

# China Will Accelerate Its Pivot to the Global South

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## What We're Watching

China is poised to significantly expand its attention on and economic, diplomatic, and security presence in the Global South in 2024, with a particular focus on developing countries in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia. This will have significant near- and medium-term geo-economic and geopolitical repercussions and generate new fault lines between the developing world and the advanced economies of the Global West.

## The Context

China's relations with the United States and the broader Global West — including the European Union and Australia — have deteriorated sharply in recent years. Although Beijing has made attempts to restore relations with these states, these efforts have met with limited success. Technological controls and economic barriers continue to proliferate as an incremental but substantial decoupling with the Global West has proceeded. Therefore, Beijing has increasingly embarked on a proactive pivot to make cultivation of relations with the Global South, rather than the Global West, the center of its geopolitical strategy. This strategy aims to secure access to raw materials; develop new markets; garner political support; and bolster China's diplomatic, security, and economic influence on the world stage.

Several Chinese initiatives and diplomatic breakthroughs have set the scene for much more to come in this regard in 2024. These include the high-profile rollout of three major new Chinese initiatives targeting the Global South: the Global Development Initiative (GDI) in 2021, the Global Security Initiative (GSI) in 2022, and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) in 2023. These initiatives set forth a development and political framework that Beijing believes will resonate among developing countries seeking to achieve a more equitable and stable world. Additionally, in 2023, China successfully brokered a reopening of long-suspended diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia; held the first China–Central Asia Summit; oversaw the expansion of the BRICS grouping to admit Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates; and convened the Third Belt and Road Forum, which attracted senior leaders from more than 90 countries, mostly from the Global South.

## What to Expect in 2024

- GDI, GSI, and GCI will gain greater profiles and resources for activities in the Global South, including billions of development aid dollars for African countries under the GDI.



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- The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), held every three years and set to convene in Beijing in 2024, will become a principal focal point for China's accelerated engagement with the Global South.
- At the BRICS 2024 summit, hosted by Russia, China will support admittance of several more countries to the body; more than 30 countries have expressed interest in joining, including Algeria, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, and Kazakhstan.
- Beijing will press hard to insert language that aligns with the aims of the GDI, GSI, and GCI and its goals for transforming global governance into upcoming UN sessions and documents, including the high-profile "Summit for the Future" in September 2024.
- China will significantly expand the operational presence of its military and police forces in the Global South, including through training programs and new basing arrangements.