

Contemporary Geopolitical Dynamics and Global Security: Projections for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT: As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and interconnected, new challenges defined by the vagaries of diplomacy, leadership, and politics, as well as trade, warfare, and other contending geopolitics within national and international contexts, continue to emerge. Therefore, this study provides a detailed analysis of key evolving geopolitical dynamics and makes projections for the future, focusing on their implications for sustainable development. It examines the shifting power dynamics among major global actors, delineating the critical security imperatives that demand international attention, while exploring the intricate interconnections between these phenomena. The study further assesses the roles played by various international actors, including states, international organisations, and non-state entities, in shaping and responding to these dynamics, thereby determining their impacts on global stability for the attainment of sustainable development. To provide a multifaceted understanding of states' behaviours and global interactions, the study applied established theories, including realism, liberalism, and constructivism, in arriving at its recommendations on global security and sustainability. The need for humanity to adopt a global survivability collective (GSC) approach was advocated to foster a harmonious and sustainable development strategy. The adoption of the GSC concept recognises that the crises and dynamics of current geopolitics transcend borders and require a unified approach by all stakeholders for the sustainable development of our world. Overall, the study provides actionable insights for leaders, policymakers, academics and other stakeholders on methodologies of addressing the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical environment to ensure a more sustainable global future.

KEYWORDS: Geopolitics, Geopolitical Dynamics, Security, Global Security, Sustainable Development, Projections, Contemporary, International Relations and Organisations, Global Governance

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the world's geopolitics have undergone profound shifts, which have continued to shape the global landscape. These shifts in geopolitics are dynamic and constantly evolving. Hence, the global governance system has gradually been transformed from a unipolar order towards a more complex and diffuse multipolar configuration (Abdulle, 2024). This diffusion of power extends beyond mere redistribution among states and has continued to intensify competition across multiple domains, thereby complicating and challenging global security imperatives. Of great significance is the emergence of leaders in several countries, especially between 2024 and 2025, whose opinions and outlooks upstage traditional global dynamics and beliefs (London Business School, 2020). The leadership uncertainties have significantly unsettled the global socioeconomics and introduced considerable political and policy uncertainty, alongside persistent geopolitical rivalries that are projected to reshape international interactions (Buryk et al, 2025).

Global dynamics are also challenged by occurrences influenced by Russia and the United States of America (US). These two permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council are among those entrusted by the UN Charter with the primary responsibility of responding to threats to international peace and security (Maulana, 2024). The decision of Russia to wage war against Ukraine and the US's unconditional and continued support of Israel in its war against Palestine, despite recorded atrocities, have eroded the credibility of the UN and its powers to enforce global peace in the face of disobedience by world powers and/or permanent security council members (Aljazeera, 2025; Ramesh, 2025). The outcomes of the wars and conflicts in Iraq, Syria, other parts of Asia and Africa, especially the Sahel, including the ousting of Gaddafi from Libya, have combined to change the global geopolitical map (Ramesh, 2025; Ugbo, 2025; UN News, 2025). There are several breaches of agreed-upon international laws on many of the contentious issues in the emerging dynamics that have eroded trust in the capacity of the UN (and particularly the

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Security Council) and other international organisations to broker peace, stability, and security in the world (Maulana, 2025; Ugbo, 2025; UN News, 2025). These inconsistencies have significantly undermined the legitimacy of the rules and leadership roles of global governance.

Issues associated with trade liberalisation, climate change, technological advancements, and the influence of non-state actors (NSAs) are key to defining the contemporary geopolitical landscape. The increasing interdependence and interconnectedness of the world, including issues and challenges such as trade, warfare, politics, diplomacy, and national leadership, have continued to define the geopolitics of the world. Indeed, the competition for natural resources, access to global markets, and technological dominance are becoming the primary drivers of conflicts and wars worldwide (Ramesh, 2025). Furthermore, shifts in economic and military power from countries in the West to those in the East, especially as China becomes a significant global power, would inevitably influence the future balance of power (Weng, 2023). The increasingly disruptive and unpredictable nature of the US, especially since the emergence of the President Trump administration, and its western allies, has reinvigorated the desires of liberal democrats to navigate towards China and Russia as political alternatives. Alternatively, neoliberal governments in the developing world have experienced both economic growth and upheavals under various forms of state capitalism. Governance in developed democracies has experienced the emergence of new right-wing political movements that challenge outward-oriented policies (London Business School, 2020). These occurrences and challenges have been attributed to shifts towards nationalism and protectionism. Consequently, the expansion of the BRICS to BRICS+ and other global institutions has emerged to challenge the norms. The summation of these occurrences on global geopolitics has continued to shape the dynamics of security and the sustainable development of our world.

Based on the foregoing, this study aims to provide an analysis of this evolving landscape, with a focus on projections for the immediate future and their implications for sustainable development. It will examine the shifting power dynamics among major global actors, delineate the critical security imperatives that demand international attention, and explore the intricate interconnections between these phenomena. Furthermore, the study will assess the roles played by various international actors, including states, international organisations, and non-state entities, in shaping and responding to these dynamics, particularly concerning their impacts on global stability and sustainable development. To provide a multifaceted understanding of states' behaviours and global interactions, the analysis will draw upon established political science theories such as realism, which emphasizes power and self-interest in an anarchic system; liberalism, which highlights cooperation, interdependence, and the role of institutions; and constructivism, which focuses on the significance of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping state behaviour and global security issues (Chukwu, 2024; Granieri, 2015). By focusing on the immediate future, this analysis seeks to identify actionable insights for stakeholders grappling with the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical environment to adopt in pursuit of a more sustainable global future.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CLARIFICATIONS

GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS

The term geopolitics was first defined by Frederick Ratzel as political geography. It was later expanded by Rudolf Kjellen to Geographical Politics, abbreviated as Geopolitics (Flint, 2021). Geopolitics is the study of how geography influences politics and international relations. It examines the interplay between geographical factors such as locations, resources, and boundaries and the political behaviours of states and other actors on the global stage (Granieri, 2015). Geopolitics considers how these factors shape a nation's foreign policy, its relationship with other countries and its overall role in the global order. The dynamics of geopolitics, also referred to as geopolitical dynamics, connotes the interplay of geographical factors with political, economic, and social elements that shape the relationships and power balances between different countries and groups on a global scale. These dynamics involve the struggle for resources, influence, and control over territory, and their influences on international relations, trade and security (Flint, 2021).

Because geopolitical dynamics are constantly evolving, those of our contemporary times would reflect issues that determine key elements such as global power balance and impact on governance, interactions and alliances that affect international cooperation, conflict and competition. Economic factors are also critical to contemporary geopolitical dynamics, as these influence global trade and all issues around it. Other significant aspects of the geopolitical dynamics are historical antecedents, national ideologies and values, climate change and technological developments (Riegl & Landovský, 2013). These issues are germane to determining global peace and security (disputes and their resolutions), competitions over influence, resources, territories, as well as the sustainable development of our world.

