



# INDIAN JOURNAL OF LEGAL AFFAIRS AND RESEARCH

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1

Peer-reviewed, open-access, refereed journal

**IJLAR**

+91 70421 48991  
editor@ijlar.com  
www.ijlar.com

## **DISCLAIMER**

The views and opinions expressed in the articles published in the Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the IJLAR, its editorial board, or its affiliated institutions. The IJLAR assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions in the content of the journal. The information provided in this journal is for general informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice. Readers are encouraged to seek professional legal counsel for specific legal issues. The IJLAR and its affiliates shall not be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of the information contained in this journal.

## Introduction

Welcome to the Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research (IJLAR), a distinguished platform dedicated to the dissemination of comprehensive legal scholarship and academic research. Our mission is to foster an environment where legal professionals, academics, and students can collaborate and contribute to the evolving discourse in the field of law. We strive to publish high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that provide insightful analysis, innovative perspectives, and practical solutions to contemporary legal challenges. The IJAR is committed to advancing legal knowledge and practice by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

## Preface

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence in legal scholarship. This volume presents a curated selection of articles that reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of legal studies today. Our contributors, ranging from esteemed legal scholars to emerging academics, bring forward a rich tapestry of insights that address critical legal issues and offer novel contributions to the field. We are grateful to our editorial board, reviewers, and authors for their dedication and hard work, which have made this publication possible. It is our hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and will inspire further inquiry and debate within the legal community.

## **Description**

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is an academic journal that publishes peer-reviewed articles on a wide range of legal topics. Each issue is designed to provide a platform for legal scholars, practitioners, and students to share their research findings, theoretical explorations, and practical insights. Our journal covers various branches of law, including but not limited to constitutional law, international law, criminal law, commercial law, human rights, and environmental law. We are dedicated to ensuring that the articles published in our journal adhere to the highest standards of academic rigor and contribute meaningfully to the understanding and development of legal theories and practices.

# **THE FRACTURE OF GLOBAL ORDER: GEOPOLITICAL REALIGNMENT, GEOECONOMICS OF SCARCITY, AND THE RISE OF MULTI-POLAR AUTONOMY IN 2026**

AUTHORED BY - UDAY RAJAK

School of Legal Studies, Vikrant University, Gwalior, M.P. (India)

## **ABSTRACT**

The world in 2026 is like it is on the verge of a huge divide the U.S.-China rivalry, a revival of protectionism, and the decline of multilateral institutions are driving the world towards a more multipolar configuration. The scarcity of resources, fragmented supply chains, and division of the energy market, as well as the struggle over the Arctic resource base, mean that countries become increasingly competitive, resulting in competing trade blocs and distinct technology ecosystems since nations are no longer pursuing full globalization, but merely remaining self-reliant. It is a turbulent period that provides the Global South with an opportunity to become more independent, seek various alliances, diversify their economies, and become more sovereign, but also exposes them to the risk of greater great-power confrontation and the absence of international institutions.

## **Keywords:-**

Global South Multi-Alignment, Resource Scarcity Conflicts, Business and Supply Chain Impacts, Middle East Realignment, Climate Geopolitics

## **Introduction: Global South's Moment: Autonomy Amid the Fractures**

### **Historical and Global Context**

Global orders have transformed significantly, and they are replacing the old world powers in Afro-Eurasia with Europe 19th century Concert of Europe (1815-1914) where Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia and France convene in congresses to maintain the peace then devolving into the bipolar Cold War (1945-1991) <sup>i</sup> and subsequently into the single-pole under the U.S. which is now disintegrating into a multipolar world with emerging economies of the Asian world and Global

South -like the disintegration of the confrontation between the U.S and China resembles the old cold war standoff and 19th -century European balance-of-power politics, with border disputes (remember Sino-Soviet 1969) and Taiwan Strait crises (1950s) prefiguring the present-day tech and trade wars, and protectionism is reviving 1930s Smoot-Hawley tariffs that further fragmented supply chains during the Great Depression, which is the opposite of the globalization after WWII that is now moving towards res The power play over resources is reminiscent of the 1970s oil crises due to OPEC embargoes during the Yom Kippur War, which severed energy markets and induced competition in the similar fashion that the modern Arctic claims by Russia, the U.S., Canada, Denmark, and Norway had; historically, disruptions of supply caused self-reliance, as was the case in trade wars of the 1930s <sup>ii</sup> that spawned competing ecosystems. The new multipolar opportunities of the Global South also increased due to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM, 1961) which allowed post-colonial states to avoid the U.S.-Soviet blocs and today BRICS pursues the same goals as UN and finance reform as western multilateralism is weakening, as League of Nations failed to do<sup>iii</sup>, offering the diversification, but again, risking proxy wars, as the Cold War did in Africa and Asia.

