

THE CHURNING OF THE GLOBAL ORDER



Dossier n° 72
Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research
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In January 2023, a reporter from *Yomiuri Shimbun* asked the press secretary of Japan's foreign ministry, Hikariko Ono, for a definition of the term 'Global South'. 'The government of Japan does not have a precise definition of the term Global South', she responded, but 'it is my understanding that, in general, it often refers to emerging and developing countries'.¹

The Japanese government struggled to find a more accurate assessment of the Global South, which it attempted to provide in the *Diplomatic Bluebook 2023*. In a long section on the idea of the Global South, Japanese officials acknowledge that the former Third World seemed to have developed a new mood. When the countries of the Global North, led by the United States, demanded that the countries of the Global South adopt the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) position on the war in Ukraine (namely to isolate Russia), they refused, accusing the West of 'double standards', since, as Japan's foreign ministry notes, it justifies its own wars while decrying the wars of others. In light of this new mood in the Global South, Japan's foreign ministry stated the need for a new attitude with 'an inclusive approach that overcomes differences in values and interests'. As Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi wrote in the preface to the bluebook, 'The world is now at a turning point in history'.²

This turning point is exemplified by the fact that few states in the Global South have been willing to participate in the isolation of Russia, refusing, for instance, to support Western resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly. Not all the states that have refused to join the West in its crusade against Russia are 'anti-Western' in a

political sense; rather, many of them are driven by practical considerations, such as Russia's discounted energy prices. Whether they are fed up with being pushed around by the West or they see economic opportunities in their relationship with Russia, increasingly, countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have refused to capitulate to the pressure coming from Washington to break ties with Russia. It is this refusal and avoidance that drove France's President Emmanuel Macron to admit that he was 'very impressed by how much we are losing the trust of the Global South'.³

At a Munich Security Conference panel discussion on 18 February 2023 at the Munich Security Conference, three leaders from Africa, Latin America, and Asia developed their argument about why they are unhappy with the war in Ukraine and the campaign pressuring them to break ties with Russia. As Namibia's Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila said, 'We are promoting a peaceful resolution of [the Ukraine] conflict so that the entire world and all the resources of the world can be focused on improving the conditions of people around the world instead of being spent on acquiring weapons, killing people, and actually creating hostilities'. When asked why Namibia abstained from the United Nations vote on the war, Kuugongelwa-Amadhila said, 'Our focus is on resolving the problem... not on shifting blame'. The money used to buy weapons, she said, 'would be better utilised to promote development in Ukraine, in Africa, in Asia, in other places, [and] in Europe itself, where many people are experiencing hardships'.⁴

A series of reports published by leading Western financial houses repeat Macron's anxiety about the West's declining credibility in the

Global South. BlackRock notes that we are entering ‘a fragmented world with competing blocs’ while Credit Suisse points to the ‘deep and persistent fractures’ that have opened up in the world order.⁵ Credit Suisse’s assessment of these ‘fractures’ describes them accurately: ‘The global West (Western developed countries and allies) has drifted away from the global East (China, Russia, and allies) in terms of core strategic interests, while the Global South (Brazil, Russia, India, and China and most developing countries) is reorganising to pursue its own interests’.⁶

In order to understand these major changes taking place in the world and the Global North’s bewilderment about the new mood in the Global South, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research produced dossier no. 72, *The Churning of the Global Order*, based on research carried out with Global South Insights and our collaboratively produced study, *Hyper-Imperialism: A Dangerous Decadent New Stage* (January 2024).⁷

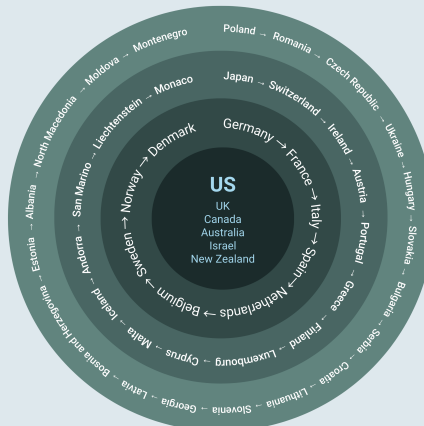


On the Terms Global South and Global North

The United Nation is made up of 49 countries in the Global North and 145 countries in the Global South. In this dossier, we use the terms ‘rings’ to describe the Global North and ‘groupings’ to describe the Global South, based on the depictions in the figures that follow. The rings of Global North are organised around the United States and its closest allies at the centre, with each ring that encircles this centre, or inner core, made up of states in the Global North that, for different reasons, are not in the inner core. These rings do not suggest any fragmentation of the Global North, which operates as a bloc. The Global South, on the other hand, is not a bloc, but an emerging project that is formed by different groupings, each of which has its own logic, as we will explain below.

The US-Led Imperialist Bloc: 49 countries, 4 rings

The Global North, 2023



The Global North

The war in Ukraine has shed light on and accelerated certain geopolitical shifts. On one side, a group of countries that follows the direction of the United States reacted to the entry of Russian forces into Ukraine as an integrated military, economic, and political bloc. These countries participate in certain platforms, of which NATO and the Group of Seven countries (G7) are the most significant. This reflects a dynamic that has been in place since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 in which NATO and the G7 act together to drive an agenda largely defined by the United States, with Europe and Japan as secondary powers in the alliance.

Over the past few decades, the contradictions between the NATO and G7 countries were smoothed over and faded into the background. Despite secondary differences within these countries' military, economic, and political positions and capacities (such as the disagreement between the US, UK, and France over who would export submarines to Australia in 2021), the Global North can be best understood as a bloc that is willing to unite around core issues.⁸

The Egyptian intellectual Samir Amin wrote, in 1980, of the 'gradual consolidation of the central zone of the world capitalist system (Europe, North America, Australia)'. Soon thereafter, Amin began to use the term Triad to refer to this 'central zone' of imperialist powers that emerged after World War II.⁹ The ruling classes in Europe and Japan, he argued, had subordinated their own national self-interest to what the United States government had begun to call their 'common interest'. Building on Amin's conception, we

organised the Triad into four rings, with modifications that reflect the current trends in international and regional relations.

