

BRICS AND THE MULTIPLOIDIZATION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: NAVIGATING POST-HEGEMONIC PATHWAYS

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Introduction

The global geopolitical landscape is experiencing profound transformations driven by the shifting dynamics of international power relations. Historically characterized by unipolarity under U.S. dominance, the contemporary international order increasingly gravitates towards multipolarity (Ashford and Cooper 2023; Geeraerts 2011: 60). This transition is significantly influenced by the BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—collectively representing an ascending force that contests traditional hegemonic frameworks, significantly influencing this shift (Butler 2018, 18; Armijo 2007, 9)³. The emergence of the BRICS symbolizes a distinctive form of South-South cooperation and represents a deliberate effort by states of the Global South to reshape global governance towards a post-hegemonic orientation⁴.

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3 This study focuses on the post-hegemonic transformation of global politics, rather than the counter-hegemonic aspect. This transition from a unipolar to a multipolar order does not imply the total cessation of US influence. Instead, the US's status as the sole superpower post-Cold War has been contested, and its capabilities and power have diminished; however, it remains a dominant force. For further reading, see Mir Hosseini et al. (2021).

4 However, it should be emphasized that the BRICS, as it is, is not a cohesive historical alliance opposing US hegemony. Some scholars argue that the BRICS initiatives may not foster genuine South-South cooperation, but instead perpetuate existing inequalities among emerging nations. Despite these perspectives, the BRICS plays a vital role in shaping global governance frameworks and facilitating international development. For more information, see Juncal

Despite extensive studies on the advent of multipolarity and its impact on global governance (Garzón 2017; Efstathopoulos 2016; Shaw et al. 2009), a significant knowledge gap remains about the specific policies and methods employed by the BRICS to counter American hegemony effectively. Particularly understudied is the nuanced interplay between economic dynamism, military capabilities, institutional frameworks, and cultural influence within the BRICS context and their cumulative effect on global multiploidization.

Addressing this gap, the current research seeks to comprehensively evaluate the role of the BRICS alliance in facilitating the multiploidization of global governance. This study's central research question is: "How does the BRICS alliance contribute to the multiploidization of global governance?". While the term multipolarity traditionally refers to the distribution of power among multiple sovereign actors in the international system, multiploidization refers to a deeper transformation: not only the diffusion of power, but also the emergence of parallel governance architectures, alternative norms, and Southern-led institutional innovations that challenge hegemonic universality. As used in this paper, multiploidization captures the qualitative reordering of global governance, whereby actors from the Global South—especially the BRICS—no longer merely participate in existing institutions but actively reshape their design and legitimacy. It is both a descriptive and analytical term that highlights a world no longer centered on a single pole or logic of governance, but characterized by plural nodes of agency, sovereignty, and normative authority (Gürçan 2019; Kiely 2015; Quiliconi and Kingah 2016). This paper analyzes the strategic implications of South-South cooperation and elucidates the broader shifts in international power dynamics resulting from the decline of U.S. dominance⁵.

In evaluating the role of the BRICS, this study distinguishes between two causal pathways: (1) the direct erosion of U.S. hegemony through deliberate institutional, economic, and geopolitical countermeasures; and

(2018), Gu et al. (2016).

5 This interpretation aligns with Barry Buzan's recent reflections on the BRICS as an expression of "deep pluralism"—a diplomatic formation that, while too heterogeneous to form a tightly integrated bloc, nonetheless plays a pivotal role in transitioning from a Western-centric order to one marked by a more diffuse distribution of wealth, knowledge, and governance authority. As Buzan argues, the BRICS aggregates shared dissatisfaction with the overextension of U.S. financial dominance and the disproportionate influence of the U.S. and Europe in global intergovernmental institutions. Michael Cox similarly notes that, despite internal divergence, the BRICS increasingly possesses global legitimacy as a Southern-led platform for post-hegemonic governance. These views underscore the importance of analyzing the BRICS not as a coherent bloc, but as a functional coalition engaging in strategic, pluralist alternatives to Western-dominated global structures (Buzan 2025; Cox 2025).

(2) the strategic expansion of the BRICS influence into global governance spaces weakened by declining Western legitimacy. While these dynamics are interrelated, this distinction clarifies the mechanisms by which the BRICS contributes to multiploidization. In some cases—such as promoting de-dollarization or building parallel development institutions—the BRICS acts as a direct challenger. In others—such as filling gaps in global infrastructure finance or public health governance—it acts as an opportunistic system-builder in a shifting international order.

While studies such as Bastanifar et al (2025) and Jacobs & Van Rossem (2014) examine economic and geopolitical factors, their analyses often focus on selected dimensions or pairwise comparisons rather than systematically integrating economic, military, institutional, and cultural (soft power) dimensions. Previous work, such as that of Moch (2024) and empirical comparisons such as those of Cogent Social Sciences, has relied primarily on comparative measures or empirical data on economic and military capabilities. These studies often provide quantitative comparative analyses, without deeply examining the strategic interactions between these diverse dimensions or their cumulative geopolitical implications. Previous research has primarily emphasized the BRICS as emerging economies challenging economic dominance or compared them with traditional power groups (G7). While geopolitics is addressed, an explicit and detailed examination of the direct role of the BRICS in shaping a post-hegemonic global governance system is less of a central analytical issue. Our research explicitly highlights the transition from unipolar (US-dominated) to multipolar (post-hegemonic) governance and elaborates on how the BRICS are strategically creating alternative governance structures (such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the New Development Bank, initiatives such as de-dollarization) to advance a South-centric multipolar order. This explicit and apparent shift in global governance systems represents a distinct contribution and innovation.

The novelty of the present research, therefore, lies in the integrated geopolitical-economic assessment (economic, military, institutional, cultural) that provides a comprehensive strategic analytical framework that considers cumulative geopolitical implications and highlights an explicit analysis of the BRICS role in actively shaping a post-hegemonic global governance architecture.

Methodologically, the study employs a comparative analytical framework, drawing from primary and secondary data sources. It assesses the relative influence of the BRICS in economic dynamism, military power, institutional capacity, and cultural (soft power) influence. This multidimensional approach allows for a robust evaluation of how the

BRICS collectively disrupt traditional hierarchies and construct alternative governance frameworks, such as promoting de-dollarization and establishing the New Development Bank. Ultimately, the study argues that BRICS' active participation in global governance signifies a pivotal transformation from a U.S.-led unipolar system towards a more diversified, multipolar international order, fundamentally reshaping the architecture of 21st-century global governance.

