

The Global South and Multilateralism

BROOKINGS-KDI CONFERENCE

QUO VADIS MULTILATERALISM?

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER

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(KIEP)

Mainstreaming

(1/3)

The term “Global South” is gaining prominence among developing countries.



“The Ministers underlined the critical role of the Group of 77 and China, which represents two thirds of the nations of the world and of all humanity, in providing the **Global South** with the means to articulate our shared vision, promote our interests and enhance our joint negotiating capacity within the United Nations system.”
(2025)



“We, the Leaders of BRICS countries, met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 6 to 7 July 2025 for the XVII BRICS Summit held under the theme: “Strengthening **Global South** Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance”.”
(2025)



“We, the **Global South**, have the largest stakes in the future. Three fourths of humanity lives in our countries. We should also have equivalent voice. Hence, as the eight-decade old model of global governance slowly changes, we should try to shape the emerging order.”
(2023)

Mainstreaming

(2/3)

It is now widely used across global media, diplomacy, and policy discourse.

“The Return of the **Global South**”

(2023, Foreign Affairs)

“Year in a Word: ‘**Global south**’”

(2023, Financial Times)

“What is the **Global South**?”

(2024, UK Parliament House of Commons Library)

“I have consistently undertaken efforts to advance Japan's relations with the **Global South**.”

(2023, Prime Minister Kishida)



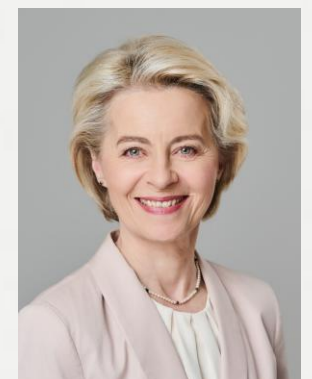
“we celebrate the growing momentum of opportunity, innovation and solidarity across the **Global South**.”

(2023, Secretary-General Guterres)



“When I speak to the **Global South**, from Africa to India to Central Asia, they are looking for solutions.”

(2025, President von der Leyen)

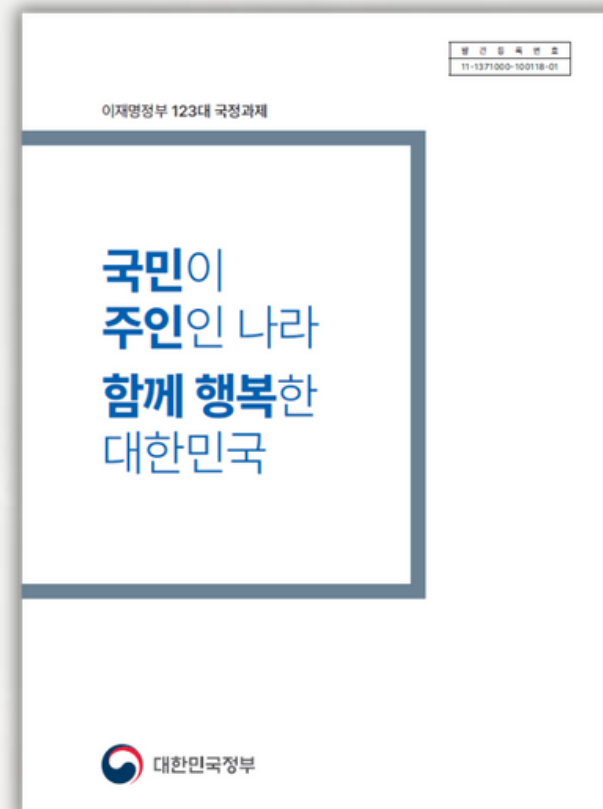


Mainstreaming

(3/3)

Korea, too, has begun to actively adopt and engage with the term.

Lee Jae Myung Administration: 123 National Agenda Items (2025)



37 통상으로 지키는 국익, 흔들림 없는 경제안보

산업부

- 글로벌 사우스 진출 신남방·신북방 정책의 계승·발전과 글로벌 사우스와의 협력으로 경제영토 확대
 - 미래 성장산업 분야 협력 확대 및 유상원조·개발금융 등 개도국 진출 지원
 - 맞춤형 통상협정 체결 및 공급망·디지털·기후 등 신통상협정 확대

120 국제사회 공헌과 참여로 G7+ 외교 강국 실현

외교부

- 외교다변화 국제 환경에 유연하게 대응하기 위한 외교다변화 추진
 - 신남방·신북방 정책의 계승·발전을 위한 파트너십 강화, 유망 글로벌 사우스로의 외교 지평 확대
 - 유럽, 인태지역 유사입장국, 중동과의 실질협력 강화를 통한 전략적 지평 확장

37. Protecting National Interests Through Trade; Ensuring Steady Economic Security

Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE)

- Expand Korea's economic footprint through the continuation and advancement of the New Southern & New Northern Policies and strengthened cooperation with the **Global South**.
 - Deepen collaboration in future growth industries and support Korean entry into developing markets through concessional finance and development financing.
 - Conclude tailored trade agreements and expand new-format trade pacts in supply chains, digital, and climate sectors.

120. Becoming a G7+ Diplomatic Power Through Global Contribution and Engagement

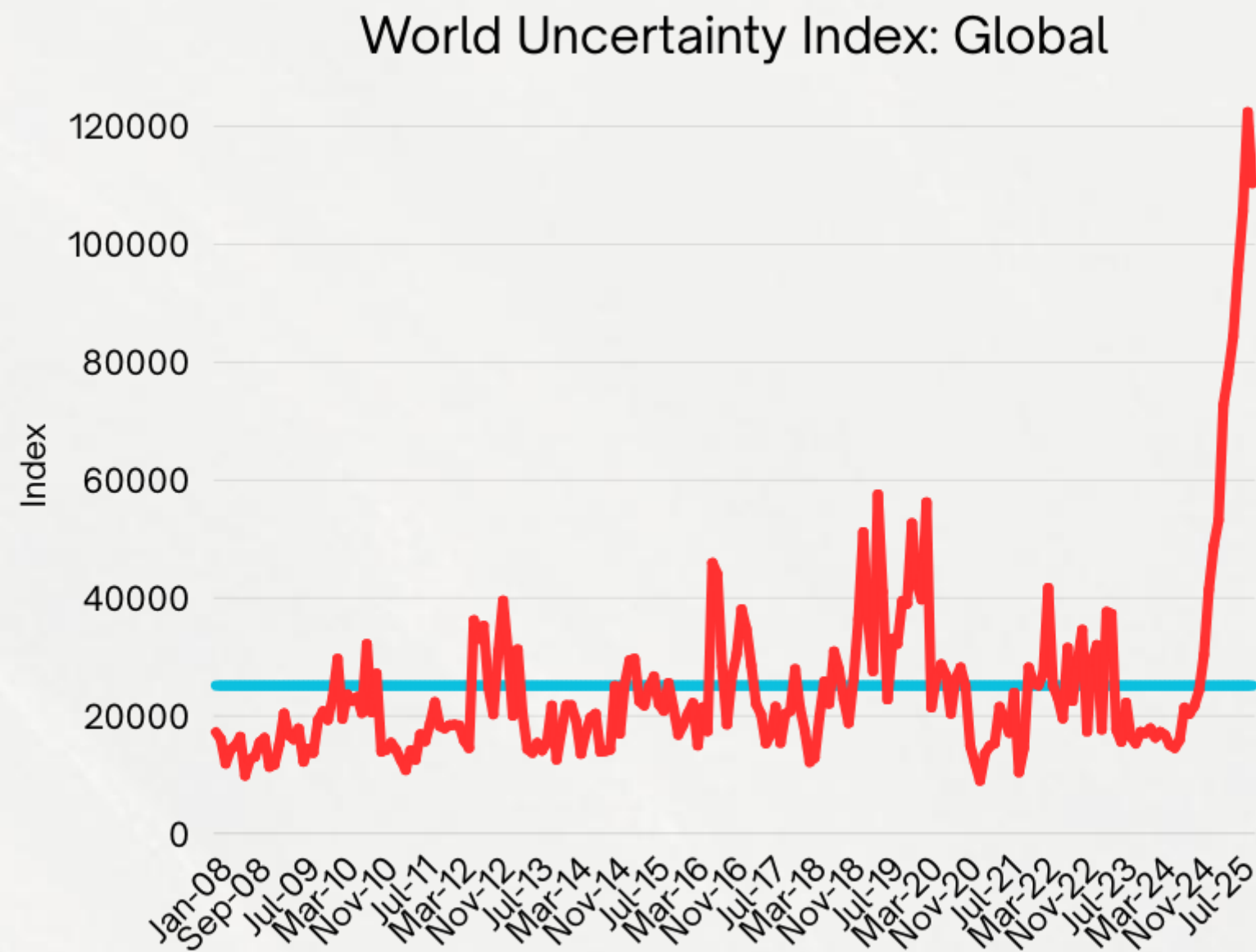
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

- Promote diplomatic diversification to flexibly respond to the evolving international environment.
 - Strengthen partnerships to continue and upgrade the New Southern & New Northern Policies, expanding Korea's diplomatic horizon toward promising **Global South** partners.
 - Broaden strategic space through enhanced practical cooperation with Europe, the Indo-Pacific's like-minded partners, and the Middle East.

Grievances

(1/3)

Developing countries are increasingly dissatisfied with a world order marked by hyper-uncertainty.



Source: Ahir, H, N Bloom, and D Furceri (2022), "World Uncertainty Index", NBER Working Paper.

Permacrisis

- Between Nov 2018 and Oct 2025, during 84 months, the index was above the long-term average in 43 months.

Polycrisis

- Financial market crashes, fiscal troubles, international trade frictions, pandemics, armed conflicts, climate change etc.

North-origin crises

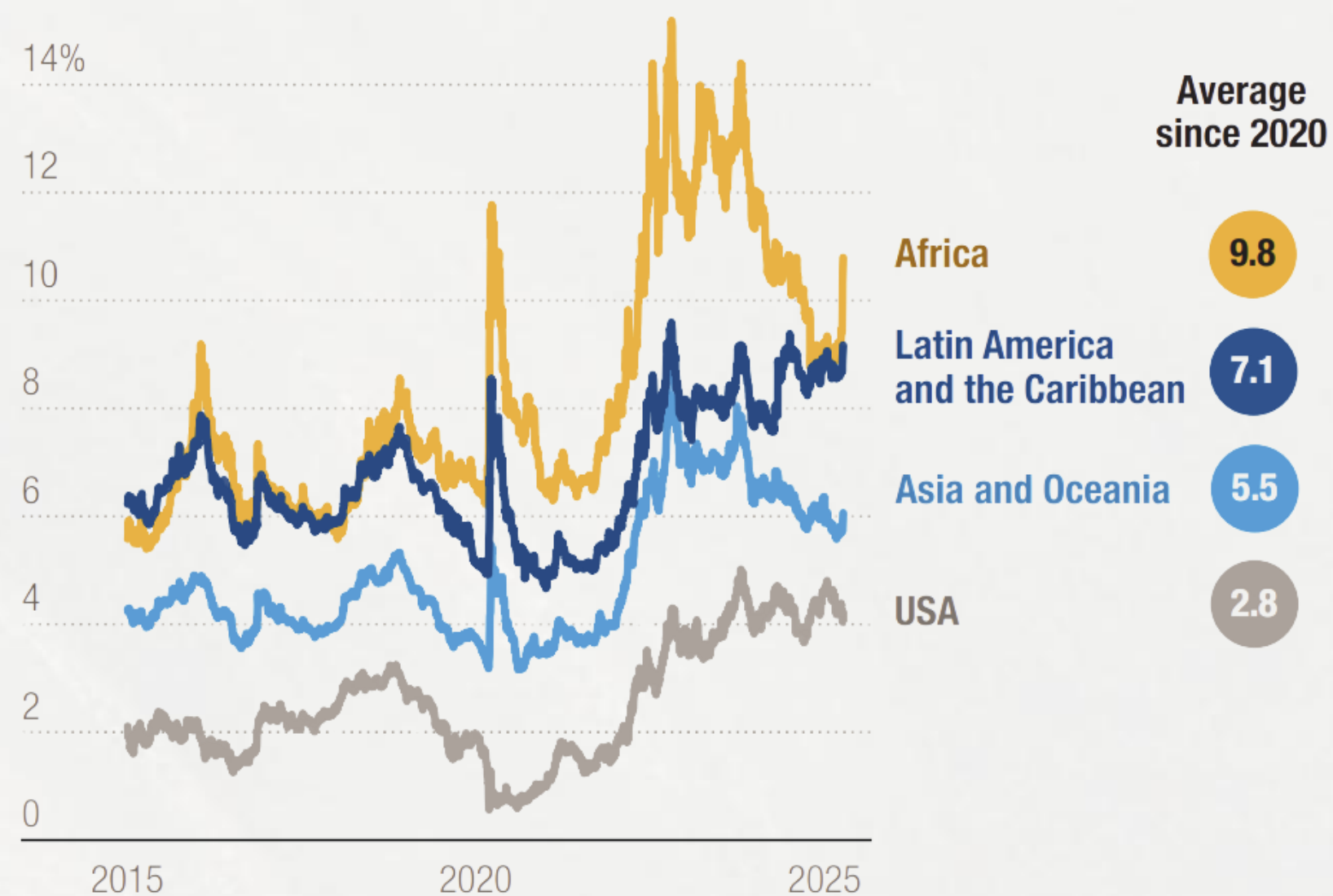
- U.S. subprime mortgage crisis, European sovereign debt crisis, Fed's tapering, Brexit etc.

