



It is with great enthusiasm that we introduce the inaugural issue of "Asia on the Horizon," a weekly newsletter dedicated to exploring the dynamic and ever-evolving geopolitical landscape of East Asia, the Asia-Pacific, and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

It won't be a traditional newsletter, but a dynamic and dedicated section of the Beyond the Horizon website, focusing on the most pressing issues and emerging trends in East Asia, the Asia-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific. As this region becomes a centre of global economic, political and security dynamics, Asia on the Horizon will provide in-depth insights and analysis to decipher the complex developments that impact both the regional and global landscape.

Through this platform, we aim to offer a unique blend of **timely news, expert analysis, strategic policy recommendations, and visually compelling data** to keep you informed and ahead of the curve. Each week, we will cover the latest shifts in alliances, economic partnerships, security developments, and technological advancements shaping the region.

As global power balances continue to shift and emerging alliances take center stage, understanding the strategic importance of Asia is more vital than ever. We invite you to journey with us as we navigate the changing tides of this pivotal region, providing you with the knowledge and foresight to stay ahead in an increasingly interconnected world.

Thank you for joining us, and welcome to the first issue of "**Asia on the Horizon.**"



1. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

This week's geopolitical landscape underscores the dynamic nature of global alliances and the increasing role of emerging powers in shaping the international order. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) continues to promote multilateralism and cooperation, emphasizing economic integration and security amidst external challenges. Meanwhile, the G7's renewed focus on Indo-Pacific security highlights the West's strategic concerns over China's assertive moves in the region. In parallel, the Quad's naval exercises demonstrate a growing commitment to maintaining a Free and Open Indo-Pacific through joint military readiness.

The BRICS XVI Summit reinforced the bloc's push for a more equitable global system, focusing on sustainable development, economic reforms, and climate action. The recent expansion of BRICS with new members signals a deliberate move to counterbalance Western influence, adding weight to the calls for a reformed international governance structure.

These developments reflect a shifting global power balance, with traditional Western powers and rising regional blocs navigating a complex web of alliances, competition, and cooperation. The coming weeks are likely to bring further clarity to these trends as geopolitical players continue to assert their interests in a rapidly evolving international landscape.

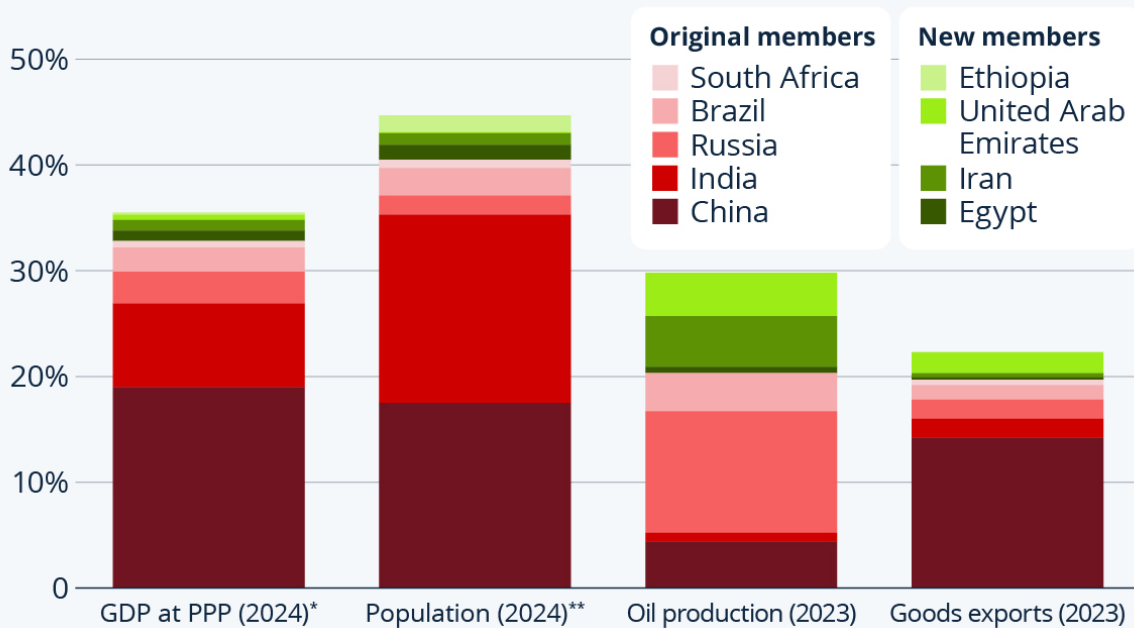
The newsletter aims to keep you informed on these critical shifts, offering insights and updates to help you stay ahead of the curve in understanding global trends and their implications. Stay tuned for more in-depth analyses, policy recommendations, and visual highlights in the coming editions.

