



[Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry](#)

Without a Stance?

Democratic Developing Nations amidst
Intensifying Systemic Competition

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Western countries tend to view the war in Ukraine as part of a global conflict between democracies and autocracies. However, in Brasilia, New Delhi, and Pretoria there is much greater reluctance to accept this view, let alone take clear sides. But why are so many developing nations – including democracies – refusing to nail their colours to the mast, and what can the so-called West do to win over key players from other regions in this systemic competition? An examination of Brazil, India, and South Africa.

On 2 March 2022, there was great jubilation when the UN General Assembly in New York announced the result of what was termed a historic vote on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. “International community overwhelmingly condemns Russia’s invasion”¹ – this was the general reaction to Resolution A/ES-11/L.1, which was supported by 141 states and opposed by just five – Russia, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, and Syria. There were 35 abstentions.² Afterwards, there was even talk of an alliance between the West and the rest of the world against Putin.³

But, just over nine months later, not much from this euphoria remains. In the West, the war is primarily perceived as a conflict between freedom and democracy on the one hand, and repression and autocracy on the other. Support for Ukraine’s struggle remains strong, and condemnation of Russia’s war of aggression is largely unanimous. Elsewhere in the world, however, the picture is much more ambivalent. One certainly cannot say that there is unanimous support for Ukraine and that Russia is completely isolated across the globe. Even the fact that a clear majority of UN members voted to condemn Russia’s illegitimate annexation of parts of Ukraine in the most recent vote on 12 October 2022 does not change this. Indeed, the past few months have increasingly shown that most developing nations have no interest in positioning themselves too strongly against Russia outside of UN institutions.

At this point, it is useful to review the results of the UN vote in early March. A closer examination does indeed paint a rather ambivalent picture. For example, if we look at Africa, it is clear that only around half of African member states – 29 out of 55 – voted in favour of the resolution (there were 17 abstentions and eight absences). Moreover, it should be considered that the 35 countries which abstained from the vote account for more than 50 per cent of the world’s population.⁴ Additionally, one must recall that the positive voting outcome was only achieved through huge diplomatic pressure. It is therefore hardly surprising that the UN General Assembly’s vote on suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, held just over a month later on 7 April, was already far less clear-cut, with 93 votes in favour, 24 against and 58 abstentions.⁵

However, it is not only such figures that have contributed to the disillusionment within the Western camp in recent months. Few people are likely to have had any great illusions about the balance of power in the UN General Assembly, or regarding the global spread of democracy and freedom. One of the main reasons for this disillusionment is that countries which have refused to adopt a clear position on Russia’s war of aggression include those that the West typically regards as like-minded, democratic partners, above all influential emerging economies such as Brazil, India, and South Africa. The significance of these three countries in terms of their positioning in relation to the West is particularly relevant in that all three are key political,

economic, and military powers in their respective regions, giving them a prominent position as “regional powers”.

Whether these countries remain *democratic* developing nations – be it in a strict sense, or a loose one – is a rather academic question, secondary to the purposes of this analysis, and will thus not be explored further. This article aims, instead, to elucidate how such definitions are far less important to the countries themselves than to the West.

The main purpose of this article is, therefore, to try to understand how these countries – specifically Brazil, India, and South Africa⁶ – view Russia’s war against Ukraine, and to examine the reasons for their positioning or non-positioning. The goal is thus to highlight different perspectives, particularly between the West and the Global South. The intensifying systemic conflict with Russia and China makes it particularly vital for the West to identify these diverging perspectives, and to consider them in its strategic thinking.

Brazil: So Long to Western Ties?

Brazil, which held presidential, parliamentary and gubernatorial elections in October, struggled to adopt a clear stance ever since Russia started its war in Ukraine. The now outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro had visited Vladimir Putin shortly before the outbreak of the war, to express solidarity with him. In the days following 24 February, Bolsonaro was initially reluctant about commenting on Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. In early March, at the UN General Assembly, he stated that Brazil wanted peace, but that he was fearful of the negative repercussions brought by sanctions on the Brazilian economy.⁷ After much hesitation, Brazil voted to condemn the Russian invasion in early March, but abstained when it came to a vote on suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council in early April. In February 2022, Brazil also abstained from a joint statement by the Organisation of American States condemning the war and joined Argentina in opposing a virtual appearance by Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky at a Mercosur meeting in Uruguay in July, only to change course once more and vote against Russia at a UN resolution in October.

Looking back at the past, and considering foreign policy traditions of the country and the region as a whole, Brazil’s current stance on issues of global governance and on the war in Ukraine is no surprise. In past decades, the region’s comparatively peaceful security architecture meant that countries like Brazil had no particular need to put global governance issues in the political spotlight, or project hard power.⁸ Brazilian diplomats were well known for their ability to position themselves between different partners and within multilateral institutions. This was mainly done with the aim of consolidating Brazil’s national sovereignty and retaining a relatively secure geostrategic position, both regionally and globally.