Grievances

(2/3)

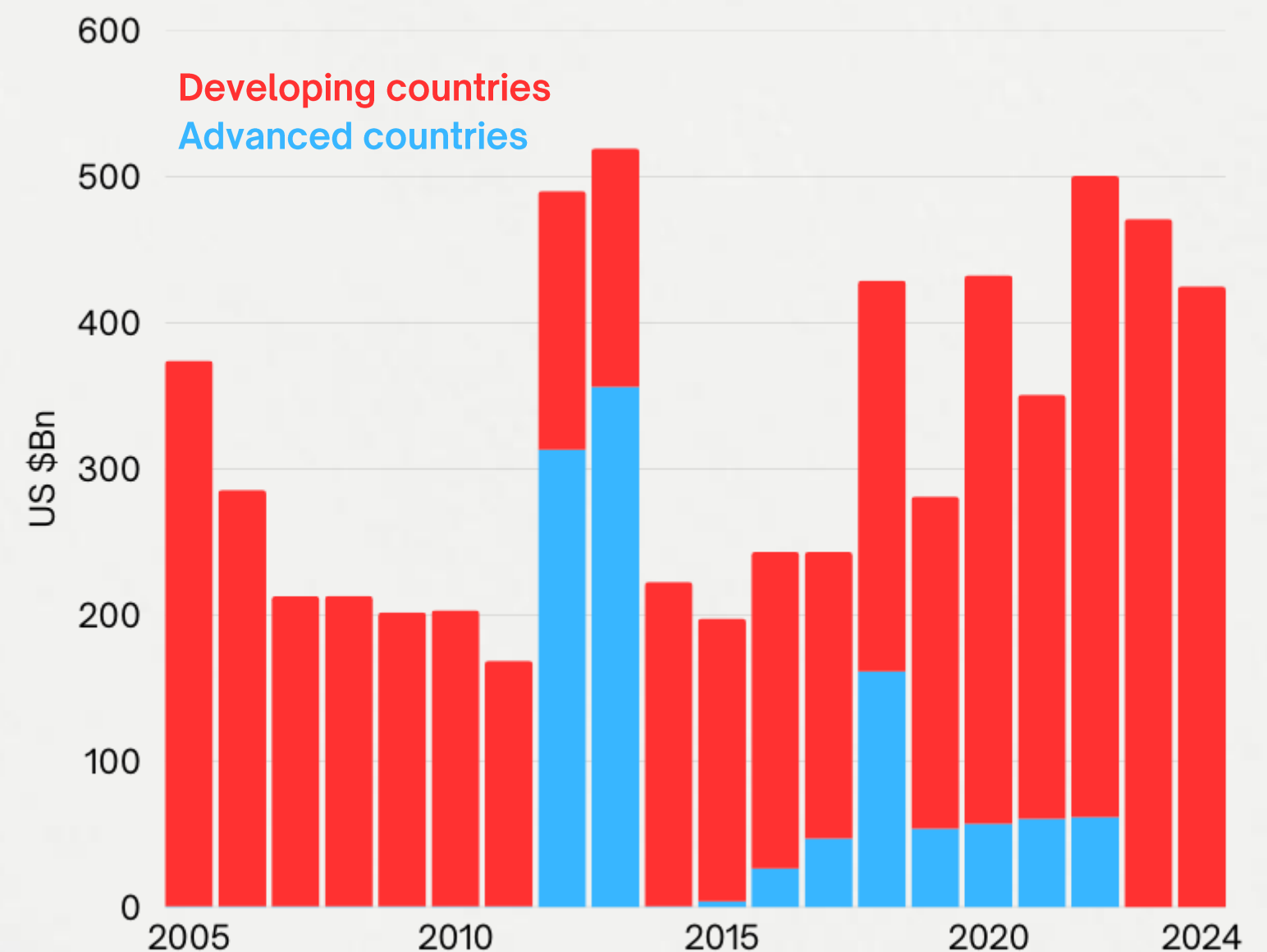
Recent global crises have hit developing economies disproportionately hard.

Bond Yields for
Developing Regions and for the U.S.



Source: UNCTAD Secretariat calculations based on LSEG (April 2025)

Total Debt in Default



Source: BoC-BoE Sovereign Default Database 2025

Grievances

(3/3)

Food, fuel, fertilizer, and security risks are intensifying.



Confidence

(1/2)

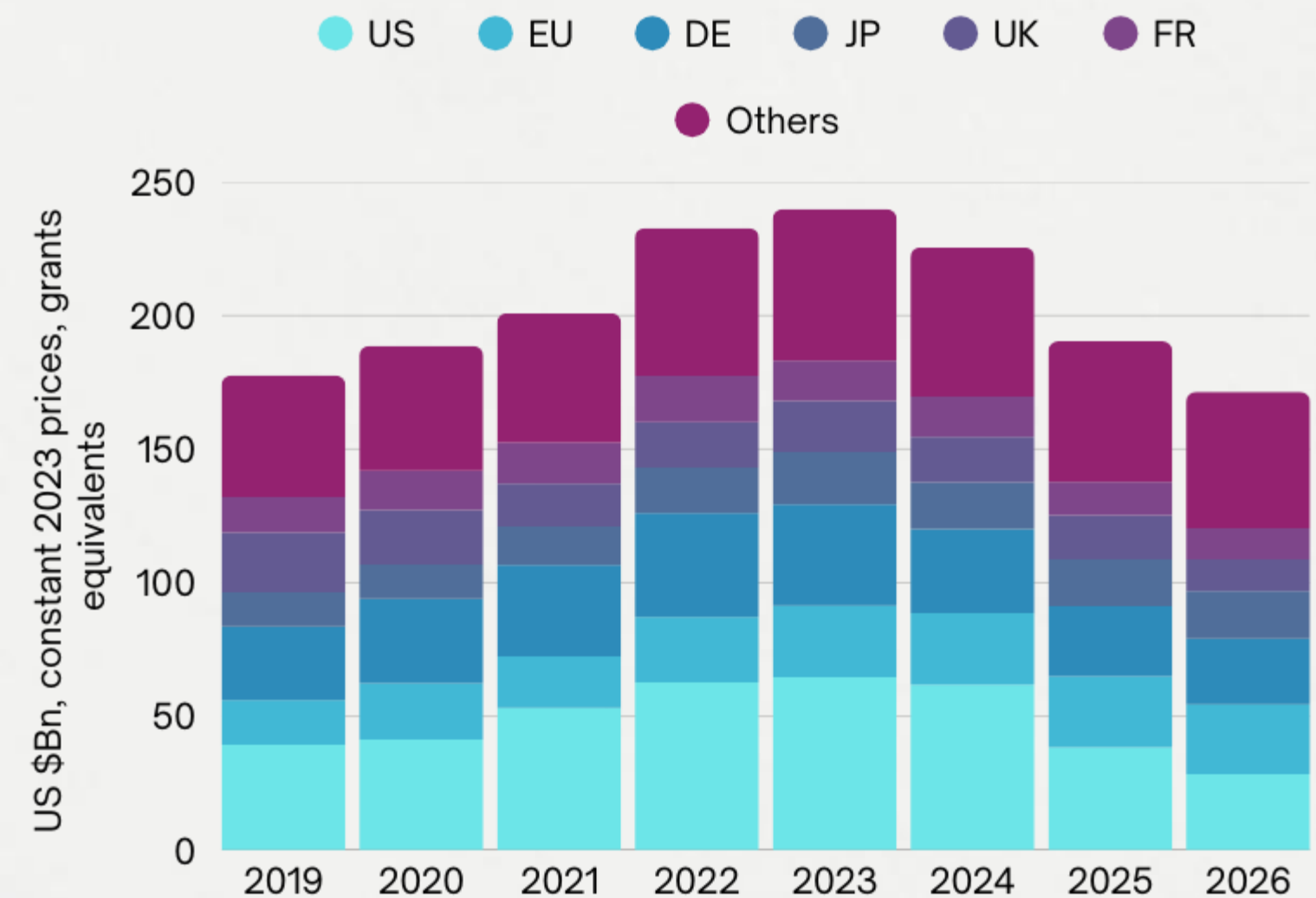
Middle-income countries are becoming more self-reliant.

Net Official Development Assistance (ODA)
Received, Middle-Income Countries



Source: World Bank

Official Development Assistance (ODA)
and Projected Changes

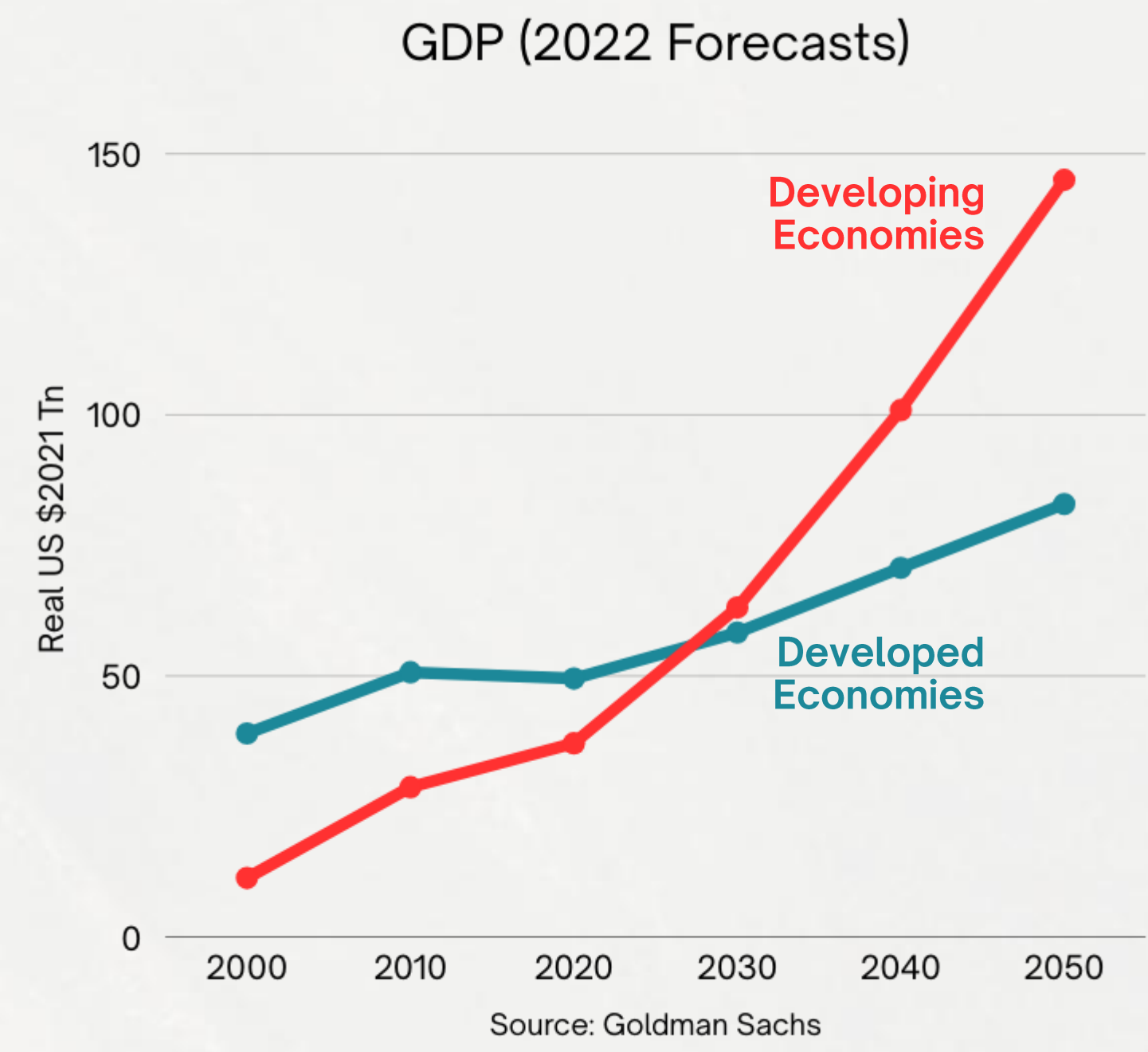


Source: SEEK Development Donor Tracker

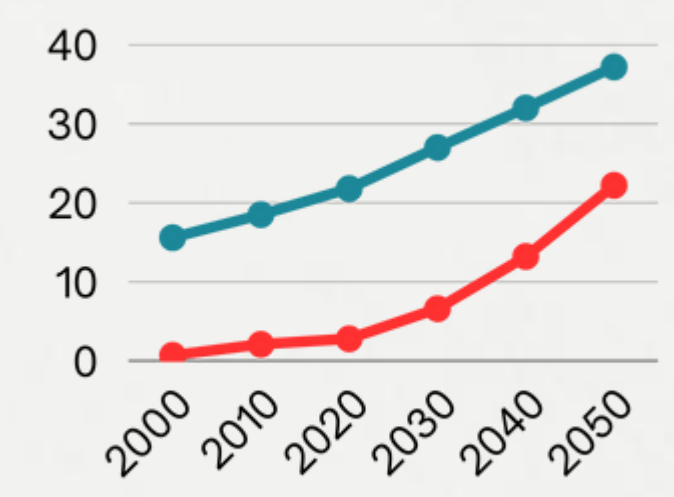
Confidence

(2/2)

