

REORDERING THE WORLD: GREAT-POWER COMPETITION, ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RIVALRY, AND THE CONTEST BETWEEN THE G7, BRICS, SCO, AND INDO- PACIFIC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS

Ali Akash

Independent Researcher, Graduate of University of Sargodha

aliakash407@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The international system is undergoing a consequential reordering as established Western-led institutions confront the growing influence of emerging powers, intensifying technological competition, and the strategic reconfiguration of global economic relationships. The Group of Seven (G7), BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and Indo-Pacific strategic frameworks represent distinct but increasingly interconnected approaches to international order, economic governance, technological development, and security cooperation. This paper examines how these arrangements contribute to the transformation of global power relations and whether their interaction is producing multipolarity, institutional fragmentation, or a more complex configuration of overlapping geopolitical networks. Employing a qualitative comparative research design, the study integrates neorealism, institutionalism, and geoeconomic analysis with documentary evidence from official declarations, policy frameworks, and relevant scholarly literature. The analysis identifies five principal dimensions of competition: institutional legitimacy, trade and financial governance, technological sovereignty, critical-resource security, and regional strategic alignment. The findings suggest that the G7 retains considerable influence through advanced technological capabilities, financial institutions, regulatory coordination, and established security partnerships, while BRICS seeks greater representation for emerging economies and expanded alternatives in development finance and international governance. The SCO prioritizes regional security, sovereign equality, connectivity, and economic cooperation, whereas Indo-Pacific frameworks combine maritime security, strategic partnerships, supply-chain resilience, and technological cooperation. Nevertheless, internal differences, asymmetric capabilities, and overlapping memberships complicate the formation of cohesive rival blocs. The paper argues that the emerging order is best understood as competitive interdependence: a system in which strategic rivalry intensifies without eliminating economic interconnection or institutional cooperation. This configuration creates opportunities for middle powers and developing economies but also increases the risks of technological exclusion, coercive economic statecraft, and fragmented global governance.

Keywords: great-power competition, geoeconomics, G7, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Indo-Pacific, technological rivalry, multipolarity, global governance

1. Introduction

1.1. The reordering of international power

The contemporary international system is experiencing a transformation that extends beyond the conventional redistribution of military capabilities among major powers. Economic interdependence, technological innovation, financial networks, critical-resource dependencies, and competing visions of political legitimacy have become central arenas in which states seek to preserve or expand their international influence. The post-Cold War expectation that economic globalization and institutional integration would gradually consolidate a relatively coherent liberal international order has encountered mounting

challenges from strategic rivalry, domestic political change, institutional dissatisfaction, and the increasing use of economic instruments for geopolitical purposes. Rather than producing a straightforward transition from unipolarity to multipolarity, these developments are generating an international environment in which power is dispersed unevenly across military, economic, technological, financial, and institutional domains (Acharya, 2014; Farrell & Newman, 2019; Ikenberry, 2018).

The concept of *reordering* is therefore more appropriate than a simple narrative of Western decline or the inevitable rise of a unified non-Western bloc. International order consists not only of the distribution of material capabilities but also of the rules, institutions, norms, and relationships through which states coordinate expectations and exercise influence. A country may possess substantial manufacturing capacity without controlling the financial infrastructure through which international transactions occur. Similarly, an institution may represent a large proportion of the world's population without possessing the cohesion or enforcement mechanisms required to translate demographic and economic weight into coordinated geopolitical action. International power consequently depends on the ability to convert resources into durable influence across multiple domains (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Strange, 1988).

Four institutional and strategic configurations are particularly significant in this context. The Group of Seven (G7) brings together advanced industrial democracies with considerable influence over international finance, technological standards, development assistance, and established security partnerships. BRICS, originally associated with Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has expanded its membership and political ambitions while advocating more representative global governance and stronger cooperation among emerging economies. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) provides a regional platform for security cooperation, political consultation, economic coordination, and connectivity across Eurasia. Indo-Pacific strategic frameworks, including the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), and the broader concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific, organize cooperation around maritime security, economic resilience, technological development, and strategic partnerships.

These arrangements should not be treated as equivalent organizations. The G7 and BRICS are political coordination groupings with different institutional characteristics and constituencies. The SCO is a formal regional organization with a charter and established decision-making structures. Indo-Pacific frameworks, by contrast, comprise a diverse collection of strategies, minilateral partnerships, economic agreements, and security relationships rather than one unified institution. Their comparison is analytically valuable precisely because they exercise influence through different mechanisms. Their competition is not simply a contest between four opposing blocs; it is also a contest between different ways of organizing international cooperation and defining legitimate authority in world politics.

The G7's 2025 summit in Kananaskis addressed economic stability, technological innovation, energy security, and critical minerals, illustrating the growing convergence between economic policy and strategic security. Its subsequent ministerial agenda also emphasized artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, industrial resilience, and digital-market competition (Government of Canada, 2025a, 2025b). Meanwhile, the 2025 BRICS Rio de Janeiro Declaration reiterated the group's commitment to a more representative international order, expanded cooperation, and reform of multilateral institutions (BRICS, 2025). The SCO's 2025 Tianjin Declaration similarly emphasized multipolarity, regional cooperation, digital economic development, and a stronger voice for developing countries (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2025).

These developments suggest that international competition increasingly concerns not only who possesses the greatest power but also who establishes the rules through which power is exercised. Technological standards, semiconductor supply chains, digital infrastructure, payment systems, critical minerals, artificial intelligence, and clean-energy industries have become instruments through which governments pursue strategic autonomy and limit the vulnerabilities associated with external dependence. As Farrell and Newman (2019) demonstrate, states occupying central positions in international networks can exercise coercive influence by exploiting information and financial connections. This insight helps explain why globalization, rather than eliminating geopolitical competition, has created additional channels through which states can exert pressure on one another.

1.2. Economic and technological rivalry as instruments of statecraft

The relationship between economic interdependence and geopolitical power has become particularly visible in the competition between the United States and China. Tariffs, investment screening, semiconductor export controls, industrial subsidies, restrictions on sensitive technologies, and efforts to diversify supply chains reveal that commercial relationships are increasingly evaluated through the lens of national security. The resulting transformation does not necessarily imply the disappearance of globalization. Instead, it involves the selective restructuring of interdependence, with governments attempting to preserve economically beneficial connections while reducing dependence in sectors considered strategically indispensable (Aiyar et al., 2023; Baldwin, 2022; Farrell & Newman, 2019).

The International Monetary Fund has documented evidence of geopolitical fragmentation in trade and foreign direct investment, including a reallocation of economic relationships along geopolitical lines following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, its research also identifies the continuing importance of countries that maintain economic connections across competing geopolitical networks (Aiyar et al., 2024). <Cite refs={["turn308006search2","turn308006search9"]} /> This finding complicates the proposition that the world is dividing into completely separate economic blocs. Strategic competition may redirect trade and investment without immediately dismantling the global production systems on which advanced and emerging economies depend.

Technology intensifies this dilemma because technological capabilities are distributed unevenly and are difficult to reproduce quickly. Advanced semiconductors, semiconductor-manufacturing equipment, cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence, telecommunications networks, advanced batteries, and quantum technologies depend on specialized knowledge, capital, intellectual property, skilled labor, and complex international supply chains. Control over a critical technological bottleneck can create political leverage disproportionate to the controlling state's share of aggregate economic output. Conversely, technological dependence can restrict a state's freedom of action even when that state possesses substantial conventional military or economic resources (Drezner, 2021; Farrell & Newman, 2019; Mazzucato, 2013).

