for mankind', this architecture sequentially promotes economic dependencies through the GDI, security interoperability through the GSI, narrative alignment through the GCI, and institutional influence through the GGI, while simultaneously operationalising elements of a parallel techno-authoritarian order. Deployed through multilateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa grouping, and the United Nations, the 4GIs promote state-centric data*

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*control, sovereignty-first security frameworks, and relativist governance norms, thereby, cultivating greater reliance among countries of the Global South. This article analyses the integrated ecosystem of these initiatives and assesses their implications, including the potential emergence of competing global orders and the strategic challenges they pose for India.*

## **Introduction**

China's Global Initiatives quartet i.e., the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI), and Global Governance Initiative (GGI), launched between 2021 and 2025, represent a deliberate evolution of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) inaugurated in 2013. China's four Global Initiatives (4GIs), collectively represent the BRI's transformation from mega infrastructure projects into a comprehensive framework aimed at re-engineering the international order. Post COVID, Beijing has shifted emphasis from large, debt-heavy connectivity projects to a denser web of norms, rules, and technology-enabled mechanisms, designed to subtly expand its influence while reducing vulnerability to Western pressure. Framed as remedies for global deficits in peace, development, security, governance, and trust, the 4GIs explicitly blame Western liberal systems for current crises and present Chinese solutions as more representative, inclusive, and equitable for the Global South.

Christopher Krebs, the first director of the United States (US) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, has encapsulated his analysis of the differing strategic goals of Russia and China in their cyber operations and foreign influence campaigns against the US as, "When we think about Russia, they are trying to disrupt the system, and China is trying to manipulate the system".<sup>1</sup> China's recently launched 4GIs, launched in quick succession, marks the comprehensive evolution of Beijing's global power projection beyond the BRI infrastructure-focused project toward a self-reinforcing ecosystem systematically challenging Western liberal order. This article analyses 4GIs-integrated architecture, where GDI's economic dependencies enable GSI security partnerships, GCI's civilisational narratives legitimise the Communist Party of China's (CPC) governance values, and GGI institutionalises these

shifts as multilateral norms through system manipulation rather than disruption. Through 4GIs sequential domain dominance, Beijing normalises state-centric development models, sovereignty-first security doctrines, civilisational pluralism privileging the CPC's narratives, and governance architectures that reject universal values. Deployed via Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) grouping, and the United Nations (UN) platforms, the 4GIs cultivate the Global South reliance while offering Chinese solutions that embed non-liberal norms, state-controlled data, sovereignty-centric security, and relativist rights, gradually constructing a scalable techno-authoritarian alternative to the Western-led institutions. A mixed-methods approach was employed to systematically identify, analyse, and validate the strategic interplay between China's 4GIs as components of Beijing's comprehensive global dominance strategy for establishing the integrated architecture, enabling system manipulation over disruption.

### **Strategic Shift: Belt and Road Initiative Yields to Global Initiatives Quartet**

After phenomenal initial success, the BRI faced geopolitical backlash due to several drawbacks, which include debt traps, project delays and cancellations, environmental damage, corruption scandals, and human rights violations.<sup>2</sup> With a sharper, more flexible, and an all-inclusive plan for global competition, the 4GIs form a 'Post-COVID BRI 2.0' plan to fix the old BRI's weak spots and boosts Chinese global influence. Strategically, the 4GIs extend the earlier BRI into a comprehensive ideological arc—infrastructure cum development norms, security concepts, civilisational discourse, and governance redesign. The cumulative effect is the gradual construction of a parallel, more authoritarian leaning global order under the banner of multilateralism and Chinese 'Community with a shared future for mankind'.<sup>3,4</sup>

The 4GIs operate in sync to systematically undermine liberal democratic norms while transferring influence from the Western frameworks to Beijing's state-centric model. GDI builds economic ties, GSI offers security and technology cooperation, GCI shapes narratives and legitimacy, and GGI converts these into institutional and rule-making leverage. Taken together, they create a virtuous cycle where material dependence, security linkages and shared

discourse feed China's political influence.<sup>5</sup> Chinese President Xi Jinping's rhetoric through 4GIs highlights fairness, multilateralism, and a 'Community with a shared future for mankind' and projects China as the leader for the Global South nations against the Western hegemony.