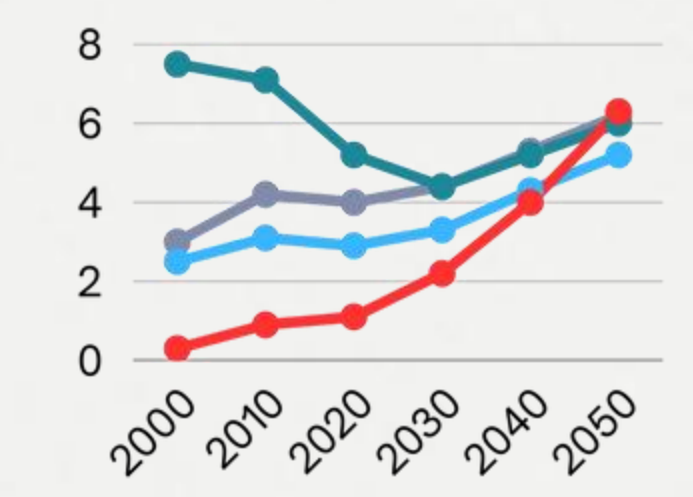
Economic catch-up (and in some cases, overtaking) is accelerating.



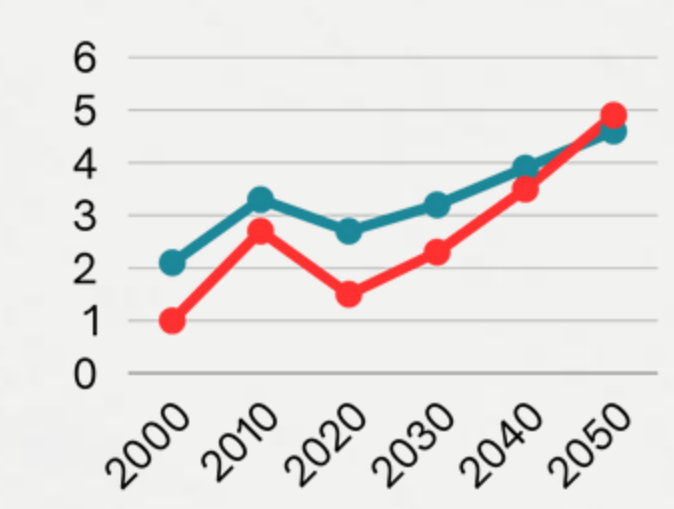
IN rises from 13% of **US** in 2020 to 60% by 2050



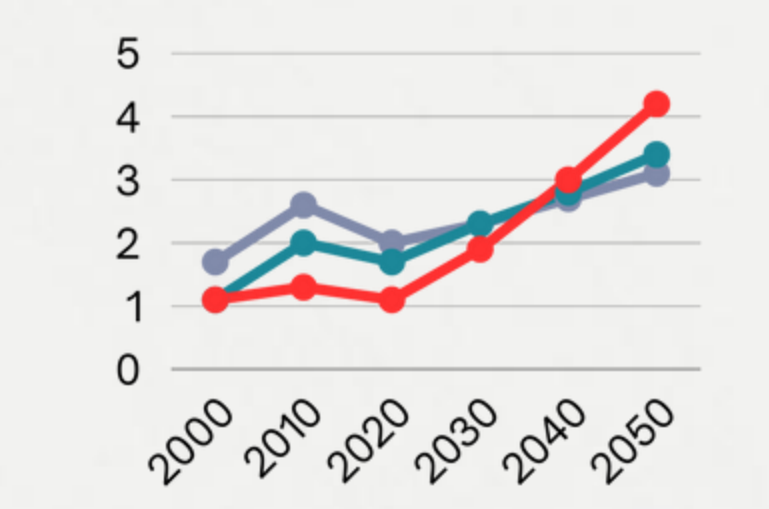
ID overtakes **JP**, **DE**, **UK** by 2050



BR overtakes **FR** by 2050

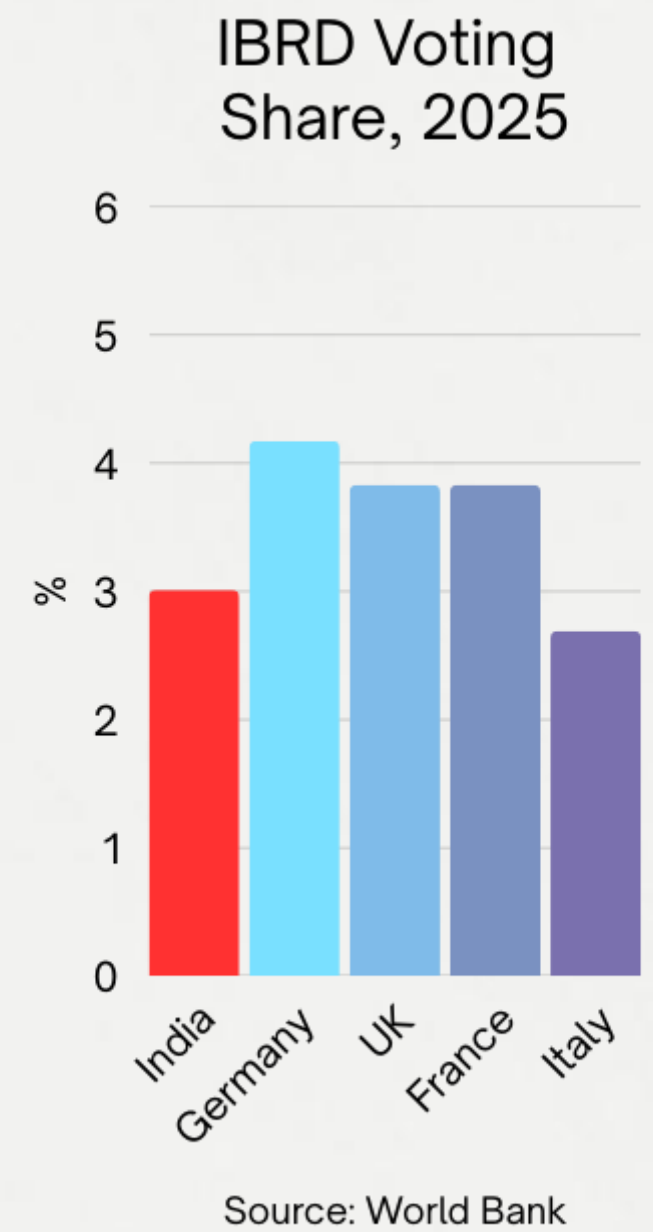
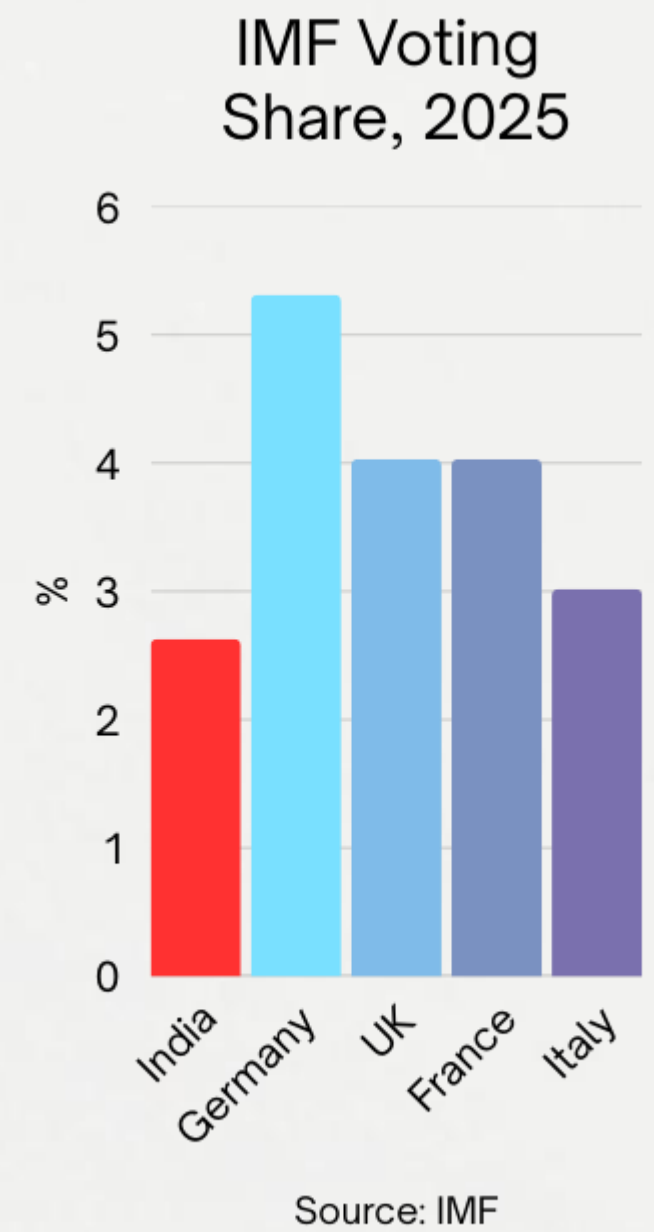
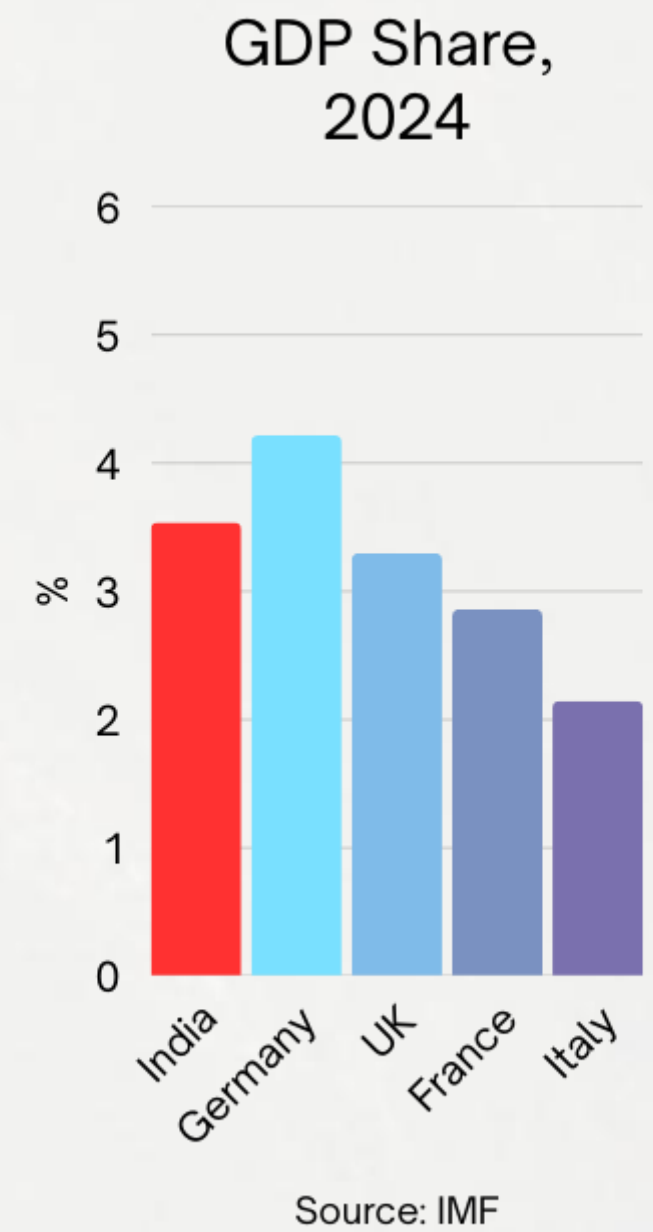
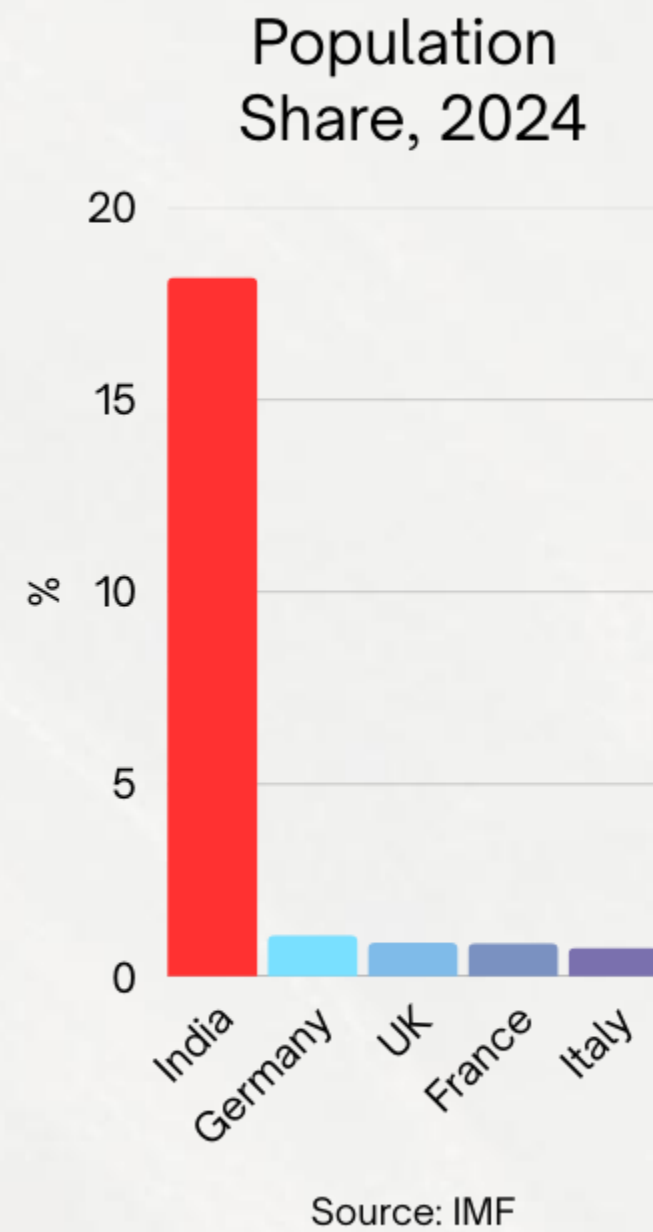