The struggle over critical minerals illustrates the same dynamic. Rare earth elements and associated processing technologies are essential to numerous advanced manufacturing and clean-energy applications. Concentration in extraction, refining, processing, and component production can create vulnerabilities for import-dependent economies. China's 2025 rare-earth export controls, for example, demonstrated how concentrated industrial capabilities can become instruments of economic statecraft, particularly when technological restrictions and resource dependencies interact (Wangwanyu, 2025). The strategic issue is therefore not merely access to raw materials but the capacity to process them, manufacture advanced components, establish technical standards, and sustain industrial ecosystems.

Economic and technological rivalry also intersects with debates about development. Many developing countries seek investment, digital infrastructure, affordable technologies, energy security, and access to advanced markets without accepting exclusive alignment with a major power. Their preferences may differ according to debt exposure, export dependence, security concerns, domestic industrial capacity, and political priorities. The resulting pattern is more complex than a binary division between Western and non-Western states. As Acharya (2014) argues, international order is increasingly shaped by multiple regions and actors whose priorities cannot be reduced to a single dominant model of governance.

1.3. The G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific frameworks as competing architectures

The G7 represents a concentration of advanced industrial economies with substantial financial resources, scientific capabilities, technological firms, and established diplomatic partnerships. Its influence derives not simply from the economic output of its members but also from their positions within international financial networks, research systems, capital markets, and standards-setting institutions. Nevertheless, the G7 faces challenges arising from divergent domestic priorities, disagreements over trade and industrial policy, the unequal distribution of global economic growth, and perceptions that established institutions inadequately represent developing countries. Its ability to shape international order consequently depends on whether it can combine internal coordination with credible engagement beyond its membership (Ikenberry, 2018; Kirshner, 2014).

BRICS presents a different model. Its members share dissatisfaction with aspects of the distribution of international authority and have sought stronger representation for emerging and developing economies. The New Development Bank and discussions concerning financial cooperation, local-currency settlement, and institutional reform demonstrate that BRICS is not merely a rhetorical coalition. However, the group's members differ substantially in economic structure, diplomatic orientation, security priorities, and relationships with Western markets. China and India, for example, possess competing regional ambitions, while Brazil, South Africa, and other members may prioritize development finance and diplomatic autonomy over confrontation with established powers. BRICS therefore combines a common demand for greater international representation with significant disagreement over how a reformed order should operate (Cooper & Farooq, 2015; Stuenkel, 2020).

The SCO occupies a distinct position in Eurasian geopolitics. Its institutional agenda includes regional security, counterterrorism, political consultation, economic cooperation, and connectivity. Its membership brings together major continental powers and states concerned about terrorism, border security, political stability, and economic development. Although China and Russia are influential within the organization, the SCO should not automatically be interpreted as a unified anti-Western military alliance. Its institutional practices and members' divergent interests constrain the degree to which common declarations translate into coordinated strategic action. The 2025 Tianjin Declaration's emphasis on multipolarity, digital economic cooperation, and reform of global governance nevertheless illustrates the organization's increasing engagement with broader questions of international order (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2025).

Indo-Pacific strategic frameworks are different again. The concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific links maritime stability, sovereignty, freedom of navigation, economic openness, and strategic cooperation. The Quad brings together Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, while IPEF focuses on selected areas of economic cooperation among fourteen Indo-Pacific partners. These frameworks seek to strengthen supply chains, improve economic resilience, promote technological cooperation, and address shared security concerns. The Quad's January 2025 ministerial statement, for example, explicitly connected regional stability with maritime security, economic opportunity, technology security, and resilient supply chains (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2025).

IPEF illustrates how economic cooperation can be institutionalized without reproducing a conventional free-trade agreement. Its four pillars concern trade, supply chains, the clean economy, and the fair economy. Although negotiations on its trade pillar remain incomplete, its supply-chain agreement entered into force in February 2024, while the clean-economy and fair-economy agreements were signed in June 2024 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore, 2026). The framework consequently emphasizes economic coordination and resilience without requiring all participants to adopt identical positions on every geopolitical issue.

The central analytical challenge is to determine how these different arrangements interact. Their competition is partly institutional, because they offer different platforms for international consultation and agenda-setting. It is partly economic, because they seek to influence trade, investment, finance, and development. It is partly technological, because they pursue advantages in critical industries and digital infrastructure. It is also normative, because they articulate different priorities concerning sovereignty, political values, representation, security, and the legitimacy of international rules.

1.4. Research problem and significance

Existing research has developed important explanations of great-power competition, international institutional change, economic coercion, and regional security. However, these subjects are frequently studied separately. Analyses of BRICS often focus on multipolarity and development finance, while research on the G7 emphasizes the established liberal order. Studies of the SCO concentrate on Eurasian security, and work on Indo-Pacific frameworks tends to emphasize maritime strategy, alliances, and China's regional influence. Such analytical separation can obscure the relationships among institutions, technologies, markets, and strategic alignments.

A comparative approach is necessary because economic and technological rivalry increasingly crosses institutional boundaries. A semiconductor restriction may affect countries outside the alliance that introduced it. A critical-mineral export control may influence industrial production across several continents. A development-finance initiative may create commercial opportunities while altering a country's diplomatic options. Similarly, a government participating in BRICS may simultaneously cooperate with the United States on technology or maritime security. Institutional membership, therefore, does not necessarily determine a state's position on every strategic issue.

The research problem addressed in this paper is how the G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific strategic frameworks contribute to the reordering of international power through their competing approaches to economic governance, technological sovereignty, security cooperation, and institutional legitimacy. The paper evaluates whether these arrangements are generating distinct geopolitical blocs, a genuinely multipolar order, or an overlapping system in which rivalry and interdependence coexist.

The study contributes to international-relations scholarship by integrating material power, institutional legitimacy, and network-based economic influence within a comparative framework. It also offers practical insights for middle powers and developing economies, whose ability to maintain strategic autonomy increasingly depends on navigating competing standards, investment opportunities, security partnerships, and technology regimes.

1.5. Research questions

The study addresses three research questions. First, how do the G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific strategic frameworks differ in their approaches to international governance,

economic coordination, and security? Second, through what mechanisms do economic and technological rivalry reshape power relations across these institutional and strategic configurations? Third, does their interaction produce coherent geopolitical blocs, a multipolar international order, or a fragmented system of overlapping and selectively connected networks?

The paper advances the central argument that the emerging international order is best characterized as *competitive interdependence*. In this configuration, major powers seek to reduce strategically sensitive dependencies and strengthen their institutional influence while remaining connected through trade, investment, production networks, energy markets, and technological ecosystems. Multipolarity is therefore emerging unevenly: power is becoming more distributed across particular domains, but the capacity to convert material resources into institutional authority remains highly unequal.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design to examine the changing relationship between geopolitical competition, economic statecraft, technological rivalry, and institutional order. Comparative analysis is appropriate because the G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific frameworks differ in membership, institutional structure, strategic purpose, and policy instruments. Rather than treating them as interchangeable organizations, the study compares their principal mechanisms of influence and examines how their differences shape the emerging international system.