GDI speeds up the UN 2030 Agenda with USD 4 bn in funding; GSI pushes 'Common Security' based on non-interference; GCI builds 'Civilisational Dialogue', and GGI calls for reforms in the UN and World Trade Organization.<sup>6</sup> Under the cloak of the 4GIs talks, China spreads techno-authoritarian ideas through economic power.

GDI pays for digital projects like Beidou satellites and Artificial Intelligence (AI) rules, which create dependencies. GSI sells surveillance tools as peacekeeping aid. GCI defends censorship as cultural sovereignty and GGI seeks to transform existing bodies like the UN and, simultaneously, propose parallel new institutions such as International Organisation for Mediation (IOMed), a Hong Kong based mediation group launched on 20 Oct 2025 with focus on resolving international disputes through mediation.<sup>7</sup>

The new groups like IOMed and the Global AI Cooperation Organisation under the cloak of GGI generally skip the UN veto limits and direct Global South dealings through China-led setups.<sup>8</sup> Organisations such as China's Maritime Courts have emerged as a global hub for dispute resolution, while handling 6,823 foreign-related cases (2022-2024) involving parties from 143 countries. The prominent recent dispute handled by China's Maritime Courts includes Ningbo Maritime Court mediating a Malacca Strait collision under Chinese law and a Marshall Islands ship case settled for USD 1.25 mn, which reflects Beijing's maritime judicial strategy.<sup>9</sup> GCI has changed human rights into development rights to justify China's actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, while, simultaneously, attacking the Western long-arm jurisdiction.<sup>10</sup> Together, GDI and GSI tie Huawei tech and Beidou satellites into the BRI across 149 countries to spread China's Great Firewall model via the Digital Silk Road (DSR) and build deep digital ties.<sup>11</sup>

Chinese official narratives describe the 4GIs as an organic whole in which GDI provides the material foundation, GSI safeguards a peaceful environment, GCI builds value consensus, and GGI supplies institutional guarantees. This systemic framing

portrays China as offering a full-spectrum governance package and not an isolated project.<sup>12</sup> Within a short span of time, China's 4GIs have rapidly constructed a parallel global architecture to challenge the Western-dominated institutions across critical domains.<sup>13</sup> Launched between 2021 and 2025, these initiatives have secured over 100 endorsements for the GDI fund (USD 4 bn), engaged security partners like Russia, Iran, and Pakistan through GSI dialogues, integrated AI governance bodies and IOMed with SCO and BRICS frameworks, and have signed 43 Global South memoranda of understanding for Cross-Border Interbank Payment System or Renminbi Settlement.<sup>14,15,16</sup>

Within four years, the swift institutional proliferation of China has demonstrated their unprecedented strategic ambition of converting economic assistance into normative dominance and redirecting global flows toward Beijing's state-centric vision. By emphasising on under-representation and historical injustice, the 4GIs frame China as the voice and defender of developing states. Preferential finance and easy transfer of cheap Chinese technology coupled with diplomatic support translate China's narrative into voting coalitions and agenda control within the UN agencies and other multilaterals.<sup>17</sup>

### **Global Development Initiative**

GDI, launched by Xi Jinping in Sep 2021 at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), accelerates the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through six core principles: prioritising development, people-centred approaches, universal benefits, innovation-driven growth, human-nature harmony, and results-oriented actions. Targeting eight priority areas, i.e., poverty alleviation, food security, pandemic response, development financing, climate change, industrialisation, digital economy, and connectivity, GDI positions China as the Global South's champion against the Western historical inequities. The implementation of GDI includes the high-level dialogue on Global Development, two sessions of the high-level conference of the Forum on Global Action for Shared Development, setting up the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund with a total of USD 4 bn, launch of the China-Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO) Third South-South Cooperation Trust Fund with USD 50 mn, and setting up of the Global Development Promotion Center. GDI rapidly

secured endorsements from over 100 countries and international organisations, with over 80 nations joining the Group of Friends of GDI.<sup>18</sup>