The Geopolitical-Economic Interplay: The U.S. vs. the BRICS

Murray (2012) identifies six elements of economic dynamism: military power, territorial dominance and control over natural resources, demographic power, institutional capacity, and global culture, which are essential for distinguishing and determining polar power. Brady (2017) emphasizes the military, financial, and scientific ambitions in polar regions that have the potential to transform global power dynamics. Dodds and Powell (2013) emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive understanding of identity politics, governance, and security in these regions. The collective analysis of these works illustrates the intricate dynamics of polar power, integrating cultural, military, and economic dimensions within global politics (Murray and Brown 2012; Murray 2012; Brady 2017; Dodds and Powell 2013). This study examines the rising influence of the BRICS through a three-dimensional framework encompassing economic dynamism, military strength, institutional capacity, and cultural influence, drawing on scholarly consensus and a review of primary and secondary sources. From a geopolitical and economic perspective, these three features are significant indicators of global hegemony. The dominance of these determinants, specifically by a single nation, corresponds to a unipolar international order. Conversely, in numerous cases, a scenario in which other nations, especially the BRICS, disrupt this power monopoly would indicate a shift toward a multipolar order. A unipolar tendency in global politics characterized the 1990s. In contrast, the 2000s were characterized by a multipolarization of world politics, during which southern rivals increasingly challenged the global hegemony of the United States.

This paper operationalizes multiploidization by examining three interrelated characteristics of the BRICS countries' collective contribution to global governance: the extent of this contribution, economic dynamism, military capability, and institutional-cultural influence. Indicators include GDP and trade volume (economic agency), defense spending and regional

military presence (strategic autonomy), and participation in multilateral institutions, development banks, and soft power rankings (institutional diversification). When these efforts shift authority and legitimacy away from U.S.-centric models toward Southern-designed alternatives, they are interpreted as evidence of multiploidization in action.

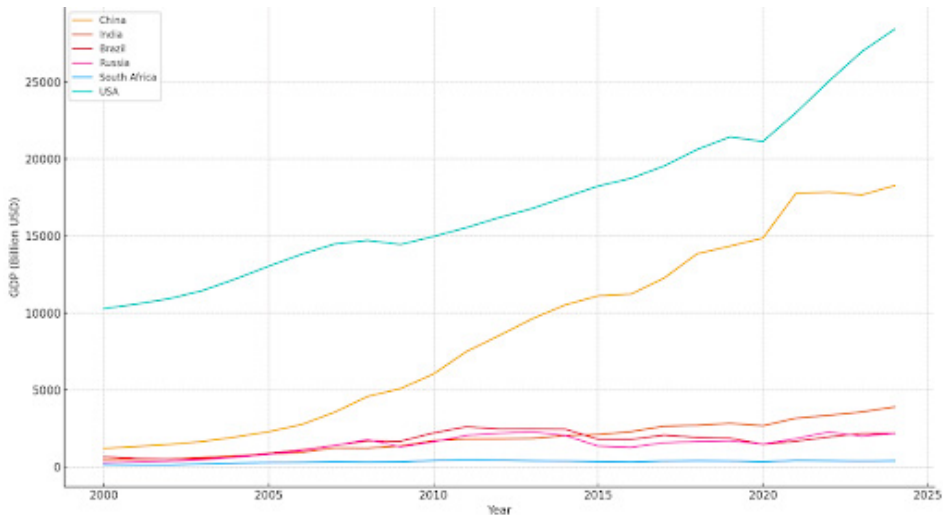
Economic Power

Economic power is defined as the capacity to influence decision-making and control resources. This complex notion significantly shapes the capabilities and choices of individuals, corporations, and nations within the context of the global landscape (Safuiddin 2021). The United States, historically the sole dominant economic power, has seen its position challenged by China's economic development over the past two decades. This shift has altered America's status, particularly as it previously provided financial assistance to war-torn nations following World War II. Evidence suggests that China has significantly challenged the United States in the economic sphere, as evidenced by the ongoing trade and economic conflict between the two nations. In the Global South, China's accumulation of over \$2 trillion in reserves and the surge in global lending notably diminishes US financial leverage by decreasing its dependence on Western institutions, such as the IMF and the dollar-centric system (Dutkiewicz et al. 2020). When it comes to international investment in the Global South, China and the US are competitors. According to Stuenkel (2016) and MacDonald and Lemco (2011), China's lending to Latin America exceeds that of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank put together. The US dollar's dominance in international finance has been significantly weakened since the euro's introduction in 1999, as well as other attempts by Eurasian nations to substitute gold or other currencies for the US dollar. The US's position as the world's leading and most dynamic manufacturing hub has been eroded due to the 2008 financial crisis and the over-financialization of the US economy.

In addition to damaging the US economy's international standing, rising unemployment and inequality have harmed the country's political climate by encouraging bigotry and xenophobia (Edelman 2019; Ivanova 2019; Milberg and Winkler 2009). Economic power is influenced by various factors, with GDP being the most significant, as it provides a more accurate representation of national economic strength (Greenaway-McGrevy 2011). However, other research suggests that it has significant limitations as an indicator of national economic power and well-being (DeLeon and Boris

2010; Lawn 2007). This element is considered a key measure and criterion for assessing the economic power of nations, as it serves as the primary variable in macroeconomic analysis and evaluations. It is the most frequently utilized indicator by economists to gauge societal well-being and facilitate comparisons among different societies (Mir Hosseini 2021, 78). China's GDP remains lower than that of the United States despite being the highest among the BRICS nations. The United States has surpassed each of the BRICS nations. Russia and Brazil are closely matched, while India's GDP per capita is relatively strong among the BRICS nations.

Figure 1: GDP (current US\$) - United States, China, Russian Federation, India, Brazil, South Africa



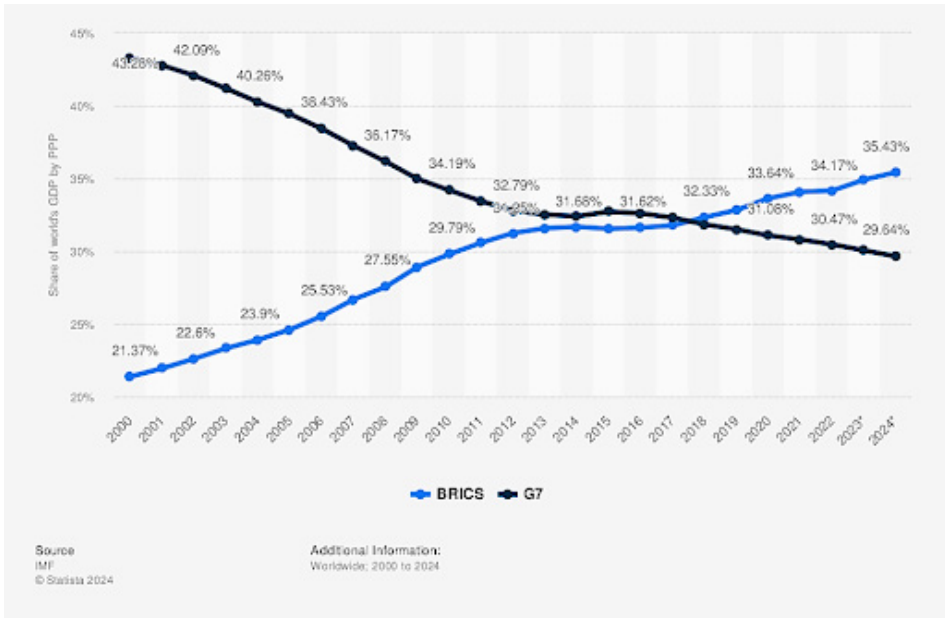
Source: www.data.worldbank.org.

