

BRICS and Brexit in a Multipolar World: Strategic Alignments, Global Balancing, and the Reshaping of Power: Research Article

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Abstract

This research investigates the shifting equations of global power in an increasingly multipolar world by examining BRICS, Brexit, and trilateral cooperation among India, Russia, and China. The central research question is: How do BRICS dynamics, compounded by Brexit, influence emerging strategic alignments and the reconfiguration of global governance and security order?

The objectives of the study are: (1) to analyze convergence and divergence within BRICS, particularly in light of Brexit; (2) to assess opportunities and constraints for RIC (Russia-India-China) cooperation in this context; (3) to explore how Brexit affects BRICS's quest for a new international security order; (4) to examine the impact of Brexit on regional balancing, strategic autonomy, and Indo-Pacific geopolitics; and (5) to evaluate the roles of BRICS and the G20 in the future of multilateral diplomacy.

Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative, multi-level case study approach. It combines discourse analysis of policy documents, elite interviews and secondary literature, integrating insights from international relations theory on multi-alignment and multipolarity.

The analysis reveals strategic convergence in BRICS around financial alternatives and institutional reform, but also divergence driven by national rivalries, especially among India, Russia, and China. Brexit emerges as a catalyst: it weakens European institutional coherence, opening space for BRICS to press for an alternative security order. Yet it also complicates RIC cooperation, as the UK's post-Brexit alignments affect Indo-Pacific balancing. Furthermore, Brexit reshapes multilateral forums: BRICS and the G20 become more central to contesting Western-led norms. The study contributes to understanding how the interplay of BRICS, Brexit, and trilateral dynamics is reshaping global power structures, challenging existing multilateral architectures, and redefining strategic autonomy in a multipolar era.

Keywords: BRICS, Brexit, multipolarity, RIC, strategic autonomy, Indo-Pacific, G20, global governance, security order.

Introduction

The global political landscape has undergone profound transformations over the past decade, marked most notably by the resurgence of multipolarity, the rise of new power clusters, and the redefinition of strategic alignments among major states. Two key developments have significantly contributed to this changing global architecture: the evolution and expansion of the BRICS grouping, and the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, known as Brexit. Both phenomena have unfolded within the broader

context of declining Western institutional dominance, increasing dissatisfaction with traditional global governance structures, and the growing assertiveness of emerging powers across the Global South. The expanding roles of China and India, Russia's search for new strategic partnerships amid geopolitical tensions, and the inclusion of new members into BRICS have contributed to reshaping global economic flows, diplomatic alignments, and governance debates. At the same time, Brexit has fractured one of the core pillars of the Western liberal order, thereby creating new spaces for alternative power configurations to emerge.

This research explores the complex interplay between BRICS, Brexit, and trilateral cooperation among India, Russia, and China commonly referred to as the RIC triangle to understand how these forces collectively influence the reconfiguration of global governance and the evolving security order. The study investigates how Brexit has generated strategic opportunities as well as constraints for BRICS, particularly regarding institutional reform, financial rebalancing, and diversification of diplomatic partnerships. It also examines how these developments affect RIC cooperation, especially considering the longstanding border tensions between India and China, Russia's strategic repositioning, and the broader Indo-Pacific security environment that increasingly shapes global diplomacy. The central research question guiding this study is: *How do BRICS dynamics, compounded by Brexit, influence emerging strategic alignments and broader transformations in global governance and security?*

The study employs a qualitative, multi-level analytical approach grounded in international relations theory, particularly frameworks of multi-alignment, strategic autonomy, and structural multipolarity. By analysing policy documents, academic literature, and geopolitical discourse, the research demonstrates that BRICS represents both an institutional challenge to Western dominance and a platform for expressing the collective aspirations of emerging states seeking greater representation in global affairs. Simultaneously, Brexit has weakened the coherence of Western institutional politics, creating opportunities for BRICS to expand its influence while also complicating the strategic landscape, particularly for India and the Indo-Pacific region. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of the conceptual keywords, followed by comprehensive thematic analysis, concluding with future perspectives and policy implications.