The research is informed by the logic of structured, focused comparison associated with George and Bennett (2005). The same analytical questions are applied to each configuration: What conception of international order does it promote? Which economic and technological instruments does it prioritize? How does it organize security cooperation? What constraints limit collective action? How does it interact with competing institutions? This approach facilitates comparison without assuming that each arrangement possesses identical objectives or institutional capacities.

The study also draws on qualitative content analysis, particularly the systematic interpretation of policy documents, summit declarations, institutional agreements, and scholarly research. Bowen (2009) identifies documentary analysis as a valuable method for investigating institutional priorities, political claims, and organizational practices. In this study, documents are treated as evidence of stated objectives and negotiated commitments rather than automatic proof of successful implementation. Official declarations can reveal how governments frame their interests, but their language must be distinguished from observable outcomes.

2.2. Data sources and selection

The documentary corpus comprises four principal categories. The first consists of official declarations and policy documents issued by the G7, BRICS, and SCO, together

with statements concerning the Quad and IPEF. The second includes institutional and policy research on global trade, financial fragmentation, technology controls, supply-chain resilience, and economic statecraft. The third consists of peer-reviewed scholarly literature on international order, institutional power, multipolarity, and strategic competition. The fourth includes selected contemporary analyses of critical-resource dependencies and emerging technological rivalry.

Documents were selected according to their relevance to the research questions, their institutional or scholarly provenance, and their ability to illuminate developments in the period under examination. The analysis gives particular attention to the 2025 G7 summit, the 2025 BRICS summit, the 2025 SCO summit, and the implementation of Indo-Pacific economic agreements. These sources provide a common contemporary reference point while enabling comparison with earlier theoretical and empirical research.

The documentary approach is especially suitable for examining competing conceptions of international order because institutional declarations make explicit claims about legitimacy, sovereignty, economic cooperation, and security. Nevertheless, the study recognizes that official documents are strategic communications. Their language may reflect negotiated compromises, public diplomacy, or aspirational objectives rather than uniform agreement among members.

2.3. Analytical framework

The study evaluates the four configurations across five dimensions: institutional legitimacy and representation; trade, finance, and development; technological sovereignty and industrial capacity; critical resources and supply-chain security; and regional security and strategic alignment.

Institutional legitimacy refers to the extent to which arrangements claim to represent international interests and influence the formulation of global rules. Trade and finance concern the instruments through which states organize economic relationships, provide development resources, and reduce exposure to external financial pressure. Technological sovereignty refers to the capacity to develop, access, govern, and protect strategically significant technologies. Critical-resource security concerns the vulnerabilities created by concentrated supplies of essential minerals, energy inputs, and industrial components. Regional security and strategic alignment concern the political and military relationships through which states respond to perceived threats and pursue regional stability.

Three theoretical perspectives guide interpretation. Neorealism explains why states seek capabilities, strategic advantages, and protection against dependence in an uncertain international system (Waltz, 1979). Institutionalism explains why cooperation persists despite rivalry and why international institutions can facilitate coordination, reduce uncertainty, and shape expectations (Keohane, 1984). Geoeconomic analysis explains how states use trade, finance, investment, technology, and industrial policy to achieve strategic objectives (Blackwill & Harris, 2016).

These perspectives are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Neorealism highlights strategic competition; institutionalism explains continued cooperation; and geoeconomics identifies the economic and technological mechanisms through which power is exercised. Together, they support a more comprehensive interpretation of the emerging order.

2.4. Comparative procedure and limitations

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, it identifies the institutional priorities and strategic instruments associated with each configuration. Second, it compares their approaches across the five analytical dimensions. Third, it evaluates the implications of these patterns for multipolarity, fragmentation, and competitive interdependence.

The study does not employ original interviews, a statistically representative survey, or a quantitative causal-identification strategy. It therefore does not claim to measure the independent causal effect of institutional membership on state behavior. Instead, it develops an interpretive explanation grounded in comparative documentary evidence and established scholarship. Its conclusions concern identifiable strategic patterns and plausible mechanisms rather than experimentally verified causal relationships.

A further limitation arises from the uneven availability of implementation data. Official declarations frequently provide clearer evidence of policy intentions than of long-term outcomes. The study therefore distinguishes announced commitments from implemented arrangements wherever possible and avoids treating institutional rhetoric as conclusive evidence of effectiveness. The analysis is also time-bounded: the 2025 summit documents and the available 2026 policy information inform the contemporary assessment, while longer-term consequences remain provisional.

3. Results

3.1. Institutional power and competing conceptions of international order

The comparison reveals that the four configurations promote different combinations of institutional continuity, reform, regional coordination, and strategic resilience. The G7 generally seeks to preserve influence within a system of international institutions in which its members have historically exercised considerable economic and political authority. BRICS places greater emphasis on correcting perceived inequalities in international representation. The SCO advances a vision of multipolarity grounded in sovereignty, regional cooperation, and a stronger role for developing countries. Indo-Pacific frameworks prioritize regional stability, strategic partnerships, maritime security, and the resilience of economic networks.

These differences do not amount to a simple division between supporters and opponents of international cooperation. Each configuration uses institutional mechanisms to pursue its interests, and each presents its preferred institutional arrangements as conducive to stability and prosperity. The principal disagreement concerns the distribution

of authority, the interpretation of legitimate security concerns, and the conditions under which economic interdependence should be maintained.

The G7's institutional influence rests on its ability to coordinate policies among advanced economies that possess extensive financial, technological, and diplomatic resources. Its members remain influential in international capital markets, research networks, industrial production, and regulatory standard-setting. Nevertheless, its restricted membership creates a representational problem when the group addresses issues affecting the wider international community. The legitimacy of its initiatives depends partly on whether other states view them as responses to shared challenges or as attempts to preserve an established hierarchy.

The 2025 Kananaskis summit illustrates both the strengths and the limitations of this approach. The summit's agenda connected economic stability with energy security, emerging technologies, critical minerals, and international security (Government of Canada, 2025a). These priorities demonstrate the G7's ability to coordinate across several domains of strategic importance. However, the ability to formulate common declarations does not guarantee that members will maintain consistent trade, industrial, or foreign policies when domestic economic interests diverge.

BRICS approaches institutional legitimacy through a different political argument: the distribution of international authority should more adequately reflect the importance of emerging and developing economies. The 2025 Rio de Janeiro Declaration emphasized a more representative international order, the reform of multilateral institutions, and cooperation across political, economic, financial, and cultural domains (BRICS, 2025). This agenda challenges the assumption that established Western-led institutions should remain the principal sites of global economic decision-making.

Yet the demand for greater representation does not establish that BRICS possesses a unified alternative institutional model. Its members differ in political systems, economic structures, strategic relationships, and preferences regarding the international monetary system. The group's consensus-based approach can facilitate broad participation, but it can also constrain the adoption of specific policies when national priorities diverge. BRICS is therefore influential as a platform for agenda-setting and coalition-building, but its capacity for coordinated geopolitical action varies by issue.

The SCO offers a regional interpretation of institutional legitimacy. Its members emphasize sovereignty, non-interference, regional security, and the importance of adapting global governance to contemporary economic and political realities. The 2025 Tianjin Declaration called for a more representative multipolar order while also supporting digital economic development and regional cooperation (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2025). Its significance lies in linking regional security concerns with wider debates about development, technological cooperation, and international representation.