GLOBAL SECURITY

The nature of contemporary threat matrices and their multifaceted complexities have made the idea of global security germane to human sustainability and development. The 21st-century threats matrix consists of mutating versions of cyberattacks, insurgency, terrorism, misuse of technology advancements, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (Aja, 2023; Ugbo, 2025). These threats could be classified as conventional and non-conventional. Global security concept encompasses the strategies, policies, and frameworks designed to maintain international peace, stability, and safety. Global security involves the gamut of activities implemented to address transnational threats while fostering cooperation among state and non-state actors in the attainment of harmony and peaceful coexistence (Ugbo, 2025).

Global security is synonymous with the principles of collective security; it involves efforts and initiatives designed to address interconnected and contending issues to facilitate a safer and more stable world. The UN was established as an initiative to ensure global peace and security through peacekeeping operations, conflict resolution, and humanitarian assistance (Sinha & Sinha, 2020; Sabit, 2023). The preamble of the UN Charter emphasised the need to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and it has organs that are maintained to address challenges to global peace and security (Sabit, 2023). Chapter VII of the UN Charter outlines the Security Council's powers to take enforcement measures, including military action, against aggressors in maintaining and enforcing global peace and security (Ugbo, 2025). In addition to protocols implemented and undertaken by the UN, there are other international treaties and agreements on several other geopolitical issues that are aimed at ensuring collective understanding in the promotion of global peace and security (Sangroula, 2023). NSAs, especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs) other than the UN, are major drivers of global security efforts through advocacy on issues affecting the well-being of mankind, such as human rights, humanitarian aid, trade and environmental protection (Sangroula, 2023; Ugbo, 2025). The works of NGOs continue to shape and shift the dynamics of geopolitics for the sustainable development of mankind.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development entails implementing a developmental process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Fischer et al., 2023; nextias.com, 2025). It involves balancing economic growth, social progress and environmental protection. In essence, sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, workable and resilient future for people and the planet Earth. It is about using available resources wisely and promoting practices that ensure a healthy planet and a prosperous society for everyone, now and in the future (Kulik, 2025). Therefore, sustainable development must be carried out to meet the present needs of humanity by improving living standards, providing access to essential resources such as food, water and energy. It also provides avenues to create opportunities for economic advancements of individuals, organisations and nations.

Sustainable development mandates the implementation of measures geared towards protecting the environment by encouraging the reduction of pollution, conservation of natural resources, mitigation of climate change, and preservation of biodiversity (Fischer et al., 2023). In promoting social progress, sustainable development promotes measures that ensure equal opportunities, access to education and healthcare, and foster inclusive communities. While ensuring the balancing of competing interests, the long-term perspective of sustainable development is about making decisions today with a clear understanding of their potential impacts on future generations.

The concept of sustainable development is often associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN in 2015 (Kulik, 2025). The SDGs are a set of 17 interconnected goals designed to achieve a more sustainable future for all by 2030. SDGs address the global challenges faced by the world and include those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The 17 Goals are designed to leave no one behind and have milestones to gauge progress towards their attainment by 2030 (Kulik, 2025; nextias.com, 2025). In the context of this paper, it would be necessary to state that the actions and inactions of the key stakeholders, leaders and people of today would impact either positively or negatively on the survival of future generations and our world.

In a nutshell, sustainable development entails living responsibly to protect and enhance the survivability of future generations, the ecosystem and all of our world. This requirement entails what could be referred to as global survivability collective (GSC). GSC is a concept being advocated by this paper, which describes humanity's collective desires for the protection of our offspring and biodiversity, prevention of harmful practices to our environment, avoidance of atrocious tendencies and crimes and the preservation of our world for the benefit of this generation and future generations. The collective, GSC, refers to the avoidance of indiscriminate consumption of resources without due consideration for future generations; the avoidance of practices that contribute to climate change and irresponsible actions that are harmful to our collective security, as well as anything capable of bringing danger to humanity, our world, and our survival. Thus, GSC calls for collective action by all stakeholders and humanity on

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security, trade, technological development, agriculture, environmental issues, and all our common concerns for the effective sustenance of our world, benefiting this generation and future generations.

METHODOLOGY

This study set out to discuss and evaluate the complexities inherent in the geopolitical dynamics of today's world as well as global security imperatives and their implications for sustainable development. To accomplish an in-depth understanding of these issues, this study adopted a qualitative approach while exploring available literature and write-ups on the subject. This approach was chosen for its ability to capture the nuances and complexities of international geopolitics and global security dynamics. Data were sourced from news media, various research results and previous studies that were still relevant to fully explain the importance of the study. Therefore, processed data were harvested from academic publications, newspapers and magazines, online and media reportage from reputable sources and journal articles. Data collected were analysed to identify patterns, trends, and relationships leading to informed conclusions and recommendations for a peaceful and sustainable world.

THE EVOLVING GLOBAL POWER LANDSCAPE

The international system is decisively shifting away from a unipolar structure to one characterised by the presence of multiple influential poles. Scholars and diplomats have frequently identified the US, Russia, China, and India as current or potential superpowers while not undermining the economic significance of Germany and the United Kingdom (Abdulle, 2024; Chukwu, 2024; Ugbo, 2025; World Superpowers, 2025). The evolving dynamics fundamentally diffuse and redefine international relations, ushering in some form of competition for control of international affairs and global dominance (Chukwu, 2024). This competition, sometimes referred to as 'great power competition,' extends beyond traditional military might and encompasses issues related to economic influence, technological dominance, and the shaping of ideological narratives (Ugbo, 2025). Indeed, the US, in its National Defence Strategy, noted that its focus would be shifted to competition with China and Russia, bearing the contending central strategic reality (US DOD, 2022). The US wants to maintain its dominance as the undisputed global superpower; hence, for 2024, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was US\$28.78 trillion, and its military expenditure surpassed the combined spending of the next nine highest-spending countries (Siampani, 2024). This is huge, but this fame is not without vulnerabilities, mostly due to internal political divisions that can impact its global standing. The emergence of Donald Trump as president in 2025 has introduced substantial uncertainty regarding the US's foreign policy, trade relations, and its commitment to international agreements (Londono & Beth, 2025). Thus, there have been accelerated shifts away from established multilateral frameworks. The policy direction and posture of the Trump administration in the US introduces a paradigm that tends to speak of the emergence of the strongman syndrome in global geopolitical dynamics. The strongman syndrome would threaten the global balance and could throw up policies and strategies driven by the nuances of individuals to the detriment of global peace, security and collective bargaining; these could undermine sustainable development.