MX overtakes **CA**, **IT** by 2040




Governance

Developing countries remain under-represented in international institutions.




India, not a member of some (high-level) global institutions




United Nations Security Council

G7



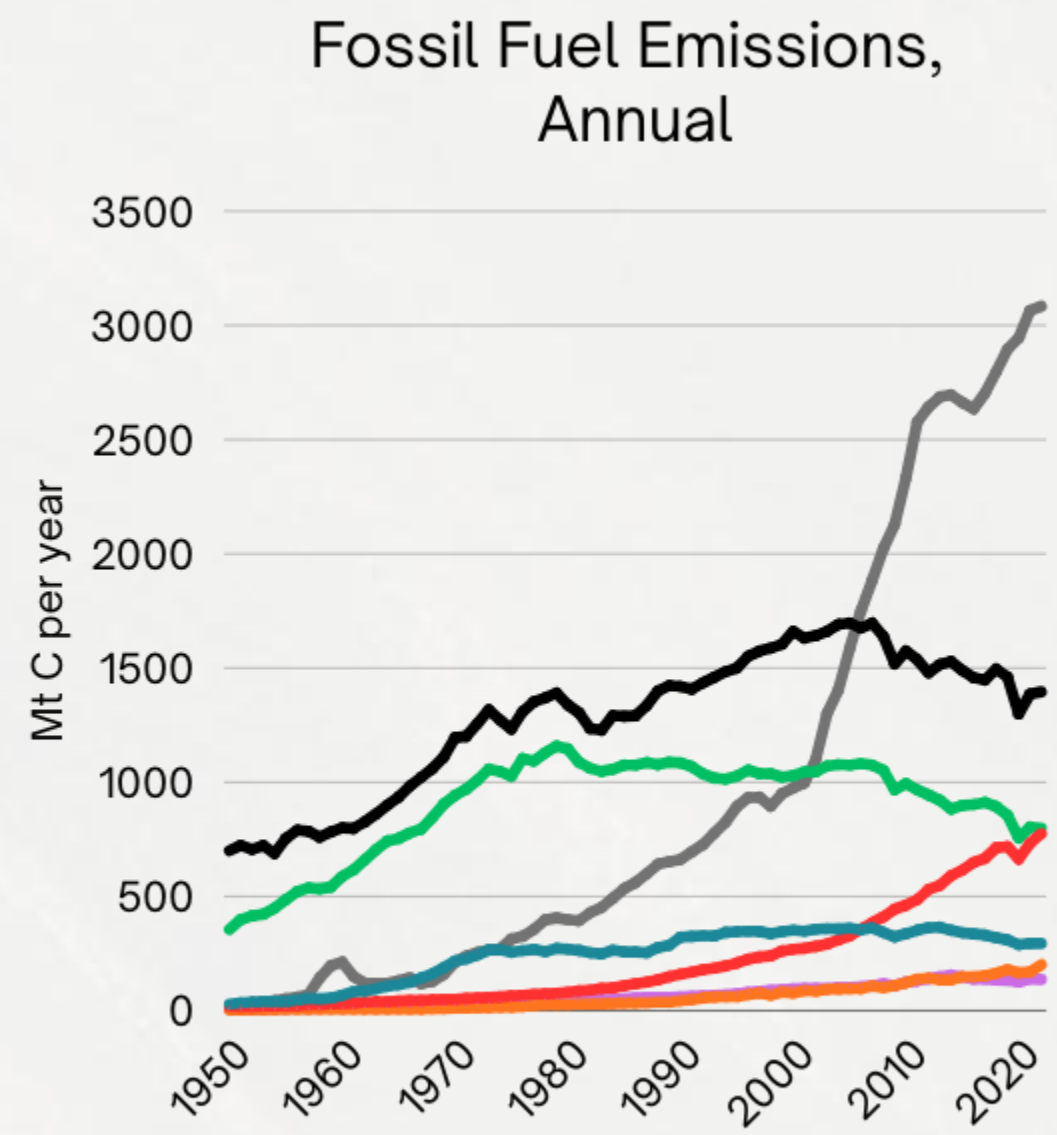
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation



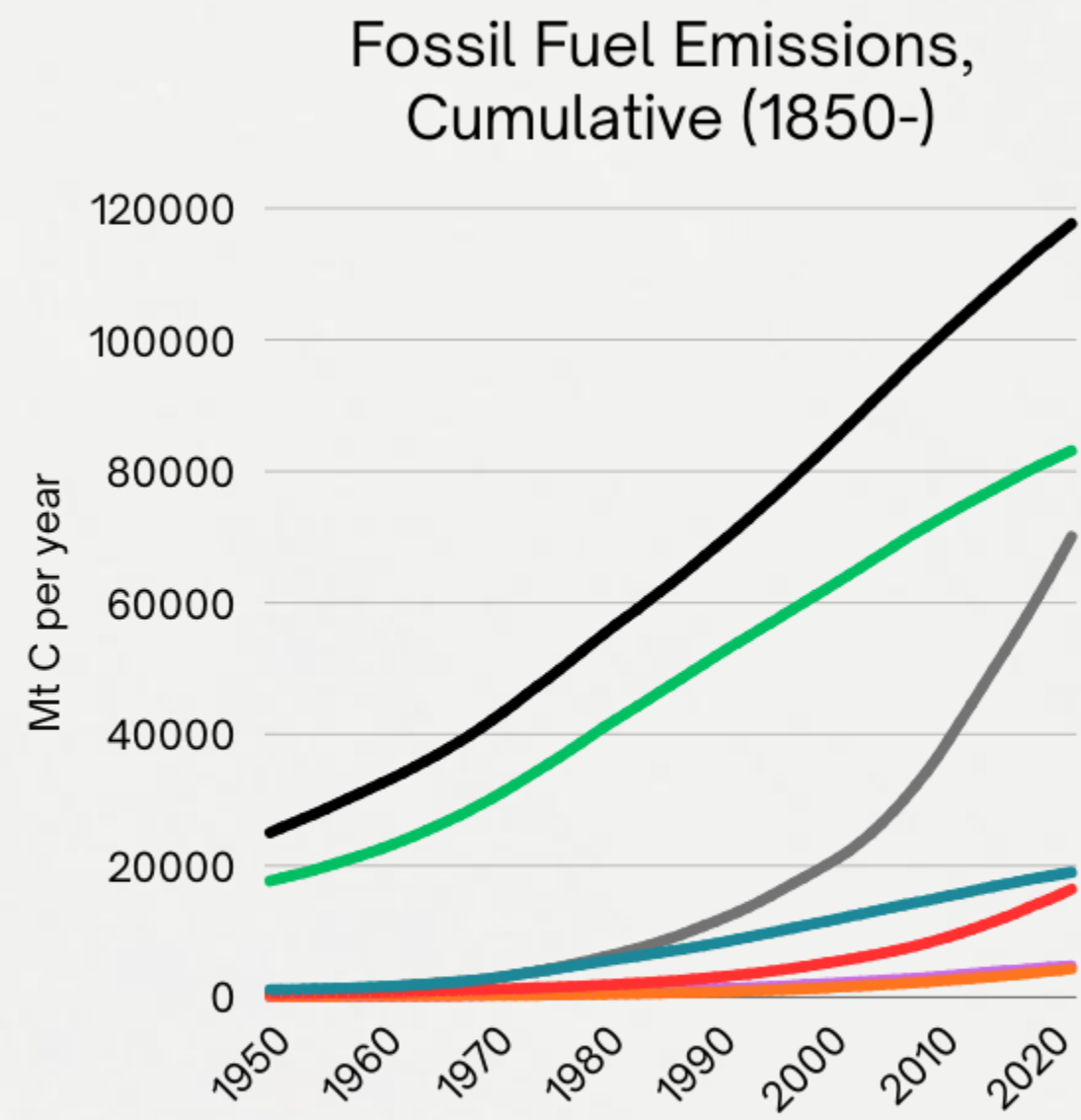
NSG Nuclear Suppliers Group

Responsibility

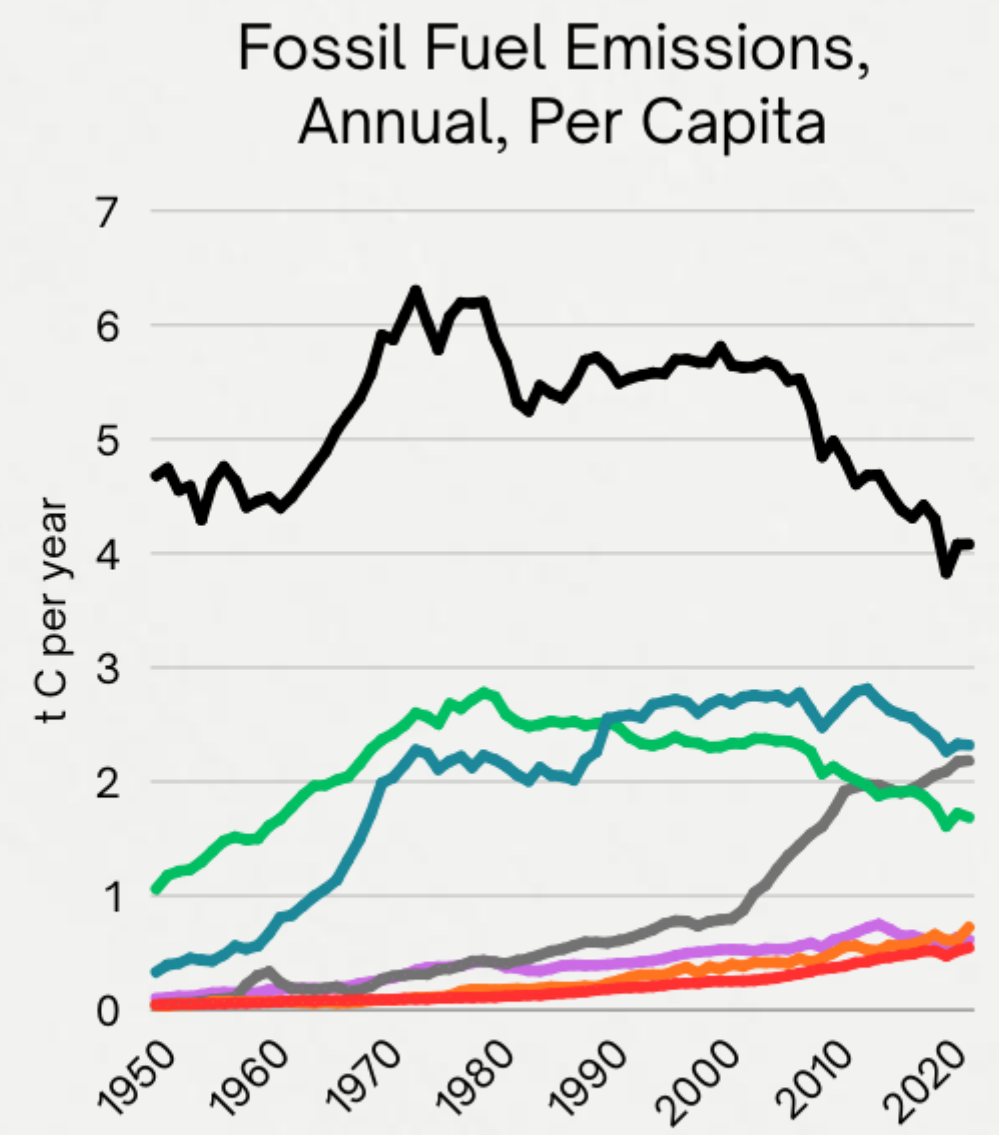
Developing countries are demanding that advanced economies shoulder greater responsibility in addressing global challenges.