BRICS

BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of major emerging economies Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa which has expanded in recent years to include new members from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Initially conceptualized as an economic grouping, BRICS has evolved into a major platform for political, strategic, and institutional cooperation among non-Western states seeking greater representation within the international order. BRICS challenges Western-dominated governance structures by advocating reforms in global financial institutions, promoting alternative development finance mechanisms such as the New Development Bank, and increasingly encouraging de-dollarization through the use of local currency trade settlements. With the addition of new members and the expansion of its economic footprint, BRICS has transformed from a loose coalition of emerging economies into a coherent geopolitical actor. The bloc's combined economic weight, resource distribution, and demographic significance make it one of the most influential groupings in global politics, especially in the context of rising multipolarity.

Brexit

Brexit refers to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union in 2020, marking one of the most consequential geopolitical events of the twenty-first century. Beyond its regional implications, Brexit has had a ripple effect across global governance structures by weakening the internal cohesion of the European Union one of the key pillars of the Western liberal order. The departure of the UK, a major economic and diplomatic power, diminished the EU's overall strategic capacity while generating uncertainties about the future of European integration. Brexit also prompted the UK to reposition itself globally, seeking new economic, diplomatic, and security partnerships beyond Europe. This reorientation, often framed as "Global Britain," has implications for BRICS because it alters the structure of Western alliances and creates openings for emerging powers to strengthen their influence. At the same time, Brexit has added complexity to Indo-Pacific dynamics, as the UK now seeks a greater role in Asian geopolitics, directly influencing India-China strategic balances.

Multipolarity

Multipolarity describes an international system in which multiple states or blocs possess significant political, economic, or military power, preventing any single actor from dominating global affairs. The shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world has been driven by the rise of emerging economies, the renewed assertiveness of Russia and China, the fragmentation of Western alliances, and the increasing importance of regional powers such as India, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia. Multipolarity reshapes global governance by decentralizing decision-making processes and redistributing power across different regions. In this emerging order, BRICS functions as a key agent of multipolarity by institutionalizing cooperation among major non-Western actors and challenging the structural dominance of Western institutions. Brexit further accelerates multipolar tendencies by reducing the coherence of the European Union and thereby allowing alternative power centers to gain influence.

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accelerates multipolar tendencies by reducing the coherence of the European Union and thereby allowing alternative power centers to gain influence.

RIC (Russia, India and China triangle)

The RIC framework refers to the trilateral relationship among Russia, India, and China. Three major Eurasian powers that collectively shape regional and global security dynamics. Although originally conceptualized as a cooperative platform to promote multipolarity, the RIC triangle has experienced both convergence and divergence. Russia and China have deepened strategic coordination in response to Western sanctions and security pressures, whereas India's relations with China have been strained due to border tensions, competition in the Indian Ocean, and differing visions for the Indo-Pacific. Despite these challenges, RIC remains an important geopolitical triangle that influences BRICS stability and the broader reconfiguration of Eurasian geopolitics. The effectiveness of BRICS often hinges on the internal coherence of the RIC relationship, making it a central component of multipolar strategic alignments.

Strategic Autonomy

Strategic autonomy refers to a state's ability to pursue independent foreign and security policies without being constrained by external powers or alliance dependencies. For emerging states such as India, Brazil, and South Africa, strategic autonomy has become a central guiding principle in navigating the complexities of a multipolar world. India, in particular, emphasizes multialignment simultaneously engaging with BRICS, the Quad, ASEAN, the G20, and Western powers to preserve its freedom of action. Brexit also reflects the UK's desire to reclaim strategic autonomy from EU institutions, although this reassertion has come with economic and diplomatic costs. Within BRICS, strategic autonomy manifests in each member's distinctive national interests, which sometimes complicate collective decision-making but also strengthen the bloc's legitimacy as a platform accommodating diverse perspectives.

Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the central geopolitical theatre of the twenty first century, driven by economic interdependence, maritime competition, resource rivalry, and the presence of major powers such as India, China, Japan, and the United States. The region is strategically vital because it hosts the world's busiest sea lanes, key chokepoints, and rapidly growing economies. India and China play dominant roles in shaping Indo-Pacific security dynamics; however, their regional visions differ significantly. India emphasizes inclusivity, rule-based maritime order, and strategic balancing with Western partners, whereas China seeks to expand its influence through economic corridors, naval modernization, and strategic investments. Brexit adds new layers to the Indo-Pacific as the UK now seeks deeper engagement with the region to compensate for its loss of EU wide influence, including cooperation with India, which in turn shapes RIC and BRICS dynamics.