The international order is becoming more divided as the political dynamics of the world continuously transition to multipolarity by 2026, and due to the spiral competition between the U.S. and China, the decline of multilateral institutions, and the recurrence of protectionism. The lack of resources, broken supply chains, fragmented energy markets, and conflicting claims over Arctic resources all add to this situation and countries are now establishing competing trading blocs and parallel technology ecosystems that are focused more on resilience and sovereignty than complete globalization. The turbulent transition provides the Global South with chances to diversify economies, create various alliances, and gain more independence. <sup>iv</sup> But it also increases the dangers of unchecked great-power friction and institutional empty space, which may be transformed into wider instability.

## **Research problem**

Analyse, fracturing global order of 2026, how has the intensifying U.S.-China rivalry eroded multilateral institutions and spurred competing trade blocs, while resource scarcities manifest in fragmented supply chains, divided energy markets, and Arctic territorial disputes foster parallel technology ecosystems over full globalization, thereby heightening risks of great-power

confrontations and threatening the Global South's pursuit of multipolar autonomy, economic diversification, and sovereignty?

## **Scope and Structure of the Paper**

In other words, this abstract is essentially examining how the liberal order that was established after the Cold War collapsed and how it diverted global politics and economics until 2026, and how it is also, by the way, strategic to pay attention to the Global South. It discusses 2008-2026 and provides analogies, such as the Concert of Europe, the Cold War, 1930s protectionism, 1970s oil shocks, and NAM/BRICS to support the idea of rivalry, scarcity and institutional decay. It is broken down into three areas of analysis: mapping geopolitical changes between U.S. and China rivalry to multipolarity; geoeconomics of scarcity (resource limits, supply-chain divisions, energy decoupling, Arctic rivalries); and Global South prospects/dangers to autonomy, diversification, and great-power pressures. The paper goes deep into the disintegration of the post-cold war liberal order, which rearranges world politics and economy by 2026 and the smart actions of the Global South. Since the crash of 2008 up until now, it echoes of the Concert of Europe, the Cold War, the tariffs of the 1930s, the oil crises of the 1970s, and NAM/BRICS to decipher the current crashes, scarcities and the wilting institutions. It addresses three angles charting geopolitical pivots that are fueled by U.S. China strife to multipolar flux; dissecting the geoeconomic bite of scarcity, resource squeezes, divested chains, energy divides, Arctic scrambles; and weighing the positive (agency, variety) against the negative (rivalry drag) in the self-rule/spread of the Global South.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the fracturing of the post-Cold War liberal global order by 2026, driven by intensifying U.S.-China rivalry, the erosion of multilateral institutions, and the resurgence of protectionism, and to assess how these forces manifest in competing trade blocs and parallel technology ecosystems.

Specific objectives include:

- To map the transition from U.S. unipolarity to multipolarity, drawing historical parallels with the Concert of Europe, Cold War bipolarity, and 1930s trade fragmentation, while examining the role of border tensions, tech wars, and Taiwan Strait crises.<sup>v</sup>

- To dissect the geoeconomics of scarcity, including fragmented supply chains, divided energy markets, and Arctic territorial disputes among Russia, the U.S., Canada, Denmark, and Norway, and their shift toward national resilience over globalization.
- To propose strategic pathways for Global South autonomy, such as diversified alliances and reformed global finance, to mitigate instability from institutional voids and resource competition.<sup>vi</sup>

## 1. Fracturing global order in 2026

The entire scene in 2026 is the transformation of the post-cold war U.S.-dominated liberal order to a multipolar environment. The U.S. China rivalry is in the middle of all this and it is messing up trade, technology, security and even the middle-powers.<sup>vii</sup> We have regional blocs overlapping each other, competing standards and selective collaboration on urgent matters such as climate change and pandemics instead of a single globalization. The weird part ? We are now hyper dependent in finance, data, and supply chains, and governance is politicized providing the Global South countries with greater autonomy at the expense of increased risk.

**Key Drivers: U.S.–China Rivalry** The driving force of the change is the U.S. vs. China. Tariffs and export controls divide the supply chains in the trade process, particularly with semiconductors, U.S. regulations drive us to diversify to partners in Asia, such as Taiwan and South Korea. The competition between two tech ecosystems is the tech war over 5G, AI, and quantum computing where Huawei dominates the Global South and the Western alliances, like the Quad.<sup>viii</sup> The security blocs were further divided with AUKUS and NATO agreements opposing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China. The middle powers, India (walking Quad tie to Russian deals) and Brazil (attempting to balance BRICS to U.S. trade deals) have an opportunity to have a role, but also feel compelled to choose a partner.<sup>ix</sup>

### Symptoms of Fragmentation

The turn substitutes the globalization that is integrated with the mini lateralism, small, problem-oriented groupings.