These four rings are:

1. The inner core of US-led imperialist Anglo-American settler states, which is made up of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (all part of the Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council, a network of intelligence agencies bound by undisclosed agreements), as well as Israel. These countries – rooted in forms of white supremacy – are the most advanced in the military, economic, and political arenas, with the United States maintaining dominance over the group.
2. The next layer is made up of the nine core European imperialist powers: Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. All of these countries are members of the ‘Fourteen Eyes’ spy network (formally known as SIGINT Seniors Europe), and all of them are NATO members (with Sweden’s membership all but guaranteed). These powerful European countries nonetheless subordinate their national interests to the inner core, operating almost as vassal states. Take the case of Germany, which – despite having one of the largest economies in the world and dominating the European Union – has nonetheless vitiated its ability to take care of its citizens since the war in Ukraine began in 2022 so as not to challenge US hegemony over European foreign policy. As the economist

Michael Hudson described it, this is ‘the third time in a century that the United States has defeated Germany’.¹⁰

3. The third ring is made up of Japan and the secondary European powers, such as Switzerland, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Greece, and Finland. Although loyal to the United States, these countries do not have as much influence on the world order as the European imperialist powers based on their military, economic, and political capacities. Some of them, like Portugal, Finland, and Iceland, are part of NATO but are less integral to US military strategy. In the case of Portugal, for instance, despite being a former colonial power, its relatively smaller GDP is a factor in its exclusion from the ring of secondary European powers.
4. The fourth, outer ring is made up of nineteen countries in the former Eastern Bloc. These countries, which were not colonial powers, were drawn into the imperialist bloc in the post-Cold War era mainly through economic subordination and with NATO’s eastern expansion. Some of these countries are governed by pro-NATO right-wing regimes (i.e., Poland, Ukraine, and Estonia), which play a frontline role in the West’s efforts to contain Russia. Others attempt to keep their distance from NATO (such as Serbia), though Western pressure often leaves them with little choice.

In 1945, the US began to consolidate its hegemony over the Global North countries through three major axes:

1. The United States' military domination of Europe through NATO and the spread of US military bases in the defeated axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan).
2. Japan, Western Europe, and Anglo-American settler states' economic integration with and dependence on the United States. This began with the Marshall Plan (1948) in Europe and the initial military occupation of Japan (1945–1952).
3. The political subordination of the European, Japanese, and white settler state elites to the US elite structure by selecting which political parties would be permitted to be in power. This was accomplished through the creation of a pro-US global elite by, for instance, opening US universities to elite students from these parts of the world and forming a set of networks (such as the Bilderberg Meeting in 1954) that sought to create a common understanding of the world fashioned by the United States.¹¹

In addition to the Global North's subordination to the United States along these three axes – which took great effort and struggle to achieve – three other factors are key to understanding both the concept of the Global North and the logic of the four rings into which we have divided these countries.

1. **A shared history of brutality.** The term Global North is not a neutral geographical term. In fact, it is decidedly not geographical, given the inclusion of countries such as Australia

and New Zealand in the inner core. Rather, the term Global North is synonymous for other terms such as the West and the advanced countries. These are all polite designations for the most adequate term: the imperialist bloc. It is worth noting that most of these countries – whether the US-led Anglo-American core (such as the United Kingdom and the United States); the core European powers (such as Germany and Italy); or secondary European powers (such as Portugal and Austria) – have shaped the modern world through a shared history of violence that opened with the Atlantic Slave Trade and continued with the use of nuclear bombs against the civilians of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ongoing genocide of Palestinians. There is no comprehensive account of the hundreds of millions of people killed by colonialism.¹²

A core feature of this violence is the drain of wealth from the colonised regions of the world to the colonial powers. This drain not only lined the coffers of these powers and paid for the opulent infrastructure that still exists today; it also shaped the neocolonial system that continues to leech wealth from the colonised states long after formal colonialism ended.

2. **The drain of wealth from the South to the North.** Despite making up only 14.2% of the world population, the 49 countries of the Global North account for 40.6% of the world's GDP, based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).¹³ By controlling capital and the production of raw

materials, intellectual property, and science and technology – all part of the legacy of colonialism – the Global North states continue to ensure that they accumulate a greater share of the planet’s wealth. One example of the enormous colonial theft of wealth is the nearly \$45 trillion that the British drained from India between 1765 and 1938, which accounts for almost the entire period of British rule in India (1757–1947). This wealth flooded the British banking system, enabled capital accumulation for British industrialisation, and created built in advantages that have lasted for generations.¹⁴ Meanwhile, average life expectancy declined by 20% between 1870 and 1921, and the literacy rate when India won its independence in 1947, after three hundred years of colonialism, was a mere 12.2%.¹⁵

A recent paper shows that, based on unequal exchange, \$152 trillion was plundered from the Global South between 1960 and 2017. The authors point out that, in 2017 alone, the Global North appropriated \$2.2 trillion worth of commodities in the Global South – ‘enough to end extreme poverty 15 times over’.¹⁶ Imagine if we could calculate the entire drain of wealth from the (former) colonies and the social impact this had on their health and education systems.