Indo-Pacific frameworks, by contrast, derive much of their influence from the density of partnerships among maritime powers and technologically advanced economies. The

Quad and related arrangements connect regional security concerns with economic resilience, infrastructure, emerging technologies, and supply-chain cooperation. Their institutional flexibility allows participants to cooperate on specific objectives without establishing a comprehensive regional organization. This flexibility, however, also means that commitments may vary in scope, legal force, and implementation.

The first finding is therefore that institutional competition concerns not only organizational membership but also the mechanisms through which authority is produced. The G7 emphasizes coordination among established advanced economies; BRICS emphasizes representational reform and South–South cooperation; the SCO combines regional security with a sovereignty-centered vision of multipolarity; and Indo-Pacific frameworks organize strategic cooperation through flexible networks. These approaches overlap in their support for economic resilience and international cooperation, but differ in their understandings of legitimacy, security, and institutional authority.

3.2. Economic governance, trade, and financial influence

The second finding concerns the growing importance of economic governance as an instrument of geopolitical competition. All four configurations recognize that economic resilience contributes to national security, but they differ in their preferred mechanisms for achieving it. The G7 emphasizes coordination among advanced economies, investment in strategic industries, and the security of critical supply chains. BRICS seeks greater influence over development finance and international economic governance. The SCO prioritizes regional connectivity, trade facilitation, and digital economic cooperation. Indo-Pacific economic frameworks focus on strengthening supply chains, coordinating clean-economy investment, and improving economic resilience.

The G7's advantages arise from the scale and sophistication of its members' financial markets, industrial systems, and technological sectors. Its influence is reinforced by established economic institutions and the international role of currencies and financial networks associated with its members. These advantages create substantial capacity for coordinating sanctions, investment restrictions, industrial incentives, and technological controls. However, using such instruments can impose costs on the states implementing them, particularly when restrictions disrupt access to important inputs or encourage alternative economic arrangements.

BRICS' economic significance rests partly on the scale and diversity of its members and partly on its potential to expand development financing and financial cooperation. The New Development Bank provides an institutional mechanism for infrastructure and sustainable-development financing, while discussions concerning local-currency settlement reflect interest in reducing selected vulnerabilities associated with dependence on established financial channels (Cooper & Farooq, 2015; Stuenkel, 2020).

Nevertheless, the distinction between diversifying financial arrangements and replacing the international monetary system is essential. A substantial change in international reserve holdings, payment practices, or financial influence requires more than

political declarations. It depends on the availability of liquid and trusted financial assets, predictable legal arrangements, convertibility, payment infrastructure, and confidence in the institutions managing those systems. BRICS members may support greater use of national currencies in particular transactions without agreeing on a common currency or a comprehensive alternative to existing financial networks.

The SCO's economic agenda places greater emphasis on regional cooperation, connectivity, and trade facilitation. Its Eurasian geography creates opportunities for transport corridors, energy cooperation, digital trade, and infrastructure investment. However, differences in national development strategies, sanctions exposure, regulatory arrangements, and security priorities complicate the integration of regional markets. Economic connectivity may increase resilience by creating additional routes and commercial relationships, but it does not automatically eliminate dependence on dominant suppliers or external financial institutions.

Indo-Pacific economic frameworks offer a different model. IPEF's emphasis on supply chains, clean-economy cooperation, and fair-economy arrangements reflects an attempt to coordinate selected aspects of regional economic policy without requiring a conventional comprehensive free-trade agreement. Its supply-chain agreement entered into force in February 2024, providing an institutional basis for cooperation on disruptions and supply-chain resilience (Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore, 2026). Such arrangements can facilitate information-sharing and crisis coordination, although their effectiveness depends on implementation, investment, and the willingness of participating governments and firms to adjust their behavior.

A broader economic pattern emerges from these differences. Globalization is not simply being reversed; it is being reorganized around risk management, strategic diversification, and selective dependence. Governments increasingly seek alternative suppliers, additional trade routes, and greater domestic capacity in sensitive sectors. Yet diversification frequently requires continued access to international markets and production networks. An economy that attempts to localize every strategically significant activity may incur substantial costs, lose access to specialized inputs, and reduce its own competitiveness.

Research by Aiyar et al. (2024) reinforces this interpretation by showing that geopolitical fragmentation can redirect trade and investment while creating opportunities for countries that remain connected to competing economic networks. <Cite refs={["turn308006search2","turn308006search9"]} /> Such connector economies may benefit from production relocation and commercial diversification, but their position also exposes them to pressure from competing powers. Maintaining access to several markets can create economic opportunities while requiring careful management of sanctions, export controls, investment screening, and competing regulatory expectations.

The evidence therefore indicates that economic rivalry is generating differentiated patterns of integration rather than a uniform process of deglobalization. The G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific frameworks seek greater control over the strategic conditions of

economic exchange, but their efforts remain constrained by the costs of abandoning existing interdependencies.

3.3. Technological sovereignty and the struggle over strategic industries

The third finding is that technological capability has become a central determinant of international influence. The ability to develop and deploy advanced technologies affects productivity, military modernization, industrial competitiveness, intelligence capabilities, and the design of digital infrastructure. Consequently, technological rivalry is not merely an extension of conventional commercial competition; it is a struggle over the future distribution of economic and strategic power.

The G7 benefits from advanced research institutions, substantial private investment, deep capital markets, and established technological ecosystems. Its members retain important capabilities in semiconductor design, advanced manufacturing equipment, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, aerospace, and scientific research. These capabilities can reinforce international influence when governments coordinate export controls, investment screening, research partnerships, and standards-setting.

Nevertheless, technological leadership is not evenly distributed across the G7 itself, and the group's members may disagree about the balance between commercial openness and national security. Industrial policies designed to protect strategic industries can also generate friction among partners competing for investment and manufacturing capacity. The same policies that increase domestic resilience may therefore complicate international coordination.

BRICS represents a different technological configuration. Its members possess substantial scientific, manufacturing, digital, and resource capabilities, but these are distributed unevenly. China's industrial scale and technological development coexist with India's strengths in information technology and digital services, Brazil's agricultural and resource capabilities, and other members' specialized energy or industrial sectors. This diversity creates opportunities for cooperation but does not automatically produce an integrated technological ecosystem.

The central challenge for BRICS is to translate complementary capabilities into durable collaborative institutions. Cooperation in research, digital infrastructure, technology transfer, and industrial development could reduce selected dependencies. However, differences in intellectual-property regimes, regulatory approaches, industrial priorities, and strategic trust may constrain the sharing of sensitive technologies. National industrial policies can encourage domestic innovation while simultaneously limiting the degree of technological integration among partners.

The SCO's digital economic agenda similarly recognizes that technological development has implications for regional growth and sovereignty. The 2025 Tianjin Declaration highlighted digital trade infrastructure, electronic commerce, technological innovation, and cooperation in the digital economy (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation,

2025). These priorities suggest that the SCO's economic role is extending beyond conventional regional security toward the infrastructure and capabilities that support modern production and communication.

Indo-Pacific frameworks approach technology through a combination of security cooperation, economic resilience, and coordination among strategically aligned partners. The Quad's January 2025 statement linked regional stability with technology security and reliable supply chains (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2025). The G7's 2025 technological agenda likewise emphasized artificial intelligence, critical emerging technologies, and industrial resilience (Government of Canada, 2025b). Together, these initiatives demonstrate that technological cooperation is increasingly framed as a component of strategic security.