G20

The G20 is one of the world's most influential multilateral platforms, bringing together the world's major advanced and emerging economies to discuss global economic governance, financial stability, and development challenges. For BRICS members, the G20 provides a critical arena for shaping global policies and asserting collective concerns of the Global South. As Western institutions face diminishing coherence due to Brexit and internal political divisions, the G20 has become increasingly central to global

governance debates. BRICS states often use the G20 to advocate for reforms in global financial institutions, climate financing, digital governance, and equitable development. The interplay between BRICS and the G20 becomes even more important in shaping future global governance as power redistributes across multiple poles.

Global Governance

Global governance refers to the institutions, norms, and decision-making structures that regulate international relations, economic flows, security frameworks, and collective challenges such as climate change. For decades, global governance was dominated by Western institutions the IMF, World Bank, NATO, WTO, and EU-led frameworks. However, BRICS challenges this dominance by promoting an inclusive multipolar governance system that emphasizes sovereign equality, South–South cooperation, and the reform of financial and security architectures. Brexit also disrupts global governance because it removes one of the EU’s key contributors, weakening traditional Western leadership and opening space for new actors to shape norms and rules.

Security Order

Security order refers to the structure of international security relationships, including military alliances, strategic partnerships, conflict-management mechanisms, and regional security architectures. The post-Cold War security order was heavily influenced by Western-led alliances such as NATO. Today, however, that order is being redefined. Russia’s estrangement from the West, China’s military modernization, India’s rise as a regional security provider, and BRICS cooperation all contribute to a new global security landscape. Brexit adds another dimension: the UK’s exit from EU security frameworks reduces Europe’s strategic coherence and compels London to seek new bilateral and regional partnerships, including in the Indo-Pacific. These developments collectively reshape the global security order, making it more competitive, fragmented, and multipolar.

BRICS as an Engine of Multipolarity: Institutional Evolution and Strategic Intent

BRICS has evolved far beyond its origins as a loose economic grouping. In the last decade, it has turned into a coherent geopolitical force capable of influencing regional and global governance debates. The bloc’s rising economic weight accounting for a substantial share of global GDP combined with its demographic and resource diversity gives it both structural and normative power in global affairs. BRICS represents not only emerging economic centers but also states with distinct visions of international order, many of which express dissatisfaction with Western dominance in decision-making. Through the creation of institutions such as the New Development Bank, BRICS actively seeks to reshape global finance by offering alternatives to the conditionality-driven lending practices of Western institutions. The bloc also increasingly pushes for reforms in international financial governance, advocating fairer representation for developing countries in bodies such as the IMF and World Bank. Its advocacy for de-dollarization, particularly through local currency trade settlements and alternative payment systems, illustrates its ambition to reduce structural dependence on U.S.-centric financial architecture. BRICS is both a symbol and an agent of multipolarity: a platform through which major emerging economies articulate collective aspirations and create institutional pathways to reshape global power structures.

Brexit as a Catalyst for Global Realignment

Brexit fundamentally altered the political and economic landscape of Europe and reshaped Western institutional coherence. The departure of the United Kingdom diminished the EU's overall diplomatic and economic weight, weakening a major pillar of the Western-led liberal order. Brexit also forced the UK to reposition itself globally, adopting a more flexible and outward-looking strategy dubbed "Global Britain." This repositioning carries significant implications for BRICS because it reduces the coherence of Western collective action while incentivizing the UK to engage more actively with emerging powers, including India, China, and members of the Global South. From a structural perspective, Brexit can be considered a catalyst for multipolarity because it introduces fragmentation into the Western alliance system and provides opportunities for non-Western actors to expand influence. Moreover, Brexit complicates existing geopolitical equations within regions such as the Indo-Pacific, where the UK seeks a deeper role through naval presence, defense partnerships, and participation in security dialogues. This adds a new dimension to RIC relations, indirectly affecting India-China strategic balances and altering the context in which BRICS operates.

Convergence and Divergence in BRICS: The RIC Triangle as a Strategic Core

At the heart of BRICS lies the RIC triangle Russia, India, and China whose internal dynamics heavily influence the bloc's stability and long-term coherence. Russia and China have deepened strategic cooperation due to geopolitical pressures, particularly in response to Western sanctions and security tensions. This has led to a closer alignment in economic, military, and diplomatic spheres. India, however, maintains a more complex posture. While it values BRICS as a platform for global influence and South-South cooperation, it remains wary of China due to border disputes, competition in the Indian Ocean, and divergent visions for regional order. India's strategic calculus revolves around preserving multi-alignment and preventing China from dominating Eurasian geopolitics. Russia acts as a potential stabilizing force within the triangle, maintaining strong ties with both India and China, although its deepening dependence on China has shifted the internal balance. Despite these divergences, the RIC triangle continues to function as a strategic core for BRICS. Cooperation among the three powers has reinforced the bloc's commitment to multipolarity, institutional reform, and alternatives to Western dominated governance. However, RIC tensions also act as internal constraints that limit BRICS's ability to translate political rhetoric into cohesive strategic action.

