
Why the 'Global South' is in the Spotlight Now?

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Does the 'Global South' include China?

The Global South does not have a clear definition or list of countries, but generally refers to 'developing countries'. This comes from the fact that most developing countries are located in the Southern Hemisphere. The term can be found in explanations such as (1) the 'low- and middle-income countries' of the World Bank, or the 'G77 + China' (currently over 130 countries) at the UN which is a coalition of developing countries, or (2) an alternative expression for the 'Third World' of the Cold War period (countries which is not categorized as either the East or the West).

In recent years, the term has increasingly tended to be used with the nuance of (2) 'Third World', which is not categorised as either the West or China/Russia, in response to the power struggle between the US and China, as well as Russia's aggression in Ukraine. For example, Prime Minister Kishida announced in his policy speech on 23 January 2023, that the 'G7 would unite and strengthen its engagement with the so-called Global South', and in a subsequent parliamentary note, he stated that he did not consider including China in the Global South. India hosted 'the Voice of Global South Summit' on 12/13 January 2023, where it made clear its aspirations to become an influential leader of the Global South. It is unclear whether China was invited to the event, but as a matter of fact, China did not take part in it.

We should not 'push away' the Global South to China and Russia

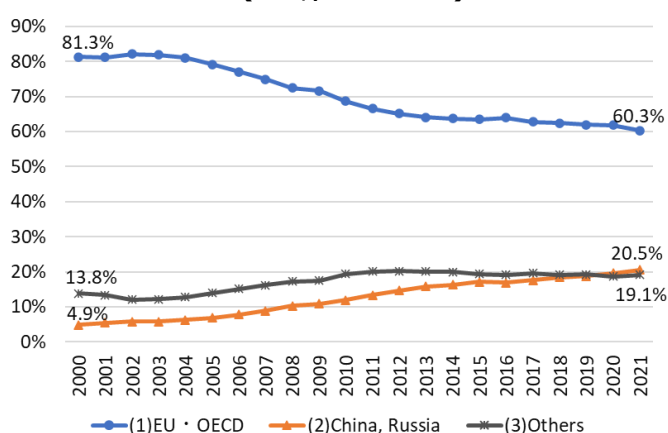
Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, democratic countries primarily in the West, have banded together to support Ukraine by imposing economic sanctions on Russia. Russia's invasion is an attempt to change the status quo through violence, which is unacceptable. Moreover, Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and also possesses nuclear weapons. This is a serious challenge to the 'rules-based international order' that has been built up over many years, and due to the relative proximity between China and Russia, the situation of the order has developed into a confrontation over systems and values, i.e., democracies versus autocracies.

The United States, the dominant power in the democratic world, has made 'Out-Competing China and Constraining Russia' as one of its top priorities in its National Security Strategy released in October 2022. It also calls for fostering democracy, but suggests cooperation with countries that 'may not be democratic but nevertheless depend upon a rules-based international system'. When a country does not accept democratic systems in the first place, there is a probability that the supremacy of law over power will not be in place within that country. How can we expect such a country to act under the rule-of-law in the international community? Why is the U.S. taking a position that could be described as a double standard?

Behind the above U.S. behaviour, there is a shift in the global balance of power. Let us

look at the transition of economic power (Fig. 1). Simplifying the data to focus on trends, I classified into the following three categories, (1) the EU and the OECD (including western advanced economies such as Japan and the U.S.), (2) China and Russia, and (3) Others. Although countries such as Taiwan and Belarus are included in (3) for simplification purposes, the image of the Global South today is that of (3).

Figure 1 World GDP Share (US\$, nominal)



(note) China includes Hong Kong and Macau
 (Source) IMF World Economic Outlook Database (Oct 2022), 2021 includes forecasts

In 2000, the situation could be described as 'unipolar,' with 80% of the power in the Western industrialized countries, but as of 2021, the ratio between (1) Western industrialized countries, (2) China and Russia, and (3) Others has shifted to 6:2:2. The war in Ukraine broke out in the midst of this shift in the balance of power. While many countries have voted in favor of several UN resolutions condemning Russia's invasion, 100 countries opposed, abstained, or were absent from the resolution to suspend Russia's status as a member of the UN Human Rights Council. It is apparent that many countries in the Global South have adopted a strategy of not making their position clear (Table 1). 44 out of 54

countries in Africa and 8 out of 10 countries in ASEAN either opposed, abstained, or were absent.