The concentration of advanced technology in particular countries creates a structural asymmetry. A state that controls a critical input, specialized production process, or indispensable software ecosystem may influence the strategic choices of countries that depend on it. Such influence can arise without direct military coercion. Export restrictions, licensing requirements, investment controls, or access limitations may impose substantial costs on the targeted economy.

Farrell and Newman (2019) describe this broader mechanism as the weaponization of interdependence. Their framework explains how states occupying central positions in international networks can exploit those positions to monitor or restrict flows of finance, information, and other resources. Technological competition extends this logic to semiconductor equipment, advanced computing, telecommunications, and other strategic sectors.

The result is an expanding tension between technological openness and technological security. Open research networks, international scientific collaboration, and cross-border production contribute to innovation, but they can also create vulnerabilities when strategic competitors gain access to critical capabilities. Conversely, restrictions designed to protect technological advantages may accelerate rival states' efforts to develop alternatives, redirect investment, or construct parallel systems.

The evidence therefore suggests that technological sovereignty is best understood as a relational capability rather than complete technological independence. No major economy possesses every essential component of advanced technological production. States can reduce particular dependencies, but comprehensive self-sufficiency is difficult and often economically inefficient. The strategic objective is more plausibly to secure access to indispensable capabilities, diversify vulnerable supply chains, and preserve sufficient domestic expertise to respond to disruption.

3.4. Critical minerals, energy security, and supply-chain politics

The fourth finding concerns the growing interaction between resource security and technological competition. Critical minerals and energy systems connect industrial

production with national security, environmental transition, and international economic influence. Their importance arises not simply from geological scarcity but from the concentration of extraction, processing, refining, and manufacturing capabilities.

Rare earths provide a particularly clear example. Although rare earth elements are not uniformly scarce in geological terms, the capacity to extract and process them economically is concentrated. Processing infrastructure, environmental costs, specialized technical knowledge, and established industrial networks create barriers to entry. A country controlling significant portions of these activities can influence the availability and cost of inputs required for electronics, electric vehicles, wind turbines, and defense-related technologies.

China's 2025 rare-earth export controls illustrated how these dependencies can become instruments of strategic bargaining. Wangwanyu (2025) interprets the measures within a broader pattern of economic statecraft and technological competition, in which resource controls interact with restrictions on advanced technologies. This episode demonstrates that industrial leverage can emerge at several stages of a supply chain, from extraction and processing to component production and technical expertise.

The G7's 2025 critical-minerals initiative reflected concern about these vulnerabilities and the need for greater supply-chain resilience (Government of Canada, 2025a). For advanced economies, diversification involves developing alternative suppliers, expanding recycling, supporting domestic processing, and cooperating with resource-producing countries. Yet these efforts require time, capital, infrastructure, and environmental safeguards. New mining or processing facilities cannot necessarily replace established production networks quickly or at comparable cost.

BRICS and the SCO have opportunities to deepen cooperation among countries possessing energy resources, mineral deposits, manufacturing capacity, and large consumer markets. Such cooperation could support investment in extraction, refining, transportation, and industrial development. However, resource endowments alone do not guarantee strategic autonomy. Countries may remain dependent on external technology, financing, specialized machinery, or export markets even when they possess substantial mineral reserves.

Indo-Pacific frameworks also connect resource security with the clean-energy transition. The IPEF clean-economy agenda emphasizes energy transition, clean technologies, and stronger cooperation across relevant supply chains (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.). These arrangements can support diversification, but they also raise questions about who captures the value created by new industrial systems. Resource-producing countries may supply raw materials without obtaining the processing capacity, technological expertise, or manufacturing investment required for higher-value production.

The distributional consequences are important. If strategic competition encourages powerful economies to secure mineral supplies through exclusive agreements or restrictive

industrial policies, developing countries may face pressure to choose commercial partners or accept unequal contractual terms. Alternatively, competition among investors may strengthen the bargaining position of resource-rich states, enabling them to negotiate technology transfer, local processing, infrastructure investment, and environmental protections.

Energy security introduces additional complexity because traditional hydrocarbon systems coexist with the expansion of renewable energy and electrification. Oil and gas remain strategically important, while batteries, electricity grids, renewable technologies, and critical minerals are becoming central to future industrial competitiveness. Governments must therefore manage both established energy dependencies and emerging technological vulnerabilities.

The findings indicate that resource security is not a peripheral issue within great-power competition. It is a structural connection between industrial policy, technological capability, environmental transition, and geopolitical leverage. States that can diversify supplies, process resources, and manufacture higher-value components are better positioned to resist coercion and capture the economic benefits of technological change.

3.5. Regional security and strategic alignment

The fifth finding is that economic and technological competition increasingly intersects with regional security arrangements. Military partnerships, diplomatic coordination, maritime access, infrastructure investment, and technology-sharing agreements reinforce one another, although they do not necessarily produce unified geopolitical blocs.

The G7's security role is shaped by the relationships among its members and their broader alliance networks. Its capacity to coordinate economic measures can reinforce diplomatic and security objectives, particularly when sanctions, export controls, and financial restrictions are implemented in cooperation with allied governments. However, the G7 itself is not a collective-defense organization. Its political statements should not be confused with the treaty-based obligations of particular security alliances.

BRICS presents a different pattern. Its members may share an interest in reducing external constraints on national decision-making, but their security priorities are not identical. China and India maintain significant unresolved strategic tensions, while other members have different regional concerns and relationships with major powers. Consequently, BRICS' capacity to coordinate diplomatic positions does not imply a common defense policy or a unified military strategy.

The SCO has a more explicit regional-security orientation, including cooperation against terrorism and other transnational security threats. Its institutional role is particularly relevant to Eurasian stability, where border disputes, political instability, regional connectivity, and security concerns intersect. Nevertheless, the organization contains states

with different strategic priorities, and cooperation in one security domain does not necessarily translate into agreement over broader geopolitical disputes.

Indo-Pacific frameworks are more directly shaped by maritime security and concerns about the regional balance of power. The Quad coordinates among Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, while other partnerships and regional agreements provide additional mechanisms for security cooperation. Their flexibility enables governments to collaborate on selected issues without committing to a single comprehensive institutional structure.

India's participation in BRICS, the SCO, and the Quad illustrates the limitations of a rigid bloc-based interpretation. These memberships reflect overlapping strategic calculations rather than an unambiguous choice between competing international camps. India may support reform of global governance, cooperate with China and Russia in particular multilateral settings, and simultaneously strengthen security and technological partnerships with the United States, Japan, and Australia.

This pattern is consistent with the broader behavior of middle powers. States seek to preserve diplomatic flexibility, obtain economic and technological benefits from multiple partners, and avoid dependence on a single external power. However, strategic autonomy becomes harder to maintain when rival states demand restrictions on technology transfers, investment relationships, defense cooperation, or access to markets.

The findings therefore indicate that the emerging security order is characterized by differentiated alignment. Cooperation is organized around particular issues and perceived threats rather than a single universal division between rival blocs. This structure can provide flexibility and reduce the costs of exclusive alignment, but it also creates uncertainty when states must respond to crises that affect several overlapping partnerships simultaneously.

3.6. Comparative synthesis of the four configurations

The comparison identifies four distinct but interacting approaches to the reordering of international power.

The G7 derives influence from advanced industrial capacity, financial networks, research systems, and coordination among established economies. Its principal challenge is to preserve strategic effectiveness while addressing concerns about representation and the economic costs of restrictive policies.