Source: Global Carbon Budget



Source: Global Carbon Budget



Source: Global Carbon Budget

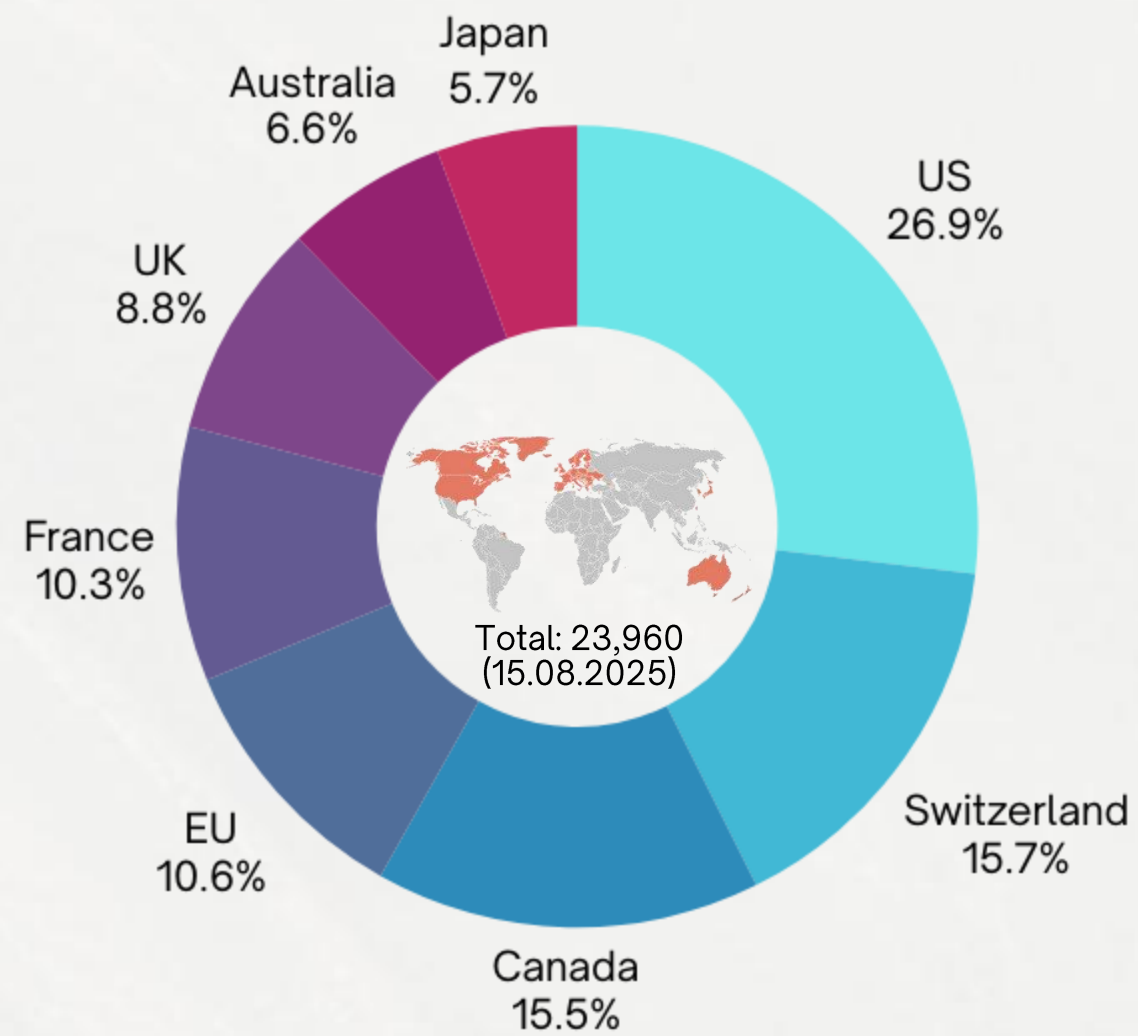
- BRA
- CHN
- EU27
- IDN
- IND
- JPN
- USA

Autonomy

(1/2)

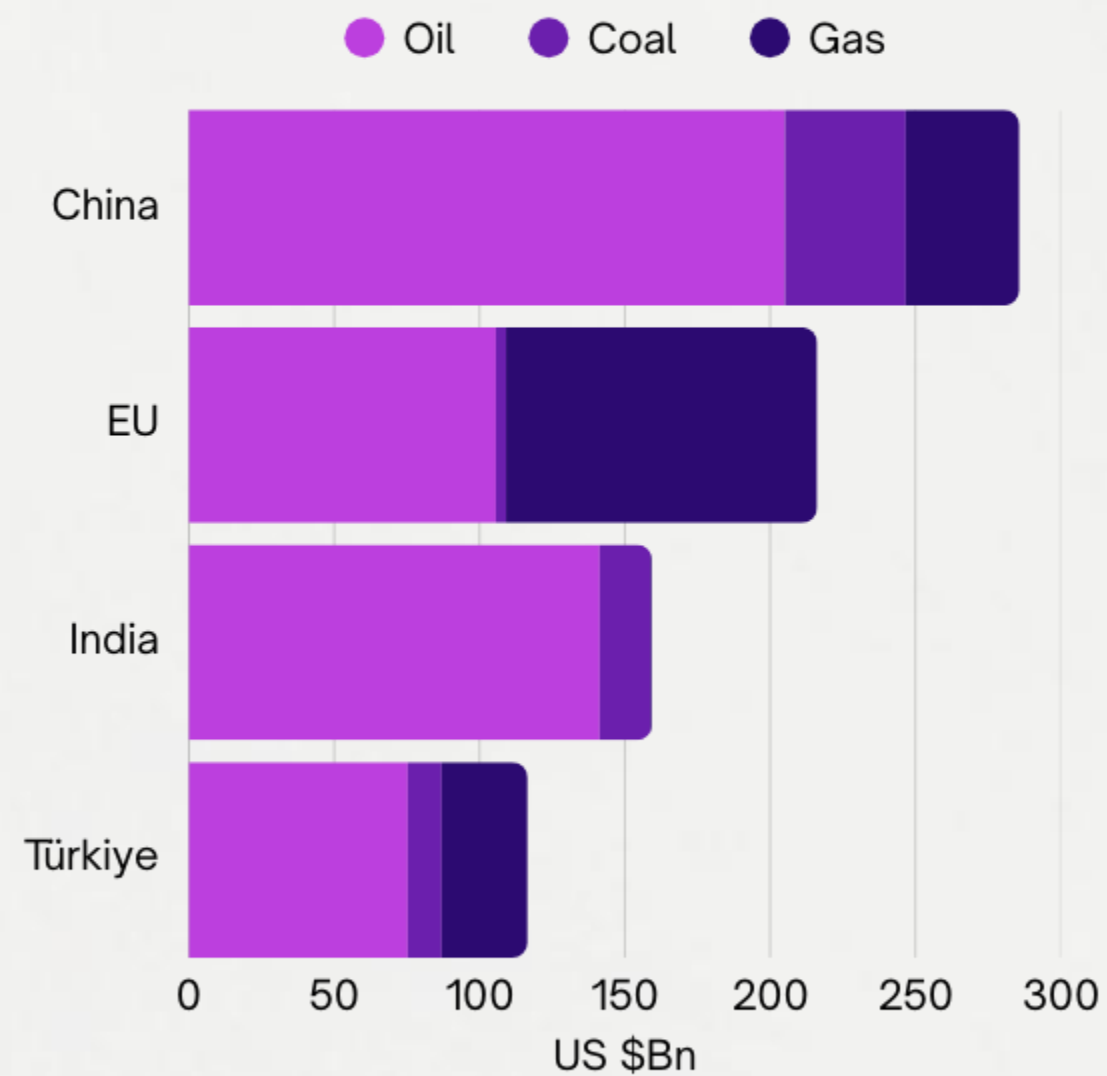
Developing countries are guarding their strategic and diplomatic autonomy.

% of Sanctions on Russia, since 22.02.22.