In Sep 2025, at the UNGA 80<sup>th</sup> session, China announced the China-UN Global South-South Development Facility (2025-2030) with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, targeting digital transformation and green development in the most vulnerable countries, including least developed countries, land-locked developing countries, and small island developing states through Huawei and Beidou infrastructure and AI capacity-building.<sup>19</sup> Under the cloak of developmental rhetoric, GDI architects a parallel techno-authoritarian order which focuses on smaller, greener, digitally-oriented projects that embed the Chinese standards. Huawei 5G networks, Beidou satellite systems, and surveillance architectures across 149 countries create digital dependencies that normalise state-centric data control, bypassing the Western privacy and data protection norms.<sup>20</sup>

### **Global Security Initiative**

GSI was launched by Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum for Asia on 21 Apr 2022 and is articulated through six core commitments: indivisible security, sovereignty respect, UN Charter adherence, legitimate security concerns, dialogue-based dispute resolution, and comprehensive traditional or non-traditional security. GSI rejects Cold War alliances and zero-sum games in favour of win-win partnerships. Unlike Western collective defence models, GSI prioritises state-centric stability, cyber sovereignty, biosecurity, and AI governance while positioning China as a mediator for the Global South security dilemmas. GSI is operationalised via a Feb 2023 concept paper and sponsors platforms like the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum to showcase Chinese surveillance technologies.<sup>21,22</sup>

Over 90 bilateral and multilateral documents now incorporate GSI language while systematically converting GDI economic dependencies into enduring security partnerships that discreetly embed the Chinese standards.<sup>23</sup> Pacific Island nations have already received integrated disaster relief and police training packages featuring Hikvision surveillance systems and Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corporation cyber security solutions framed as non-traditional security cooperation. In Central Asia,

joint counterterrorism drills conducted through SCO frameworks are gradually enhancing People's Liberation Army interoperability with regional militaries.<sup>24</sup> GSI's recent signature achievement remains China's Mar 2023 mediation normalising Saudi–Iran relations, restoring diplomatic ties after seven years and securing both nations' commitments to GSI principles. This breakthrough is hailed by more than 100 countries and has demonstrated China's neutral broker credentials while expanding Chinese Middle East footprint and embedding GSI concepts into bilateral agreements across BRICS, SCO, and African Union frameworks.<sup>25,26</sup>

### **Global Civilisation Initiative**

GCI was presented by Xi Jinping in Mar 2023 during a high-level dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting, seeking to foster respect for civilisational diversity; uphold humanity's common values such as peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom through a state-centric lens; preserve and innovate civilisations; and strengthen people-to-people exchanges globally.<sup>27</sup> GCI rejects 'Clash of Civilisations' rhetoric, promoting mutual learning over the Western universalism.<sup>28,29</sup> In addition to the cultural diplomacy, GCI strategically architects a parallel techno-authoritarian order by exporting China's party-state model of governance, which fuses Confucian harmony with digital authoritarianism. This order challenges the US-led liberal international framework by normalising cyber sovereignty, algorithmic control, and elite capture through platforms like the World Internet Conference and Confucius Institutes (rebranded as Chinese International Education Foundation in mid-2020).<sup>30,31</sup> By prioritising civilisational dialogue over universal human rights, China positions itself as an alternative pole, fostering interoperability among authoritarian regimes via DSR infrastructure to include Huawei 5G networks, AI-surveillance, and data localisation standards that protect participants from Western sanctions and norms.<sup>32</sup>

A recent success exemplifies Chinese GCI parallel order's traction. GCI's success manifested in the Ministerial Meeting of Global Civilizations Dialogue, held in Beijing on 10-11 Jul 2025, where more than 600 delegates from 140 countries endorsed its principles under Safeguarding Diversity of Human Civilisations, amplifying exchanges with Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup> In Jun 2024, the 78<sup>th</sup>

session of the UNGA unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by China to designate 10 Jun as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilisations. This resolution emphasises respecting civilisational diversity and promoting equal dialogue and mutual respect among different cultures, reflecting the core principles of GCI. The unanimous support highlights GCI's alignment with global trends and its relevance in an interconnected world. It addresses critical questions about the coexistence of civilisations and the future of humanity, offering Chinese perspectives and solutions to foster mutual learning and advance human progress. In 2024, GCI has been incorporated into bilateral agreements with over a dozen countries, including Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Serbia, and Hungary, earning growing international recognition and support. Even before the launch of GCI, China continued to deepen cooperation with UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UN World Tourism Organisation. The unanimous support highlights GCI's alignment with global trends and its relevance in an interconnected world. As of Dec 2022, China has included its 43 items on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.<sup>34</sup>