In 2023, China had the highest GDP among the BRICS nations, totaling US\$17.84 trillion, whereas the other member countries each have GDPs below US\$4 trillion. China has consistently been the largest economy within the bloc, and its rapid growth ranks second globally, following the United States. Some analysts predict that India may surpass the United States by mid-century; however, China's GDP is anticipated to exceed that of the United States by the end of the 2020s, positioning it as the largest economy globally. Experts predict that India's growth rate will match that of China and is likely to surpass it in the next decade (Christensen and Xing 2016; Hopewell 2016; Kiely 2015). The BRICS group functions as more than a mere trade or economic bloc; it established the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014

to invest in renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure globally. The NDB symbolizes evolutionary innovation in global governance, responding to systemic gaps left by traditional Western-led institutions. Its membership expansion, including countries beyond the BRICS core, underscores its growing geopolitical importance and role in advancing a multipolar order—what Noroozi calls “polyplidity”—in global economic governance (Noroozi 2024). The Shanghai-based multilateral development lender has recently funded a variety of projects, including updates to cargo rail systems in South Africa and enhancements to liquefied natural gas transportation capacity in China. It often finances development initiatives based on local currencies, which many anticipate may eventually contest the dominance of the U.S. dollar in the global economy. Despite the strained or superficial relationships among its members in the 20th century, their current initiatives have significantly enhanced their global influence. In 2024, the BRICS group recorded a GDP of approximately \$26.95 trillion, which is marginally higher than that of the United States (World Bank n.d.a).

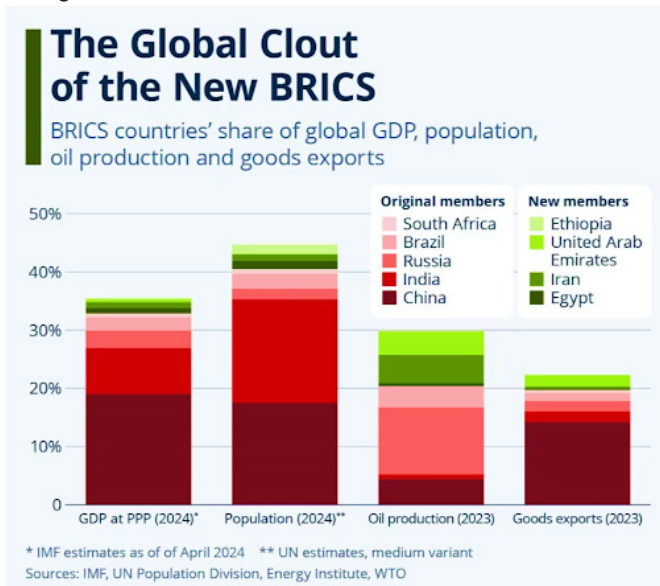
Analysis of the shares of the United States and the BRICS nations reveals a decline in the United States’ share of global commerce and output, decreasing from 50% in 1945 to 25% in 2020. The percentage of US dollars among global currencies declined from 66.9% in 2005 to 61% in 2020. China and India now account for 25% of the global GDP, while the BRIC countries collectively represent 20% of the world’s output. By 2024, the share of the Group of 7 nations—comprising the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Canada—in global GDP was approximately 30%. Collectively, the BRICS nations represented 35 percent of global GDP. According to the purchasing power parity (PPP) measure, the BRICS nations surpassed the G7 nations in total GDP proportion in 2018. According to purchasing power parity, the BRICS economies are expected to represent 37.3% of global GDP by 2024. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that China accounted for 19.05%, whereas India contributed 8.23%. The European Union and the United States each represented approximately 14.5% of the global economy simultaneously (World Economic Forum 2025). The BRICS nations have experienced an increase in strength, particularly at the regional level (Cochrane and Zaidan 2024), while the traditional great powers, represented by the G7, have witnessed a decline in their global influence in recent years.

Figure 2: Share of BRICS and G7 countries in total gross domestic product (GDP) in purchasing power parity (PPP) from 2000 to 2024



Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Figure 3: The Global Clout of the New BRICS



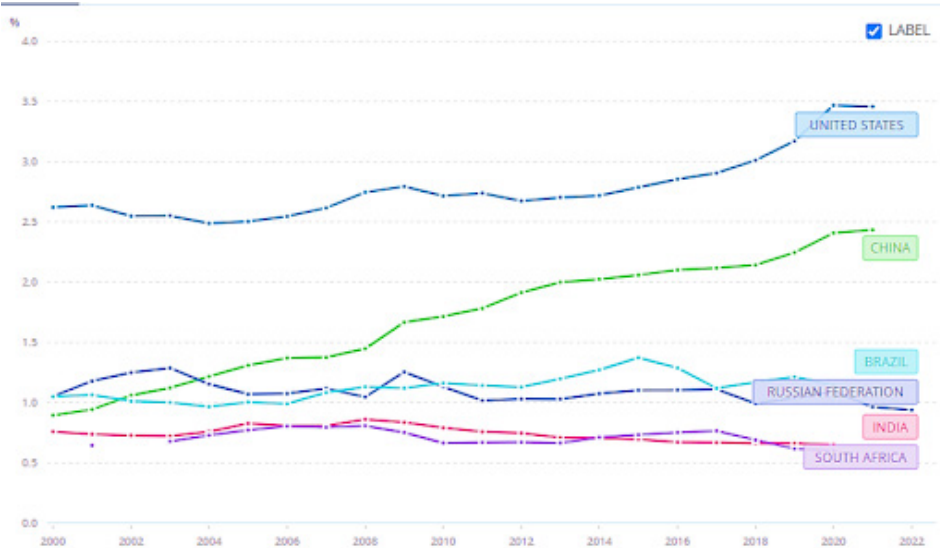
Source: www.weforum.org.

Furthermore, the BRICS bloc is increasingly establishing itself as a significant economic entity in commodities trading. Let us examine oil. An analysis conducted by S&P Global (Griffin 2024) indicates that the inclusion of Iran, the UAE, and potentially Saudi Arabia in the BRICS group could result in the collective control of nearly 50% of global oil output and an estimated 35% of total oil consumption. The inclusion of Saudi Arabia would enhance the BRICS group's status as a significant force in the commodities market, according to the paper. The BRICS nations, due to their large populations, possess a significant workforce and consumer base. The International Labour Organisation projects that the labor force participation rate in the bloc will reach 60.6% in 2024, corresponding to 1.5 billion individuals. Men's participation stands at 73.9%, while women's is at 47.4%, indicating a significant gender disparity in participation rates.