In the recent changes in the balance of power and the shaky international order, it can be said that the Global South, many of which are rather close to authoritarian China and Russia in terms of values and political systems, 'should not be pushed away to the side of China and Russia. This is the importance of the Global South from the perspective of the democratic countries. As a pragmatic response, developed countries in the West are also showing respect for the position of countries that abide by international rules, regardless of their domestic regimes.

Table 1 Resolution to suspend Russia's membership of UN Human Rights Council(April 7, 2022)

Against (24 countries)	Abstention (58 countries)	Absent (18 countries)
Algeria	Angola	Afghanistan
Belarus	Bahrain	Armenia
Bolivia	Bangladesh	Azerbaijan
Burundi	Barbados	Benin
Central Africa	Belize	Burkina Faso
China	Bhutan	Djibouti
Republic of the Congo	Botswana	Equatorial Guinea
Cuba	Brazil	Guinea
North Korea	Brunei	Lebanon
Eritrea	Cape Verde	Mauritania
Ethiopia	Cambodia	Morocco
Gabon	Cameroon	Rwanda
Iran	Egypt	Sao Tome and Principe
Kazakhstan	El Salvador	Solomon Islands
Kyrgyzstan	Eswatini	Somalia
Laos	The Gambia	Turkmenistan
Mariology	Ghana	Venezuela
Nicaragua	Guinea-Bissau	Zambia
Russia	Guyana	
Syria	India	
Tajikistan	Indonesia	
Uzbekistan	Iraq	
Vietnam	Jordan	
Zimbabwe	Kenya	
	Kuwait	
	Lesotho	
	Madagascar	
	Malaysia	
	Mexico	
	Mongolia	
	Mozambique	
	Namibia	
	Nepal	
	Niger	
	Nigeria	
	Oman	
	Pakistan	
	Qatar	
	St Christopher and Nevis	
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	
	Saudi Arabia	
	Senegal	
	Singapore	
	South Africa	
	South Sudan	
	Sri Lanka	
	Sudan	
	Suriname	
	Thailand	
	Togo	
	Trinidad and Tobago	
	Tunisia	
	Uganda	
	United Arab Emirates	
	Tanzania	
	Vanuatu	
	Yemen	

(Source) DLRI

Not a simple tri-polarity - India is an important partner

The tripolar classification of democracy, authoritarianism and the Global South is a useful overview of trends in the balance of power, but in reality, there are gradations rather than a clear division between the three poles.

Even in the EU and OECD countries that are considered to be in the democratic camp, Turkey and Hungary are notable for their

authoritarian regimes, while in Israel a bill has been submitted to parliament that would allow a majority vote in parliament to overturn a Supreme Court decision. Although China and Russia declared before the war in Ukraine that there are no limits to Sino-Russian friendship and no forbidden areas of cooperation, China has never recognised Russian sovereignty in the Donbass and other areas in Ukraine. We can say that a delicate distance between them cannot be denied.

The Global South is geographically widespread in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and elsewhere, with diverse values and political systems, but many countries agree that they want to 'get on well' with both the West and China/Russia. Among the Global South, India is the largest in terms of both economic size and population, and has a strong presence as a self-confessed leader of the Global South, remaining neutral in UN resolutions condemning Russia, for example. India is also the world's largest democratic country, and a member of the QUAD as well as the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and will hold the G20 presidency in 2023, thus increasing its importance as a nodal point in the international community.

Important values, but better not to emphasise the term 'universal' too much

“Universal values” such as freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights are “uni” (single) and “verse” (orientating), i.e., it sounds like that other values are not acceptable and should be respected as a matter of course by all countries and entities around the world. I believe that the overemphasis on the expression “universal”

should be handled with caution, as there are a number of countries where freedom and democracy are not sufficiently prevalent.

Many in the West, including Japan, have a history of imperialist colonial policies or of expropriating land from indigenous peoples in the past. We need to face these violence-based histories with modesty, and instead of forcing our values on the countries of the Global South, we need to continue our dialogue while recalling the process that led us to believe that our values are more important than anything else, and are universal. Furthermore, we ourselves must continue to attract the Global South by demonstrating to the world the prosperity and cooperation of democracies.

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