3. **A common condition of militarisation and intelligence.**

The role of intelligence networks is frequently underestimated in assessing the power of the Global North. The category of ‘intelligence’ is no longer merely about espionage of the old type but now includes digital surveillance and

warfare (including cyberattacks on key infrastructure). Each of the Global North countries participate in high-level military coordination and intelligence sharing, driven by the inner core. The closer a country is to the inner core, the more synchronised the level of intelligence and military coordination. This does not mean that the countries in the outer rings are not yoked into the systems of the inner core, but only that they are not invited into the inner sanctum of information and weapons systems. The structure of the four rings is reflected in global intelligence networks, as exemplified by the distinctions between the Five, Nine, and Fourteen Eyes intelligence networks. The Five Eyes intelligence network (made up of five of the six inner core countries, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States – with Israel as a de facto ‘sixth eye’) works closely with but maintains a distinction from the Nine Eyes countries (Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway, added onto the Five Eyes countries) and, finally, with the Fourteen Eyes countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sweden, added to the Nine Eyes countries), which are privy to an increasingly depleted level of intelligence sharing the further they are from the inner core.

The Global South

Unlike the Global North, the Global South is not an integrated bloc. The countries of the Global South have different economic realities, military capacities, political systems, and governments, often with conflicting political traditions. Though several of these countries share certain characteristics and interests, the concept of the Global South is not defined by their commonalities but by a set of other factors. Nonetheless, these countries share the facts that:

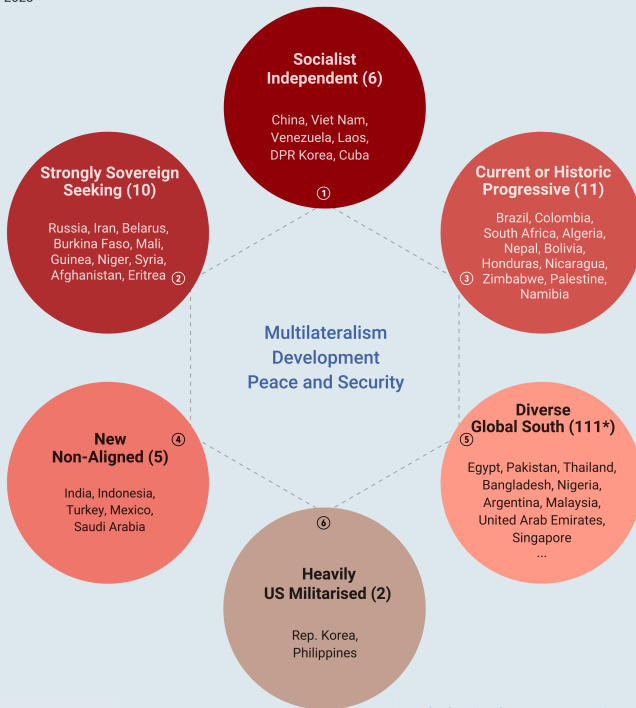
- They are former colonies and semi-colonies that have been subject to five hundred years of humiliation.
- They, in some cases, have and do pursue socialist projects, for which they have been punished by the imperialist bloc.
- They are – for a variety of reasons – victims of imperialist overreach using extra-economic force, such as coups and sanctions.
- They have often come together around various common interests, such as to seek debt relief, establish their right to build economic democracy, and access global health measures, including vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these commonalities, it would be an overreach to call them – as we did the Global North – a bloc. Instead, we think of the Global South as being made up of six groupings with interlocking

relationships (as well as antagonistic disputes amongst some of them). These groupings are:

The 'Rest of the World': 145 diverse countries, 6 groupings

Current or former colonies, semi-colonies, and socialist projects
The Global South, 2023



Source: Global South Insights

*Only the nine largest economies are listed (as of 2022)

1. **Socialist independent states.** This grouping includes six countries (China, Viet Nam, Venezuela, Laos, the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Cuba) that remain committed to the socialist trajectory, with all of its complex zigs and zags. Since 2016, China, a key member of the group, has had the largest GDP (PPP) in the world and an economy that is almost three times greater than that of India (a country with a comparable population).¹⁷ The Chinese people have achieved the greatest feat in modern times in terms of human development by lifting 800 million people out of poverty.¹⁸

2. **Strongly sovereign seeking states.** This grouping is defined by states that have, more recently and despite the many internal differences between them, taken steps to assert their sovereignty but have not established a formal socialist process. Many of these states, such as Eritrea and Mali, are part of the Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter, which formed in July 2021 under the leadership of the Venezuelan government. The West has, in turn, punished this posturing through extreme hybrid warfare.¹⁹ Russia, a special case in this grouping, is a primary target for regime change and coercive measures that seek to dismember and denuclearise it.

3. **Current or historic progressive states.** The societies in these countries have been shaped by national liberation movements – such as the struggle against apartheid in South Africa – and by movements against dictatorships – such as in Brazil – the impact of which has imprinted itself deeply onto their political cultures. Despite the limitations of the

governments in this grouping, their severe internal contradictions, and the difficulties of becoming emancipated from the global capitalist system, they have not wilted before US interference. However, none of these countries benefitted from a socialist revolution that might have weakened their national bourgeoisie through substantial land reform or through socialising advanced sectors of the economy, for instance.

4. **New non-aligned states.** These countries, with rising GDPs, are outgrowing their dependence on the West. The size and scale of their economies have given them some independence to pursue national economic interests without actively advancing political sovereignty. They have realised that the US seizure of foreign reserves and use of sanctions against at least 31.5% of the world population have become severe threats to the global majority and that the United States is no longer either a market of last resort or a major provider of foreign direct investment.²⁰
5. **The diverse Global South.** This grouping includes the 111 countries that lack any clear political, economic, or military unity. They vary in the degree to which they align with the Global North.
6. **Heavily US militarised states.** The two countries that make up this grouping – the Republic of Korea and the Philippines – are effectively military colonies of the United States, though their populations strain against the

limitations of being subordinated to US military and security needs.