Moreover, participation in the unofficial economy of BRICS nations is significantly elevated. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 934.4 million individuals in BRICS countries are employed in the informal sector, with a significant majority located in India. A 2023 report by the International Labour Organization stated that informal work is widespread in certain BRICS nations, with productivity improvements associated with shifts towards formal employment and enhanced working conditions. The unemployment rate in the BRICS nations stands at 5.3%, encompassing a total of 84.7 million individuals (World Economic Forum 2025).

Another important concept that has gained special importance in today's economy is the "Research and Development" sector. The data presented in the tables and graphs below indicates that China is closely approaching the United States; analysts forecast that China will ultimately surpass the United States in this aspect. The percentage of GDP allocated to R&D spending in the United States increased from 2.62% in 2000 to 3.46% in 2022. China's performance increased from 0.9% in 2000 to 2.43% in 2022 (World Bank n.d.b).

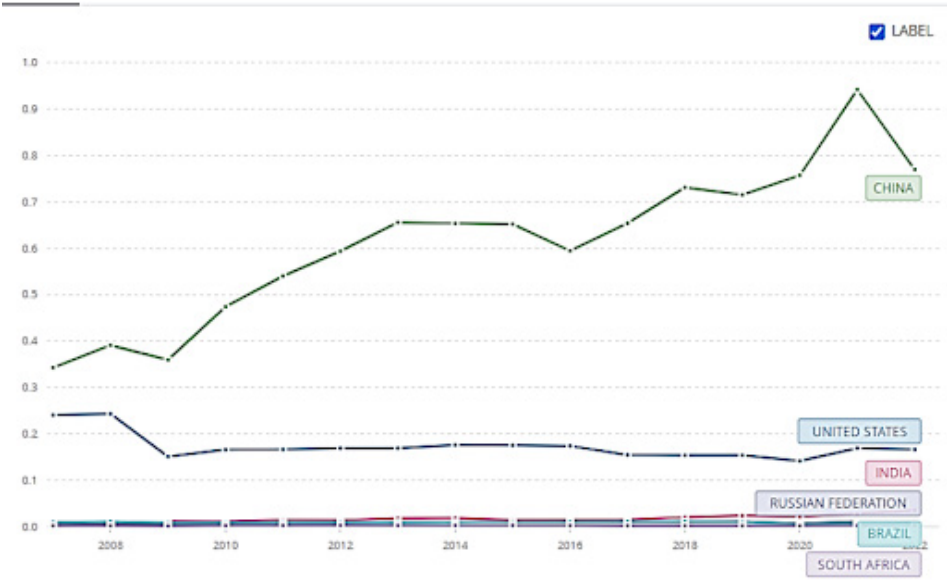
Figure 4: Research and development spending (% of GDP) - United States and BRICS countries from 2000 to 2022



Source: www.data.worldbank.org.

It should also be noted that in the performance of high-tech exports, China had reached 23% in 2022 from 30% of manufacturing exports in 2007. This is while the United States reached 18% in 2022, with the same percentage in the same year. According to the figures, China's high-tech exports in 2007 amounted to \$342.57 billion, which reached \$769.7 billion in 2022. The United States also exported high-tech products worth \$240.51 billion in 2007, which reached \$166.44 billion in 2022. Other BRICS countries do not have a powerful position in this field, but this cannot be said about India. India's high-tech exports in 2010 were \$11.22 billion, which is expected to increase to \$35.22 billion in 2022 (World Bank n.d.c).

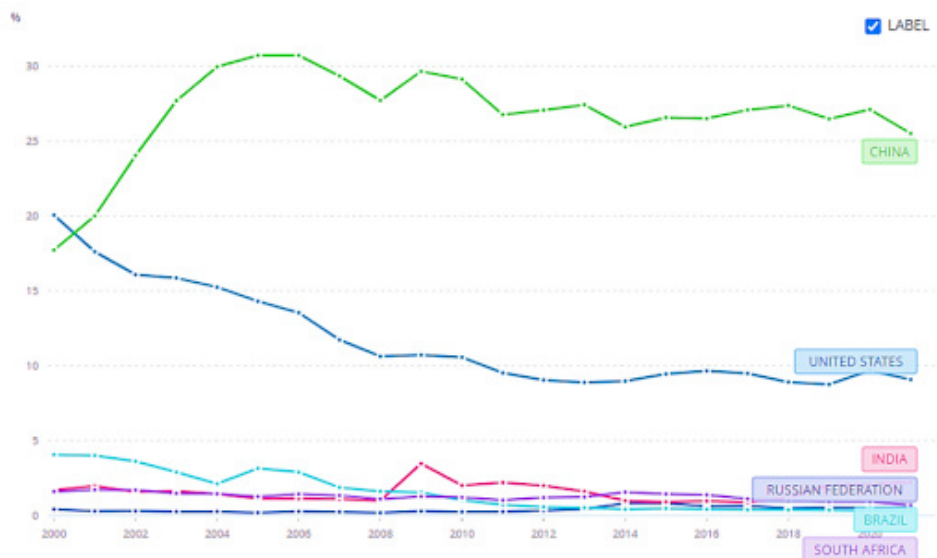
Figure 5: High-tech exports (% of manufacturing exports) - United States, China, Russian Federation, India, Brazil, South africa from 2007 to 2022



Source: www.data.worldbank.org.

The export of ICT items from the US experienced a significant decline in technological competitiveness, decreasing from 20.08% in 2000 to 9.1% in 2022. Since that time, China has experienced significant economic growth, exceeding the US economy with a share of approximately 25.5% in 2022 (World Bank n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.e), despite having a smaller proportion of ICT goods exports compared to the US in 2000 (17.7%).

Figure 6: ICT goods exports (% of total goods exports) - United States, China, Russian Federation, India, Brazil, South Africa from 2000 to 2021



Source: www.data.worldbank.org.