2. STATISTICS OF THE WEEK

The expansion of BRICS, now including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE, marks a significant shift in global power dynamics. As leaders gather in Kazan for the first summit since this historic enlargement, the bloc now represents 45% of the world's population and 35% of global GDP (PPP). With increased oil production and a growing economic footprint, BRICS is positioning itself as a counterweight to Western-led institutions, advocating for a more multipolar world. Yet, China's dominant economic power within the group raises questions about its influence in shaping BRICS' future.

The Global Clout of the New BRICS

BRICS countries' share of global GDP, population, oil production and goods exports



* IMF estimates as of April 2024 ** UN estimates, medium variant

Sources: IMF, UN Population Division, Energy Institute, WTO



<https://www.statista.com/chart/33311/brics-share-of-global-gdp-and-population/>

3. MAP OF THE WEEK

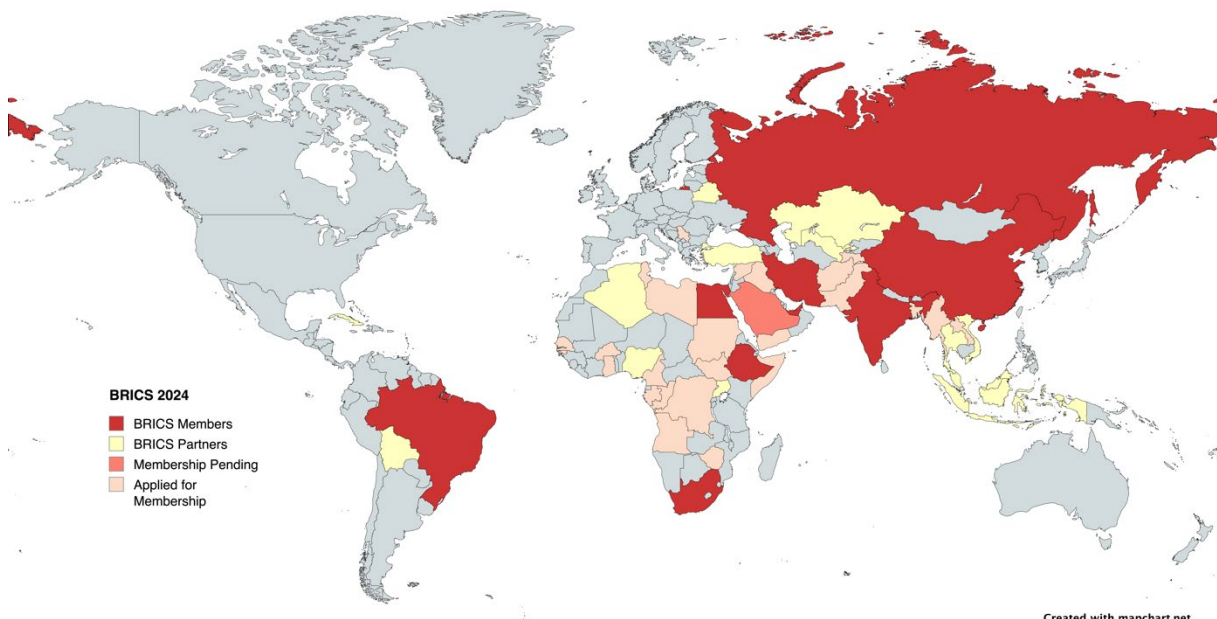
BRICS Expansion 2024

The 2024 map illustrates the significant expansion of BRICS—a coalition originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. As the organization seeks to increase its global influence, BRICS has expanded its membership, partnerships, and applications from countries across multiple continents.

This map highlights key developments:

- **New Members:** In 2024, BRICS welcomed several new members, including Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates, marking the most extensive expansion in its history. This decision reflects BRICS' aim to enhance its global footprint and include countries from diverse regions, contributing to a more multipolar international system.
- **Partnerships and Pending Memberships:** BRICS continues to foster partnerships and expand its network of cooperative states. Countries with pending membership are actively engaging with BRICS, indicating a growing interest in joining an organization seen as an alternative to Western-led institutions.
- **Applications for Future Membership:** A number of nations have formally applied for BRICS membership, showcasing the organization's attractiveness to countries seeking stronger economic and strategic ties outside traditional Western alliances.