China is recognised as a formidable potential superpower, with projections signifying it may surpass the US as the world's largest economy before 2030. Two significant strategic policies have combined to propel China's standing in the competition for relevance; these are the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) and 'Made in China 2025' (MIC2025) policy (Rabeya, 2023). These roadmaps have become the cornerstone of China's ambitions for technological self-reliance and global manufacturing leadership. The BRI has ensured China's inroads into over 150 countries since 2013, while the MIC2025 policy launched in 2015 targets high-tech sectors such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), telecommunications, and semiconductors, backed by substantial state funding and incentives. As of 2024, these strategic roadmaps have largely succeeded in achieving their set objectives by enhancing China's domestic content goals and establishing its global leadership in several critical technologies, including high-speed rail, solar panels, and electric vehicles (Simonov, 2025; Namakula, 2025). China has the potential to continue to decide and play key roles in global commerce and economic growth. The disputes around the South China Sea and those associated with the status of Taiwan would continue to define policies within and about China. In summary, the BRI and MIC2025 have largely succeeded and provided China with the impetus and financial power to venture into several areas that would continue to influence global dynamics.

Russia is also a potential candidate for the superpower status. Russia has prioritised cooperation with the 'world majority' and the 'Global South' as a key component of its foreign policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2024; Stent, 2024). The objective of this policy is to solidify Russia's influence, thereby expanding its range beyond Europe and Eurocentric issues. Some scholars and public analysts view Russia as constantly opposing the US (Chukwu, 2024; Stent, 2024; Ugbo, 2025). These views are underscored by Russia's relationship with countries with adverse or tense relationships with the US and allies, as well as its stands on Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. Hence, Russia has robust relationships with most countries the US has termed rogue, such as North Korea, Iran, African countries under military regimes, China and many others, as exemplified by the BRICS + countries (Stent, 2024). These alliances and relationships are considered moves designed to

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counter the US's global influence. Again, the strongman syndrome of the current administration completely undermines the conclusion of any viable analysis. This is because President Trump, being the strongman of the US, could unilaterally determine the country's relationship with Russia, as was the case recently when President Putin was invited to Alaska for peace talks on the Russia-Ukraine crisis despite the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court and opposition by some of the US's allies over the composition of the talks (New York Times, 2025; wionews, 2025). Russia's quest for global relevance and survival amid NATO's hostility would continue to bring forth new alliances and shape its policies in the foreseeable future. This would have consequential impacts on global geopolitical dynamics, given the huge resources and military might of Russia.

Likewise, India, due to its fast-growing economy, is projected to emerge as a global superpower by 2050. India employs a multi-alignment strategy, skilfully balancing its relationships with all nations, especially the powerful ones like the US, China and Russia, while constantly maintaining its strategic autonomy (Stent, 2024). This approach includes seeking diversified partnerships, notably with African and Latin American nations, to bolster its global influence and safeguard its national interests (Siampani, 2024). A significant driver of the projected emergence of India as a superpower is its huge population, which is the largest for any nation globally (Hertog et al., 2023). The huge population of India has made India a destination of choice for manufacturing, commerce and technology, especially ICT. India's relevance in these spheres would continue to be decisive in the global geopolitics and ensure its place as one of the drivers of future dynamics of global affairs.

The European Union (EU) faces considerable pressure from high energy prices, intense competitive pressures from China and the US, and significant fiscal constraints. Most European countries had to grapple with the challenge of adapting to global economic realities, as they were unable to get assured resources from their erstwhile colonies (Buryk et al, 2025). This scenario is most applicable to France, whose African colonies have gradually embraced the defence of their sovereignty by reneging on long-standing agreements to propel nationalists' ideologies (Ogbonna et al., 2023). A situation that has left them vulnerable; hence, other alliances are being negotiated.

The situation with the EU and developments in China, Russia, India and the global South supports a shift towards a multipolar international system. This does not merely represent a redistribution of power but fundamentally redefines international relations as an era of intense great power competition. This implies a more complex interplay where multiple states vie for influence, leading to a broader scope of competition beyond military might, encompassing economic and technological spheres. An important development is the increasing tendency of policymakers to stress policies designed to ensure their economic competitiveness and sovereignty. This involves expanding trade protectionism and implementing industrial policies. This indicates a fundamental shift in globalisation's trajectory, where economic policies are increasingly becoming instruments in geopolitical rivalries. This move towards economic self-sufficiency, often manifested through tariffs and subsidies, is actively rewiring global trade flows and challenging established trade norms. These outcomes have triggered significant shifts in international engagement, potentially undermining multilateral cooperation and existing alliances. The US's unprecedented tariff hike on goods from over 150 countries in August 2025 shows the effect of unstable domestic economic and political trends as well as the increasing shifts towards protectionism. These occurrences could reshape the global economic order, moving away from interconnectedness towards more insulated, competitive blocs.

Table 1: Comparative Global Power Dynamics

Power	Status (2025)	Key Economic Indicator (2025 GDP)	Military Spending and Capability	Strategic focus	Key Challenges
United States	Present Superpower	US\$28.78 trillion	Dominant; greater than the next 9 countries combined	Global leadership, technological edge, deterrence	Internal political division and foreign policy uncertainty
China	Potential Superpower	Projected to overtake the US in the 2020s	Growing military capabilities, nuclear	Technological self-reliance (MIC2025), global manufacturing leadership, market capture	Technological dependencies, US competition

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Russia	Potential Superpower	Unspecified	Nuclear, conventional hard power	Cooperation with the Global South, a new Eurasian security system	Western confrontation, economic pressure
India	Potential Superpower	US\$4 trillion; Fastest growing economy	4th in military capability	Multi-alignment, strategic autonomy, diversified partnerships	Border disputes (China), protectionism
European Union	Major Economic Power	Growth forecasts 0.8% - 1.6%	Increasing defence spending	Economic competitiveness, strategic autonomy, and sustainability	High energy prices, U.S./China competition, and fiscal constraints

MAJOR POWER RIVALRIES AND EVOLVING ALLIANCES

SHIFTING ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

The global security landscape in 2024-2025 has been characterised by a dynamic restructuring of traditional alliances and the emergence of new partnerships, reflecting the evolving multipolar environment. Traditional alliances such as NATO continue to strengthen their responses to specific threats; however, the broader trend observed is towards the formation of more localised or mini-lateral security arrangements. Beyond traditional blocs, new security and economic partnerships are emerging. In the Indo-Pacific, key US allies are intensifying their preparedness amidst concerns over a potential conflict involving China, particularly in contested environments (Weng, 2023; Abdulle, 2024). EU commitments to Indo-Pacific security are also increasing, evidenced by deployments of UK carrier groups and polices of France and other US allies (Rabeya, 2023). A notable development is the strengthening of the Russia-China-North Korea axis. Russia continues to forge closer ties with North Korea as a mechanism for establishing a new Eurasian security system, particularly in response to perceived strategic bloc formation of the US (Namakula, 2025; Stent, 2024). This growing alignment of sanctioned states presents a complex challenge, potentially linking the Korean Peninsula and Ukraine fronts in broader geopolitical dynamics.