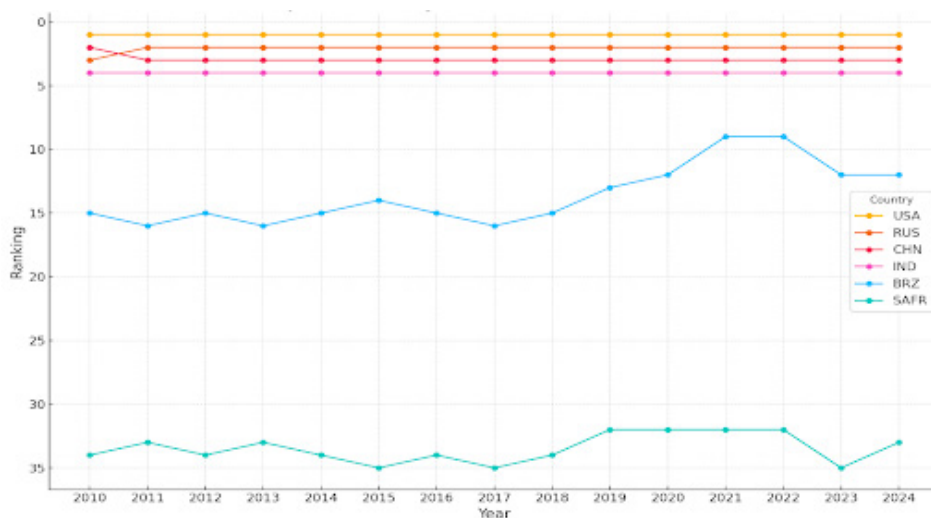
While the United States remains the top destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worldwide, the BRICS nations have experienced a notable increase in this flow in recent years. For twelve consecutive years, the United States has ranked highest among countries attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). US investment in China is expected to be \$126.1 billion in 2022. Chinese corporations invested \$215 billion, whereas US businesses spent roughly \$515 billion in BRICS nations, excluding China. As of 2021, India had invested \$14 billion, ranking it third among the BRICS countries in terms of investments in the United States. Brazilian investments have also surged dramatically; the proportion of US investments rose by almost 50% between 2016 and 2021. However, Russia's overall direct investment in the United States has decreased by 10 percent over the past five years to approximately \$4 billion. From \$84 billion to \$355 billion, BRICS foreign direct investment flows almost doubled between 2001 and 2021. From 11 percent in 2001 to 22 percent in 2021, the BRICS' share of worldwide foreign direct investment inflows also doubled. Despite the global downturn, BRICS nations continued to attract significant foreign direct investment in 2019.

To understand how the Global South has evolved since the turn of the century, we must examine the performance of the BRICS countries in terms of foreign investment. Despite economic disparities, BRICS nations are translating their economic growth into enhanced geopolitical and institutional capabilities. This, however, does not diminish the significance of BRICS growth in global industry and infrastructure development, where they have outperformed the US economy. In the realm of international trade, BRICS has finally matched the United States, as the disparity in foreign direct investment (FDI) share between BRICS and the US is rapidly diminishing. World Bank data indicate that China has surpassed the United States in selected indicators of high-technology and ICT-goods exports, while the performance of the other BRICS countries remains uneven (World Bank n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.e).

Military Power

In this section, the present article focuses on data from the reputable website “Global Firepower”. The sources of military power and the indicators on which this institute has obtained results are more than 50 factors, the most important of which include; human resources, financial costs of military forces, enemies and support, logistical power, naval power (number of aircraft carriers, submarines, etc.), land (tanks, advanced armored weapons, etc.), air (number and type of advanced jets, helicopters, etc.), access to natural resources and geographical factors and defense budget. According to the 2024 index rating, the United States ranks as the strongest military power globally, followed by Russia, China, and India (GFP 2024). Brazil, as a member of the BRICS, ranks among the top 15 military powers globally; South Africa, although ranked lower than other nations, remains part of this group. The United States continues to emerge as the leading military power. In 2024, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that the United States accounted for \$997 billion in military expenditure, representing over 37% of total global military spending for that year. The United States allocates 3.4 percent of its GDP to military expenditure, positioning it below Saudi Arabia, Israel, Algeria, and Russia in terms of military spending as a percentage of GDP. China ranks second in military expenditure at \$314 billion, followed by Russia in third with \$149 billion, Germany in fourth with \$88.5 billion, and India in fifth with \$86.1 billion (Liang et al. 2025). Figure 7 illustrates the significant military capabilities of the BRICS nations and the United States.

Figure 7: Military Power Rankings of the USA and BRICS (2010-2024)

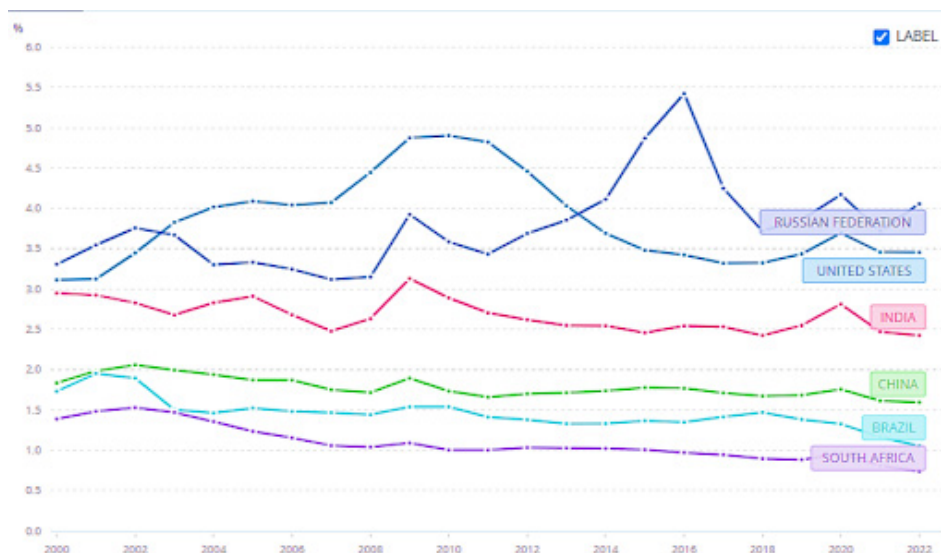


Source: globalfirepower.com.

Through the control of natural resources and the escalation of religious and ethnic tensions in the South, the United States has used its military might in direct and indirect ways to limit possible competitors and hinder their progress. With the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States pursued its hegemonic ambitions at a cost of an estimated \$4.4 trillion. Golub (2010) argues that the US interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, and the South China Sea were ultimately unsuccessful. Among countries that spend a portion of their GDP on defense, the US ranks second, just behind Russia. Russia has increased its military spending as a percentage of GDP, which is hardly surprising given recent events in Syria and Ukraine. India's military spending as a proportion of GDP fell sharply between 2005 and 2015, overtaking China in the process. While the collective investments of BRICS nations in strategic deterrence and regional defense alliances indicate an increasing capacity for coordinated opposition to unilateral US interventionism, these countries do not individually match US capabilities (Cochrane and Zaidan 2024; Brown 2012). China accounts for over 6 percent of the global arms trade, positioning it as the third-largest exporter of weapons worldwide. Russia has emerged as the second-largest arms supplier globally, surpassing the United States in terms of military spending (UPI 2016). Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, 2014–2016 invasion of Ukraine, and 2022 invasion of Ukraine all show how a Cold War-style setting can

derail US-centric security worries. A primary symptom of the US military's deteriorating capability is the growing influence of Russia and Iran in Syria. The United States' military might was severely weakened in 2015 due to the Russian-Nordic war in the Baltic Sea and China's threat to American military supremacy in the South China Sea. US leaders openly acknowledge the decline in US military deterrence. Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work asserts that actions by Eurasian rivals, which seek to restrict US access to operational theaters and limit freedom of maneuver, are leading to a decline in broad operational and technical dominance and an inadequate demonstration of deterrence by the United States (US Department of Defense 2017).