This map provides a clear visualization of BRICS' strategic trajectory, emphasizing its growing influence in the global economy and geopolitics, as it expands its membership and partnerships to include more countries from Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. The organization's inclusive approach highlights a desire to challenge the traditional dominance of Western institutions, seeking to establish a more balanced global order.



4. PHOTO OF THE WEEK

A new family photo of the BRICS countries

President of Russia Vladimir Putin during a group photo ceremony for the heads of delegation at the 16th BRICS summit in Kazan. From left: Prime Minister of Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed, President of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa, President of China Xi Jinping. From right: Foreign Minister of Brazil Mauro Vieira, President of Iran Masoud Pezeshkian, President of the UAE Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.



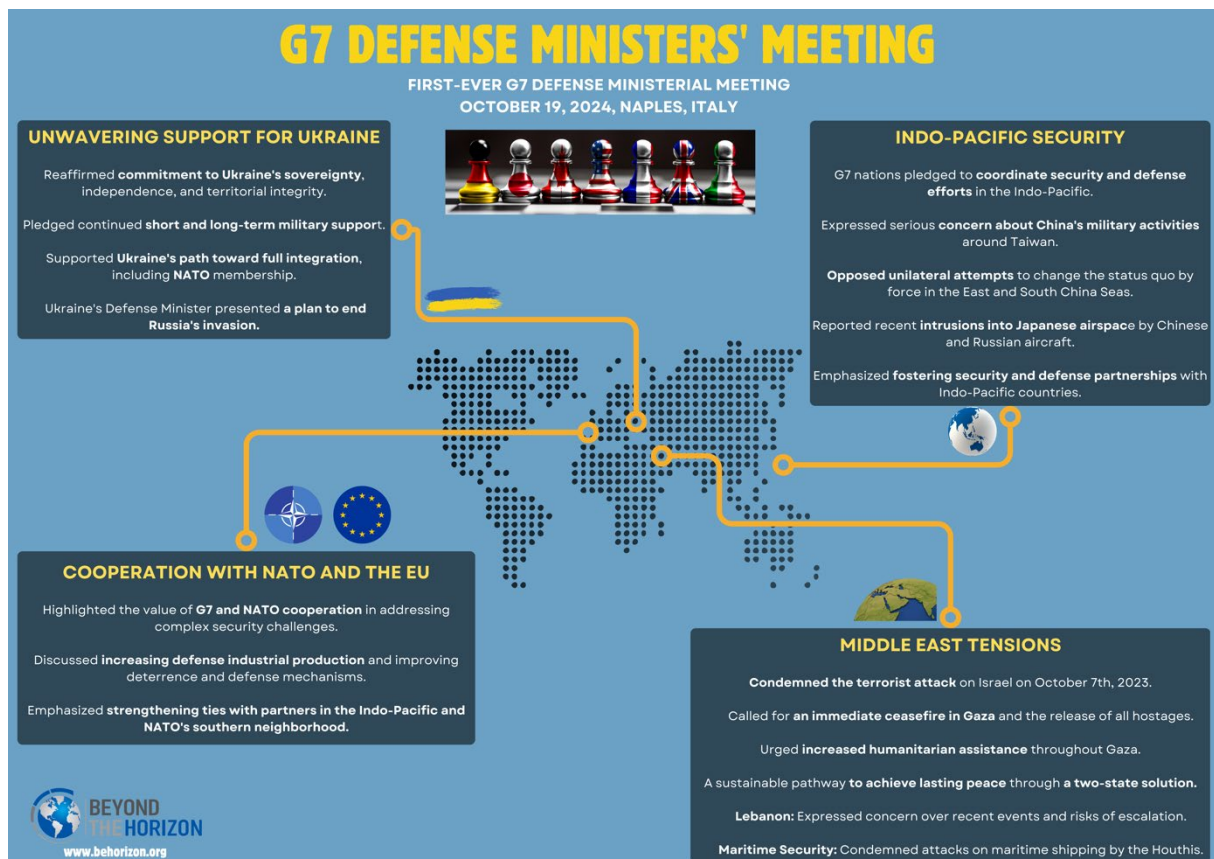
Sergey Bobylev/ brics-russia2024.ru host photo agency

https://photo-summit.brics-russia2024.ru/en/media/8790039.html?context=list&list_sid=list_351011332

5. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

This week's infographic showcases highlights from the inaugural G7 Defense Ministers' Meeting in Naples on October 19, 2024. Key themes include:

- Support for Ukraine with a focus on military aid and NATO integration.
- Indo-Pacific Security concerns, particularly regarding China's actions in the region.
- Collaboration with NATO and the EU to enhance defense capabilities.
- Middle East Tensions with emphasis on peace, humanitarian aid, and regional stability.



6. REGIONAL ALLIANCES

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – A Beacon of Multilateralism

At the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), held in Islamabad on October 16, 2024, the SCO reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism and regional cooperation amidst a shifting global order. The meeting was marked by a joint communique underscoring the need for deeper collaboration on key issues such as economic integration, security cooperation, and sustainable development among its 10 formal members, including China, Russia, and India.

Key Takeaways from the 23rd Meeting:

Economic Cooperation: The SCO continues to foster strong economic ties, with trade between China and other SCO member states reaching nearly \$200 billion in the first five months of 2024. Initiatives such as the "SCO+" platform aim to address challenges like climate change, energy crises, and development gaps through multilateral cooperation.

Security and Stability: As the region faces rising security tensions, particularly from terrorism and external geopolitical threats, the SCO is reinforcing its security mechanisms. Leaders reiterated their commitment to fighting terrorism and proposed the creation of a universal security center for addressing regional risks.

The Shanghai Spirit: The SCO remains rooted in the principles of mutual trust, equality, and cooperation, often referred to as the Shanghai Spirit. This spirit has attracted growing interest from other nations, with more countries seeking partnership with the organization, highlighting its expanding influence.

China's Role: As China assumes the SCO's rotating presidency for 2024-2025, it has prioritized action-oriented cooperation aimed at enhancing economic development and security integration across member states. The focus on pragmatic measures reflects China's growing influence within the SCO, further positioning the organization as a key multilateral actor.

Why It Matters:

The SCO's unique approach to regional cooperation—balancing development needs, security challenges, and geopolitical concerns—offers a model for countries in the Global South. Its inclusive and non-confrontational stance contrasts with traditional Western-led alliances, providing a vital platform for developing nations to advance their interests on the global stage.

In a world marked by increasing geopolitical divisions, the SCO stands as a beacon of multilateralism, promoting peace, stability, and shared prosperity across Eurasia.

7. ANALYSIS

Strengthening Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific – A Closer Look at Malabar 2024

The recent **Malabar 2024** naval exercise involving the Quad nations—India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S.—highlights a deepening commitment to maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. The latest edition, held from October 8 to 18 off the coast of Visakhapatnam, is considered the most comprehensive to date. Originally a bilateral drill between India and the U.S., Malabar has evolved into a key multilateral event aimed at addressing shared maritime challenges and enhancing regional security.

Focus of Malabar 2024

This year's exercise concentrated on **surface, sub-surface, and air warfare**, with a particular emphasis on anti-submarine warfare (ASW), a critical domain given China's expanding naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean. Major assets, such as Australia's **HMAS Stuart**, Japan's **JS Ariake**, and the U.S. **USS Dewey**, participated in a range of advanced maneuvers alongside Indian warships and aircraft. The operations included **surface weapon firings, air defense drills, and ASW exercises**, demonstrating the increasing complexity and scope of Malabar's maritime strategies.

Strategic Implications

Malabar 2024 underscores the Quad's strategic focus on **countering China's growing influence** in the Indo-Pacific. The emphasis on ASW and high-level training in maritime interdiction operations reflects the Quad's priority to maintain stability in key sea lanes, crucial for global trade. This exercise not only reinforces the Quad's interoperability but also serves as a deterrent against any potential threats in the region, promoting a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

G7's Strategic Focus on Indo-Pacific Security

The recent G7 defense ministerial meeting highlighted a growing commitment to Indo-Pacific security amid an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. The meeting underscored the need for a unified approach to counter rising regional tensions, particularly concerning China's expanding influence and strategic alliances. The G7's efforts are reflective of a broader desire to establish a cohesive and rules-based international order in a region marked by competing interests and power dynamics.