Together these 145 countries (which includes Palestine as a UN observer) account for 85.8% of the world population and 59.4% of world GDP (PPP).²¹ As we will see in the final section, these six groupings are part of major regional and international projects (such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Union of South American Nations and BRICS10 and the G77, respectively) that reflect the new mood in the Global South – one that is shifting toward regionalism and multilateralism and away from the singular dominion crafted by the imperialist bloc.

On the Idea of the Five Controls

The Marxist assessment of imperialism over the past century has been shaped by Vladimir Lenin's theoretical and practical contributions, rooted in the experience of the Russian Revolution. In Lenin's classic work, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), he argued that, through its more competitive stage, capitalism advanced to produce oligopolies in important sectors – such as finance – and that these oligopolies clashed with each other, drawing their states into a conflict over markets in the colonies and into direct military confrontations with each other. The wave of formal decolonisation that began after the end of World War II in 1945 – which had a prior history in Latin America in the 1800s but was then restarted with the Cuban Revolution (1959) – created new conditions for imperialism. The territorial retreat of the imperialist powers was not matched in any way by a loss of their control over the world economy. To the contrary, they had fashioned what Kwame Nkrumah called neocolonialism.

Over the past few years, however, we have witnessed the slow attrition of the West's control over the world economy as well as the gradual delegitimisation of the entire neocolonial structure. To better understand this attrition, we adopted a method that Samir Amin developed almost thirty years ago to assess the nature of imperialist power.²² Amin argued that the neocolonial structure did not require Western-based transnational corporations to own most of the world's assets. Instead, he explained, what was needed was for them to have monopoly control over many of the assets in key sectors and ensure that the ultimate beneficiary of these assets would be the

Triad, or the Global North, and its ruling classes. Amin identified five forms of control that lie at the heart of the neocolonial structure:

- Control over natural resources
- Control over financial flows
- Control over science and technology
- Control over military power
- Control over information

In *The World Needs a New Socialist Development Theory* (July 2023), we argued that the West's control over natural resources, financial flows, and science and technology is being challenged by the emergence of the Global South's major economies: China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Turkey, and Mexico, which were all among the top thirteen largest economies in the world by GDP (PPP) in 2022.²³ China's impressive rise out of abject poverty has been key to weakening the Global North's hold over these first three controls.

Two exaggerations by the United States and the imperialist bloc from the mid-1990s to the 2010s also contributed to weakening this hold:

1. **US wars**, from the global war on terror to the wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

2. **US economic overextension**, from the over-credit in the US housing market to the lax regulation of the Western banking system.

These US wars and the Third Great Depression of 2007–2008 provoked a crisis of the Global North's leadership of the world system. It is in this context that Russian President Vladimir Putin said at the 2007 Munich Security Conference that the world does not need 'one master'.²⁴ Great doubts began to arise across much of the Global South about the role of the US as the buyer of last resort, the anchor for the world monetary system, and the political stabiliser of the world order.

New developments in China and Russia, which were taking place at the same time as these US wars and the chaos in the world capitalist system, began to accelerate new changes:

1. **China.** In the last years of the Hu Jintao government (2003–2013), China's leadership began to reassess its reliance upon the US market and US political leadership. The formation of BRICS in 2009 was part of this new posture. This reassessment was then translated into a new policy framework under the leadership of Xi Jinping. This included establishing alternatives to the US market and leadership, such as by creating an internal market through large-scale capital investment, eradicating extreme poverty, and building the One Belt, One Road (later Belt and Road) Initiative. Furthermore, China began to use the BRICS

process to encourage the formation of new monetary systems and new political leadership.

2. **Russia.** Towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the Russian government began to undo the damage that the destruction of the Soviet Union had done to its people. Firstly, the government, led by Putin, began to claw back the energy sector from the 'oligarchs' and organise the basis of the economy around principles of self-sufficiency, including holding capital within the country and not allowing profits to be taken out into the Western-controlled banking system. Secondly, the government began to increase Russia's role in OPEC+ (the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) and build up its energy sector in order to sell oil and natural gas to Europe in a context in which the Global North's wars on Iraq and Libya and sanctions-driven hybrid war on Iran interfered with Europe's major sources of energy.

The economic magnetism of China and Russia – in the context of a long-term economic crisis in the Global North – led countries of the European Union to become more integrated with Eurasia. This took place on two levels: European countries began to rely increasingly on Russian energy (a third of Germany's energy needs were fulfilled by Russia, for example) and on investment and technology from China (18 European Union countries joined the Belt and Road Initiative, including Italy, Poland, Portugal, and the Czech Republic).²⁵ Europe's integration with Asia was historically logical and necessary and, alongside the rise of China, threatened the

general unipolar structure of the Global North as well as the neo-colonial structure of the world economy. Unable to roll back this integration and the rise of China, the US, alongside its allies in the Global North, accelerated a hybrid war against both China and Russia. The frontlines of this war were initially economic (through a trade war, for example) but quickly began to focus on two areas: Ukraine and Taiwan. The war in Ukraine had two important consequences on the world order: first, it increased the cost of food and fuel across the globe, and second, it was met by a refusal by many developing countries to bow down to the West and its posture on the war. Together, these consequences generated a new mood in the developing world and the emergence of a new non-alignment.

The Global North's control over military power and information, however, has not withered. At a time of economic listlessness and political fragility, the Global North – led by the United States – is exercising the remainder of its power with great force and, in doing so, endangering the planet's existence. As our research shows, the Global North countries – especially the United States – expend significant amounts of their budgets on the military, building systems that threaten every aspect of human life and wasting human ingenuity on ways to destroy life rather than affirm it.