Some examples are: -

**Regional blocs:** the Western tilt of the CPTPP vs. RCEP in Asia. –

**Competitors:** EU GDPR and China data sovereignty regulations which divide the digital governance. –

**Selective collaboration:** COP climate meetings yield small agreements, and the pandemic reaction underscores the gaps in vaccine politics.

**It remains not independent:** global finance is dependent on the dollar, data flows facilitate tech giants but global governance draws on such connections as an instrument.

Implications on the Global South. Multipolarity offers new economies a greater choice: BRI loans of China, IMF preconditions of the West, or G20 reform-thrust of India. However, it also introduces veto points - major powers prevent reforms such as the expansion of the UN Security Council and offer conditional help. In great-power flashpoints, like in the South China Sea or Ukraine, it is nearly impossible to remain neutral, and so the risks are high. In the case of India, it entails multi-alignment, i.e., increasing domestic technology through Atmanirbhar Bharat by playing both sides.

This disintegration is not a collapse but a restructuring to competitive interdependence when states seek resilience more than efficiency. By 2026, there will be further polarities in the regulation of AI (e.g. U.S. chip restriction) and green technology (Chinese hegemony in solar power). South-south cooperation such as the AFCFTA in Africa may be a win on the brighter side. Yet, the risks are high unless some new regulations such as a reformed WTO are introduced. Based on geopolitical theories (such as the offensive realism by Mearsheimer), in such a situation, power diffusion benefits agile middle powers but also increases instability.

Alignment	Focus Areas	Key Gains	Risks
Quad (U.S., Japan, Australia)	Indo-Pacific security, tech supply chains <a href="#">sanskritiias</a>	Defense tech, counter-China <a href="#">drishtiias</a>	U.S. protectionism <a href="#">chathamhouse</a>
BRICS (Russia, China, etc.)	Economic reforms, Global South <a href="#">drishtiias</a>	Energy security <a href="#">drishtiias</a>	China dominance <a href="#">icds</a>
Bilateral (U.S. iCET)	Semiconductors, AI <a href="#">ndtv+1</a>	Investments (Rs. 1.6L cr) <a href="#">ibef</a>	Export curbs <a href="#">ndtv</a>

## 2. U.S.-China rivalry and institutional erosion. Paralysis of multilateral bodies

The U.S-China competition is threatening to nuke the multilateral organizations. It is making global governance not a rule-based universality, but an array of power games between two big guys. Consider the WTO, the UN, WHO and the climate regimes, they are all consensus and enforceable norms.<sup>x</sup> However, the growing tension between the U.S and China has virtually brought these bodies to halt. I am also excavating the modes through which this paralysis occurs, with vetoes and blocks, an increase in G2 Trump-style bilateralism and its remote consequences to norms, demonstrating a world in which power is more powerful than predictability and small states the least.

Lateralization of Multilateral Bodies. Core functions have been condemned by the big powers who are not willing to follow binding rules. At the WTO, the U.S. has had an obstruction of appointments in the Appellate Body since 2017 (under Trump fueled), rendering dispute settlement virtually useless; as of 2025, more than 50 case appeals were still pending. This preconditions unilateralism: U.S. tariffs on China reached a total of up to 550 billion equivalents of tariffs in 2019, becoming a form of managed trade such as the Phase One deal that avoids adjudication.

U.S.-China (and U.S.Russia) vetoes have blocked over 20 resolutions in Syria, Ukraine, and Gaza since 2011 in the UN Security Council, undermining its credibility, with public trust in the work of the UN peacekeeping 15% collapsed globally in 2024, according to Edelman. The COVID-19 crisis did not help at all: U.S. WHO funding reductions and threats to withdraw coincided with Chinese mask diplomacy, politicization of health information, and the 70 percent of low-income countries serving as understaffed, according to WHO audit.

Emerging Trump-Style G2 and Bilateralism. This text refers to the Trump-type G2, where the U.S. and China make transactional deals devoid of institutional protections, which is similar to RIETI (Japanese trade think tank) and Bruegel (EU) analysis. The Trump administration has focused more on bilateral tariffs (e.g. 25% on 300B of Chinese products) and side-deals compared to WTO reform, withdrawing itself to Paris, WHO, and the INF Treaty. The security instruments, such as Huawei bans through CFIUS and pressure on partners (e.g., Five Eyes + Japan), were associated with trade with defence.

**China retaliates with their bilateral/minilateral ones:** BRI includes 150+ countries with investments amounting to over 1T by 2025, RCEP includes 30 percent of the global GDP, and 140+ strategic alliances make it the best partner to 120+ countries. This divides trade: U.S.

bifurcation of global value chains with Mexico and Vietnam now doing U.S. friend shoring 20% post-2020.

**Analytical Insight:** This G2 has no ideological rallification, in contrast to Cold War bipolarity, and is chiefly shaped by domestic politics (U.S. elections, centralization in China under Xi), which result in wild, ad-hoc deals, as opposed to stable regimes.