In Africa, countries are actively enhancing their global representation through the African Union's full membership in the G20 and the inclusion of Ethiopia and Egypt in BRICS. Most Francophone African countries are gradually shifting their partnerships away from France to new partners such as China and Russia to secure alternative pathways for development, trade, and security. Turkey is also emerging as an important security partner in the Sahel, supplying advanced drones and potentially establishing military bases (Dayriby, 2025). Concurrently, AFRICOM is focusing on security partnerships in Namibia, including joint maritime security exercises, to counter malign actors and transnational threats (Dayriby, 2025; Aljazeera, 2025).

The shift in African partnerships, particularly away from former colonial powers like France towards China and Russia, signifies a strategic diversification aimed at reducing historical dependencies and exploring alternative development and security models. This reorientation is not solely driven by economic opportunity but also by the search for new security partners, as exemplified by Turkey's growing role in the Sahel. Conversely, Russia's hybrid warfare strategy, which employs 'strategic dependencies' and 'paramilitary proxies' to undermine Western influence, demonstrates how existing vulnerabilities can be exploited as tools of geopolitical leverage. These developments reflect a global fragmentation where states seek security through smaller, more agile groupings when broader multilateral consensus proves difficult to achieve. This indicates a pragmatic response to the 'multipolar or fragmented order' where states are adapting their security strategies to the realities of a less cohesive international system.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CHINA

The rivalry between the US and China remains the most defining feature of global geopolitics. This competition in the last 5 years has escalated and is expected to render globalisation more awkward and uncertain. This expectation is primarily driven by a potentially more protectionist economic approach adopted by the US. The Trump administration's policy of 'making America great again' has triggered some of the most protectionist policies in US history in recent decades (Duignan, 2025). The proposed US tariffs, including a potential 60% on Chinese goods and up to 20% on imports from all trading partners, would significantly disrupt the existing global trade system and accelerate a fundamental rewiring of world trade flows (Mistreanu, 2025). These measures target not only China but also key partners like the EU, Mexico, Canada, and Vietnam. Even a partial implementation of these tariffs

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is expected to profoundly alter global trade patterns, particularly when considering the high likelihood of retaliatory measures from affected trading partners. This protectionist stance, exemplified by the US government's tariff increases, risks igniting the largest trade war in history, with substantial short- and medium-term economic impacts globally, including a projected decline in US GDP by approximately 1% by 2028 (Chukwu, 2024; Duignan, 2025). The 'tech decoupling' between the US and China has increased significantly, with the US restricting Chinese access to advanced semiconductors. China has, in response, emplaced measures to become self-reliant in critical technologies such as AI, quantum computing, and renewable energy (Buryk et al, 2025). The rivalry between the US and China extends to critical raw materials, as evidenced by China's introduction of export licenses for seven rare earth elements and related compounds in April 2025 (Sharma, 2025). The materials involved are crucial for digital and green technologies, as well as cutting-edge defence applications. This strategic move highlights a broader effort to control essential components of the global technology supply chain. The US, in response, forced a deal with Ukraine for concessions over its rare minerals' deposits in exchange for support in its disputes with Russia (Ramesh, 2025). The US tariffs and China's drive for self-reliance are not merely economic manoeuvres; they represent a deliberate strategy to reduce mutual dependence in critical sectors. This phenomenon, often termed the 'weaponisation of interdependence,' involves leveraging economic ties for strategic advantage (Rabeya, 2023). The resulting rewiring of global trade flows and diversification of supply chains indicate a systemic effort to build resilience against future disruptions, whether from geopolitical tensions or economic coercion. This implies that while the immediate economic fragmentation has overarching consequences on national security and strategic autonomy of the great global economies, it would potentially affect the dynamics of global geopolitics and sustainability.

Military posturing and flashpoints are also central to the US-China rivalry. Taiwan continues to be a major point of contention, with the US emphasising and affirming its support despite China's opposition and assertive posture to historical linkages with Taiwan (Weng, 2023; Mistreanu, 2025). The escalation of tensions has resulted in a struggle for the soul of Taiwan by these rivals, leading to arms race. At the 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue, the US Defence Secretary threatened that there would be 'devastating consequences' for any Chinese attempt to conquer Taiwan by force (Zhao, 2025). The US further urged its Indo-Pacific allies to increase defence budgets, preparatory to a possible confrontation with China. The tension over Taiwan has led China to accuse the US of fostering regional discord with a 'Cold War mindset'. China, on its part, has heightened preparations with its People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducting its largest joint air-naval exercise around Taiwan in May 2024, and Chinese air incursions into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone have exceeded 1,200 this year (Simonov, 2025; Zhao, 2025). The South China Sea also continue to escalate the rivalry between the US and China, with a possibility of the Philippines invoking its Defence pact agreement with the US. This possibility is premised on the increasing clashes between PLA naval patrols and the Philippine Navy and locals. The invocation of the US-Philippines Defence pact could lead to conflicts that would involve US Naval forces in confrontations within the contested waterways (UN News, 2025; Ramesh, 2025; Zhao, 2025).

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

The latest Russia-Ukraine conflict, which started in February 2022 and has extended beyond its third year, has profound implications for global geopolitics. The war has evolved into a prolonged war of attrition with fierce battles in the Donbas region and has seen the Russian forces making slow, steady gains and occupying about a fifth of Ukraine's territory. Both sides have increasingly employed aerial weapons (missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) attacks), damaging urban areas and critical energy, transport, and other infrastructure, especially across Ukraine (Ogbonna et al, 2023; Buryk et al, 2025). The casualty numbers on both sides are noted to be high and increasing daily, with significant suffering among people within the conflict areas and the displacements of millions of people and substantial disruptions of socio-economic activities in Ukraine. Ukraine's energy sector has lost about 80% of its thermal generation capacity, resulting in consequential deprivation (Londono & Beth, 2025). Agricultural land abandonment, especially near conflict zones, has significantly impacted global food prices due to the loss of grain exports. The conflict continues to exert significant pressure on global energy and food security, with Europe suffering the most from reduced Russian energy supplies.

In response to the conflict, NATO has undertaken significant adaptations to its deterrence and defence posture to enhance Euro-Atlantic security. Key adaptations include doubling the number of multinational battlegroups on NATO's eastern flank from four to eight, establishing a new NATO Force Model for rapid response capabilities, and adopting comprehensive defence plans. The integration of new members like Finland and Sweden, alongside a heightened focus on critical undersea infrastructure protection and enhanced cyber capabilities, further underscores NATO's adaptive response. There has also been a surge in defence spending across member states and a commitment by members during the June 2025 NATO Summit to investing 5% of their GDP annually on core defence requirements by 2035 (Londono & Beth, 2025). NATO also commits to strengthening its defence industrial capacity with an investment of 800 billion euros under the EU Readiness 2030 plan. The US and allies continue to supply advanced military systems, including Patriot air defence systems and Gepard shells from Germany, and funding for Ukrainian drone production to

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enhance Ukraine's ability to withstand Russia's aggression (Fischer et al, 2023). The 'coalition of the willing nations' has also kept the war machine of the Ukrainians oiled.