BRICS derives influence from the scale and diversity of its membership, its demand for institutional reform, and its potential to expand development finance and economic cooperation. Its principal challenge is to convert a shared interest in greater international representation into coordinated action despite significant internal differences.

The SCO derives influence from its Eurasian reach, its regional-security mechanisms, and its potential to connect security cooperation with economic and technological development. Its principal challenge is to deepen practical cooperation without assuming that common declarations eliminate differences among members.

Indo-Pacific frameworks derive influence from strategic partnerships, maritime cooperation, economic coordination, and the technological capabilities of participating states. Their principal challenge is to sustain regional cooperation while accommodating divergent economic interests and avoiding unnecessary escalation.

These configurations overlap in several important areas. All recognize the significance of technological capacity, supply-chain resilience, and economic security. All seek to preserve some degree of national autonomy. All use institutional mechanisms to communicate priorities and coordinate selected policies. Yet they differ in their institutional foundations, strategic purposes, and understandings of legitimate international authority.

The evidence does not support the claim that the world has divided into four coherent and mutually exclusive blocs. Rather, it suggests the emergence of a layered international system in which states participate in different arrangements according to issue-specific interests. Institutional competition is real, but it occurs alongside continuing economic interdependence and selective cooperation.

4. Discussion

4.1. From unipolarity to competitive multipolarity

The findings support an interpretation of contemporary international politics as a transition toward competitive multipolarity. This does not mean that power is distributed equally among states or that a stable multipolar equilibrium has already emerged. Rather, the ability to influence international outcomes is becoming more dispersed across different domains, while the distribution of capabilities remains uneven.

Waltz's (1979) neorealist framework provides a useful starting point. In an anarchic international system, states cannot rely on a universally authoritative institution to guarantee their security. They therefore seek capabilities, monitor the distribution of power, and respond to the strategic behavior of other states. The expansion of industrial policy, technological controls, military partnerships, and supply-chain diversification is consistent with this logic.

However, neorealism alone cannot fully explain why states continue to cooperate through institutions that include strategic competitors. Keohane's (1984) institutionalist perspective helps explain why cooperation persists even when states disagree over long-term strategic objectives. Institutions provide channels for information-sharing, reduce transaction costs, establish expectations, and facilitate coordination on issues where mutual benefits remain available.

Acharya's (2014) account of a multiplex world adds a further dimension. International order is not simply being transferred from one dominant state to another. It is increasingly shaped by overlapping regional arrangements, institutional initiatives, and different sources of authority. The G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific frameworks exemplify this development because none independently governs all the economic, technological, and security relationships relevant to contemporary international politics.

The findings also qualify the assumption that BRICS' expansion necessarily signals the decline of Western influence. Aggregate economic size, demographic scale, and institutional representation are important, but they do not automatically translate into coordinated strategic power. Effective collective action depends on policy alignment, institutional capacity, financial infrastructure, technological capabilities, and the willingness of members to accept shared constraints.

Similarly, the continuing influence of the G7 does not establish that the existing international order can remain unchanged. Institutional authority may weaken when states perceive decision-making arrangements as unrepresentative or when policies designed to protect established advantages impose disproportionate costs on others. The long-term sustainability of any international order therefore depends partly on its capacity to accommodate changes in material power and provide credible mechanisms for participation.

The resulting configuration is neither straightforward Western continuity nor complete post-Western transformation. It is a contested system in which established powers retain significant structural advantages while emerging powers seek greater autonomy and influence. The key variable is not simply the number of powerful states but their capacity to convert economic and technological resources into institutional authority and sustained cooperation.

4.2. Weaponized interdependence and the limits of globalization

The findings reinforce the importance of weaponized interdependence as an explanation of contemporary economic rivalry. Farrell and Newman (2019) show that states can exploit their central positions within international networks to monitor or restrict flows that other actors require. This insight helps explain why governments increasingly treat financial systems, digital infrastructure, semiconductor supply chains, and critical-resource networks as strategic assets.

The argument also challenges the assumption that economic interdependence necessarily reduces conflict. Baldwin (1985) demonstrated that economic statecraft can be used to pursue political objectives, while Drezner (2021) highlights the centrality of economic instruments in contemporary geopolitical competition. Commercial connections may raise the costs of conflict, but they can also create vulnerabilities that governments seek to exploit or neutralize.

The distinction between *decoupling* and *de-risking* is crucial. Complete decoupling would require extensive separation of production, investment, technology, and commercial relationships. Such a process would be costly because modern production relies on specialized inputs, economies of scale, and international coordination. De-risking is narrower: it seeks to reduce exposure in selected strategic sectors while retaining beneficial connections elsewhere.

The findings suggest that de-risking is more consistent with the observed structure of competitive interdependence. Governments seek alternative suppliers, domestic capacity,

and trusted partnerships in sensitive sectors, but they continue to depend on international markets for growth, investment, innovation, and employment. The result is selective restructuring rather than the disappearance of globalization.

This process nevertheless creates significant risks. Restrictions imposed in the name of national security can spread beyond their original targets as governments respond with countermeasures. A policy intended to protect one country's technological advantage may encourage another to restrict critical resources, redirect investment, or accelerate the development of alternative systems. Reciprocal measures can then create a cycle in which each side interprets the other's defensive action as evidence of hostile intent.

The IMF's analysis of geopolitical fragmentation underscores the potential economic costs of this process, including reduced trade and investment between geopolitically distant economies (Aiyar et al., 2024). The costs are not confined to major powers. Developing economies that rely on imported technologies, foreign investment, or access to multiple markets may experience higher production costs and reduced opportunities if international networks become more restrictive.

A more sustainable approach would distinguish genuinely critical dependencies from ordinary commercial relationships. Governments can improve resilience through diversification, transparency, emergency planning, and investment in alternative capabilities without treating every cross-border connection as a security threat. The objective should be to reduce vulnerability rather than maximize separation.

4.3. Technological sovereignty and the distribution of future power

Technological competition is central to the reordering of international power because technological capabilities influence both economic productivity and military effectiveness. The ability to design advanced semiconductors, manufacture critical equipment, develop artificial intelligence, and control digital infrastructure can affect a country's capacity to innovate, protect sensitive information, and maintain industrial competitiveness.

Mazzucato (2013) emphasizes the role of public investment in the development of technological capabilities, challenging the assumption that innovation emerges exclusively from private-sector activity. This perspective is relevant to the current competition because governments increasingly support strategic industries through research funding, procurement, industrial subsidies, infrastructure investment, and regulatory measures.

The findings suggest that technological sovereignty should not be equated with complete national self-sufficiency. Advanced technological production is characterized by specialization, international collaboration, and complex supply chains. Even technologically advanced economies depend on external sources for some inputs, manufacturing processes, or raw materials. Attempts to reproduce every component domestically could reduce efficiency without eliminating strategic vulnerability.

A more realistic conception of technological sovereignty involves the capacity to maintain access to essential technologies, develop domestic expertise, diversify suppliers,

and participate meaningfully in international innovation networks. Such sovereignty is relational because it depends on the structure of external connections as well as domestic capabilities.