The Control of Arms

Unable and unwilling to build a social and political project to address the dilemmas of humanity on a global scale, the United States and its bloc have instead pursued a strategy to maintain their domination over the planet. This dominance began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist state system in Eastern Europe in 1991 as well as with the weakening of the Third World through the debt crisis, which started to spiral with Mexico's default in 1982. Intellectuals in the United States began to speak as if this dominance would last for eternity, with the 'end of history' pronounced against any challenge to the US order. However, cracks in this narrative began to widen as the G7's dominion, with the US at the helm, was deeply shaken by its military overreach in the global war on terror (especially the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003) and by the Third Great Depression of 2007–2008 (triggered by the collapse of Western housing markets).

The United States and its allies made every effort in the second decade of the twenty-first century to reassert their control over the planet. NATO's war on Libya in 2011 sent a strong signal of Western assertion, which was a prelude for the discussions about using a global NATO as a platform to advance Western military aggression, from the South China Sea to the Caribbean. Sanctions attempted to discipline anyone who would cross the lines drawn by the United States and its allies, locking countries out of the international financial system and thereby depriving entire populations of access to medicine, food, and other basic goods. (It is worth noting that sanctions, which have increased by 933% over the last twenty

years, have become a favourite form of US-led intervention).²⁶ Finally, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) returned with a renewed austerity agenda, which was deepened even during the pandemic, forcing dozens of poor countries to pay more to wealthy bondholders than they did to their own health care and education systems.²⁷

In 2018, the United States declared an end to the war on terror and clearly stated in its National Defence Strategy that its main problems were the rise of China and Russia. US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis spoke openly about the need to prevent the rise of ‘near peer rivals’ – China and Russia – and suggested that the entire panoply of US power be used to bring them to their knees.²⁸

Not only does the United States have hundreds of military bases that encircle Eurasia; it also has allies, from Germany to Japan, that provide it with forward positions against both Russia and China. In 2015 and 2019, respectively, the naval fleet of the US and its allies began aggressive ‘freedom of navigation’ exercises against the territorial integrity of both China (in the South China Sea) and Russia (mainly in the Arctic). These manoeuvres, as well as the 2014 US political intervention in Ukraine and massive 2015 US arms deal with Taiwan, further threatened Russia and China’s sovereignty. Then, in 2018, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which upset the apple cart of nuclear arms control. This withdrawal, alongside the US’s stated goals in the 2018 National Defence Strategy, showed that the US was contemplating the use of ‘tactical nuclear weapons’ against both Russia and China.

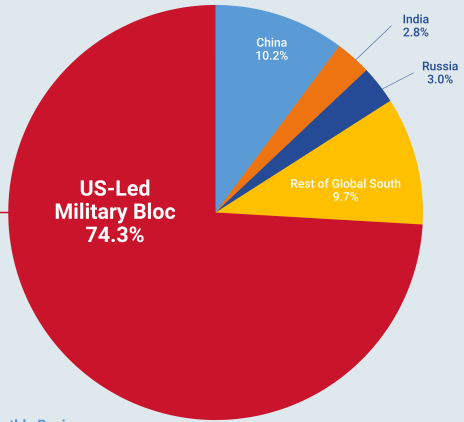
Thus far, US allies in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Australia and the Republic of South Korea, have not been eager to allow intermediate nuclear weapons into their territory, although these weapons could be positioned in US bases elsewhere, from Guam to Okinawa. It is impossible to understand Russia’s intervention in Ukraine without understanding this longer history of threats perceived by Moscow. It is not beyond reason to worry that the United States might position its intermediate nuclear weapons in Ukraine – whether or not Ukraine joins NATO.²⁹

Actual world military spending 2022

Figures in billions (USD)

World total 2,868

US military	1,537	53.6%
Rest of NATO	360	12.6%
Non-NATO US military bloc	234	8.2%



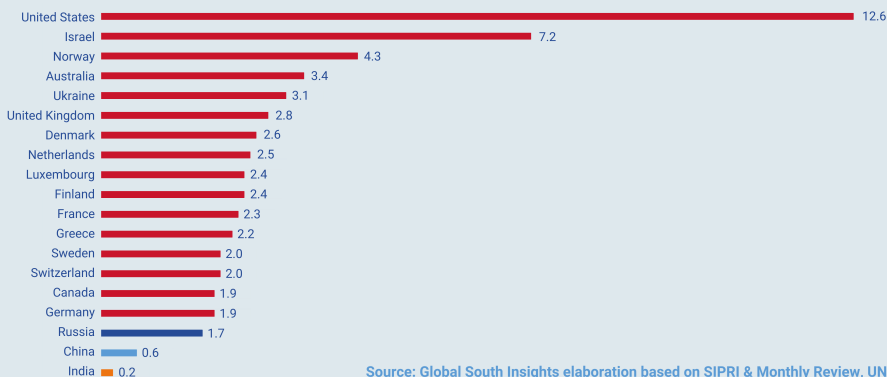
Source: Global South Insights elaboration based on SIPRI & Monthly Review

To affirm their position of domination over the world order, the United States and its allies have increased military spending beyond

belief. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) calculated that, in 2022, US military spending was roughly \$877 billion, or roughly 39%, of estimated global military spending.³⁰ However, as a recent report published in *Monthly Review* shows, this figure is vastly underestimated: actual US military spending is closer to \$1.537 trillion – nearly double SIPRI’s calculation and the official US numbers.³¹ Adding in the 2022 estimated expenditures of other NATO states (\$360 billion) and all US-dominated, non-NATO military allies (\$234 billion), based on official figures, brings the total military spending of the US-led military bloc to \$2.13 trillion, though this could well be below actual spending. This calculation brings the global military spending in 2022 to \$2.87 trillion. In other words, the US-led military bloc accounts for 74.3% of world military spending, and the US spends 12.6 times per capita above the world average (Israel, coming in second, spends 7.2 times above the world average per capita, with the other imperialist powers spending two to three times more than the world average).³²