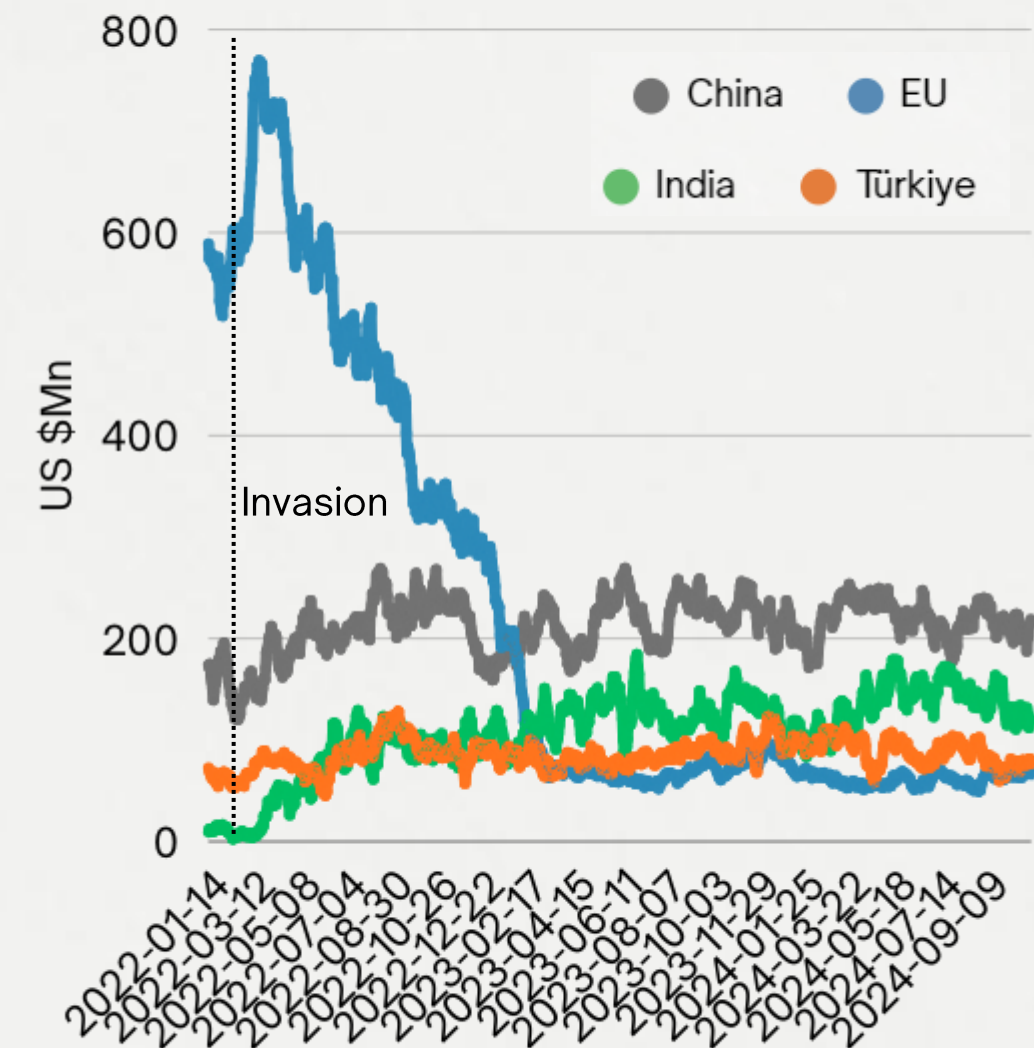
Source: Castellum.AI

Importers of Fossil Fuels from Russia, Invasion-26.11.25



Source: CREA Russia Fossil Tracker

Importers of Fossil Fuels from Russia, 1.1.22-26.11.25



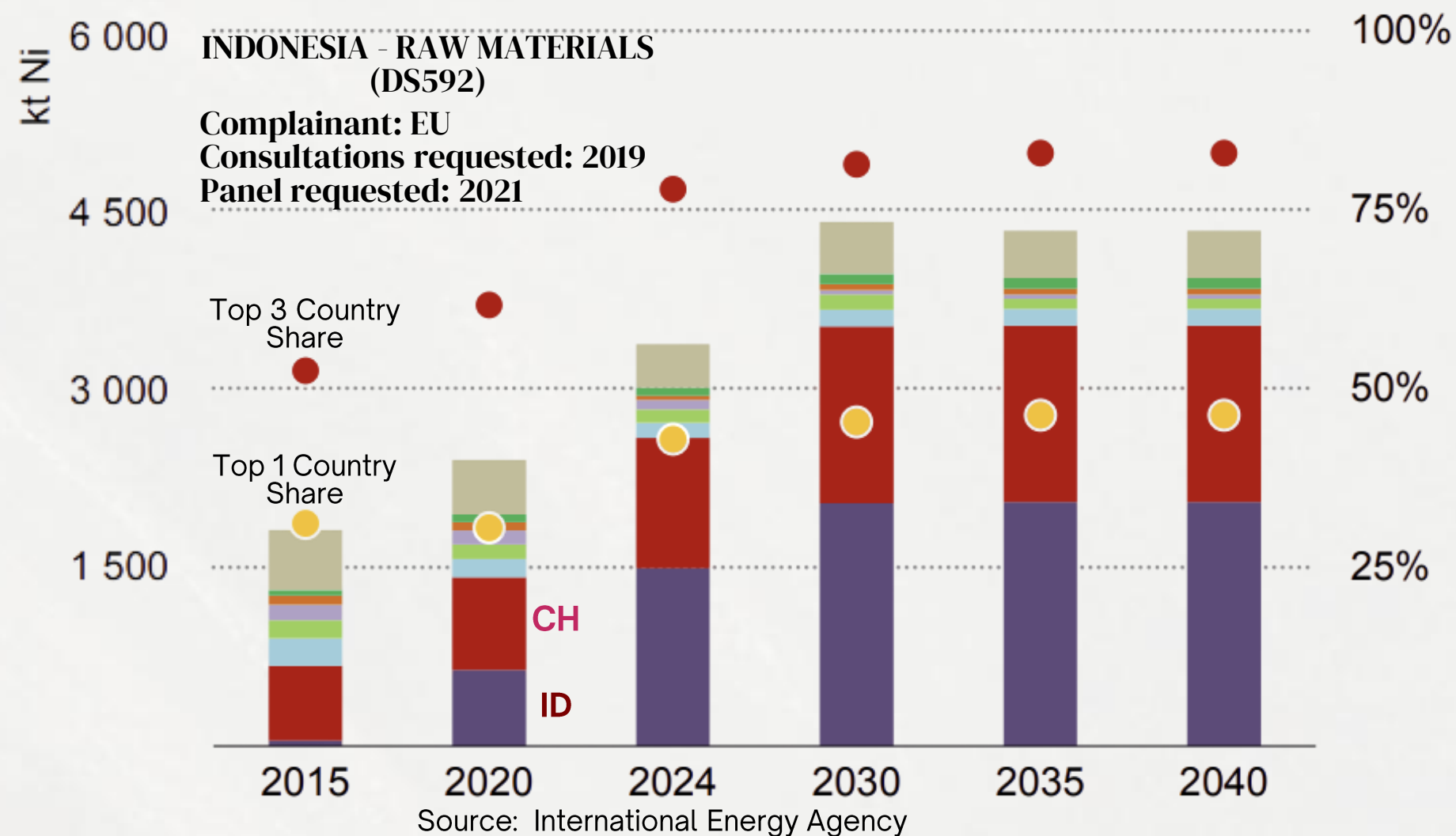
Source: CREA Russia Fossil Tracker

Autonomy

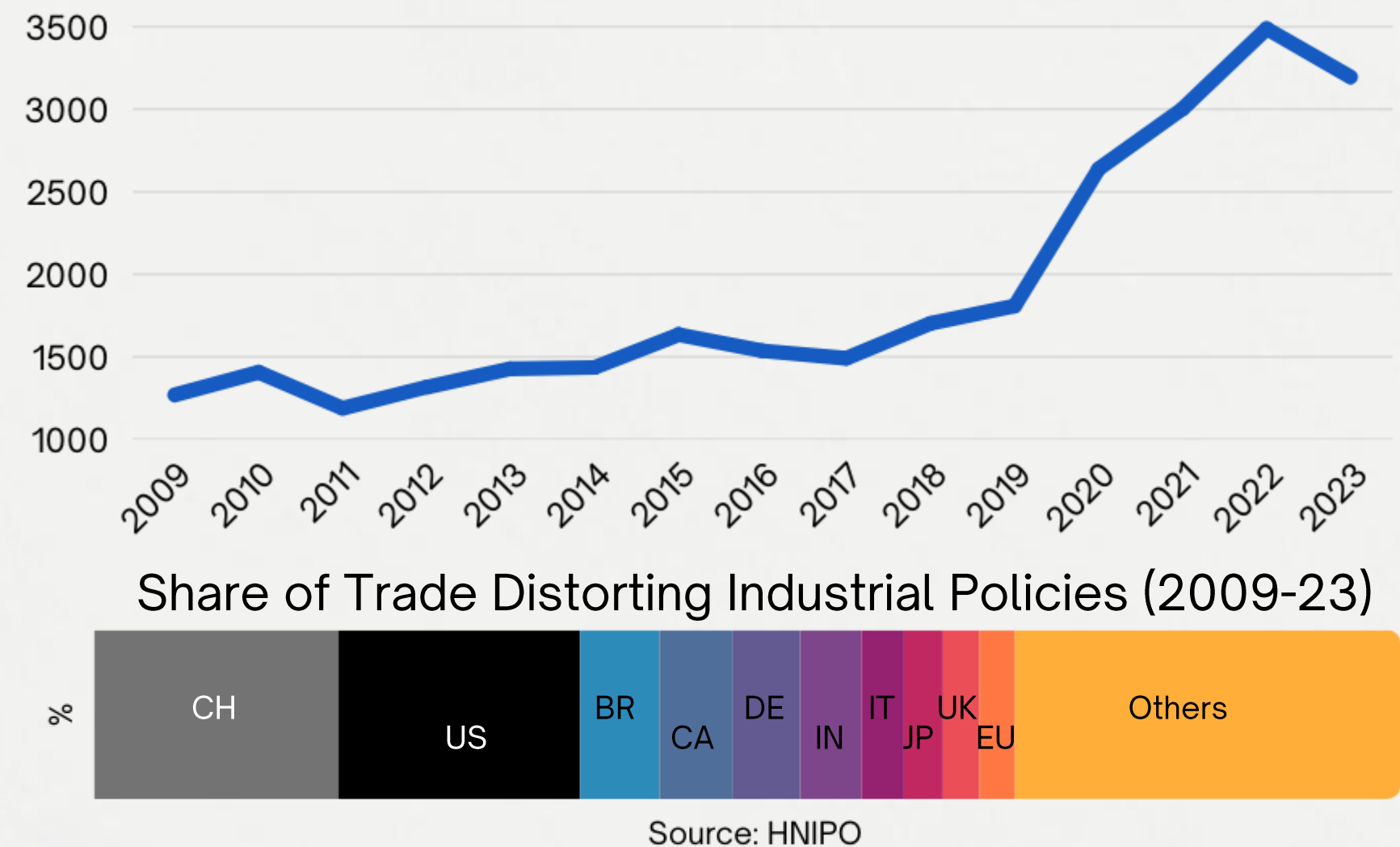
(2/2)

Developing countries see advanced economies kicking away the “industrial-policy ladder” while taking an “industrial-policy elevator.”

Refined Nickel Production and the Base Case Forecast

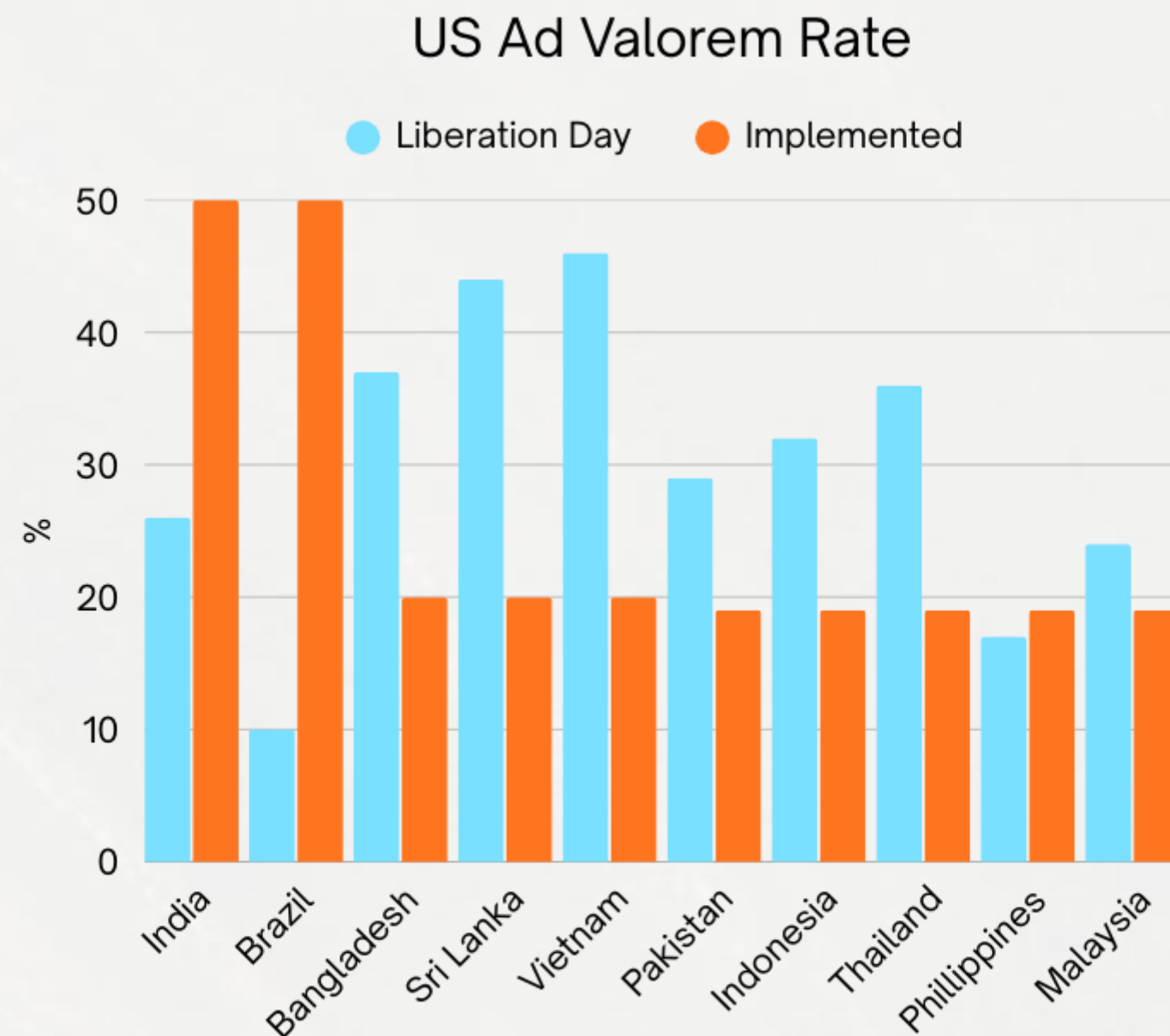


Number of Trade Distorting Industrial Policies



Tariff War

Amid the erosion of the multilateral trade regime, the U.S. has imposed a 50% tariff on India.



Source: Reed Smith; The White House



while many of our key trading partners like ... India (17 percent) ... have simple average MFN tariff rates that are significantly higher. For example, the United States imposes a 2.5 percent tariff on passenger vehicle imports ... while ... **India** (70 percent) ... impose much higher duties on the same product. ... For rice in the husk, the U.S. MFN tariff is 2.7 percent ... while **India** (80 percent) ... impose higher rates. Apples enter the United States duty-free, but not so in ... **India** (50 percent).



I find that the Government of **India** is currently directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil. Accordingly, and as consistent with applicable law, articles of **India** imported into the customs territory of the United States shall be subject to an additional ad valorem rate of duty of 25 percent.

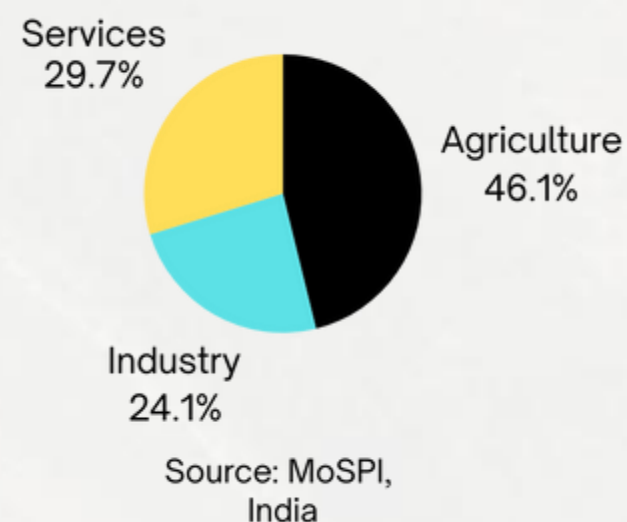
Resistance

India's resistance stems largely from domestic political-economic dynamics.