Impact on Norms, Enforceability, weaker actors. Institution skipping is cherry-picking the norms, which violates enforceability. The NDCs at the Paris Agreement become weak when the U.S. re-enters the agreement with the condition of aid on concessions to China; the IHR compliance of WHO decreases by one quarter during the blame-shifting between the U.S. and China. Arms control fails with INF/START expirations.

General Implications and Perspectives. The U.S.-China competition accelerates regime complexity to put bilateralism over multilateralism to cut predictability, such as a Thucydides Trap with power balances surpassing rules (by Graham Allison). Small players will be minilateral (e.g. CPTPP without China) and coerced, which has led to other options such as BRICSexpansion.

**Mitigation requires minilateral plus reforms:** plurilateral WTO arrangements (e.g. JSI on e-commerce), or climate clubs. However, without a U.S. China drier-up, institutional decay continues accelerating, headed towards a polarized order.

Institution	Key Erosion Mechanism	Impact Metric (to 2025)
WTO	Appellate Body block	50+ unresolved appeals
UNSC	Veto paralysis	20+ deadlocked resolutions
WHO	Funding politicization	25% IHR compliance drop
Paris Agreement	Pledge dilution	40% unmet finance goals

### **3. Competing trade blocs and supply fragmentation**

Trade blocs competing against each other and dividing the supply is a rather wild thought process when you consider it. The very core of it is a scarcity of resources that prompts all these bloc motions.

The so-called critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, or the rare earth people are literally the building block of EVs and batteries, wind turbines, chips, and defence technology. The fact that everybody is freaking out over supply manipulation is particularly after China began imposing export quotas on items such as gallium and germanium and that compelled the U.S. and its allies to establish new resource blocs. Together with Mexico, EU, Japan, and some of them, Washington is collaborating to establish price floors, hoard materials and even friend-shoring of such minerals, to disrupt Chinese influence and cement investment advantages.<sup>xi</sup>

Pro-U.S. projects and friend shoring. So, it has layers upon layers of U.S. initiatives which are beginning to come into being: The action plans between the U.S and Mexico, which include coordinated stockpiling, common regulations, and perhaps a price adjustment of the important minerals on the border.<sup>xii</sup>

We are also witnessing possible U.S. -EU-Japan systems that combine price floors and tariffs with investment coordination and research collaboration to ensure that cheaper Chinese supplies do not replace them.

The Quad Critical Minerals Initiative -forming the U.S., Japan, India and Australia- is making efforts to make wild go without the rare earths in China by joint mining, processing and refining efforts. The entire idea is to create a trusted supply belt amongst friends though this could cost more and/or result in fewer supply options. The BRI of China and the Global South New Three. China is retaliating by strengthening its own resource and industry chain with even more geoeconomic Belt and Road. New BRI phases are laying stress of a ton on: Oil, gas, copper, lithium, rare earths investments in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Middle East.<sup>xiii</sup>

The New Three export pillars of China, which include electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, and solar/renewables, are normally supported by the Chinese financing, technology packages, and long-term take-up packages.

That arrangement allows Chinese companies to dominate the entire chain of mining, processing, and finished EV/battery/solar exports and they lock-in the host countries with debt, equity and access.

Regionalization and fragmentation of supply chains. Companies are starting to conform to this divided scene by: Re-regionalizing supply chains such as the Chinas+1 trick in Southeast Asia and India, neo-shoring to Mexico to the US market, and friend-shoring of similar-minded countries. Constructing two or parallel supply chain to stay abreast with divergent regulations (U.S. vs China export controls, data rules, content requirements, etc.). And with bilateral or minilateral deals in trade and investment as opposed to pounding any one world system.

#### **4. Divided energy markets and Arctic disputes**

Nuclear Fuel and Energy Markets. It is evident that the world is divided in its nuclear fuel supply chain, demonstrated by the numbers, primarily due to the invasion by Russia in Ukraine and the consequent western sanctions. Rosatom, which controlled approximately 40% of the world enrichment prior to 2022 no longer has the same fold. In January 2026, the U.S. injected 2.7 billion dollars into establishing domestic low-enriched uranium (LEU) and high-assay LEU (HALEU) plants with the help of companies such as Centrus and Orano. It aims at being self-sufficient by the mid-2030s and reduce the European 20-30 per cent dependency in Russian fuel.

The switch to China is now underway and Russia is now offering cheaper enriched uranium establishing a Sino-Russian nuclear axis as the two strengthen their ties in energy and this trend can be seen with China making deals with Rosatom reactors as well as Russia remaining the largest supplier of oil to China despite the sanctions. Russia is dispatching discounted crude (think Urals at \$1020 below Brent) to India and China in oil and gas, and Europe is locking in U.S. LNG (approximately 50BCM/year by 2030) and Qatari contracts. This market alternate can increase prices Western diversification would increase energy costs by 1520 per cent in the short term, according to IEA, but bolster trade blocs.