The whole region has a long tradition of non-intervention in international affairs. Particular emphasis is placed on the right to self-determination and the equality of states, and there is a strong aversion to external political or military interference in domestic affairs. The origin of this world view lies in the colonial and interventionist experiences, which many Latin American countries have faced through Europe and the United States.⁸ This could potentially explain why Brazil voted against Russia’s illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory at the UN level, while usually being much more ambivalent regarding Russia in other matters.

Brazil imports nearly a quarter of the fertiliser for its vital agricultural sector from Russia.

Besides historical factors, other considerations also play a role. In times of global supply chain bottlenecks, recession, and food shortages, these considerations are predominantly economic. Much of Latin America’s economic growth over

the past decade has been based on trade with Asia, and particularly China, which has become the region's largest trading partner.¹⁰ Russia's role in the region should also not be underestimated. Brazil imports nearly a quarter of the fertiliser for its vital agricultural sector from Russia, and Brazilian politicians insist there are currently no alternative sources of supply.¹¹ In any case, the Brazilian people are already facing soaring prices for energy and basic foodstuffs, along with high inflation overall.

Despite such structural conditions, it is, however, obvious that the Bolsonaro factor has played a significant role in Brazil's current positioning. Among Bolsonaro's political opponents, there is speculation that the current president, whose term will end on 1 January, views an autocrat like Putin as a role model. Moreover, it is not only regarding the war in Ukraine that Bolsonaro has abandoned Brazil's traditionally strong Western orientation. The relationship with the US became frosty when Joe Biden took office, but has thawed somewhat since the Summit of the Americas in June 2022. However, the Bolsonaro administration's foreign policy as a whole has shifted away from regional and international engagement. For example, under Bolsonaro, Brazil expressed great scepticism towards the regional Mercosur integration project, pulled out of hosting the 2019 World Climate Summit, and withdrew from the UN Compact on Migration.¹²

Europe should probably say goodbye to any expectations of Brazil's unequivocal commitment to the West.

The big question is what will happen to the country's foreign policy stance after ex-President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, who recently won the presidential election, takes office. There will probably be no change with regard to Brazil's stance on Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine.¹³ Lula believes President Zelensky is "just as responsible for the war as Putin", accuses

the US and EU of being complicit by pushing for NATO's eastward expansion, and has no desire to be drawn into a new Cold War.¹⁴ It is also likely that Lula will bring Brazil closer to China, as was the case during his previous presidency.¹⁵ Brazil, while not a member of the Belt and Road Initiative, receives significant amounts of Chinese investment.¹⁶ For some years, China has even replaced the EU as Brazil's biggest trading partner and is now the largest buyer of agricultural products, such as soy, pork, and chicken.

Overall, we can expect to see many Latin American countries trying to take a more pragmatic and impartial stance on Ukraine as well as regarding global order in the coming years. One of the main reasons behind this will be the need to focus on addressing socioeconomic problems at home, and the fact that governments do not really gain any favours with their domestic audience for positioning themselves strongly for or against the West. Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua are exceptions to this for ideological reasons, and have publicly expressed their solidarity with Putin.¹⁷ In general, however, the reaction of many countries is different to the Cold War era, when many actors in the region formed clear alliances either with the US or the former Soviet Union. This was partly due to military, ideological, and economic pressure that the two countries can no longer exert in the region today.

Brazil is now a case in point for the fact that countries in the region prefer to pursue good relations and trade with China and Russia as well as the EU and US. It also illustrates that some countries do not want to be pigeonholed within the global order unless they really have to. Celso Amorim, President Lula's former foreign minister, recently stressed how multipolarity is viewed by Brazil as both a tendency and as a political goal of the country's foreign policy, and that it does not want to be trapped in between the competition amongst China and the US.¹⁸ Nevertheless, under Lula, Brazil could once again assume a stronger role in Latin American integration and regional order. However, Europe should probably say goodbye to any expectations of Brazil's unequivocal commitment to the West.

India: Self-confident and Alliance-shy

“Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems” – with these words, which subsequently went viral on social media, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar responded to a question about India’s stance on the war in Ukraine at the GLOBSEC conference in Bratislava, in June 2022. He went on to say that India had not the slightest intention of aligning itself with any geopolitical power bloc in the near future.¹⁹ In the interview, the minister explained India’s interests and strongly rejected the idea that India – a country with nearly one-fifth of the world’s population – should share the world view

of a bipolar order, let alone join one of the two camps, the political West on the one hand, or Russia and China, on the other.

India, which is self-confident in its foreign policy and has always been wary of alliances, has maintained close relations with Russia since Soviet times. During the Cold War, the USSR obstructed numerous UN Security Council resolutions on the Kashmir conflict in India’s favour, and was seen as a counterweight to India’s archenemies to the north – China and Pakistan. India could also count on Soviet support in the 1971 war against Pakistan. In return, India did not condemn the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops in 1968, and supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980.²⁰



Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar: “Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems.” [Source: © Adnan Abidi, Reuters.](#)

India and Russia still have close economic ties: the majority of India's defence and weapons arsenal is Russian-made. The latest acquisitions from Russia are the Triakand frigate in 2014 and the S-400 missile defence system. However, the Russian arms industry is partly dependent on Western companies, especially in the technology sector, such as for chips for the aforementioned S-400 defence system.²¹ So the fact that Boeing, Airbus, and other companies are no longer supplying Russia as a result of Western sanctions could, sooner or later, also compromise India's defence capabilities.