Brexit and BRICS: Opportunities for Representation and Reform

Brexit weakened the EU's global influence, creating opportunities for BRICS to expand its institutional role. With Europe fragmented, emerging economies gain stronger voices in multilateral institutions such as the G20, WTO, and UN. The UK's post-Brexit search for global partnerships has also brought it closer to major emerging powers, particularly India, which now enjoys significant diplomatic leverage in negotiating trade agreements and strategic partnerships with London. This reconfiguration of alliances indirectly benefits BRICS because it reduces Western collective coherence and lends greater weight to non-Western alternatives. Brexit also disrupted global economic flows, creating new trade and financial opportunities for BRICS states to deepen intra-bloc cooperation. The absence of the UK from the EU also limits Europe's ability to resist reforms in global financial governance, allowing BRICS members to advocate more effectively for redistribution of voting rights and greater representation in international institutions. At the same time, Brexit has encouraged BRICS states such as China and Russia to expand

their influence in Europe in different ways, ranging from investments to energy partnerships. However, Brexit also introduces new complexities, especially for India's domestic political considerations and its security calculus in the Indo-Pacific, where the UK's increased presence intersects with US led strategic frameworks.

The Indo-Pacific as the New Center of Strategic Gravity

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the geopolitical pivot of the twenty-first century, shaping the strategic interests of BRICS members as well as global powers. India and China are the two central actors in this region, but their strategic visions remain fundamentally opposed. China seeks to consolidate influence through its Belt and Road Initiative, expanding maritime presence in the Indian Ocean and strengthening its naval power in the South China Sea. India, on the other hand, adopts an inclusive vision that emphasizes cooperation, open sea lanes, and freedom of navigation. India's engagement with the Quad—a group that includes the United States, Japan, and Australia—illustrates its intention to balance China's rise while preserving strategic autonomy. Brexit further complicates this equation because the UK now seeks a deeper role in the Indo-Pacific to compensate for loss of influence in Europe. London's naval deployments, defense agreements with India and Japan, and participation in regional dialogues signify a growing Western presence in Asian geopolitics. These developments intersect directly with BRICS and RIC dynamics, creating both cooperation opportunities and strategic tensions. While the Indo-Pacific provides BRICS members with expanding markets and strategic partnerships, it also highlights internal divergences that limit collective action within the bloc.

Strategic Autonomy and Multi Alignment Among BRICS Members

BRICS cooperation is the emphasis each member places on strategic autonomy. India pursues a multi-alignment strategy that allows it to engage with multiple partners BRICS, G20, Quad, ASEAN, Russia, and Western powers without committing to any single bloc. This approach enhances India's global influence but also complicates attempts to forge deeper security cooperation within BRICS. Brazil follows a similar pattern, balancing agricultural and trade partnerships with Western economies while seeking greater representation in global institutions through BRICS. South Africa focuses on development, continental leadership, and reducing reliance on Western finance. Russia's strategic autonomy has been redefined by its confrontation with the West, driving it closer to China but also encouraging broader non-Western partnerships. China seeks global leadership but faces resistance from other BRICS members that fear domination. Despite the shared aspiration for a multipolar world, these differing national priorities create internal tensions within BRICS. At the same time, they reinforce the bloc's legitimacy as a platform that accommodates diverse interests and allows each member to advance its foreign policy goals.

Security Order and Geopolitical Reconfiguration

The global security order is undergoing significant transformation as traditional Western led alliances face internal and external pressures. BRICS has emerged as a critical voice advocating alternatives to the existing security architecture. While the bloc does not present a military alliance, it provides a political platform for discussing security challenges, including terrorism, regional conflicts, and strategic stability. Russia and China emphasize challenging NATO centric security frameworks, whereas India prioritizes sovereignty, territorial integrity, and maritime security. These differing perspectives highlight the diverse security needs of BRICS members. Brexit further influences this evolving security order by shifting the

UK's role from a European security anchor to a global maritime security actor, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. This shift intersects with India and China's maritime strategies, creating new opportunities for cooperation as well as areas of tension. The evolving security order reflects a broader pattern of decentralization in global security governance, where multiple regional frameworks, alliances, and coalitions operate simultaneously, shaping a fragmented yet multipolar security environment.