Grievances about domestic sovereignty interference

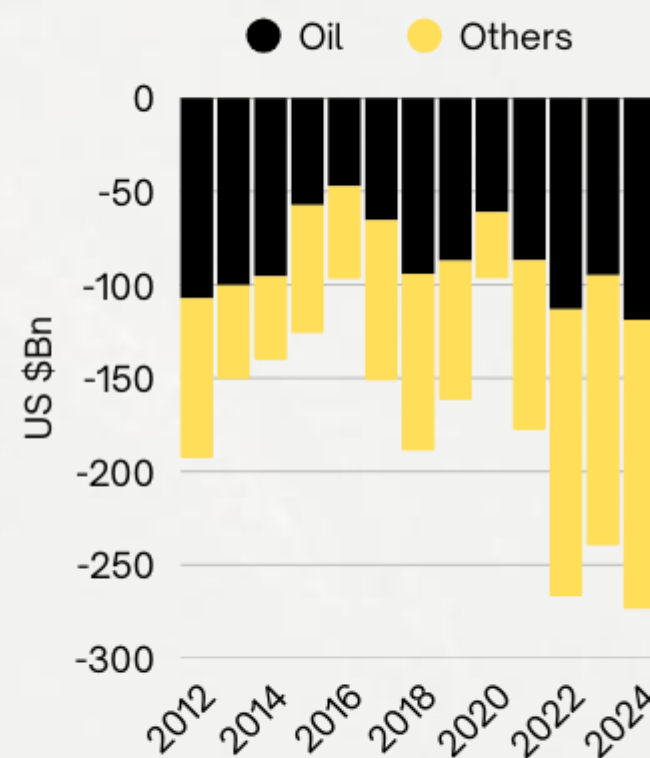
India is reluctant to open its agricultural sector, a core employer and politically sensitive domain.

Workers by sector, 2023-24



Energy drives structural trade deficits, pushing India to secure the cheapest possible oil to protect stability.

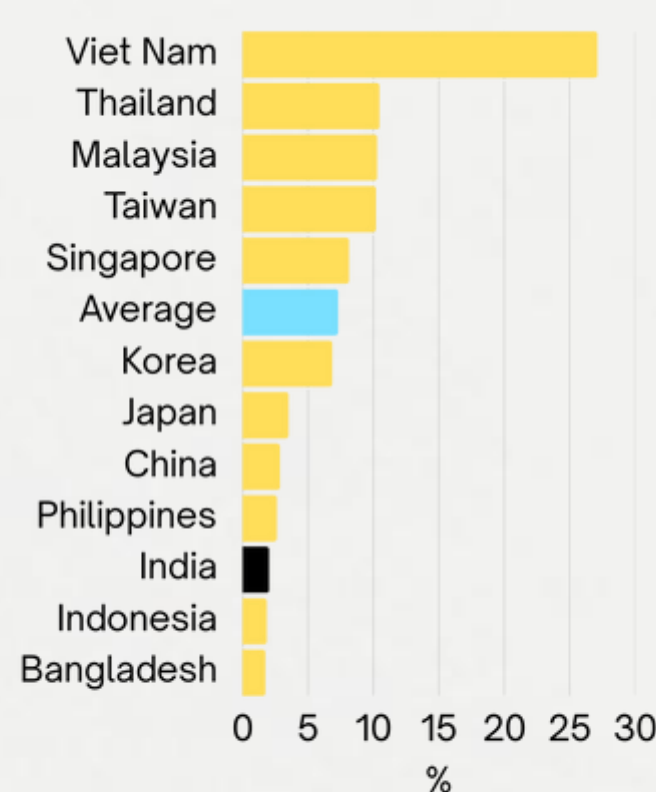
Trade Balance



Growing confidence in its economic ascent

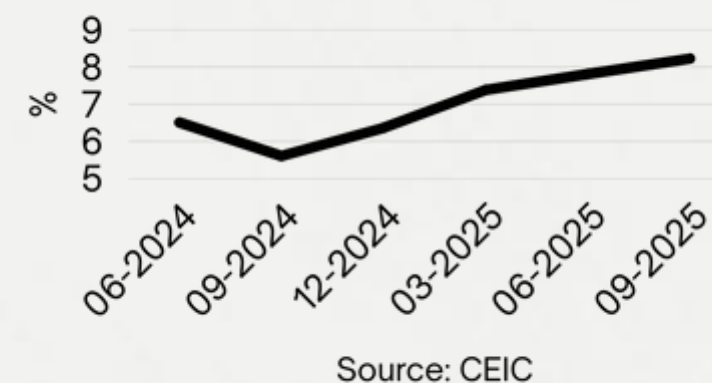
U.S. is a major export destination, but its contribution to India's GDP is modest

Exports to U.S. as % of GDP, 2024



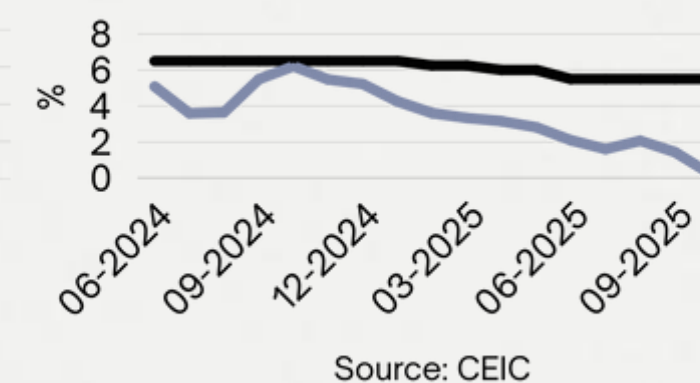
India's economy is resilient and on track to become the world's third largest.

GDP growth

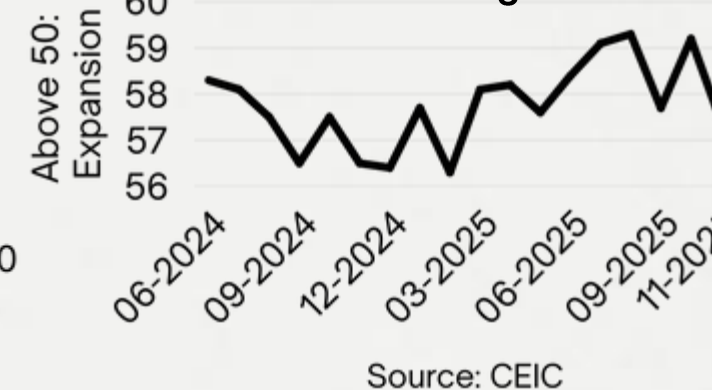


India retains ample policy space to absorb and respond to tariff shocks.

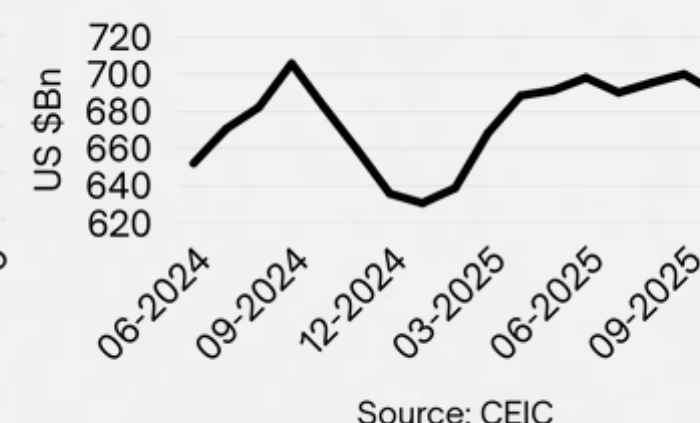
Policy Interest Rate & Inflation Rate



Purchasing Managers' Index - Manufacturing



Foreign Exchange Reserves



Response

India is improving its business environment while accelerating its multi-alignment strategy.

Domestic Reform

GST
(September, 2025)

Labor
(November, 2025)

Diversification

Japan
(August, 2025)

European Union
(September, 2025)

SCO
(September, 2025)

GST Reforms for Commerce and Trade Industry		
Sector/Products	Old GST Rate	New GST Rate
Cartons, Boxes and Cases of Corrugated/ Non-Corrugated Paper or Paper Boards	12%	5%
Paper pulp moulded trays	12%	5%
Chamois leather and composition leather with a basis of leather or leather fibre	12%	5%
Leather after tanning/crusting	12%	5%
Footwear (≤ ₹2,500 per pair)	12%	5%
Supply of job work in relation to hides, skins and leather falling under Chapter 41	12%	5%
Rice husk/glassfibre reinforced gypsum/ cement bonded particle/jute particle/ bagasse/sisal fibre boards	12%	5%
Sheets for veneering, bamboo flooring, casks, barrels, vats, tubs of wood	12%	5%
Idols (wood, stone, metals)	12%	5%
Paintings, drawings and original engravings	12%	5%
Handcrafted candles, carved wood products, handbags including pouches and purses	12%	5%
Stone art ware, stone inlay work, tableware and kitchenware of clay and terracotta	12%	5%
Glass statuettes, artware of iron, aluminium, brass/copper	12%	5%
Commercial goods vehicles (trucks, delivery vans)	28%	18%
Prepared/preserved vegetables, fruits, nuts	12%	5%
Man-made fibres (MMF)	18%	5%
Man-made yarns	12%	5%
Toys and sports goods	12%	5%

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Result of Rationalizing Labour Laws		
	29 LAWS	4 CODES
Rules	1436	351
Returns	31	Single (Electronic)
Forms	181	73
Registers	84	8
Registration	8*	Single
License	4	Single
Compounding	–	Introduced first time
Improvement Notice	–	Introduced first time

* Factories, BioCW, Contract Labour, Plantation, Motor Transport, ISMW, ESI & EPF

Source: Ministry of Labour & Employment



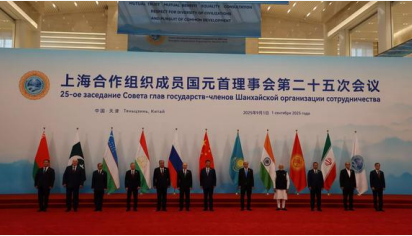
Japan-India Joint Vision for the Next Decade: Eight Directions to Steer the Special Strategic and Global Partnership

- (I) Next Generation Economic Partnership
- (II) Next Generation Economic Security Partnership
- (III) Next Generation Mobility
- (IV) Next Generation Ecological Legacies
- (V) Next Gen Technology and Innovation Partnership
- (VI) Investing in Next Gen Health
- (VII) Next Gen People-to-People Partnership
- (VIII) Next-Gen State-Prefecture Partnership



Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on a New Strategic EU-India Agenda

- Five Pillars:
- (I) Prosperity and Sustainability
 - (II) Technology and Innovation
 - (III) Security and Defence
 - (IV) Connectivity and Global Issues
 - (V) Enablers across Pillars



A discussion took place on the prospects for the development of multilateral cooperation across the full spectrum of activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the areas of politics, security, trade, investment, energy, industry, sustainable development, new technologies, international and regional agendas, as well as questions concerning the improvement of the Organization’s work. Heads of delegations put forward a number of proposals and initiatives.

Departure

As the U.S. retreats from multilateral institutions, it leaves a large vacuum in global governance.