Figure 8: Global Military spending of the United States and BRICS as a percentage of GDP between 2000 and 2022



Source: www.data.worldbank.org.

The Role of Institutional Capacity and Cultural Soft Power in Shaping International Politics

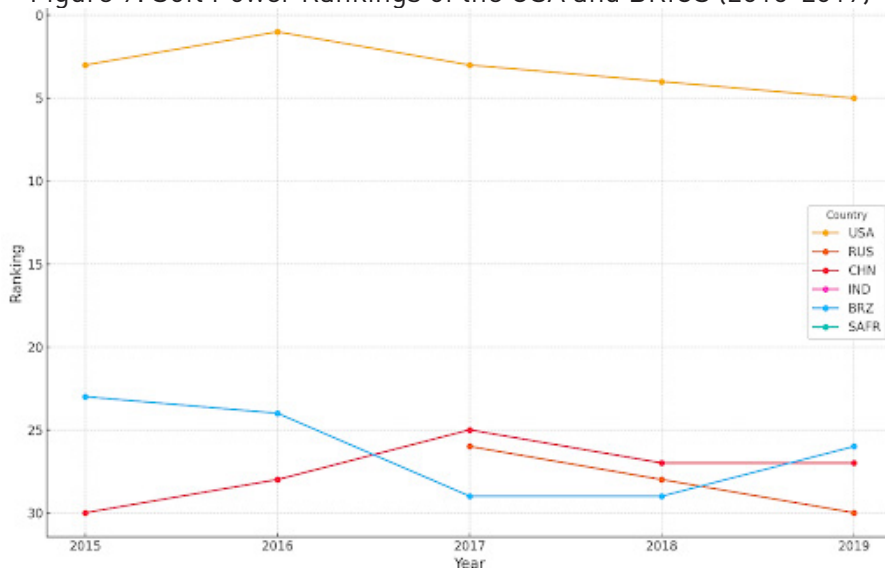
Hopewell (2021) and Fukuyama (2013) both acknowledge the general trend of the United States' institutional authority dwindling. For a long time, the United States maintained its hegemonic position by controlling major global governance institutions. These include the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Economic Forum. The United States' refusal to join the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court, along with its violation of the UN Charter during the 2003 Iraq war, has caused significant discontent within the global community (Singh 2012). Following the Trump administration's demand for renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Donald Trump's rise to power accelerated the decline of US institutional power. China, the world's second-largest economy, has risen to become the third-largest contributor to the International Monetary Fund, following Japan and the United States. The United States' failure to ensure unilateralism within the UN, coupled with the calls for UN reform from the BRICS, highlights the emergence of post-hegemonic regionalism as demonstrated by entities such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union, the Alianza Bolivariana para Los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), and the Union of South American Nations (UNASur). According to Bagley and Defort (2015) and Muhr (2013), regionalism has added a new dimension to South-South collaboration by creating stable channels for various groups to participate, such as social movements, alternative media, anti-corporate development firms, independent pharmaceutical industries, and development banks. Concentrated on a security-focused framework designed to avert US interventionism in the region, post-hegemonic Eurasian regionalism is a key concept. Key events in Eurasian regionalism include joint military exercises, commercial groups, universities, and research networks (Song 2016; Aris 2011). According to research by Quiliconi and Kingah (2016), DeConing (2015), and Kiely (2015), the BRICS effort is a symptom of the US's declining hegemonic institutional authority, as it seeks to establish an independent development bank, contingency fund, and credit rating agency. Improving connectivity and economic cooperation across Eurasia is the goal of China's new Silk Road Initiative, a massive development plan. Similar to the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild Europe after World War II, the project was formally inaugurated in 2013. Curran (2016), Shen (2016), and Tiezzi (2014) all agree that China's international standing is rising as a result of the Silk Road Initiative's appealing long-term policy goals and focus on infrastructure development.

When it comes to international culture, the United States is unrivaled. Numerous well-known schools, media outlets, artists, and film productions call it home. Approximately forty-three million immigrants reside in the United States. Individuals seeking improved living conditions often favor

this location (Brown 2012). Cultural influence represents the area where potential adversaries of US power exhibit their weakest capabilities. However, each year, the Soft Power Research Center publishes a report in the form of a magazine that examines the ranking of countries in soft power and the factors that influence it. Two relevant components of the index are the Culture and Education sub-indices. The Culture sub-index measures the quality, international reach, and appeal of a country's cultural production, including both high and popular culture, whereas the Education sub-index assesses university quality, the ability to attract international students, and contributions to academic research publishing (McClory 2019, 28, 60–61). This paper investigates and evaluates the soft power of the BRICS nations and the United States, utilizing data from this center. The center's annual report indicates a decline in United States soft power, resulting in a loss of position from 2015 to 2019. China seeks to enhance its position by increasing its cultural output. India and South Africa are excluded from this list because their assessments are based on 30 dimensions.

Figure 9: Soft Power Rankings of the USA and BRICS (2015-2019)



Source: www.softpower30.com.

Interconnected Dimensions of the BRICS Power: Toward a Coherent Strategic Postured

The BRICS alliance increasingly illustrates the interaction among military, economic, and institutional capacities, contributing to a broader post-hegemonic strategic orientation. The economic growth of the BRICS nations, particularly China and India, has enhanced their trade and investment influence, enabling them to establish new governance institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB), support South-South infrastructure initiatives, and promote de-dollarization. These projects integrate economic power with institutional influence, thereby promoting an environment that critically examines Western-dominated institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF (Quiliconi and Kingah 2016; Noroozi 2024).

Moreover, strengthening economic capabilities has facilitated military modernization, especially in China and Russia. China's defense spending, backed by its growing GDP and technological base, has increased its naval footprint in the Indo-Pacific, while Russia's military assertiveness in Ukraine and Syria reveals a desire to counterbalance NATO and U.S. interventionism (Cochrane and Zaidan, 2024; Liang et al. 2025). These developments have geopolitical significance beyond mere military strength — they demonstrate the strategic autonomy of BRICS members and help protect the sovereignty of new regional financial and security initiatives such as the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Aris 2011; DeConing 2015).

Institutional innovations further strengthen soft power. For instance, China's Belt and Road Initiative and Brazil's regional integration efforts serve as economic outreach and tools of diplomatic influence and cultural projection (Curran 2016; Juncal 2018). These endeavors combine infrastructure development with public diplomacy, enhancing the global perception of the BRICS as legitimate leaders in a multipolar world.

This integrated strategy—leveraging economic gains to bolster military capacity, while embedding within institutional and cultural frameworks—marks a shift from isolated state power toward collective, multi-domain influence. The convergence of these dimensions reveals that the BRICS is not merely a grouping of rising powers, but a coordinated platform strategically constructing alternatives to the U.S.-led global governance (Stuenkel 2015; Kiely 2015). These developments illustrate a dual causal logic at the heart of BRICS-led multiploidization. While the BRICS alliance sometimes operates in reaction to declining Western influence, in other instances it directly challenges hegemonic norms and structures. The table below summarizes these two intertwined pathways.