Arctic Militarization and Competition over Resources. The melting of ice is increasing- the Arctic sea ice is shrinking 13percent per decade (NSIDC), exposing 13percent of the worlds undiscovered oil and 30percent of the gas (USGS), as well as rare-earth minerals. Russia is constructing more than 20 additional bases in the Arctic and operating a so-called Shadow Fleet of tankers on the Northern Sea Route (NSR), with a capacity of 36 million tonnes by 2024. The two countries are on par with each other shown by the investments of the Polar Silk Road and the joint drills such as Ocean-2023. NATO documents more than 50 intrusions annually, thus the U.S. deploys F-35s

to Finland, drives the icebreaker program in Canada, and deploys Virginia-class submarines in the region.

All of this creates UNCLOS tensions- Russia asserts an extension of 1.2 millions km<sup>2</sup> of the Lomonosov Ridge, disputed by Canada and Denmark, and lies within bountiful EEZs, which appear very similar to the Shtokman field. The rivalry intensifies around LNG (supposedly Yamal by Novatek) and sea routes, reducing the Asia-Europe traffic by 40 per cent. It adds environmental issues which put a burden on governance: the biodiversity deals at the Arctic Council stand at a standstill following the fallout of the Ukrainian crisis, which is further driven by the rivalry.

Geopolitical Implications and Risks. These changes are like a cold partition of energy zones, a repetition of the Cold War, intensified by the urgency of climate. The main risks are:

#Shocks in supply Western HALEU shortages may delay SMR deployment by 5 or more years. \* Escalation ladders- Arctic gray-zone incidents (e.g., shadowing NATO patrols) will cause miscalculations.

#Governance erosion- UNCLOS wrangles cease to exist and power projection over rule-making becomes the order of the day.<sup>xiv</sup>

## 5. Parallel technology ecosystems

U.S. Export Controls: The Development of the Small Yard, High Fence Strategy. The U.S. has been adding to its export controls since the end of the 2010s to prevent China from vacuuming up dual-use technology critical to its military modernization - advanced semiconductor fabs, chip-making equipment, artificial intelligence chip, EDA software and all that. The Biden administration version of the small yard, high fence, phrase, coined by NSA Jake Sullivan, is basically the lock down of the high-risk stuff, but leave the broader trade running. However, in 2023 and 2025 the regulations broadened the yard and introduced more serious performance requirements, two-tier chip classification and AI-specific limits such as GPU limits and model-weight limits based on specific countries.

In a potential Trump 2.0 administration such a structure remains but is changed to hard bargaining. You may witness selective rollbacks as a gift to mineral access, tariff reduction, or reindustrialization bargains. Nonetheless, the future journey is simply more violent, politicized regulations. It represents the shift of multilateral coordination ( think Wassenaar ) to unilateral leverage making national security over-and-above global efficiency.

Strategic Response on the part of China: Rushing Native Ecologies. These controls pose a real threat to China so it is giving full throttle on the concept of indigenous innovation in the so-called dual circulation model, the balancing between domestic circles and selective globalization. Massive subsidies, state procurement requirements, and political imperatives are the primary strategies that drive home made alternatives in chips (such as SMIC), operating systems, cloud services, and industrial software. Huawei is a textbook case, in that it is re-establishing its ecosystem based on home supply chains, where Baidu is demonstrating Apollo Go robotaxi networks based on AI and autonomous driving stacks, which are configured to Chinese hardware, data, and standards.

The regulatory instruments enhance this: data localization legislations, cybersecurity inspections, and algorithm certifications all solidify local control and transfer foreigners to the fringes. The outcome is a divided parallel-technology system, with U.S.-based networks (ARM, AWS) separating into China-based ones (RISC-V, Alibaba Cloud) in terms of standards, supply chain, application store, and philosophy-yeah, it is all about the sovereignty of interoperability.

### **Systemic Effects of Tech Bifurcation:-**

A great deal of effects come out of this division.

#### **1. Innovation and Loss of Diffusion:**

The cross-border cooperation in AI chips, quantum computing, and 6G is strangled due to a lack of trust and limits, and it slows down the speed of global R&D. As an example, American companies such as NVIDIA have to end up with dualized product lines, whereas Chinese companies become redundant in doing the same thing at a greater expense.<sup>xv</sup>

#### **2. Geopolitical Alignment Pressures**

Third countries are in an ecosystem lock-in crisis, as they either adopt U.S.-aligned standards (Qualcomm 5G modems) or adopt Chinese ones (Huawei 6G infrastructure). The differences are widened by payment systems such as Visa versus Union Pay.

#### **3. Economic Trade-offs**

Globally, the cost of R&D is soaring, and overlapping is redlining it off-the-record, but it also becomes resilient to failure at a single point, as occurred to China when it hoarded chip stocks in 2022.