### **Global Governance Initiative**

GGI is a fourth major global initiative of this decade and the newest layer in a broader long-term project to reshape the international order in a way that favour Chinese power, norms, and interests. GGI was introduced by Jinping during SCO Plus meeting at Tianjin on 01 Sep 2025<sup>35</sup>, representing a cornerstone of China's overarching strategy to reshape the global order. GGI completes the quartet alongside GDI, GSI, and GCI to construct a 'Community with a Shared Future for Mankind'.<sup>36</sup> The initiative systematically addresses the fundamental questions of global governance, 'By whom, how, and for whom it is conducted', while responding to the concerns of the international community, presenting itself as the correct choice for tackling global challenges and the essential path to resolving the governance deficit.<sup>37</sup> GGI advocates five core concepts: First, sovereign equality to ensure participation in global affairs by all countries; second, international rule of law for a just and orderly global governance system; third, multilateralism for greater solidarity and cooperation among all countries; fourth, a people-centred approach for universally beneficial and inclusive outcomes of global governance; and fifth,

real results for a pragmatic and efficient global governance process.<sup>38</sup>

China exploits multilateralism to reshape international organisations into 'China Fit' entities, suppressing dissent while amplifying the CPC's narratives.<sup>39</sup> A former UN employee, Emma Reilly, exposed how Beijing silences sensitive topics, manipulates reports, and downplays human rights and democracy within the UN bodies.<sup>40</sup> As the US leadership retreats under President Donald Trump's retrenchment, Beijing exploits the vacuum not only by infiltrating existing international organisations, but also by creating new ones to shape nascent domains like AI, space, and deep-sea mining. Framed as South–South solidarity, GGI strategies cultivates the Global South dependencies, implant pervasive intelligence networks, and normalises the Chinese norms, while gradually displacing the Western paradigms and challenging institutional transparency. China is actively shaping the UN and positioning itself to challenge the Western-led norms. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, marking China's 50<sup>th</sup> UN Security Council permanent seat anniversary in Oct 2021, praised Beijing as "An increasingly important contributor... and a major pillar of international cooperation".<sup>41</sup> A House Committee report, dated 24 Oct 2024, reveals China co-opting the UN and World Health Organization, neglecting their commitments while shaping global standards through Huawei and ZTE support.<sup>42</sup>

China leverages financial power and strategic personnel placement to reshape the UN agendas, holding key roles in FAO, International Telecommunication Union, and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (holding Under-Secretary-General post since 2007). This enables blocking unfavourable resolutions, prioritising sovereignty and development over liberal norms, and building anti-Western coalitions through development programs.<sup>43</sup>

### **Global Initiatives Quartet: Self-Reinforcing Architecture for Global Surge Amid Volatility**

Post Xi Jinping's ascension to the top leadership position, China is no longer content with being a 'Rule-taker', China now seeks to become a 'Rule-shaper'.<sup>44</sup> China's 4GIs marks a strategic pivot from the BRI's infrastructure focus to a holistic framework, re-engineering global norms post-COVID. The 4GIs translate Jinping's vision into reality.<sup>45</sup> The 'Community of shared future for mankind'

concept is deliberately crafted to reshape international discourse, reëcting China's eëort to reframe global governance around inclusivity and mutual respect.<sup>46</sup> The 4GIs, launched sequentially within five years, form a comprehensive framework that projects Beijing's strategic influence across development, security, culture, and governance amid global volatility. Collectively, these initiatives aim to reshape global governance structures while amplifying China's political, economic, and security footprint worldwide. The 4GIs operate as a coordinated ecosystem: GDI creates material dependencies via financing and infrastructure; GSI establishes security interoperability through policing and surveillance exports; GCI drives civilisational consensus via mutual learning; and GGI achieves existing institutional capture and creating parallel structures like IOMeD organisations and AI governance forums.<sup>47,48</sup> Analysis of recent events and their success within short period confirms this interplay, validating Beijing's shift toward a techno-authoritarian order that privileges relativist rights over universal values, gradually eroding the Western institutions.