Table 1: Dual Causal Pathways in BRICS-led Multiploidization

Causal Mechanism	Definition	BRICS Strategy or Example	Effect on Global Governance
Direct Challenge	BRICS acts to weaken or bypass hegemonic institutions and norms	Creation of NDB and CRA; promotion of de-dollarization; SCO security bloc	Undermines Western institutional centrality and financial monopoly
Strategic Expansion	BRICS fills governance gaps created by U.S. retreat or institutional fatigue	Belt and Road Initiative; vaccine diplomacy; South – South development forums	Builds new legitimacy structures; increases Southern leadership

Source: Authors.

Geopolitical Assessment: The Rise of the BRICS and Multiploidization

The complex political and historical settings that descriptive statistics alone cannot portray go beyond mere numerical representation when it comes to the multipolarization of international politics and the emergence of the South. This section will review the results of the comparative analysis in light of significant political and historical events that have occurred since the 2000s.

Many in the Global South consider the 1980s to have been a decade of lost opportunities. The decade that followed was just as dull for the South, which is still reeling from the social and economic effects of neoliberal restructuring. When it came to addressing their urgent economic and security concerns, important nations in the Global South began to express their worries about the demise of the US-centered global order and the neoliberal framework in the 2000s, marking a turning point for them (Kiely 2015: 54). The fight of the Global South against the unipolar world order was waged on two fronts. Prominent nations are aiming to be more involved and have a greater say in the global governance system that the US leads. On the other hand, Quiliconi and Kingah (2016) and DeConning et al. (2015) sought to address the world system’s unipolar tendencies by creating global governance institutions. This

two-sided rivalry has reached a turning point with the formation of the BRICS. While the BRICS is often criticized for lacking ideological or geopolitical unity, it is more accurate to view it as a strategic coordination platform rather than a tightly integrated bloc. Its coherence lies not in military alliances or uniform economic policies, but in shared interests: resisting Western hegemony, demanding reforms in global institutions, and building parallel frameworks for financial and development cooperation (Kiely 2015; Stuenkel 2016). This functional coherence—issue-based and goal-oriented—enables BRICS to act collectively in areas like the creation of the New Development Bank, the promotion of multipolar diplomacy at the UN, and opposition to unilateral interventions (Quiliconi and Kingah 2016). Even where bilateral tensions exist, such as between India and China, the forum remains a strategic space for dialogue, pragmatism, and joint policy signaling, especially in response to perceived Western overreach. This flexible, pluralist model allows BRICS to function effectively in a post-hegemonic world where coalition-building often outweighs rigid alignment.

After the financial crisis of 2008, O'Neill revised his predictions and predicted that China would overtake the US in economic strength by 2027, followed by Brazil in 2029, Russia in 2037, and India in 2027 (Kiely 2015: 57). The BRICS organization was formalized and its first summit convened in response to the financial crisis of 2008 (Cooper 2016: 79). The meeting covered a wide range of topics, including important issues such as social justice, sustainable development, the US economy, and the global crisis. The summit demonstrated that the Global South must be included in addressing the 2008 financial crisis, as its resolution is too significant to be solely managed by the G8 nations. The BRIC summit underscored the importance of international law and multilateralism within the UN, advocating for Brazil and India to secure a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (DeConning et al. 2015: 23; Kiely 2015: 49).

A more multipolar world and a more democratic international order were the goals of the 2010 Brazil summit, the second of its kind. This shift in the global economic center of gravity has moved east and south, as acknowledged in an OECD study (Kiely 2015: 10). With South Africa's inclusion in China's 2011 third summit, the group was rebranded from BRIC to BRICS; today, its members account for 43% of the world's population. As a worldwide forum for collaboration and discourse, the BRICS was reaffirmed at its 2012 meeting in India. It reaffirmed its support for global harmony, multipolarity, development, and the principles of international law. Cooper (2016), DeConing et al. (2015), and Kiely (2015) all pointed out that the global financial system needs to be reformed and made more democratic, with the

creation of a new development bank. The primary objective of the upcoming fifth BRICS meeting in South Africa was to create a new development bank. Two other councils were formed: the Think Tank Council and the BRICS Business Council. The BRICS Bank, Women's Forum, and Trade Union Forum were all created at the 2014 BRICS summit.

At the summit in Russia in 2015, a \$100 billion fund was established as a contingency reserve to increase liquidity in the event of potential balance of payments problems. This summit marked a turning point in the BRICS' post-hegemonic trajectory, timed to coincide with the summits of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. A multipolar framework for international cooperation in IT is essential, according to BRICS. With the eighth summit, India played host. The establishment of a global credit rating agency by the BRICS nations signifies a shift towards the democratization of the international financial system (Cooper 2016; DeConing et al. 2015; Kiely 2015). In 2017, China hosted the ninth BRICS summit. The summit expressed support for development and multilateralism, collaboration with Emerging Market Developing Countries (EMDCs), the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB), engagement in Public Private Partnerships (PPP), the contingency reserve arrangement (CRA), the development of a BRICS economic partnership strategy, and the enhancement of political and security cooperation. These systems provide alternative sources of legitimacy and credit conditionality, thereby deliberately undermining the institutional authority of the U.S. and its allies while addressing gaps in global finance (DeConing 2015; Kiely 2015).

The 10th BRICS summit took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2018. The summit's notable achievements included support for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, BRICS collaboration with underdeveloped nations and emerging markets, and the establishment of the BRICS Energy Research Engagement Platform. The 11th BRICS summit, held in Brazil in 2019, focused on enhancing collaboration in science, technology, and innovation while addressing transnational crime, including organized crime, money laundering, and drug trafficking. The 12th BRICS Summit in 2020 was convened virtually, highlighting the importance of multilateralism and the central coordinating role of the United Nations in global affairs. The 13th BRICS Annual Summit 2021 was conducted electronically.

By demanding more representation from developing nations at the IMF and a more flexible system of equal participation between creditors and debtors, BRICS has pushed for a more democratic approach to global governance. These reform efforts failed; thus, a new development bank, a credit rating agency, and conditional reserve systems were established (Quiliconi et

al. 2016: 40). To help finance infrastructure and development projects, the BRICS Development Bank was established with an initial capital of \$50 billion, with each member contributing \$10 billion. The BRICS countries can better prepare for the potential balance of payments issues and maintain sufficient liquidity with the assistance of the contingency reserve system. Within the framework of the contingency reserve, 41% of the resources come from China, while 18% each comes from Brazil, India, and Russia. South Africa holds a 5% share. The credit rating agency aims to challenge the Big Three's supremacy, as noted by Quiliconi and Kingah (2016: 249). For the BRICS, the main issue with these rating agencies is that they often serve the interests of Northern bloc companies' long-term goals, which is counterproductive. By creating a single bond market and making it easier for the BRICS countries to invest in each other, this project aims to enhance the attractiveness of bonds as an investment option by providing authorities and investors with a better understanding of the risks involved (DeWet 2017).