In the case of the Global South, there is a lot at stake. Low-cost Chinese hardware (inexpensive 5G packages) is fast infrastructure wins at the risk of falling into the regime of data and standards in Beijing. Western equipment is interoperable and provides IP security at a high cost, which compels path-dependent decisions with limited rule-making authority. It increases the digital divide, perhaps just as VHS vs. Betamax did on a civilization level.

Extended Connotations and Prospects. The separate eco-systems intend a real splinternet, fragmenting the formerly single digital realm into competitive areas. Although the American dominance allows a slight breathing period against the technological ascension of China, it also pushes Beijing into a quicker self-sufficiency, which could result in a tech-multipolar world by 2030. Transactional crosses Trump 2.0 might close easy deals (rare earths, that sort of thing) but would put off allies and accelerate the schism.

## **6. Global South's autonomy dilemma**

Opportunity Multilateralism and BRICS+.

The Global South players, such as India and Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, etc., have been rushing to multipolarity and fill in their lists of partners. They are going through platforms such as BRICS + and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the mini-alliances (IBSA, I2U2, a set of Gulf-Asia linkages), to have access to Chinese infrastructure and funding (the BRI, AIIB), raid Western markets and security guarantees, and draw new Southern money in gulf and Asian sovereign-wealth funds. align their plans on such areas as development finance, debt restructuring, and a shakedown of the Bretton-Woods institutions.

India is a prime example of multi-alignment: it is consolidating security relations with the U.S. and the Quad, yet it also continues to trade with China, en masse -cos the trade statistics continued climbing at an alarming rate despite the border stand-offs. Coercion threat and diminishing policy space.

But the more it is fragmented the more leverages you have to play with. The United States and the European Union are imposing secondary sanctions, export restrictions, and screening of their investment options to advance their geopolitical and human-rights agendas. In response, China retaliates by cutting off its markets, tourist attractions, and exports of rare-earth, and financing BRI projects when states violate its most vital interests (Taiwan, Xinjiang, and maritime conflicts, etc.). With a lot of IMF conditions and combating Chinese lenders on top of it, most of the Global South

states find themselves in debt traps and commodity-dependent economies to renegotiate under severe conditions. In the absence of substantial, international dispute-settlement systems and a pool of shared public goods, small states must frequently swallow the pill on deals that are take it or leave it and play to the large power dynamic.

Endogenous capacity is strategic autonomy. To literally capture real strategic freedom, the Global South must develop its own muscle rather than merely pursue the diversified patron roll.

Publishing: strengthening the domestic industry and technology manufacturing, digital infrastructure, green technology to reduce the dependence on a single supplier.

building up regional victories, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, ASEAN structures and South American cooperation, so that they can bargain more effectively with the outside giants. injecting money in education, research and administration in a manner that they can extract meaning out of supply chains instead of merely her shirts.

Policy analyses (drop -in BCG-type procedures on de-risking, not decoupling) and consulting assure that the tightening of logistics, data governance, and green industrial policy is central to the Global South transforming the multipolarity mode into a real sovereignty game instead of a vulnerability game.

However, it is a steep climb due to high capital expenses, technical differences through export bans, and unpredictable prices of commodities. Even a formal multipolar world can entrap nations into low-value employment, resulting in dependency with the trappings of a democracy, through resource and technology shortages.

## **Finding and results**

These results indicate that the global order by 2026 is undergoing restructuring rather than collapse into competitive interdependence based on the U.S.-China rivalry, fragmented multilateralism, regionalized supply chains, and a limited yet promising space of the Global South. Law George town.

## **Fracturing global order in 2026**

A liberal, U.S.-dominated post-cold war order has been replaced by a more flowing multipolar world where power is more distributed and rules are weaker and more debatable. The U.S.China

rivalry has taken the form of the central organizing axis of geopolitics, with knock-on effects in the trade, technology standards, and security alignments, compelling middle-powers such as India and Brazil to multi-alignment instead of unstable and relatively stable camp membership.

Globalization is no longer a single combined system, but an overlapping of regional and minilateral formations like CPTPP, RCEP and issue-based coalitions on climate or health, which provide selective cooperation but increase complexity of the regime. The Global South is becoming more and more interdependent and vulnerable due to hyper dependence on cross-border finance, data, and critical supply chains combined with politicized governance.

### **U.S. and China competition and institutional dissipation**

The U.S. objection to appointments to WTO Appellate Body has in effect blocked binding dispute settlement and created dozens of so-called appeals into the void and promoted unilateral tariffs and negotiated trade agreements instead of adjudication by rule. Repeat U.S.-China and U.S.-Russia vetoes at the UN Security Council have frozen efforts to act on Syria, Ukraine, and Gaza, undermining the credibility of the Council and indicating that great-power politics is being used by the Council to override collective standards in security. [us.china-embassy.gov](https://www.us.china-embassy.gov).