Following NATO's gang-up with Ukraine, Russia has deepened its relationship with China under its 'Turn to the East' (TOE) policy. This relationship has heightened Russia's resistance to the US and its NATO allies as a strategic shift to confront the West. The TOE policy is considered a viable alternative to resolving Russia's problems in Europe, geared towards helping Russia avoid defeat in the ongoing conflict. Again, the alignment has economic benefits for Russia as it helps in its stability through increased trade with China (rising 29% in 2022 and 26% in 2023 to \$240 billion) (Rabeya, 2023). It is largely a marriage of convenience rather than a true partnership of equals. The power gap between the two nations is widening, with China expecting Russia to support its positions while Russia demands autonomous great power respect. This suggests that while the relationship is expected to deepen for the next 6-10 years, it is driven by Russia's limited manoeuvrability and dependence on China, rather than a fully aligned long-term vision (Burna-Asef, 2025). The policy for the survival of Russia has also witnessed it approaching countries such as North Korea, Iran, Belarus and other allies to support its war efforts (Abdulle, 2024). Indeed, there is significant support from these nations, including the deployment of their soldiers in support of Russia.

BRICS+ EXPANSION AND GLOBAL REBALANCING

The bloc of 5 countries comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) has undergone significant expansion, with Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates attending their first summit as member states in 2024, and Indonesia joining in early 2025. This expanded group, informally referred to as BRICS+, now represents a substantial portion of the global economy, generating 36% of global GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP), surpassing both the G7 and the EU (Namakula, 2025). The collective nominal GDP of the initial five members alone stood at US\$28 trillion in 2024, accounting for approximately 27% of the gross world product. The expansion of BRICS+ signifies a deliberate effort to create a counterbalance to traditional Western-dominated global governance structures and to foster a shift in power and economic balance. This grouping aims to elevate the diplomatic voice of its members, particularly emerging powers, and to advocate for reforms in global governance. The bloc's focus includes economic diversification, climate resilience projects, and the development of initiatives like the BRICS Multilateral Guarantees. The diverse economic and political priorities among its members, coupled with the significant economic dominance of China within the expanded group (accounting for 52% of BRICS+ GDP PPP), present inherent challenges to achieving a unified agenda and maintaining a truly balanced partnership (Nach & Ncwadi, 2024). This suggests that while the bloc presents a formidable challenge to the existing global order, BRICS+ long-term effectiveness will depend on its capacity to reconcile divergent national interests and translate collective rhetoric into tangible, coordinated policy actions.

Relatedly, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has emerged as a rallying point for the Asia continent. The SCO 2025 Council of heads of state summit held in Tianjin, China, had the largest gathering in its history with over 20 foreign leaders and 10 international organisations in attendance (Bao, 2025). The large attendance and outcomes of the summit reflect growing disaffection for the policies of the US and Western nations. There was open condemnation of the reemerging Cold War mongering/mentality of the US and its allies (Bao, 2025). The discussions and outcomes of the various engagements are indicative of the desires for drastic geopolitical shifts by the SCO leaders in the face of perceived highhandedness of the US and its allies, in relation to tariff hikes, conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Israel-Palestine and others within the Middle East.

CRITICAL GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL IMPERATIVES

PERSISTENT CONFLICTS AND REGIONAL INSTABILITY

The global security landscape is heavily impacted by persistent and deepening crises in several key regions. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region faces an unprecedented level of crises, characterised by relentless conflict, staggering refugee situations, and a deepening economic downturn. The conflict between Israel and Hamas, and broader regional tensions, continue to exact a heavy toll. Israel is engaged in wars of attrition in Gaza and Lebanon, with ceasefires proving unlikely to bring a definitive end to the conflicts (Stent, 2024). Israel's intent to maintain a presence in Gaza and build permanent military installations is expected to fuel a Hamas-led insurgency and sustain the drivers of regional conflict. Israel's continuous violations of international law, including the Doha and Tunis bombings, have increased the number of nations calling for sanctions to checkmate Israel (Al Jazeera, 2025; Abdulle, 2024). The economic consequences for the Palestinian economy have been severe, with a 27% shrinkage in GDP in 2024, marking the deepest contraction in three decades. Unemployment in Gaza has soared to 80%, leaving many households without a stable income. Food insecurity has reached critical levels, with 1.95 million people facing crisis-level food insecurity, and inflation in Gaza surged by over 230% in 2024 (Siampani, 2024).

Hostilities between Israel and Iran intensified, leading to missile, rockets and UAVs attacks on both countries in mid-2025. The US also deployed its B-2 stealth bombers and the GBU-57 bunker-buster bombs to destroy Iran's underground nuclear facilities within the period (Al Jazeera, 2025). The US was able to broker a ceasefire after 12 days of hostilities, but tension remains high. The

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confrontation between the 2 foes marked a dramatic escalation of the running proxy conflicts between Israel and Iran. Specifically, Iran-backed NSAs significantly escalated their terrorist activities since 2024, reaching a peak of 2,266 incidents (Ramesh, 2025). Hezbollah was the most active, followed by the Houthis movement and Hamas. Houthi missile and drone attacks have severely disrupted international shipping in the strategic Red Sea, causing Suez Canal traffic to drop by 42% in 2024 and leading to increased costs for essential goods globally (Namakula, 2025). The increased sophistication and access to military-grade weaponry like rockets, missiles, and UAVs by these groups point to state sponsorship.

The toppling of the Assad dynasty in December 2024 by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has led to new sectarian clashes in Syria. Israel, Turkey, UAE and Saudi Arabia are among the key influencers of the clashes with traces of US and Russia's involvement (Simonov, 2025; Mistreanu, 2025). Recovery and reconstruction efforts are critical for the country, but there are challenges given the continued external influence and fractured territory. Libya remains fragmented and vulnerable to external interference, with the conflict between rival regimes over political power and oil revenues becoming more entrenched. The conflict in Sudan also has not abated, reflecting disparate interests within the Arab world.

The conflicts in the Middle East, parts of Africa, Ukraine and indeed across troubled regions of the world are not merely geopolitical events but are actively causing severe economic devastation, mass displacement, and critical humanitarian crises. The economic impacts, including GDP contraction, soaring unemployment, and rampant inflation, are long-lasting and would hinder recovery for years to come. The direct correlation between conflict intensity and its economic and human tolls highlights that these conflicts are not contained but have cascading effects that undermine human capital, destroy infrastructure, and disrupt basic services, creating long-term instability that extends beyond the immediate areas of conflict. There is therefore the need for right-thinking individuals, states and NSAs to embrace the concept of collective and human security as contained in the GSC for a peaceful and sustainable world.