The United States is seeing its hegemony challenged by a shifting global power dynamic. However, it has a long way to go before it forms a cohesive power bloc. This is why strategic variances across the BRICS are worth looking at, even if cooperation has dominated over national differences. South-South collaboration follows the same rule. China, India, and Japan's territorial dispute in the South China Sea is a prime illustration of this. Conflicts along the Sino-Indian border, India's worries about Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean, and China's policies that discourage Chinese investment in India's economy are all factors that could impede the post-hegemonic governance movement in the South. Even if it is important not to ignore the low-intensity hegemonic rivalry among Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, Latin America is also not as contentious as Asia (Cooper 2016: 24; Cheru 2011: 47). A UN Security Council resolution decrying an alleged chemical assault in Syria was met with silence from China, despite a Russian veto, highlighting the differences among the BRICS members. However, during NATO's intervention in Libya, the BRICS nations' united resistance to US dominance and Northern interventionism was plain to see. On March 17, 2011, South Africa supported UN Resolution 1973, which paved the way for action. Because other BRICS members stayed out of it, NATO was able to play catch-up. Members of the BRICS group began to voice their disapproval of NATO's role in the UN following the UN's ruling a few months later (DeConing 2015: 37). Additionally, it was agreed that Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and the belief that only communication could help resolve the Iranian nuclear dilemma.

Furthermore, adding to this convergence is the BRICS backing

of Palestine's UN membership and Russia during the Ukraine crisis. Importantly, BRICS's collective backing for Syria helped to prevent Northern forces from intervening militarily (Otero and Gürcan 2016; Duggan 2015). It was a significant development. This critical perspective suggests that the BRICS may form a logical political alliance.

Conclusion

Along with the strategic shortcomings of Southern rivals and the waning US hegemony, the efforts of the BRICS nations to both challenge the current hegemonic order and create new international frameworks that counter US-led hegemonic institutions are seen as contributing to the concept of post-hegemony. Rival governing bodies, such as the IMF and the World Bank, are targets for the BRICS Development Bank Foundation. The document discusses the dominance of the US dollar in international trade, suggests the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund that operates independently, and advocates for the creation of a credit rating agency. Furthermore, BRICS stresses that the UN and the International Monetary Fund require extensive reforms.

There is clear evidence across multiple disciplines that the United States is losing its global dominance. The United States' hegemony in international politics and economics has been eroded as the global production and export hub has moved to the South. The US financial dominance has been more precarious since the 2008 financial crisis, which had a significant impact on the US economy. The growing influx of foreign investment and development loans from BRICS nations to the Global South has contributed to the US's decline. There has been a marked decline in the United States' economic dominance, partly due to China's expansion and the fact that the US now has the highest GDP per capita. Second, even though the United States still has the most significant military force in the world, its capacity to deter other countries has dramatically declined. The United States military deterrence is inadequate in light of Russia's aggressive behavior in Ukraine and Syria and China's persistent pushback in the South China Sea. When measured against GDP, Russia's military spending is now higher than that of America's, and the two countries together pose a formidable threat to Washington's hegemony in the international arms trade. Despite their proven ability to impact international economic frameworks and create a more pluralistic global order, the BRICS nations still fall short in military capability. This must be acknowledged. Institutional competency and worldwide cultural effect are the

third and fourth factors that are putting the US global hegemony to the test. The rise of new institutions in the Global South, a weakening commitment to global governance, and the decline of hegemonic international institutions all point to a gradual erosion of US institutional authority despite the significant impact of US culture on cultures around the world. Particularly in the context of NAFTA, the hegemonic sovereignty crisis is on full display. In the 1990s, NAFTA exemplified the pinnacle of integration with global capitalism. The US president officially acknowledged it as a major trade failure in 2017. The United States' institutional supremacy has suffered a significant setback with the demise of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the emergence of post-hegemonic and Latin American regionalisms, such as ALBA and Unasur. The emergence of post-hegemonic Eurasian regionalism, such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and China's Silk Road Initiative, has also considerably reduced US hegemony.

Therefore, the backdrop created by the 2008 financial crisis and the weakening of global hegemonic control is beneficial to post-hegemonic enterprises. There is now a multipolar shift in international relations, mainly due to the decline of US global hegemony following major historical events. An example of the world South's view of multiploidization is the rise of BRICS as an actor and architect in the post-hegemonic international system, which entails not just a growth in influence but also a fundamental reorganization of world governance. Notable Southern states, especially those involved in the BRICS alliance, have been at the forefront of a new post-hegemonic movement in the South of the world. One notable consequence of this post-hegemonic era is the shift from North-led to South-South coalitions in international cooperation endeavors. On the one hand, the BRICS countries are actively working to dismantle existing hegemonic global governance systems; on the other hand, they are seeking new forms of global governance that would have less sway over the US. Indicators of the BRICS countries' attempts to change the current framework of global hegemonic governance include their growing engagement and reform demands inside the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations. Aspirations for autonomous sovereignty are reflected in the proposal for an alternative development bank and the challenge to US dollar global hegemony. According to the BRICS' double-edged sword, the multipolarization of global governance is both a purposeful rearrangement and a reactive response to the decline of hegemony. Although they benefit from the United States' decline, the BRICS nations are more concerned with contributing to the demise of hegemonic institutions and norms.

In the end, BRICS is cohesive not because its members have a common geopolitical identity but because their strategic goals are functionally aligned. A versatile yet determined pursuit of post-hegemonic sovereignty is evident in the group's dual-track strategy, which entails collaborating with hegemonic institutions while simultaneously developing autonomous mechanisms. Several constraints hinder the BRICS effort from evolving into a historically unified group that challenges US dominance despite its geopolitical significance. South-South trade is still in its early stages of development. It faces significant inequalities, with different strategic viewpoints on several problems, which contributes to its continued reliance on the US economy and other constraints.

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ABSTRACT

As global governance transitions from U.S.-led unipolarity to multipolarity, the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—play a significant role. This study examines “multiploidization,” highlighting the decentralization of institutional control, standard diversification, and economic empowerment beyond traditional centers. This analysis employs geopolitical-economic frameworks to examine BRICS’ influence in institutional-cultural, military, and economic domains, highlighting strategies to contest existing hegemonies and fill vacuums created by Western withdrawal. Through de-dollarization and institutional innovation (e.g., New Development Bank), the BRICS promotes a pluralistic, inclusive, post-hegemonic order, indicating a significant historical transition towards equitable global power distribution notwithstanding internal disparities.

KEYWORDS

BRICS, Global South, Multiploidization.

Received on June 18, 2025

Accepted on May 23, 2026