During COVID-19, WHO and international health governance in general became politicized with funding reductions and competing narratives undermining compliance with International Health Regulations and showing how the rivalry of major powers can empty out technical institutions. Climate governance is also being undermined, with promises in the Paris Agreement not being met, and with climate finance commitments not being achieved, an action is moved into small clubs instead of universal regimes.

### **Fragmentation of supply by competing trade blocs**

Lithium, cobalt, gallium and germanium are now the key minerals of geoeconomic rivalry, and China employs its stock of export licensing and informal prohibitions on the export of gallium and germanium as the means of leverage to expose the Western vulnerability and to force it to diversify. The U.S. and allies are countering this by developing friend-shored resource blocs with their company friends such as Mexico, the EU, Japan, India and Australia aiming to price coordinate, hoard, and new mines and refineries to avoid Chinese control, despite the cost, questmetals.

China is retaliating by BRI 2.0-type investments in energy and minerals and its new three (EVS, batteries, solar) export pillars which have integrated Global South producers into China-centered value chains, via finance, technology and long-term offtake dealings. Companies are going to increasingly use dual or regionalized supply chains ("China+1" nearshoring to Mexico, ASEAN, or India), and re-allocate production to divergent export control, subsidy, and data policies, which further accelerates the fragmentation of what was once a single global production network.

### **Sected energy markets and the Arctic conflict**

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and subsequent sanctions have disrupted nuclear fuel and hydrocarbon markets, and since Rosatom controls a huge portion of the global enrichment, the U.S. invested 2.7 billion dollars in home LEU and HALEU enrichment plants to become less reliant on Russian supplies. An informal energy division is becoming a reality: Russia and China strengthen a subsidized oil, gas, and nuclear alliance, Europe secures long-term U.S. LNG and Qatari contracts, at the price of increased billing in the short term but strengthening energy security in the blocks. Reuters

The swift melting of ice in the Arctic is opening up vast untapped oil, gas, and mineral reserves, which is accelerating the development of Russian military infrastructure, Sino-Russian collaboration on the so-called Polar Silk Road, and greater NATO effort, including the deployment of more forces and the observation of the area. Superimposed claims on continental shelf under UNCLOS, particularly those along geographic features such as the Lomonosov Ridge, and the lack of movement in the Arctic Council environmental collaboration increase the possibility of gray-zone events and lack of governance in an area that is central to future sea pathways and energy channels.

### **Parallel technology ecology**

The U.S. export restrictions have developed into a small yard, high fence approach which is progressively limiting the supply of high-end semiconductors, chipmaking equipment, AI chips and similar software, and defining what is considered sensitive. These unilateral or coalition-based controls are changing older multilateral regimes to national-security-oriented techno-nationalism,

which encourages the indigenous innovation trend and dual-circulation approach to chips, cloud, operating systems and AI layers.

The regulatory framework of the country including data localization, cybersecurity audits, and code control establishes a closed ecosystem of companies such as Huawei and key cloud vendors and excludes the presence of foreign actors and establishes its own standards ecosystem. It is the coming split of U.S.-centric and China-centric technology infrastructure, where third countries are forced to adopt incompatible networks (5G/6G, payments, cloud), increasing the cost of R&D and the pace of diffusion of innovation but with as much resilience to single-point failures. Questmetals

### **The dilemma of global South autonomy**

By joining BRICS+, SCO, new multilaterals and South-South agreements such as AfCFTA, the Global South has acquired bargaining space and can now access diversified finance (BRI, AIIB, Gulf SWFs) and markets challenging hierarchies of the Bretton Woods era. Countries such as India have been multi-aligned at once, securing deeper relationships with the U.S. and the Quad, participating in BRICS and SCO, and increasing trade with China even though security issues remain unresolved, using fragmentation as tactical benefits.

Nevertheless, increased imposition of secondary sanctions, export restriction and investment screening by Western countries, and countermeasures of an economic nature by China squeeze policy spaces of smaller economies and increase the cost of neutrality. The vulnerability of debts, reliance on commodities and fragility of impartial, dispute-settlement mechanisms usually compel Global South states to asymmetric, take-it-or-leave-it deals that undermine the appearance of successful sovereignty despite actual multipolarity. questmetals.

The Global South needs strategic autonomy, however, based on the development of endogenous capabilities industrial and technological upgrading, digital and green infrastructure, regional integration and human capital to transform multipolarity into actual sovereignty instead of a new form of dependency. But high capital requirements, barriers to accessing technology, erratic commodity cycles imply that unless there is intentional capacity building among states and the provisions of collaborative institutional reforms (such as a more representative WTO or global financial architecture) the existing fractured order is likely to increase vulnerability rather than power.