ESCALATING CYBER AND HYBRID THREATS

Cyberspace has become characterised by increasing complexity, driven by geopolitical uncertainties and the proliferation of sophisticated cyberthreats. A defining feature is the weaponisation of advanced technologies, particularly AI, deepfakes, and the emergence of 'cognitive warfare' (Ugbo, 2025; Zhao, 2025). The rapid adoption of AI has introduced new vulnerabilities that have profoundly impacted cybersecurity. Additionally, generative AI (GenAI) actively augments cybercriminal capabilities, leading to a notable uptick in social engineering attacks, more sophisticated ransomware campaigns, and highly scalable attacks (Ugbo, 2025). Deepfakes and media manipulation are increasingly prevalent and leveraged for spreading disinformation, identity theft, fraud, and even for bypassing security requirements. Hacktivist groups now use technical disruptions to manipulate public opinion and undermine trust in institutions. State-sponsored actors are also leveraging GenAI to create realistic phishing content, fake images, and deepfakes to support their cognitive attacks. Some technologically advanced countries use a 'military-civil fusion' strategy to incorporate AI and big data for information operations and the development of 'multi-domain precision warfare' concepts.

The interconnectivity of systems in cyberspace has exposed critical infrastructure and global supply chains to vulnerabilities. Supply chain vulnerabilities are among the top ecosystem cyber risks in most organisations (Ramesh, 2025). Key concerns include software vulnerabilities introduced by third parties and the potential for cyberattacks to propagate throughout the entire ecosystem. Gray-zone warfare (GZW) encompasses hostile strategies and tactics deployed in the ambiguous space between peaceful competition and open conflict and poses a threat to high-value targets such as aerospace, transportation hubs, energy grids, water supplies, and undersea cables (Sinha, 2024). GZW tactics range from sabotage and cyberattacks to election interference and covert operations, all designed to avoid triggering an armed response.

The lines between state-backed espionage and organised cybercrime are increasingly blurring; thus, attribution becomes difficult (Ugbo, 2025). Online platforms have become fertile grounds for organised crime, facilitating illicit trade and complex cyberattacks with enhanced anonymity and scalability (Sinha, 2024). The growth of 'ransomware-as-a-service' (RaaS) models further exemplifies this convergence. The rapid development and deployment of AI represent a profound amplification of asymmetric warfare capabilities. AI dramatically lowers the barrier to entry for sophisticated attacks and enables new forms of asymmetric warfare, particularly cognitive warfare (Londono & Beth, 2025). This shifts the security challenge from purely technical defence to also include the critical domains of information integrity and societal resilience. The pervasive nature of AI in augmenting cybercriminal capabilities and its leverage by state-sponsored actors for deepfakes and media manipulation suggests that AI allows both non-state and state actors to achieve strategic objectives without traditional military engagement, making it a critical tool in irregular warfare (Sinha, 2024).

The potential of AI technologies to revolutionise industries, enhance military capabilities, and shape societal norms has far-reaching implications for disrupting traditional geopolitical balances. Many AI experts predict that the first state to develop artificial general intelligence (AGI), capable of performing a wide range of tasks better than humans, will gain immense advantages in

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military and economic power, intensifying an 'AI arms race' (Joshi, 2024; Sinha, 2024; Ugbo, 2025). The computational power required to train and deploy generative AI models demands staggering amounts of electricity, leading to increased carbon dioxide emissions and pressure on electrical grids (Sinha, 2024; Ramesh, 2025). The electricity consumption of data centres globally rose to 460 terawatt-hours in 2022, making them the 11th largest electricity consumer worldwide, and is expected to approach 1,050 terawatt-hours by 2026 (Gooding, 2024). This rapid increase in demand for new data centres often necessitates reliance on fossil fuel-based power plants, raising significant environmental concerns. The ecological impact extends beyond electricity consumption to the substantial water required for cooling data centres.

As AI development accelerates, it poses unique and mounting challenges to governance frameworks, creating a de facto governance vacuum. The rapid pace of AI development is outpacing regulatory frameworks, necessitating an urgent need for international regulation and cooperation. The situation has implications for risks and opportunities as the world grapples with how to promote responsible and ethical AI development, while states compete for dominance. The lack of clarity on AI's risks, opportunities, and policy issues that require regulation would define future developments; therefore, the need to consider the GSC concept in formulating workable frameworks becomes imperative.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION RISKS AND ARMS CONTROL CHALLENGES

The global security environment is currently marked by heightened nuclear proliferation risks, driven by trends in arsenal modernisation and expansion, and exacerbated by escalating geopolitical tensions. The number of nuclear weapons available for use has shown a concerning increase, rising from 9,585 at the beginning of 2024 to 9,604 at the beginning of 2025 (Sinha, 2025). This upward trajectory is expected to continue as nuclear-armed states modernise and, in some cases, actively expand their arsenals, most of which are deployed and ready for immediate use on submarines, land-based missiles, and at bomber bases (Newsweek, 2025). The conflicts in various parts of the world continue to escalate the risk of nuclear weapons being used. For instance, it is considered a possibility that Russia may use nuclear weapons if seriously threatened and on the verge of defeat by Ukraine and allies (the US and other NATO countries). Similarly, North Korea has continued to consolidate its capacity to deploy nuclear weapons and other WMD in its quest for survival, thereby contravening the spirit of nuclear non-proliferation (Sinha, 2025).

Technological advancements and the pursuit of a competitive edge have ushered in a new phase of the space race, with major powers accelerating their military and economic ambitions in orbit. The space domain has increasingly become a battleground where national security interests are prioritised over international cooperation. Space has become the backbone of military and economic power, with countries heavily investing in satellite technology, communications, and defence systems. More equipment and systems, either for security, socio-economic, or other purposes, have become dependent on space-based technology within the last decade. The involvement of private space companies in the space race has also been profound. For instance, private entities now play significant roles in the transformation of modern warfare, as seen with SpaceX's Starlink role in Ukraine's military efforts (Maulana, 2024). However, the unauthorised use of commercial space assets by hostile actors raises concerns about misuse. There are also significant developments in counter-space weapons and resilient satellite constellations, including the integration of AI into space-based surveillance systems, which contribute to an ongoing space arms race.