This interpretation has implications for each configuration. The G7 can draw on advanced research systems and established technological firms, but it must manage disagreements over industrial policy and technological regulation. BRICS can pursue collaborative research, infrastructure, and technology transfer, but its members must address differences in capabilities and strategic priorities. The SCO can support digital connectivity and regional innovation, but practical outcomes depend on financing, technical standards, and implementation. Indo-Pacific frameworks can facilitate cooperation among technologically capable partners, but their effectiveness depends on sustained investment and the management of commercial interests.

The central danger is that technological competition may produce increasingly incompatible systems. Divergent standards, restrictive export regimes, competing digital infrastructures, and limitations on research collaboration can increase costs and reduce the benefits of international innovation. Smaller economies may be especially vulnerable because they lack the resources to maintain parallel systems or negotiate favorable terms with multiple technological suppliers.

A balanced approach would preserve cooperation in areas where shared standards and research benefit all participants while applying proportionate safeguards to clearly identified security-sensitive technologies. Without such distinctions, the pursuit of technological advantage may undermine the innovation ecosystems on which that advantage depends.

4.4. Institutional legitimacy and the demand for reform

The comparison reveals that institutional legitimacy is not merely a normative concern; it is also a source of strategic influence. Institutions that are widely perceived as representative and effective are more likely to attract participation, facilitate implementation, and sustain cooperation. Conversely, institutions viewed as exclusionary or dominated by a narrow group of states may encounter resistance even when they possess considerable material resources.

BRICS' demand for greater representation reflects dissatisfaction with the distribution of authority in established global institutions. The significance of this demand extends beyond the group's own membership. Many developing countries seek a stronger voice in international financial governance, development priorities, and the formulation of rules affecting trade, technology, and investment.

However, institutional reform and institutional replacement are different processes. Reform seeks to modify existing arrangements to reflect changing capabilities and political expectations. Replacement involves constructing alternative mechanisms that can perform comparable functions. The former may preserve the benefits of established cooperation

while improving legitimacy; the latter may create additional options but also increase institutional duplication and fragmentation.

The G7's long-term influence will depend partly on its ability to recognize that material capability alone cannot guarantee durable authority. Its members may remain economically and technologically powerful, but their initiatives are more likely to gain broader support when they address the interests of states outside the group. Development finance, technology access, infrastructure investment, and credible consultation can strengthen legitimacy while serving strategic objectives.

BRICS faces a complementary challenge. Its criticism of existing institutional inequalities will be more persuasive if it can demonstrate that its own mechanisms deliver transparent, effective, and broadly beneficial outcomes. A demand for a more representative international order requires institutional practices capable of accommodating internal diversity and distributing benefits credibly.

The SCO and Indo-Pacific frameworks confront different but related legitimacy questions. The SCO must demonstrate that regional cooperation can deliver practical benefits while accommodating members' diverse priorities. Indo-Pacific frameworks must show that their security and economic initiatives contribute to regional stability and prosperity rather than functioning primarily as instruments of strategic exclusion.

The findings therefore suggest that legitimacy and effectiveness are mutually reinforcing. Institutions gain influence not only through the resources of their members but also through their capacity to produce valued outcomes, accommodate differences, and establish credible expectations.

4.5. Middle powers, strategic autonomy, and connector economies

One of the most important implications of competitive interdependence is the expanding role of middle powers and connector economies. States that maintain commercial or diplomatic relationships across competing networks can sometimes benefit from investment relocation, trade diversification, infrastructure development, and expanded access to technology.

Yet the opportunities are accompanied by substantial risks. Connector economies may become targets of pressure when major powers seek to prevent the transfer of strategically sensitive technologies or restrict commercial relationships with rivals. Their ability to preserve flexibility depends on the diversity of their economic relationships, the strength of domestic institutions, and their capacity to manage conflicting regulatory demands.

India provides an illustrative case because it participates in BRICS and the SCO while also cooperating with the Quad. Its strategy demonstrates that states may distinguish between institutional participation, economic interests, and security partnerships. Such behavior does not eliminate strategic tensions, but it shows why membership in one organization cannot be treated as a complete indicator of geopolitical alignment.

For developing countries, strategic autonomy should therefore be understood as a practical capacity rather than a diplomatic slogan. It requires diversified trade relationships, investment in human capital, reliable infrastructure, institutional transparency, and the ability to negotiate contracts that support domestic development. Countries with narrow export bases, weak technological capacity, or concentrated external financing may possess fewer realistic options when geopolitical pressures intensify.

The opportunities associated with resource competition also require careful management. Mineral-producing countries can seek local processing, skills development, technology transfer, and infrastructure investment rather than accepting a role confined to raw-material extraction. However, such strategies require regulatory capacity, environmental safeguards, and credible investment frameworks. Without these conditions, competition among external powers may reproduce existing patterns of unequal value capture.

Middle powers can also contribute to reducing systemic fragmentation. By supporting interoperable standards, transparent investment rules, regional dialogue, and practical cooperation across institutional boundaries, they can help preserve economic connections without abandoning legitimate security concerns. Their influence may be greatest when they coordinate around specific shared interests rather than attempting to establish another comprehensive geopolitical bloc.

4.6. Toward a framework of competitive interdependence

The concept of competitive interdependence synthesizes the central findings. It describes an international order in which states remain economically connected but increasingly treat the terms of interdependence as objects of strategic contestation. Rather than choosing between unrestricted globalization and complete separation, governments attempt to determine which dependencies are acceptable, which should be diversified, and which must be reduced.

This framework differs from a conventional multipolarity argument because it emphasizes the uneven distribution of power across networks and sectors. A state may possess considerable military strength but remain dependent on external semiconductor equipment. Another may exercise financial influence while relying on imported energy or industrial inputs. A resource-rich economy may possess bargaining power but lack the processing technology required to capture higher-value production. Power is therefore multidimensional and relational.

Competitive interdependence also differs from a simple new-Cold-War interpretation. Although strategic rivalry can encourage ideological polarization and the construction of parallel systems, contemporary economies remain deeply connected through production, investment, services, and technological collaboration. Complete bloc separation would impose costs that many states seek to avoid. The existence of overlapping institutional memberships and connector economies further complicates rigid divisions.

The framework generates three propositions. First, strategic competition will intensify most sharply in sectors where capabilities are concentrated, substitution is difficult, and governments perceive direct national-security implications. Second, institutional cohesion will depend less on aggregate membership size alone than on the ability to coordinate policies and deliver practical benefits. Third, countries maintaining diversified economic relationships will gain opportunities from fragmentation, but their benefits will depend on domestic capabilities and their ability to manage external pressure.

These propositions offer a basis for future empirical research. Quantitative studies could examine whether institutional membership predicts changes in trade composition, foreign direct investment, technology transfers, or supply-chain concentration. Comparative case studies could investigate whether governments' stated de-risking strategies produce measurable reductions in vulnerability. Research on development finance could assess whether new institutional arrangements improve access to infrastructure and technological capabilities.

The present study does not claim that competitive interdependence is a permanent or universally applicable condition. Severe conflict, comprehensive sanctions, or a major technological rupture could accelerate the formation of more exclusive blocs. Conversely, successful institutional reform and stronger mechanisms for economic cooperation could moderate fragmentation. The concept is therefore best understood as an analytical description of current tendencies rather than a deterministic prediction.

4.7. Policy implications

The findings have several policy implications. First, governments should prioritize resilience over indiscriminate economic separation. Diversification, transparent supply-chain information, emergency coordination, and investment in alternative sources can reduce vulnerability without unnecessarily dismantling commercially beneficial relationships.

