

Emerging Powers in a Changing Global Order: How BRICS and Key Nations Reshape Governance and Foreign Policy

BRICS 2025 'Rio Summit' and its coordination against tariffs from Trump have become an important, but often understated, moment in world politics. At a superficial level, it appears as yet another run-of-the-mill year-end meeting. But, in substance, it was a strategic inflection point; an effort by rising great powers to challenge US unilateralism, and to remake global rules via new institutions. Its reach extends all the way to the structure of international power.

By 2025, the BRICS grouping will include 11 full members with 9 partner countries, its core consisting of its five major: BRICS countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. With members from all over Europe, Asian, South America, and across Africa, BRICS is now representing the broader global interest and is expected to be playing a larger role in shaping the global landscape politically, in terms of security, in terms of economics, and in terms of technology.

This paper's main argument is that BRICS is not just a participant in global governance anymore; the institution is using institutional innovation as a major instrument to act on multiple domains (politics, security, economy, and technology) at once to disrupt Western-dominated rule-making mechanisms. BRICS is working toward a global order restructuring through a non-Western "global power" which pushes it toward "multipolar governance" from "unilateral dominance", while also deepening interdependency between emerging economies due to external pressure, such as the Trump tariff war.

BRICS on the Move Across Four Hubs

a. Politics: Putting the "Global South" at the center of lawmaking

BRICS has gained real weight in influencing international rules with its population and money. Combined, the bloc represents 45% of the world's population and has a combined PPP GDP of \$77 trillion, surpassing the G7's \$57 trillion for the first time. This scale means: On just about any big issue with the UN system, there won't be a lasting fix if BRICS isn't okay with it.

Further leveraging this, BRICS stands by multilateralism with sovereign equality and forming consensus principles. The bloc has taken a united stance on sanctions, on debt, and on climate through the Rio Declaration. In big crises like the Iran strikes, the Gaza fight, and Russia against Ukraine, BRICS together said to use calm talk. Doing so, it is counterweighting Western unilateral interventions and making sure that the Global South's interests are built into the global game setting up.

b. Security: Decentralization's "Collective Security Vision" to Wear Out Traditional Hegemony

BRICS creates a security architecture through a two-track method, which involves cooperating practically and constructing institutions.

On the one hand, targeted joint military exercises have spread. In August 2025, Sino-Russian forces conducted "Maritime Joint 2025" in Vladivostok, conducting anti-submarine drills and air defence drills. This is an exercise that refutes directly on the US's "threat from the western Pacific"; it is a display of rising powers' cooperation on their defences.

On the other hand, the Rio Summit saw the formation of the first BRICS collective security coordination mechanism for the Middle East crisis. It was aimed to connect the response to the terrorist attacks, cyber error, and regional stability. It challenges the former "centralized & treaty-bound" alliance model, and adopts a flexible "security umbrella" against external interference.

c. Economics: Drive "De-dollarization" to Rewrite Global Fin and Trade

Financial innovation is the most shocking economic lever on the BRICS.

In 2025, the BRICS Pay cross-border payment network went live, with 159 countries covered, and enabled clearing between two member currencies directly, like RMB-ruble and RMB-rupee. And now 70% of intrabrics trade is in non-dollar currency, which challenges SWIFT's monopoly on global settlement infrastructure.

To start with, the New Development Bank (NDB) is preparing to launch BRICS Clearing, an alternative settlement mechanism that will be implemented in addition to SWIFT, which will provide global buyers and governments with various payment options without political interference. Trump's tariff war has boosted BRICS economic integration. Brice expands their internal markets, improves its trade settlements, and decreases its exposure towards Western markets and the dollar systems. This transforms the defensive cooperation to proactively reconfigure global trade flows, which is a key step toward a monetary multipolarity.

d. Technology: Crafting Fresh Customs and Protecting Digital Freedom

BRICS holds sway over next-gen tech governance through a dual emphasis on setting rules and autonomous infrastructure.

The Rio Summit adopted the Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Statement, which embraces "digital sovereignty first" and spurns technology systems under Western control. China helped establish the BRICS AI Development & Cooperation Center, allowing member nations to co-develop sovereign AI frameworks and avoid reliance on external suppliers.

In space and navigation, China-Brazil Earth observation satellites and China-Russia Beidou-GLONASS compatibility solutions are offering BRICS-aligned nations alternatives to U.S. GPS. In digital finance, the BRICS Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) Alliance—integrating China's mBridge, Brazil's Drex, and Russia's digital ruble—is conducting cross-border pilots. Over 130 countries are looking into joining, propelling global digital finance toward greater inclusivity and sovereignty.

The mainstream commentary focuses on the internal divisions, such as China-India trade deficits and Saudi-Iran regional rivalry, suggesting that the coherence of BRICS is always fragile. There are certainly some differences, but these are often overstated, both in terms of their magnitude as well as how much systematic impact they have. External pressure from US tariffs, western rule-making bias, and legacy military hegemony acts as a kind of cement, bringing countries together with stronger reasons to work together. Instead of undermining it, these pressures actually push for an ongoing process of achieving consensus and for building resilience among institutions, in order to make sure that BRICS has its strategic direction.

Externally, financial concentration, technological bottlenecks, and unilateral trade policies are squeezing emerging economies' strategic space, intensifying their push for autonomy in payments, technology, and security. Internally, the BRICS is constructed from the bottom up, including the Rio Declaration, joint statements, collective security coordination, BRICS Pay, NDB initiatives, AI centers, and CBDC pilots as a skeleton that absorbs political frictions but sustains functional cooperation. China and India compete commercially but collaborate on payment infrastructure and AI norms; Saudi Arabia and Iran clash regionally but co-manage Middle East security coordination. In sum, these have made BRICS a stronger force in calibrating the global order, moving from an informal consultation platform into a more solid one.

The BRICS 2025 Rio Summit cannot be simply regarded as an "anti-American rally," which would be an incorrect understanding. Rather, it is a strategic attempt at institution redesign, using financial diversification, multilateral coordination, and technological freedom to counter unilateral domination in pursuit of a pluralistic global order. As the experience of Brazilian coffee producers shows, who have been able to avoid losses from U.S. tariffs by quickly entering the Chinese market, the deepest logic of BRICS replacing growth on others with developmental sovereignty, and the substitution of a zero-sum hegemony model for win-win interdependence. But despite internal disagreement and outside pressure, BRICS is now a more open, pluralistic, and innovative model of globalization. And this model will always make the world's power system tend to be more multipolar, balanced, and robust.