With the 4GI's, Jinping has established the ideological arc which shows how he seeks to be the architect of a future global order underneath the rhetoric of fairness. The Chinese leader aims to leverage China's economic power to embed techno-authoritarian principles that actively undermines the Western-led institutions and democratic ideals. With launch of the 4GIs in quick succession, the world is witnessing not just an expansion of Chinese influence, but a premeditated construction of a parallel global system designed to entrench Beijing's vision of an alternative, state-centric order.<sup>49</sup>

Beijing's 4GIs alongside other global strategies present a more cohesive vision for the world than the US currently offers. While the White House's Jul 2025 AI Action Plan is a crucial step towards asserting their *technological* leadership, it alone does not compete with China's *all-encompassing* ideological framework, demonstrating the CPC's ambitions to cement the supremacy of China's values in the global economy, security apparatus, and digital governance.<sup>50</sup>

In future, China's quartet will weaponise its global influence trajectory by securing global endorsements from underdeveloped or developing nations and mobilising billions via the UN resolutions

and SCO integrations to institutionalise their vision that embeds Beijing's state-centric norms. Exploiting the US economic retrenchment, gross domestic product slowdowns, and Trump-era US–Europe rifts over tariffs and de-risking, China will normalise non-liberal governance through aggressive tech exports and BRICS expansions to capture majority of the Global South digital infrastructure. The US distractions from Ukraine and Iran conflicts since early 2026 will divert Western resources, enabling Beijing to tilt neutral states toward a state-centric East via GDI's economic dependencies, GSI's security pacts, GCI's relativist narratives, and GGI's multilateral codification, while countering the liberal West despite decoupling risks and Indo-Pacific alliances.

China's weaponisation of the quartet will greatly undermine India's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific and accelerate its encirclement through GDI-driven economic dependencies that glue India's neighbours Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka into the BRI corridor, thereby, slashing New Delhi's regional leverage. GSI frameworks embedded in the SCO summits will prioritise common security over territorial disputes, thereby, diluting India's sovereignty claims amid persistent Ladakh standoffs and China's military realignments with Pakistan, fostering hybrid vulnerabilities from debt traps to data sovereignty loss. GCI's civilisational rhetoric will undermine India's pluralistic democracy by normalising the CPC's relativism on rights and governance, while GGI will elevate Beijing's position as BRICS or UN financier and norm-setter, contesting India's rules-based advocacy and further amplifying USD 100 bn trade deficits. These actions may result in the marginalisation of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), heightened border problems, and India's isolation in South Asia.

## **Conclusion**

China's global initiatives quartet marks the paradigm shift from debt-heavy BRI as a mere infrastructure precursor to a self-reinforcing ecosystem, wherein, GDI generates dependencies, GSI forges security ties, GCI aligns narratives, and GGI codifies norms. Together, these initiatives subtly advance Beijing's dominance plan by systematically challenging the Western liberal order through system manipulation rather than outright disruption. Under Jinping, this comprehensive architecture operationalises his vision,

delivering Chinese public goods via the SCO, BRICS, and UN platforms to normalise state-centric data control, sovereignty-first security, and relativist governance, fostering the Global South reliance while eroding universal values. Globally, 4GIs entrenches dual orders with Beijing's techno-authoritarian model, capturing digital spheres amid Western fragmentation. For India, the successes of 4GIs will escalates encirclement: GDI's debt traps will erode 'Neighbourhood First' influence; GSI's SCO pacts will dilute border sovereignty amid Ladakh tensions; GCI's narratives will undermine democratic pluralism; and GGI's BRICS or UN norms will contest rules-based advocacy, risking sub continental leverage loss, BIMSTEC isolation, and hybrid threats.

### Endnotes

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