Looking beyond 2025, the growing competition for supremacy by major powers would continue to encourage an arms race, driven by technological advancements and heightened geopolitical tensions. This includes the desperation of countries to have nuclear weapons, the development of more sophisticated space-based missile defence systems, autonomous space vehicles equipped with AI, and the expansion of cyberspace systems for defence purposes. The dependence on arms superiority and defence assets for national security due to the bullying of powerful and influential states would create a dilemma for arms control. This is because these assets have become increasingly critical for national sovereignty, pride and avoidance of intimidation by the 'global powerful', the Iranian and North Korean examples come to mind. Inherent vulnerability to attack creates a strong incentive for nations to develop nuclear weapons and other unconventional capabilities. This would lead to a potentially escalatory cycle of development and deployment of these capabilities for protection and deterrence. Ultimately, the preventive mechanisms for regulating the arms race among nations would be hampered, thereby jeopardising global peace and security. The arms race significantly undermines the concept of GSC and would invariably compromise efforts at global security and sustainable development.

CLIMATE CHANGE, RESOURCE SCARCITY, AND HUMAN SECURITY

Climate change has become a direct, immediate security threat that profoundly impacts human security through its intricate links with conflict, resource scarcity, and migration. The 'Climate Conflict Nexus' relating to the alterations in the Earth's climate system exacerbates existing vulnerabilities that potentially trigger or intensify various forms of conflict. Climate change impacts, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events (heatwaves, floods, wildfires), and changes in precipitation patterns, directly intensify the scarcity of essential resources like water, food, and arable land (BBC, 2024). This scarcity, in turn, disrupts livelihoods,

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particularly in climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture and fisheries, leading to economic hardship, unemployment, and social unrest.

Climate-induced migration and displacement place immense strain on resources and infrastructure in receiving areas, often leading to social friction, xenophobia, and even violent conflict between host communities and new arrivals (Environment, 2025). The war in Tigray, Ethiopia, for instance, was partly fuelled by climate-induced droughts, while shifting migration patterns in Sudan due to desertification and water scarcity intensified ethnic tensions (BBC, 2024; Kelecha, 2024). The economic consequences of climate inaction, particularly the loss of livelihoods, can also create conditions conducive to social unrest. Water scarcity has been observed to increase conflict between communities and drive large-scale movements of people from rural to urban areas.

Water scarcity presents a particularly acute challenge, with an estimated 1.8 billion people residing in regions experiencing absolute water scarcity, while as many as 3.5 billion could face water scarcity (FAO, 2025). Currently, nearly 703 million people lack access to water, and over 2 billion do not have safe drinking water services. This crisis exacerbates conflicts both within and between nations, especially in arid regions like the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel, where disputes over key water sources are uncommon. Food insecurity is another critical dimension of this nexus. In 2024, 295.3 million people across 53 countries faced acute food insecurity, worsening acute hunger globally (GRFC, 2025). Conflict is identified as the main driver of acute food insecurity, while climate change-related extreme weather is the primary driver, affecting over 96 million people. Economic shocks also contribute significantly to food insecurity.

The disproportionate burden of climate impacts on the poorest countries, which have contributed least to the crisis, highlights a critical geopolitical dimension often referred to as climate injustice. The decision by some governments to reallocate aid budgets from climate initiatives to defence spending, and the potential failure to meet climate finance commitments, are viewed not just as moral failures but as geopolitical risks. This suggests that climate injustice actively undermines multilateralism and global cooperation, thereby creating conditions that may lead to future conflicts. The strong emphasis on climate justice and the criticism of aid budget cuts directly link climate finance to international security, implying that addressing climate change is also about managing North-South geopolitical tensions and fostering trust for broader global cooperation, as emphasised in the concept of GSC.

Table 2: Resource Scarcity Projections and Security Implications (2025)

Resource Type	Key Projections (2025)	Root Causes	Security Implications
Water	1.8-3.5 billion people are facing scarcity	Climate change, population growth, pollution, poor infrastructure, and overuse	Increased intra/inter-state conflict, mass migration/displacement, and social unrest
Food	295.3 million are facing acute food insecurity (2024)	Conflict, climate change, and economic shocks	Hunger, malnutrition, livelihood disruption, population displacement, and social unrest
Energy	Modest gains in energy security, persistent constraints	Conflicts disrupting trade, surging demand (incl. AI data centres), infrastructure bottlenecks	System flexibility issues, increased pressure on grids, and broader resilience challenges

ECONOMIC COMPETITION AND ITS SECURITY DIMENSIONS

Economic competition is increasingly intertwined with national security, moving beyond traditional trade disputes to encompass strategic control over critical technologies, supply chains, and industrial capacity. This geo-economic approach utilises economic leverage to achieve geopolitical objectives, fundamentally altering global economic relations. Policymakers are intensifying their focus on economic competitiveness and sovereignty through trade protectionism and industrial policies. The US's pursuit of a more protectionist economic approach, characterised by tariff hikes, would expectably accelerate a rewiring of global trade flows (Buryk et al, 2025). Biotech is emerging as a new geopolitical frontier due to its strategic importance for economic growth, national security, and human health, leading to a more fragmented global biotech landscape (Campagna, 2025). China's MIC2025 strategy has significantly succeeded in making China a major manufacturing power, making China sufficiently capable to compete with the US. China's MIC2025 serves as a prime example of the application of economic means as a national strategy in achieving strategic technological dominance, thereby deepening global trade competition.

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The pursuit of economic sovereignty and protectionist policies by major powers carries the significant risk of a partial or full decoupling of economies, leading to a fragmented global economy. This could result in higher costs, reduced efficiency, and slower global GDP growth. Such fragmentation would disproportionately impact vulnerable economies, especially those that rely on open trade and investment for growth and stability. The decoupling of the global West and South economies has been identified as a key geopolitical dynamic. Reports from the IMF and World Bank consistently forecast slower global growth due to rising trade barriers and heightened policy uncertainty (London Business School, 2020; Fisher et al, 2023). This indicates that the strategic choices of major powers to prioritise economic self-sufficiency could lead to a less integrated and less prosperous global economy, thus harming those reliant on open trade and investment. Despite these challenges, there are efforts to strengthen and reinvigorate multilateralism. In September 2024, world leaders adopted the Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact, and Declaration on Future Generations, reaffirming their commitment to the SDGs and effective multilateralism (Reliefweb, 2024). These documents aim to adapt international cooperation and institutions to today's realities, calling for structural reform of the Security Council to ensure greater representation for underrepresented regions and groups, particularly Africa and Latin America. There are also calls to reform the international financial architecture to enhance the representation of developing countries and secure increased funds for the SDGs. These calls resonate well with the concept of GSC.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Global demographic shifts are creating significant long-term challenges for stability and economic growth. Falling fertility rates have significantly led to population decline in most major economies, implying that these countries are incapable of replacement due to declining fertility. It is estimated that by 2100, populations in some major economies would fall by 20% to 50%, inverting the age structures such that the number of older people grows while the number of younger people shrinks (Bao, 2025). This demographic transformation is already impacting advanced economies and China, where the share of working-age people is projected to fall to 59% by 2050 from 67% today (Cheng, 2024). Sub-Saharan Africa is noted as the only region exempt from this trend. These demographic changes have profound economic implications. GDP per capita growth in advanced economies and China could slow by 0.4% annually on average from 2023 to 2050, unless productivity growth increases significantly or people work more hours (Cheng, 2024; Abdulle, 2024). Retirement systems may need to channel as much as 50% of labour income to fund the increased consumption-income gap of seniors.