BRICS and the Global South: Voice, Representation, and Development

BRICS increasingly positions itself as the champion of the Global South, advocating fair representation, equitable development, and reform of global institutions. Its development initiatives, particularly through the New Development Bank, offer alternatives to Western development models that often impose conditionalities. BRICS countries emphasize sovereignty, non-interference, and partnership-based development approaches that resonate with many developing nations. The bloc's advocacy for technology transfer, climate financing, digital infrastructure, and South-South cooperation reflects a broader effort to redefine development paradigms. Brexit indirectly strengthens this position by weakening Western institutional capacity to present unified development agendas. As Europe grapples with internal divisions, BRICS members find greater opportunities to influence multilateral development debates through the G20, UN, and regional organizations. However, the long-term influence of BRICS as a development actor depends on its ability to deliver tangible benefits, financial resources, and institutional support to partner countries across the Global South.

Constraints and Challenges within BRICS

Despite its growing influence, BRICS faces several internal and external challenges that limit its ability to function as a cohesive geopolitical force. Internal divergences between India and China remain a major obstacle. Border disputes, economic competition, and differing visions for global leadership undermine the trust required for deep political coordination. Russia's growing dependence on China also alters internal power dynamics, potentially reducing room for India's strategic maneuvering. Economic asymmetries within BRICS present another challenge, as China's overwhelming economic strength raises concerns about dominance. Externally, BRICS faces challenges from competing geopolitical forces, including Western strategic alliances, Indo-Pacific security frameworks, and global economic uncertainties. The absence of a unified security mechanism and divergent threat perceptions further limit BRICS's ability to shape global security. Yet, despite these challenges, the bloc continues to grow in influence due to shared structural interests in reforming global governance and advancing multipolarity.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between BRICS and Brexit exemplifies the complexity of global power transitions in the twenty first century. BRICS has evolved into a critical engine of multipolarity, challenging the structural dominance of Western institutions and reshaping global governance through institutional innovation, economic cooperation, and political coordination. Brexit, on the other hand, has introduced fragmentation into the Western alliance system, reducing European strategic coherence and creating opportunities for emerging powers to expand their influence. The interaction between BRICS and Brexit reflects a broader realignment in international politics where emerging powers assert their agency and demand a seat at the global decision making . The RIC triangle plays a central role in shaping BRICS's internal dynamics, while the Indo-Pacific continues to be a major arena where strategic competition unfolds. Although BRICS

faces internal constraints, the bloc's shared commitment to reforming global governance and promoting strategic autonomy ensures its continued relevance.

As the world transitions toward multipolarity, BRICS is likely to play a major role in shaping the norms, institutions, and strategic alignments of the future. Brexit's long-term impact will depend on how effectively the UK leverages its global outreach and adapts to new geopolitical realities. Ultimately, the interplay between BRICS and Brexit contributes to a transformative moment in global politics one that decentralizes power, elevates the Global South, and challenges the foundations of the post-Cold War international order.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Looking ahead, BRICS is poised to become an even more influential actor in global governance, especially as it continues to expand and deepen institutional structures. Future developments may include the creation of a common BRICS currency mechanism, a strengthened payment system, and further expansion of the New Development Bank's financial outreach. The bloc may also take a more active role in climate governance, digital infrastructure, and energy transitions. The RIC triangle will remain crucial its stability will determine whether BRICS can evolve into a more integrated geopolitical actor or remain a diversified coalition. India's role will be particularly significant as it balances relations with the West while strengthening its influence in BRICS.

For Brexit, the future hinges on how effectively the UK reinvents itself in a competitive multipolar environment. Its increased engagement with the Indo-Pacific will shape regional power balances, while its relations with India and China will influence broader Eurasian geopolitics. The future global governance architecture will likely be hybrid, fragmented, and multipolar characterized by competition between US led frameworks, China led initiatives, BRICS driven institutional reforms, and new coalitions across the Global South. In this emerging landscape, cooperation among BRICS members, strategic flexibility, and the pursuit of inclusive governance will be critical for ensuring global stability.

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