Second, international institutions should expand practical cooperation in areas where shared interests remain substantial. Public health, climate adaptation, energy security, disaster response, and certain aspects of digital governance can provide opportunities for collaboration even among strategic competitors. Institutional overlap need not produce fragmentation if arrangements maintain compatible standards and communicate effectively.

Third, technological governance should distinguish clearly between security-sensitive capabilities and technologies whose wider diffusion supports development. Excessively broad restrictions can limit innovation, raise costs, and encourage the construction of competing systems. Carefully targeted safeguards, combined with predictable licensing and transparent criteria, can better balance security and economic efficiency.

Fourth, development strategies should emphasize domestic capabilities rather than dependence on external investment alone. Developing economies can improve their

bargaining positions by investing in education, research, infrastructure, regulatory institutions, and higher-value production. Strategic autonomy is more sustainable when supported by productive capacity than when pursued exclusively through diplomatic positioning.

Finally, institutional reform should address both representation and performance. Greater participation in decision-making can improve legitimacy, but representation must be accompanied by transparent procedures and mechanisms that produce tangible benefits. Established and emerging institutions alike will face difficulties sustaining influence if their commitments remain largely rhetorical.

5. Conclusion

The reordering of international power is not adequately explained by the decline of one dominant power or the rise of another. It involves a broader transformation in the relationship between institutions, economic networks, technological capabilities, and strategic security. The G7, BRICS, SCO, and Indo-Pacific frameworks represent distinct approaches to this transformation, each offering different mechanisms for coordinating policies, shaping international expectations, and pursuing strategic objectives.

The G7 retains considerable influence through advanced technological capabilities, financial networks, industrial resources, and established partnerships. Nevertheless, its authority is challenged by demands for greater international representation and by tensions between economic openness and security-driven restrictions. BRICS provides an important platform for emerging economies seeking institutional reform, expanded development cooperation, and greater strategic autonomy, but its internal diversity limits the extent of coordinated action. The SCO links Eurasian security with regional connectivity and digital economic cooperation, although practical implementation remains constrained by differences among its members. Indo-Pacific frameworks connect maritime security, economic resilience, technological cooperation, and strategic partnerships, but their flexibility also produces uneven commitments and potential tensions with other regional arrangements.

Economic and technological rivalry is the principal mechanism linking these configurations. Trade restrictions, financial measures, semiconductor controls, industrial policy, critical-mineral dependencies, and supply-chain diversification increasingly shape international relations. Yet these instruments operate within an interconnected global economy in which complete separation remains costly and often impractical. The result is neither the uninterrupted globalization of the post-Cold War era nor a fully consolidated division into hostile blocs.

The study's central conclusion is that the international system is moving toward **competitive interdependence**: a contested order in which states seek greater strategic autonomy while continuing to rely on international economic and technological connections. Multipolarity is emerging, but unevenly; institutional competition is

intensifying, but it does not eliminate cooperation; and strategic alignment is becoming more differentiated rather than uniformly bloc-based.

For middle powers and developing countries, this transformation creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities. Greater competition among external partners may expand access to finance, infrastructure, technology, and markets, but it can also expose weaker economies to coercive pressure and fragmented regulatory systems. The capacity to benefit from the emerging order will depend on domestic institutional strength, technological development, economic diversification, and the ability to negotiate across competing international networks.

Ultimately, the future of international order will depend not only on the distribution of material capabilities but also on whether major powers can establish credible arrangements for managing interdependence, accommodating changing demands for representation, and preventing technological and economic rivalry from escalating into systemic fragmentation. A sustainable international order will require more than strategic balancing: it will require institutions capable of combining security with cooperation, national autonomy with shared responsibility, and technological competition with the preservation of global economic connectivity.

REFERENCES

- Acharya, A. (2014). *The end of American world order*. Polity Press.
- Aiyar, S., Chen, J., Ebeke, C., Garcia-Saltos, R., Gudmundsson, T., Ilyina, A., Kangur, A., Kunaratskul, T., Rodriguez, S. L., Ruta, M., Schulze, T., Soderberg, G., & Trevino, J. P. (2023). *Goeconomic fragmentation and the future of multilateralism* (IMF Staff Discussion Note No. 2023/001). International Monetary Fund. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400229046.006>
- Aiyar, S., Presbitero, A. F., & Ruta, M. (2024). *Changing global linkages: A new Cold War?* (IMF Working Paper No. 2024/076). International Monetary Fund. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400272745.001>
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2025, January 22). Joint statement by the Quad foreign ministers. <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/joint-statement-quad-foreign-ministers>
- Baldwin, D. A. (1985). *Economic statecraft*. Princeton University Press.
- Baldwin, R. (2022). *The peak globalisation myth: Why regions matter*. Oxford University Press.
- Barnett, M., & Duvall, R. (2005). Power in international politics. *International Organization*, 59(1), 39–75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050010>
- Blackwill, R. D., & Harris, J. M. (2016). *War by other means: Geoeconomics and statecraft*. Harvard University Press.

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- BRICS. (2025, July 6). Rio de Janeiro declaration: Strengthening global South cooperation for a more inclusive and sustainable governance. <https://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/250706-declaration.html>
- Cooper, A. F., & Farooq, A. B. (2015). Testing the club dynamics of the BRICS: The new development bank from conception to establishment. *International Organisations Research Journal*, 10(2), 32–44.
- Drezner, D. W. (2021). *The uses and abuses of weaponized interdependence*. Brookings Institution.
- Farrell, H., & Newman, A. L. (2019). Weaponized interdependence: How global economic networks shape state coercion. *International Security*, 44(1), 42–79. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00351
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.
- Government of Canada. (2025a, June 17). Chair's summary: G7 leaders' summit, Kananaskis, Alberta. <https://g7.canada.ca/en/news-and-media/news/chairs-summary/>
- Government of Canada. (2025b, December 9). G7 2025 Industry, Digital and Technology Ministerial Declaration. <https://g7.canada.ca/en/news-and-media/news/g7-2025-industry-digital-and-technology-ministerial-declaration>
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2018). *A world safe for democracy: Liberal internationalism and the crises of global order*. Yale University Press.
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Kirshner, J. (2014). *American power after the financial crisis*. Cornell University Press.
- Mazzucato, M. (2013). *The entrepreneurial state: Debunking public vs. private sector myths*. Anthem Press.
- Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore. (2026, August 21). IPEF pillars and agreements. <https://www.meti.gov.sg/trade-international-economic-relations/regional-and-international-platforms/indo-pacific-economic-framework/ipef-pillars-and-agreements/>
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. (2025, September 1). Tianjin Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjb_673085/zzjg_673183/xws_674683/xgxw_674683/202509/t20250901_11699651.shtml
- Strange, S. (1988). *States and markets*. Pinter Publishers.

Stuenkel, O. (2020). The BRICS and the future of global order (2nd ed.). Lexington Books.

Waltz, K. N. (1979). Theory of international politics. Addison-Wesley.

Wangwanyu, C. (2025, December 23). Analysing China's 2025 rare-earth export controls. RSIS Commentary. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. <https://rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/analysing-chinas-2025-rare-earth-export-controls/>

World Trade Organization. (2025, October 7). AI goods and frontloading lift world trade in 2025 but outlook dims for 2026. https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news25_e/stat_07oct25_e.htm