Actual per capita military spending of top 16 Global North countries, Russia, China, and India in 2022

Figures in times world average

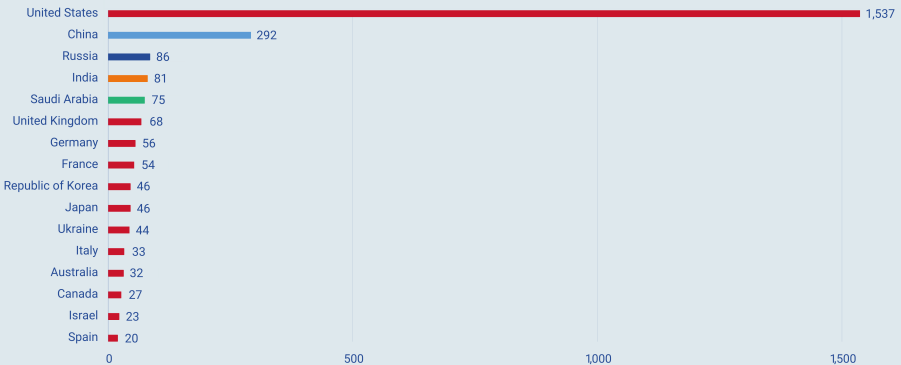


Source: Global South Insights elaboration based on SIPRI & Monthly Review, UN

China, meanwhile, accounts for 10% of world military spending (\$292 billion), and its per capita military spending is 22 times less than that of the United States.³³ Fear mongering about Chinese military spending is not substantiated by the facts. What *is* substantiated by facts is that China spends more of its social wealth on infrastructure and industry than on military waste. Meanwhile, the US spends a mere \$252 billion on education, for instance, according to the Centre on Budget and Policies Priorities, but \$1.537 trillion on the military, part of which goes to pay for its estimated 902 military bases across the world.³⁴

Top 16 countries with the largest military spending in the world in 2022

Figures in billions (USD)



The only area in the world that is free of the US military apparatus is large sections of Eurasia: China, India, Iran, and Russia. Since 1992, the United States has dreamt of vanquishing this region, including through the use of military power. In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national security advisor to US President Jimmy Carter, cautioned that ‘potentially, the most dangerous scenario would be a grand coalition of China, Russia, and perhaps Iran, an “antihegemonic” coalition united not by ideology but by complementary grievances’. ‘For America’, Brzezinski wrote, ‘the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia’, which, he said, ‘is thus the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played’.³⁵ To avoid this scenario, Brzezinski and others warned that the US should try to win over either China or Russia to isolate the other and to thereby dominate the Eurasian ‘chessboard’. However, for the past several decades, the United States has done just the opposite, electing instead to pressure both China and Russia through its New Cold War, which has, as Brzezinski predicted, brought these two countries together into a strategic bilateral and multilateral alliance. Furthermore, US Congressional Research Service data reports that the US Armed Forces have been deployed to 101 countries between 1798 and 2023.³⁶ According to the Military Intervention Project, between 1776 and 2019, the US carried out at least 392 military interventions worldwide. Half of these operations were undertaken between 1950 and 2019, and 25% of them occurred in the post-Cold War period.³⁷ In 2022 alone, 317 imperialist forces were deployed to countries in the Global South and 137 to Global North allies for a total of 454 deployments.³⁸

Perhaps the single best evidence of the racial, political, military, and economic plans of the Western powers that have manifested through the New Cold War can be summed up by a recent declaration of NATO and the EU:

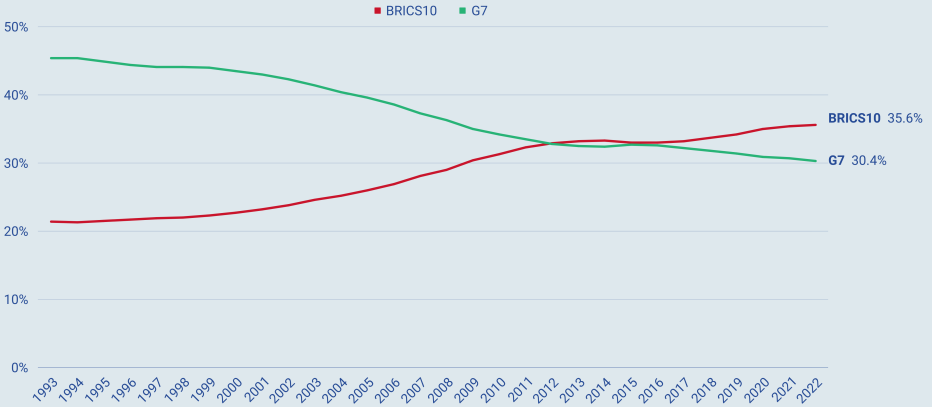
NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent, and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. We will further mobilise the combined set of instruments at our disposal, be they political, economic, or military, to pursue our common objectives to the benefit of our one billion citizens.³⁹

On the Emergence of New Organisations

On the last day of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2023, the five founding states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) welcomed six new members: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.⁴⁰ Though the new right-wing led government of Argentina under Javier Milei officially withdrew from joining BRICS on 29 December 2023, the ten BRICS countries now encompass 45.5% of the world population, with a combined global GDP (PPP) of 35.6%. In comparison, though the G7 states (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) account for merely 10% of the world population, their share of the global GDP (PPP) is 30.4%. While the countries that today form BRICS10 are responsible for 44% of global industrial output, their G7 counterparts account for a mere 21.6%.⁴¹ All available indicators, including harvest production and the total volume of metal production, show the immense power of the newly expanded BRICS10. Celso Amorim, advisor to the Brazilian government and one of the architects of BRICS during his former tenure as foreign minister, said of the new development that '[t]he world can no longer be dictated by the G7'.⁴²

