EDITORIAL: BRICS Expansion Shifts Global Faultlines to the East

At the beginning of the 21st century the world stood on the cusp of what most experts assumed would be a golden age of peace and prosperity guaranteed by an ever-expanding world economy dominated by the West. However, 9/11 and the resulting “War on Terror” and the financial meltdown of 2008 followed, leaving most of the industrialized West in crisis, and the balance of power rapidly shifting eastwards, in particularly to China. While some commentators see this as a new world disorder in the making, others, in particular those from recently fast-developed countries such as China and India, argue that the inclusion of a number of economies from their part of the world is a positive, more democratic, development which would potentially increase the stability and progress of the global system.

Many experts agree that the existing international political-economic order is unlikely to persist in its present form. A declining US power, the concomitant rise of China, and the return of multipolarity has upended a global system previously dominated by the United States and its allies, all of which bring many important questions: How can law and order, and/or their transformation thereof, prevail over the burgeoning dislocation and conflict generated by this power-shift? What types of norms and self-reflections will be required to address the geo-cultural disorders caused by the uneven inter-penetration of civilizations, differing business models and divergent governance systems between the West and the Global South? How should governments respond to these accumulating challenges? What form(s) might a new global order take, what principles and objectives should guide its creation, and how should more desirable orders be defined and pursued? What are the minimum necessary goals that future global arrangements must try to achieve?

Leading countries of the rising bloc are described with the acronym BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The term BRIC was invented by Jim O’Neill of Goldman Sachs as a concept for emerging or rising economies, which shifted to a formal institutional status in 2006 of four countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and a fifth country, South Africa, joined four years later, and thus emerged the BRICS. In less than 20 years, the BRICS has certainly made its presence felt in multiple policy spheres: financial assistance, economic development, and strategic geopolitics. Together, the BRICS countries have already overtaken the Group of Seven (G7) advanced economies in terms of their contribution to global GDP, with the group now accounting for a third of worldwide economic activity measured by purchasing power parity.

Bolstered by their success on the economic and geopolitical fronts, the BRICS is increasingly viewed by a growing number of countries in the Global South as an alternative to the domination of Western powers and institutions. More than 40 countries have formally expressed their interest in joining the BRICS.

The bloc met for its annual leaders’ summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 22–24 August 2023. The highlight of this year’s summit was the agreement to admit six new member countries: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, who will officially join the group in January 2024. Three of the additions – Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – are among the top 10 oil-producing countries in the world. Along with Russia, which ranks third in global oil output, BRICS+ has secured four of the world’s top 10 energy exporters. After expansion, BRICS+ will control 80% of global oil production. Just over two weeks after the BRICS summit, the G20 (20 top world economies) met in New Delhi, where the African Union has been granted permanent member status in

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the G20, on par with the EU. All this is a clear indication that the Global South voice is now carrying more weight in world politics and economics.

In this issue, the second issue of 2023, we have a number of interesting and topical articles about important arguments of our times. Arya Joshi, in “How has the US maintained hegemony in the international oil trade through its control in the Middle East?”, narrates the history of US control over the Middle Eastern oil industry, and explores its timeline dating back to the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. Owen Tench asks, in “Has the threat posed by China to international security been overstated?”, whether the threat posed to international security by a rising China has been overstated. Abimbola Joseph Owojori, Omolara V. Akinyemi, and Muhammad Danial Azman, in “Efficacy of counter-terrorism cooperation: A critical appraisal of Nigeria–United States counter-terrorism cooperation”, look at the current state of Nigeria–United States counter-terrorism cooperation and tries to evaluate how effective this is. “COVID-19 pandemic exposes deep fault lines in global health governance: Lessons for WHO” by Lucky Imade, which investigates some novel, innovative, and prescriptive policy approaches toward filling a lacuna in global health architecture with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next three articles are about human (in)security regarding neoliberalism, profit, power, capitalism: “Profit-driven policy and human insecurity” by Hannah Fereday; the responses of European countries to refugee crises, “Should they stay, or should they go? Modern European narratives on refugees” by Sultan Baig; and the casualty-recording database in the war in Ukraine, “Putting names to numbers: The creation of a systematic casualty recording database for the ongoing Russian aggression within Ukraine” by Emily Ward. The last two articles are about terrorism and counter-terrorism: “Are religious beliefs truly the root cause of terrorism?” by Jannah Aishah Maysun, and “The UK counter-terrorism strategy and international justice” by Manpreet Kaur Somal.

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