Regional Partnerships and Defense Cooperation

The G7's renewed emphasis on regional partnerships reveals a recognition that effective security in the Indo-Pacific requires cooperation with nations that share similar concerns about stability. The focus has been on **deepening military and strategic ties** with countries like India, Japan, and Australia, which play pivotal roles in maintaining a balance of power in the region. These alliances are not only about countering China's growing military presence but also about reinforcing collective security structures that uphold the rule of law.

The importance of interoperability and mutual trust has been a recurring theme, particularly in the context of joint military exercises like Malabar, which involve complex operations

across air, sea, and undersea domains. Such drills highlight the Quad nations' commitment to enhancing their readiness and coordination, signaling a united front in response to regional threats.

Maritime Security and Freedom of Navigation

A key area of focus for the G7 is ensuring maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. The protection of critical sea lanes—such as those in the South China Sea—is essential for global trade and stability. China's militarization of disputed territories in the region poses a direct challenge to the international rules-based order, prompting the G7 to prioritize efforts that safeguard **freedom of navigation**.

This maritime strategy is not only about monitoring and deterrence but also about upholding the legal framework set by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The G7's emphasis on this legal foundation underscores its commitment to resolving disputes peacefully, even as tensions remain high around key maritime corridors.

Undersea Threats and Anti-Submarine Warfare

The Indo-Pacific's underwater domain has become an increasingly contested space, with concerns over Chinese submarine activity shaping regional defense strategies. Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) has emerged as a critical focus for the G7, reflecting fears that unchecked undersea capabilities could alter the regional balance of power. The emphasis on advanced detection technologies and joint ASW exercises underscores a strategic priority to dominate the undersea domain, particularly in the South China Sea and the broader Indian Ocean region.

The collective approach to undersea domain awareness not only strengthens individual nations' security but also contributes to a more cohesive defense posture among allied states. This is particularly relevant as the Indo-Pacific continues to be a focal point for strategic competition between major powers.

Economic and Strategic Resilience in the Face of China's Influence

While security cooperation remains central, the G7's strategic focus extends to the economic sphere, particularly in countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China's investments in infrastructure projects across the Indo-Pacific have raised concerns about economic dependencies and geopolitical leverage. The G7's engagement in the region includes offering **sustainable and transparent alternatives** to Chinese investments, aiming to provide Indo-Pacific nations with viable options that do not come with political strings attached.

The drive to enhance regional economic resilience aligns with broader efforts to limit China's economic and strategic influence, reinforcing the G7's vision of a rules-based international order that prioritizes fairness, transparency, and sustainability.

Information Integrity and the Challenge of Disinformation

The G7's focus is not limited to traditional military and economic domains. The influence of disinformation and propaganda has become a significant concern, particularly with China and Russia using information campaigns to undermine democratic governance and sow discord. The G7's strategic emphasis on countering disinformation reflects the broader understanding that the information domain is a critical battleground in the Indo-Pacific.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, involving cooperation with regional partners to strengthen media ecosystems and bolster information integrity. This comprehensive strategy aims to ensure that the public remains informed and resilient to external influence, thereby safeguarding the political and social stability of Indo-Pacific nations.

Balancing Firmness and Dialogue with China

The G7's strategy in the Indo-Pacific reflects a dual approach of firmness and dialogue. While the coalition remains resolute in countering assertive actions that threaten regional stability, it also recognizes the necessity of maintaining open communication channels with Beijing. This balanced approach seeks to avoid unnecessary escalation while asserting the importance of adhering to international norms and peaceful dispute resolution.

Dialogue with China, particularly through multilateral platforms, remains a crucial component of the G7's strategy. By engaging China constructively, the G7 aims to manage competition while exploring avenues for cooperation on shared challenges such as climate change, trade, and regional security. This dual strategy underscores the complexity of navigating a relationship that is both competitive and interdependent, requiring a nuanced and calibrated approach.

Conclusion

The G7's engagement in the Indo-Pacific reflects a strategic evolution, adapting to the region's multifaceted challenges while prioritizing cooperation, economic resilience, and adherence to a rules-based international order. By focusing on partnerships, maritime security, undersea threats, economic alternatives, and information integrity, the G7 is positioning itself as a key player in shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific. This comprehensive approach not only addresses immediate security concerns but also lays the foundation for long-term stability and prosperity in one of the most strategically significant regions of the world.