BRICS10 vs G7: Share of world GDP (PPP)

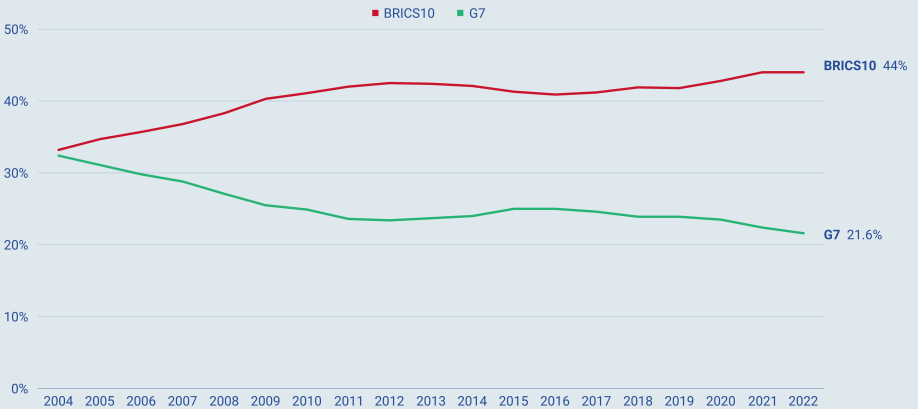
1993–2022



Source: Global South Insights elaboration based on IMF

BRICS10 vs G7: Share of world industry value added

GDP (Purchasing Power Parity), 2004–2022



Source: Global South Insights elaboration based on World Bank

Certainly, the BRICS10 nations, for all their internal hierarchies and challenges, now represent a larger share of the global GDP

than the G7, which continues to behave as the world's executive body. Twenty-three countries applied for membership before the South Africa meeting (including seven of the thirteen countries in OPEC), though over forty expressed an interest in joining BRICS, including Indonesia, the world's seventh largest country in terms of GDP (PPP).

It is important to note that BRICS10 does not operate independently of new regional formations that aim to build platforms outside the grip of the West, such as the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Instead, BRICS10 membership has the potential to enhance regionalism for those already within these regional forums.

Why did BRICS welcome such a disparate group of countries, including two monarchies, into its fold? When asked to reflect on the character of the new full member states, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said, 'What matters is not the person who governs but the importance of the country. We can't deny the geopolitical importance of Iran and other countries that will join BRICS'.⁴³ This is the measure of how the founding countries made the decision to expand their alliance.

At least three key issues lie at the heart of BRICS's growth: control over energy supplies and pathways, control over global financial and development systems, and control over institutions for peace and security.

Control over Energy Supplies and Pathways

BRICS10 has now created a formidable energy group. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are also members of OPEC, which, with Russia, a key member of OPEC+, now accounts for 26.3 million barrels of oil per day, just below 30% of global daily oil production.⁴⁴ It was China's role in brokering a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia in April that enabled both of these oil-producing countries to join BRICS. Egypt, another new addition to BRICS10 though not an OPEC member, is nonetheless one of the largest African oil producers, with an output that accounts for more than a quarter of the world's oil production.⁴⁵ What is at stake here is not just the production of oil, but the establishment of new global energy pathways.

The Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative, alongside the development of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, have already created a web of oil and natural gas platforms around the Global South, integrated into the expansion of Khalifa Port and natural gas facilities in Fujairah and Ruwais (in the United Arab Emirates). There is every expectation that BRICS10 will begin to coordinate its energy infrastructure with other energy producers. For instance, tensions between Russia and Saudi Arabia over oil volumes have simmered this year as Russia exceeded its quota in an attempt to compensate for Western sanctions placed on it as a result of the war in Ukraine. Now these two countries will have another forum, outside of OPEC+ and with China at the table, to build a common energy agenda. This expanding platform also threatens to undermine the petrodollar system, with more countries – such as Saudi Arabia – planning to sell oil to

China in renminbi, or RMB (China's two other main oil providers, Iraq and Russia, already receive payment in RMB).

Control over Global Financial and Development Systems

Both the discussions at the BRICS summit and its final communiqué focused on the need to strengthen a financial and development architecture for the world that is not governed by the triumvirate of the IMF, Wall Street, and the US dollar. However, BRICS does not seek to circumvent established global trade and development institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, and the IMF. For instance, in its concluding declaration of the summit, BRICS reaffirmed the importance of the 'rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organisation at its core' and called for 'a robust Global Financial Safety Net with a quota-based and adequately resourced [IMF] at its centre'.⁴⁶ Its proposals do not fundamentally break with the IMF or WTO; rather, they offer a dual pathway forward: first, for BRICS to exert more control and direction over these organisations, of which they are members but have been subordinated to a Western agenda, and second, for BRICS states to realise their aspirations to build their own parallel institutions (such as the New Development Bank, or NDB). Saudi Arabia's investment fund alone is worth close to \$1 trillion, which could partially resource the NDB.⁴⁷

BRICS's agenda to improve 'the stability, reliability, and fairness of the global financial architecture', BRICS chair Cyril Ramaphosa

explained, is mostly being carried forward by the ‘use of local currencies, alternative financial arrangements, and alternative payment systems’.⁴⁸ The concept of ‘local currencies’ refers to the growing practice of states using their own currencies for cross-border trade rather than relying upon the dollar. Though approximately 150 currencies in the world are considered to be legal tender, cross-border payments almost always rely on the dollar (which, as of 2021, accounts for 40% of flows over the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, or SWIFT, network).⁴⁹

Other currencies play a limited role, with the Chinese RMB comprising 2.5% of cross-border payments.⁵⁰ However, the emergence of new global messaging platforms – such as China’s Cross-Border Payment Interbank System, India’s Unified Payments Interface, and Russia’s Financial Messaging System (SPFS) – as well as regional digital currency systems promise to increase the use of alternative currencies. For instance, cryptocurrency assets briefly provided a potential avenue for new trading systems before their asset valuations declined, and BRICS10 recently approved the establishment of a working group to study a BRICS reference currency.