The shift from a young, growing workforce to an ageing population signifies the 'end of the demographic dividend' for many nations, creating fiscal pressures and potentially exacerbating social grievances. The situation in Japan, China and most developed economies in terms of demography calls for a reawakening of the value of family life and changes in the procreation belief system. These demographic pressures are intertwined with political instability. Economic challenges, such as inflation and inequality, fuelled by factors like war and mass displacement, contribute to a growing sense of global instability and dissatisfaction with traditional political systems. This has spurred the rise of populist and far-right movements globally, challenging incumbent governments and leading to political disruption in various regions, including Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Asia. The increasing fragmentation of societies, as reflected in societal polarisation and erosion of human rights, as well as demographic issues, is critical to having stable security imperatives and sustainable growth and development of mankind. Hence, the adoption of GSC imperatives is germane to solving some of the fundamental issues faced in our world today.

TERRORISM LANDSCAPE AND NON-STATE ACTORS

The contemporary terrorism landscape is evolving, with the 'fifth wave' of terrorism likely characterised by the continued prominence of Salafi-jihadist interpretations and the escalating activities of Iran-backed terrorist groups. Beyond traditional terrorist organisations, the security environment is increasingly threatened by the emergence of new non-state actors (NSAs), particularly transnational criminal organisations. The rise of NSAs is a defining feature of the evolving global order, challenging traditional notions of state sovereignty and power (Chukwu, 2024; Ugbo, 2025). These entities, though not part of governments, exert significant influence on global politics, economies, and societies. Globalisation has provided NSAs with increased access to global markets and resources, greater mobility and connectivity across borders, and an enhanced ability to mobilise resources and support globally (Buryk et al, 2025). Digital technologies have further empowered NSAs to disseminate information and propaganda, recruit supporters, and coordinate complex operations across borders (Ugbo, 2025). NSAs are playing an increasingly significant role in shaping global agendas and policies on issues such as climate change, human rights, and sustainable development through advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning. Examples include environmental NGOs influencing climate change policy and human rights organisations impacting international human rights law (Londono & Beth, 2025). While NSAs bring new perspectives and expertise to global decision-making and can mobilise resources more effectively than states, their rise also presents risks, such as terrorist organisations using violence or businesses engaging in harmful practices (Ugbo, 2025). This necessitates effective

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regulation and new forms of cooperation beyond traditional state-centric models to mitigate risks and harness opportunities for more inclusive global governance as espoused in the concept of GSC.

The influence of NSAs has led the Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Centre (GTTAC) to include cartels and gangs in its classification system (Cengiz, 2025). Cartels and gangs are organised crime groups and complicate the security arrangements of societies. These organised crime groups are increasingly adopting tactics traditionally associated with state-backed actors, blurring the lines between crime and geopolitical conflict. They exploit online platforms for illicit trade and complex cyberattacks, leveraging encrypted communications and AI-driven tools to enhance their operations with anonymity and scalability (Ugbo, 2025; Cengiz, 2025). The growth of RaaS models, where organised crime groups provide malware to affiliates and share profits from successful attacks, further exemplifies this dangerous convergence. The evolving terrorism landscape is therefore characterised by a perilous convergence where NSAs, transnational criminal organisations, and state actors increasingly overlap in tactics, funding, and objectives (Ugbo, 2025). This blurring of crime and conflict complicates attribution and response, making it harder for traditional law enforcement or military frameworks to address these multifaceted threats. The expansion of GTTAC's classification to include cartels and gangs highlights this convergence. The fact that organised crime is adopting state-backed tactics, such as disinformation and targeted cyberattacks, and leveraging advanced technologies further reinforces a more diffuse and adaptable threat landscape that challenges conventional security responses. Hence, new approaches that are workable, acceptable and sustainable could be developed using the concept of the GSC to formulate strategies for global peace and security.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The geopolitical landscape is characterised by an intricate and dynamic interplay of forces that have continued to reshape the international system. The shift towards multipolarity is not merely a redistribution of power but the fragmentation of influence in a more complex and less predictable global environment. Major power rivalries are intensifying across economic, technological, military and other domains, leading to profound consequences. The prolonged wars of attrition in Ukraine, Gaza and other parts of the world continue to redefine security imperatives while exposing lapses in the UN and other conflict resolution mechanisms. Russia's TOE strategy and the BRICS+ emergence further underscore the quest of the global South to challenge existing global governance structures. These rivalries and postering call for a more representative international order and the adoption of the GSC to engender peace and development in our world. The erosion of trust and differing interpretations of international law hinder collective action, even as the need for global cooperation on shared challenges becomes more urgent. Navigating this complex and unpredictable future will require adaptive strategies, a willingness to engage with diverse actors, and a renewed commitment to finding common grounds amidst diverging interests. The ability of states and NSAs to manage these multifaceted challenges will determine the trajectory of global stability and our common prosperity in the years to come.

To enhance global security and engender sustainable development in this complex environment, all stakeholders and policymakers must consider several strategic recommendations in line with the needs of the concept of GSC:

Adaptive Geopolitical Strategies: States must adopt flexible, multi-aligned strategies that account for a truly multipolar world, balancing intense competition with selective cooperation, understanding the dynamics of international relations.

Proactive Conflict Prevention and Resolution: Urgent action is needed to de-escalate existing conflicts and address their underlying causes; this calls for sustained diplomatic efforts, robust mediation, and increased international aid to support recovery and build resilience in affected regions.

Comprehensive Cybersecurity and Resilience Frameworks: States and NSAs must adopt a mindset of cybersecurity by investing significantly in robust cyber resilience measures, proactively addressing supply chain vulnerabilities, and developing international norms for AI and cyber warfare to mitigate risks.

Integrated Climate-Security Policies: States and NSAs must implement policies to integrate climate resilience and adaptation strategies into conflict prevention, development, and humanitarian efforts so that climate justice is enforced.

Strengthening Multilateralism and Governance: Reforms in the UN and other international organisations are necessary to enhance their effectiveness in addressing global security and sustainability challenges, especially those posed by protectionism.

Responsible Innovation and Governance of Emerging Technologies: Establishing a global framework on ethical guidelines, regulatory standards, and responsible development through collaboration of all stakeholders for governing frontier technologies.

Human-Centred Security Approaches: Shifting the focus from state-centric security to a broader concept of human security, which prioritises the protection of individuals and addresses issues like poverty, inequality, and human rights, would help address the root causes of vulnerability and instability.

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