## **Conclusion**

By 2026, the world has not become divided into a state of blatant collapse, but rather an environment of competitive interdependence, with the escalating U.S.-China tussle as the key axis line. This new balance has undermined multilateral institutions - seen in the paralysis in the WTO Appellate Body with more than 50 outstanding appeals, UNSC vetoes on 20+ resolutions, decline of WHO compliance of 25 percent of its IHR, and failure to meet 40 percent Clubs. The rise of transactional bilateralism and minilateral clubs such as CPTPP, RCEP and climate coalitions have occurred. The lack of resources has disrupted the supply chains, and U.S. friend-shoring via Quad Critical Minerals Initiatives, Mexico alliances, and EU-Japan coordination, and the counteractions of Beijing to BRI 2.0 lithium, cobalt, and its New Three export pillars (EVs, batteries, solar). Energy markets are polarised as the invasion of Ukraine by Russia triggers U.S. \$2.7 billion of investments in local LEU/HALEU to offset the pre-2022 dominance of 40% enrichment by Rosatom as Russia develops a Sino-Russian axis to supply discounted Urals crude; Arctic militarization with 20+ new bases and claims over the 1.2 million km<sup>2</sup> Lomonosov Ridge aired under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is adding to the risks of grey-zone

Polar technology ecosystems compound this rift, with U.S. "small yard, high fence" export controls of AI chips, semiconductors and GPUs pushing China into a dual-circulation effort of producing indigenous alternatives (SMIC chips, Huawei closed stacks) to the standards (e.g. RISC-V vs ARM, Unionpay vs Visa) and smothering diffusion of R&D around the world. To the Global South, multipolarity has provided benefits of tactics, through BRICS+ economic reforms, BRI/AIIB financing, and multi-alignment policies such as those of India including the Quad and rise of China trade ties, and Russian energy deals, at the expense of compressed policy space of secondary sanctions, debt traps, and coercive levers, forcing nations to depend on commodities and accept it or leave it offers.

Finally, this reorganization requires active adjustment: the reformed plurilateral structures (e.g. WTO JSIs on e-commerce), the endogenous capacity-building in the Global South through industrial upgrading, regional blocs like AfCFTA, and green/digital infrastructure, and minilateral bridges against escalations of the Thucydides Trap. In the absence of such reforms, the fractured order will exacerbate great-power interactions, innovation islands, and a sense of vulnerability in favor of actual sovereignty, highlighting Mearsheimerian realism of offense: the diffusion of

power will empower agile middle powers such as India but increase the instability of a world that is focused more on resiliency than efficiency.

---

<sup>i</sup> Kupchan, C. A., & Kupchan, C. A. (1991). Concerts, collective security, and the future of Europe. *International Security*, 16(1), 114-161.

<sup>ii</sup> Eckes Jr, A. E. (1979). *The United States and the global struggle for minerals*. University of Texas Press.

<sup>iii</sup> Mitić, A. (2025). Western RBO vs China's true multilateralism: Implications for Serbia. Institute of International Politics and Economics.

<sup>iv</sup> Palat, R. A. (2010). World Turned Upside Down? Rise of the global South and the contemporary global financial turbulence. *Third World Quarterly*, 31(3), 365-384.

<sup>v</sup> Peters, M. A. (2023). The emerging multipolar world order: A preliminary analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55(14), 1653-1663.

<sup>vi</sup> Haryono, H. (2024). The evolution of the BRICS trade alliance: Analysing strategic partnerships and economic interdependence in the Global South. *The Es Economics and Entrepreneurship*, 3(02), 202-208.

<sup>vii</sup> Jeong, B., & Lee, H. (2021). US-China commercial rivalry, great war and middle powers. *International Area Studies Review*, 24(2), 135-148.

<sup>viii</sup> Abrams, A. B. (2022). *China and America's Tech War from AI to 5G: The Struggle to Shape the Future of World Order*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

<sup>ix</sup> Wulf, H. (2024). Triangulation-With These Friends: China, India and Russia in BRICS.

<sup>x</sup> Stokke, O. S. (2013). Trade measures, WTO and climate compliance: the interplay of international regimes. In *Implementing the Climate Regime* (pp. 147-165). Routledge.

<sup>xi</sup> Brooks, S. M., & Voeten, E. (2025). Green Industrial Policy and the Geopolitics of Investment in Critical Minerals and Batteries.

<sup>xii</sup> German, A. (2023). Supply chain risks at US/Mexico border.

<sup>xiii</sup> Habibi, N. (2023). China, the Middle East, and the Belt and Road Initiative. In *SECURITY, DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY IN ASIA: Volume 2: Geoeconomics, Innovation and Development* (pp. 83-99).

<sup>xiv</sup> Nye, J. S. (1975). Ocean rule making from a world politics perspective. *Ocean Development & International Law*, 3(1), 29-52.

<sup>xv</sup> Cui, M. (2025). Between two worlds: The magnificent 7's tightrope walk in us and China rivalry.