Following the expansion of BRICS, the NDB said that it will also expand its members and that, as its *General Strategy, 2022–2026* notes, 30% of all of its financing will be in local currencies.⁵¹ As part of its framework for a new development system, its president, Dilma Rousseff, said that the NDB will not follow the IMF policy of imposing conditions on borrowing countries. ‘We repudiate any kind of conditionality’, Rousseff said. ‘Often a loan is given upon the

condition that certain policies are carried out. We don't do that. We respect the policies of each country'.⁵²

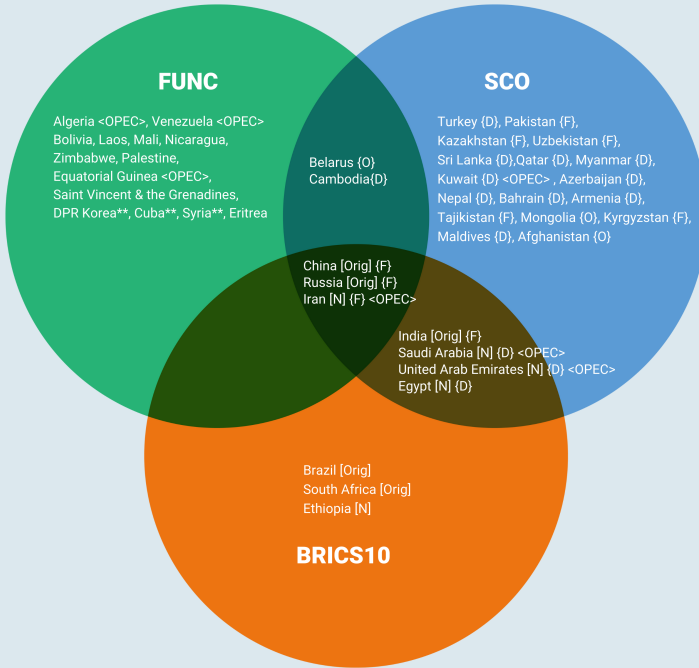
The entry of Ethiopia and Iran into BRICS10 shows how large Global South states are reacting to the West's sanctions policy against dozens of countries, including two founding BRICS members (China and Russia). China has long traded with Ethiopia, whose capital city, Addis Ababa, is the headquarters of the African Union. Drawing Ethiopia into BRICS ensures that this large country (with a sizeable population and important agricultural land) will not drift back into the Western orbit.

Control over Institutions for Peace and Security

In their communiqué, the BRICS nations write about the importance of 'comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council'.⁵³ Currently, the UN Security Council has fifteen members, five of which are permanent (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US). There are no permanent members from Africa, Latin America, or the most populous country in the world, India. To repair these inequities, BRICS offers its support to 'the legitimate aspirations of emerging and developing countries from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, including Brazil, India, and South Africa, to play a greater role in international affairs'.⁵⁴ The West's refusal to allow these countries a permanent seat at the UN Security Council has only strengthened their commitment to the BRICS process and to enhance their role in the G20.

GS43: 43 member states of Global South emergent multilateral organisations

BRICS10, FUNC, and SCO, 2023



Main Groups

- **BRICS10**
[Orig] - Original [N] - New
- **Group of Friends in Defense of the UN Charter (FUNC)**
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**
(F) - Full (D) - Dialogue (O) - Observer

Intersections

- **FUNC + SCO**
- **SCO + BRICS10**
- **BRICS10 + FUNC + SCO**

<OPEC> Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, 13 members, 7 of whom are in GS43

Source: Global South Insights

*Countries within each colour are ordered by declining GDP
**Countries that lack sufficient IMF GDP PPP data

Three major interregional platforms, still in an embryonic stage, define the new regionalism and multilateralism:

1. **BRICS10** (an expansion of the 2009 formation of BRIC), which is largely strategic but also an economic powerhouse, has ten official members and several unofficial partners.
2. **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** (2001), which was largely formed around security issues in Central Asia, has advanced into conversations about development and trade.
3. **The Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter** (2021), which is mainly a political platform, brings together twenty UN member states that are facing the brunt of illegal US sanctions, from Algeria to Zimbabwe. Many of these states attended the BRICS summit as invitees and are eager to join BRICS10 as full members.

It is no accident that there are three countries, all primary targets of pressure campaigns by the imperialist bloc, that are in all three of these organisations: China, Iran, and Russia.

There are several shared challenges and opportunities that have emerged in the Global South and that have brought many of its countries together around the need for a common framework for discussion and collaboration. These common interests include the need for:

- **Multilateralism and regionalism** that is centred on the creation of Global South-anchored cooperation.
- **New modernisation** that is centred on constructing regional and continental economies that use local currencies in place of the dollar for trade and reserves.
- **Sovereignty**, which would create barriers to Western intervention. This includes military entanglements and digital colonialism, both of which facilitate US intelligence interventions.
- **Reparations**, which would entail collective bargaining to compensate for the West's century-old debt traps and abuse of the excess carbon budget as well as its much longer-reaching legacy of colonialism.



Tectonic changes are taking place in the world, accelerated by the wars in Ukraine and the rapidly escalating genocide in Palestine. These changes are shaped, on the one hand, by the Global North's loss of economic power alongside its increase in militarisation and, on the other, by the Global South's new mood regarding sovereignty and economic development. This dossier is a preliminary exercise, based on original research and analysis, to make sense of these changes and – consequently – the new mood in the Global South.



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