Institutions facing U.S. withdrawal or non-cooperation

Formal exits



World Health Organization



United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Funding cuts/
review



unrwa
الوكالة
united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

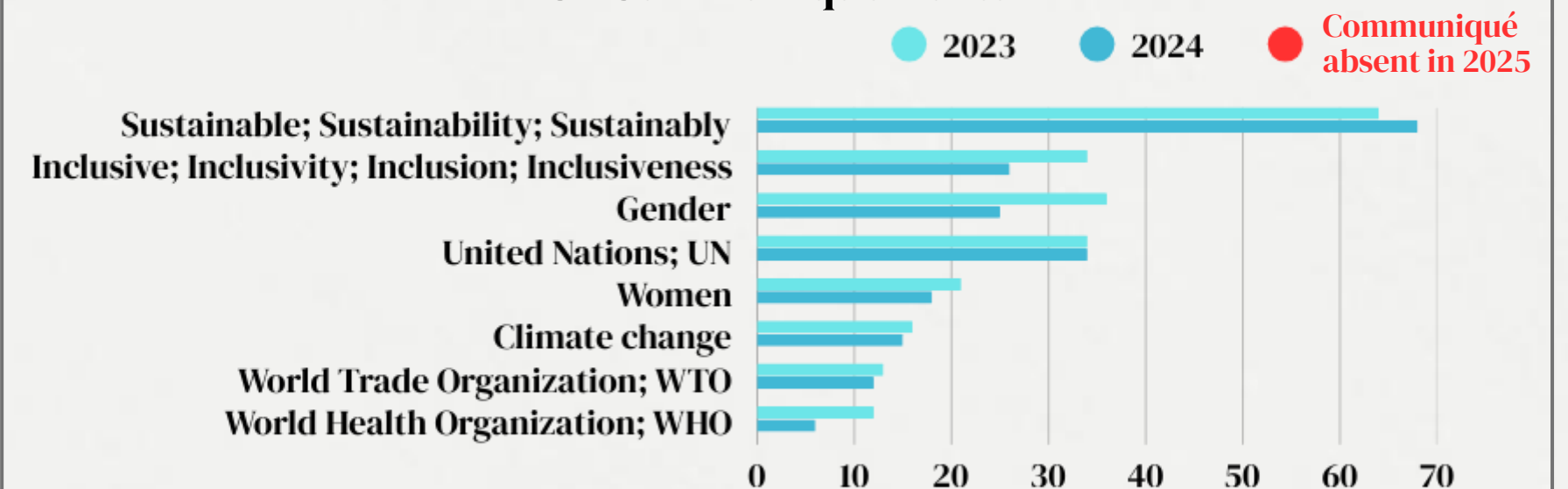
Procedural
obstruction



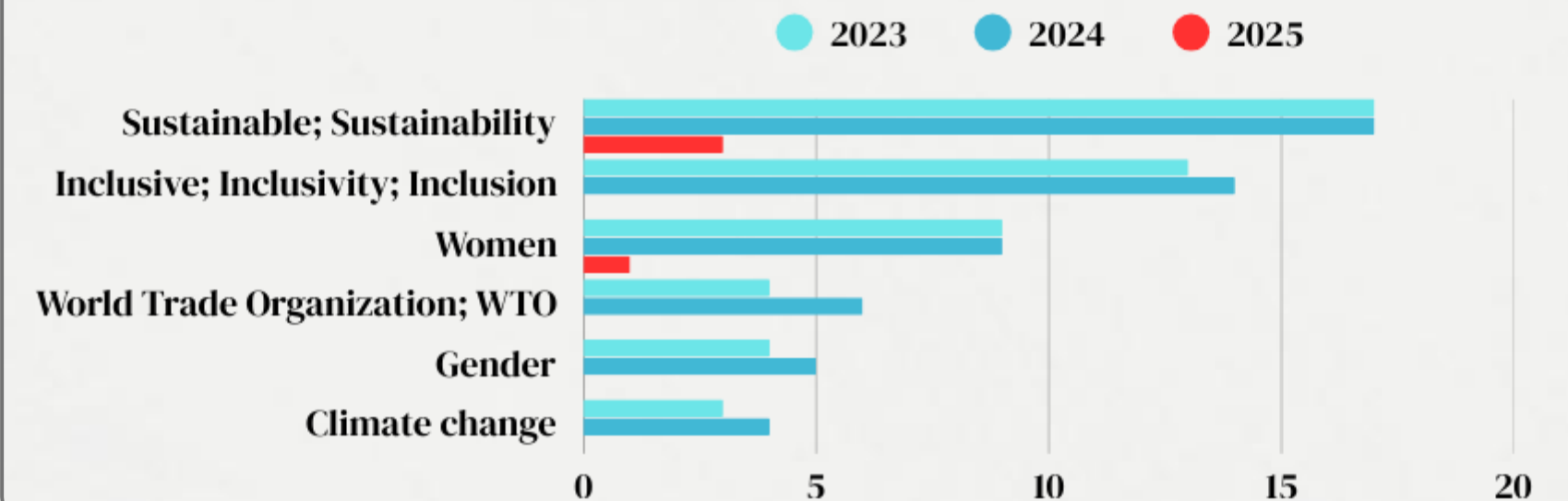
WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Keywords Frequency in...

G7 Communiqué Texts



APEC Declaration Texts



Tianjin Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (2025)

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[illegible]

BRICS

BRICS maintains its focus on multilateralism and is increasingly adopting the term “Global South.”

“Global South”
Mentioned



XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration
*BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth,
Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*
:
Partnership for Inclusive Multilateralism



XVI BRICS Summit Kazan Declaration
Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security
:
Strengthening Multilateralism For A More Just And Democratic World Order



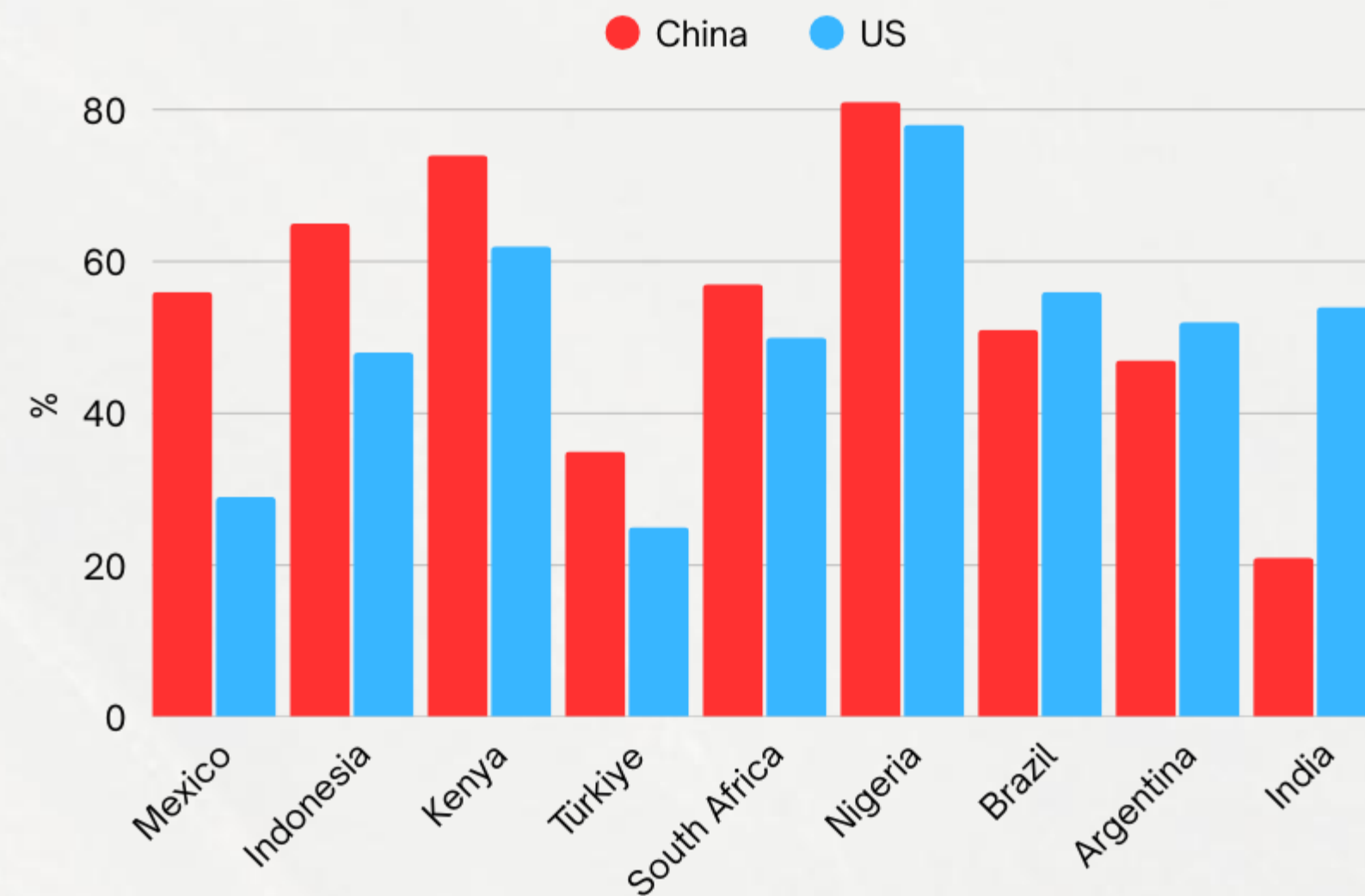
Rio de Janeiro Declaration
*Strengthening Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and
Sustainable Governance*
:
Strengthening Multilateralism and Reforming Global Governance



Global Attitudes

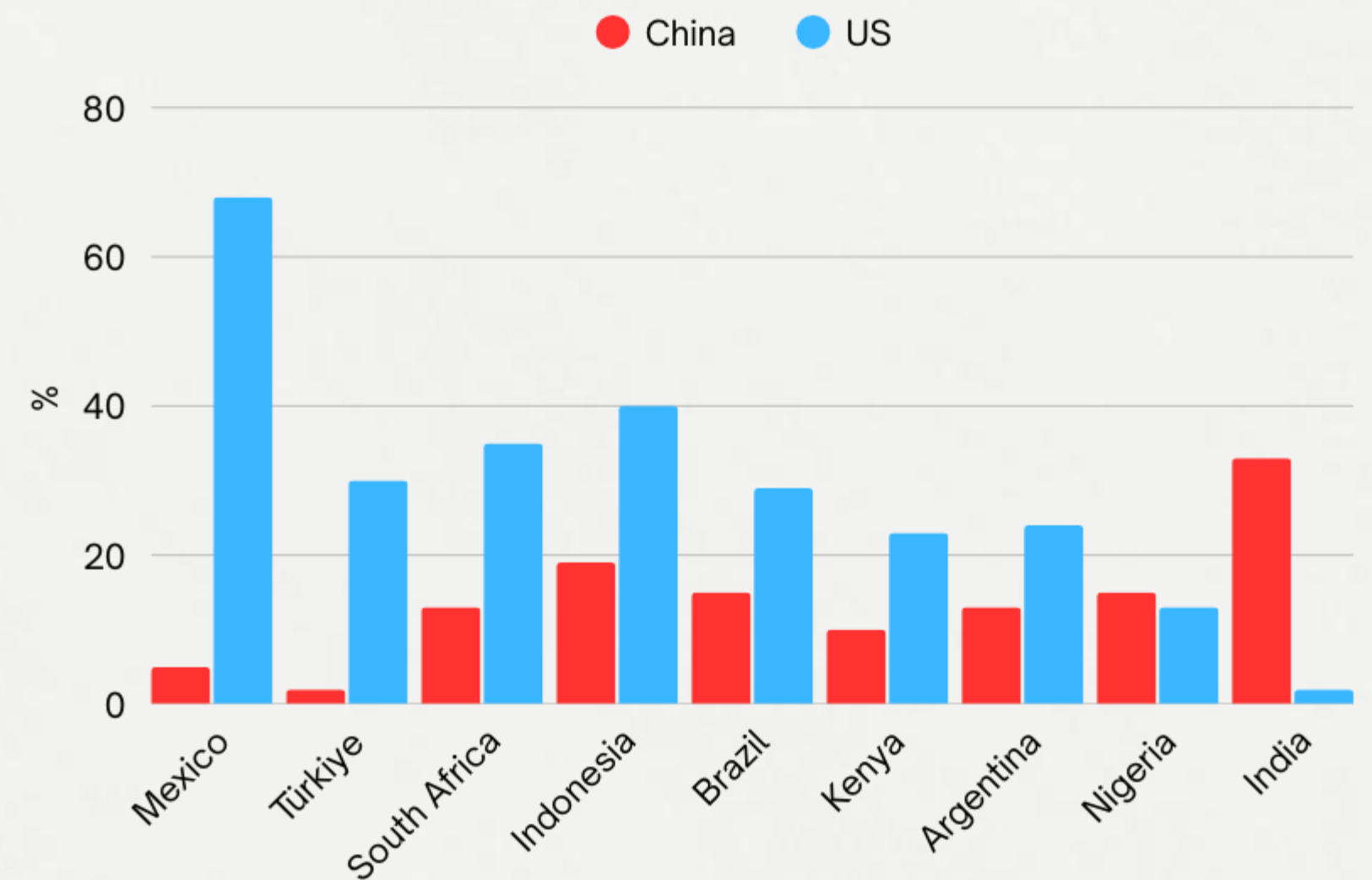
Middle-income countries are more skeptical of the U.S.

% Who Have a Favorable View of...



Source: Pew Research Spring 2025 Global Attitudes Survey

% Who Say ... is Their Country's Greatest Threat



Source: Pew Research Spring 2025 Global Attitudes Survey

Reality Check

Turning Global South rhetoric into reality will be challenging, yet the sustained weakening of multilateralism and the rise of unilateralism are creating incentives for Global South actors to push past these constraints.

Challenges:

- **Diverse strategic and diplomatic priorities**
- **Divergent views on how to reform global governance**
- **Persistent border disputes**
- **Sub-regional tensions and conflicts**
- **Limited financial capacity**

Drivers:

- **Declining trust in traditional multilateralism**
- **Slow reform of existing multilateral institutions**
- **Rising security risks driven by unilateralism**
- **Accelerating economic catch-up**
- **Growing demand for deeper South–South cooperation**