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) between Russia, Iran, and India has also been revived in the wake of Western sanctions against Russia.²² But paying for imports has become more problematic since the introduction of those sanctions. New Delhi may be able to process the imports via rouble-rupee payments or third-party currencies – and thus circumvent sanctions on payment transactions – but this procedure incurs higher costs, which is not exactly welcomed by the majority of India's financial and business elite.

In India, the international order based on values and rules is viewed as a Western construct.

In general, people in India have little patience with economic difficulties caused by the sanctions against Russia. However, the strongest opposition comes from the country's older diplomatic elite, some of whom were ideologically influenced and educated in the Soviet Union. Younger businesspeople are more likely to see the country's economic dependencies on Russia as a problem, and there are even isolated signs of understanding for the economic sanctions imposed by the West.

Nevertheless, against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that India abstained from all three UN votes on the war in Ukraine. Speaking of

the United Nations, India has been one of the largest contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions for decades. In light of this, and of India's economic growth, size, and international engagement, the country demands a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, saying that the Council no longer reflects today's power constellation. Along with Brazil, Japan, and Germany, India is campaigning for reform of the United Nations as part of the Group of Four (G4).

In India, the international order based on values and rules is generally viewed as a Western construct, which is why the country likes to promote alternative models. Some of the country's foreign and economic policy elites anticipate a world divided into two, with one bloc dominated by China, and the other by the US. Others propagate the scenario of a new Asian order, sometimes with India as a new superpower in a tripolar world order. However, this still seems unlikely when the strength of the Indian economy is compared with that of China and the US.

Another motivation for India to remain neutral is the fear that Russia could be driven into an alliance with China. India is now largely surrounded by countries that are participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative, while strictly refusing to participate itself. Despite the old conflicts, however, India is cooperating with China within the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the RIC trilateral (Russia, India, China), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The fact that its more powerful neighbour China could not only attack Taiwan but also Bhutan, which is under Indian protection, points to a potential test of India's defence capabilities. As previously mentioned, these have been adversely affected by Western sanctions against Russia, and the situation is likely to worsen. Partly because of China's growing influence in India's neighbourhood, India has joined the US, Japan, and Australia to form the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which aims to counterbalance China's expansionist ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Quad is just one of many formats that the political West uses to seek cooperation with India – rhetorically at least, the doors of the world’s liberal democracies are wide open to India. In Germany, the governing parties’ coalition treaty expresses a “strong interest in deepening our strategic partnership with India”. Australia signed a free trade agreement with India in 2021, while the UK, Canada, and the EU are all working towards one. France has sold India seven Rafale fighter jets (though this is a modest figure compared to the 400 aircraft from Russia). Japan is offering infrastructure development and Washington is keen to reward an Indian shift away from Moscow with weapons, technology, and visas.²³ Whether these recent “declarations of intent” will materialise, however, will depend to a large extent on the ongoing ability of liberal democracies to assert themselves.

South Africa: All Doors Open

South Africa’s initial reaction to the war in Ukraine can best be described as erratic. Immediately after the Russian invasion, Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor called on Moscow to withdraw its troops from Ukraine, only to be brought back into line by President Cyril Ramaphosa, who later stated that NATO was to blame for the escalation because of its eastward expansion. This stance was reaffirmed by the ruling ANC party, which ramped up its anti-West rhetoric at its party congress in early August.²⁴ South Africa abstained in the UN General Assembly vote in early March, arguing that the resolution did not call on the parties to the conflict to engage in dialogue, and would only cause more division.²⁵ South Africa also abstained from the vote on Russia’s suspension from the UN Human Rights Council, and did not join in with the sanctions against Russia.

South Africa’s long history of ties with Russia is also contributing to its reluctance to condemn Russia’s war of aggression. The USSR supported the young South African nation’s struggle against apartheid for many years – a fame that Russia continues to benefit from.²⁶ It is well known that the current ruling party receives donations from

Russian oligarchs, and Defence Minister Thandi Modise created a furore in August when she attended a security conference in Moscow.

That aside, South Africa is proud of its long tradition of non-alignment and intends to maintain this “strategic neutrality”. It wants to be a partner to the West while simultaneously maintaining good relations with China, with which it is linked through BRICS and the Belt and Road Initiative. One should also not forget how, especially in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa and other countries of the Global South felt that they had been abandoned by the West. The fact that the Western-led COVAX initiative has supplied two thirds of all vaccines sent to Africa in 2021 seems to be largely ignored here.²⁷ The impression of being badly treated by the West was also reinforced by the treatment of African migrants at the Ukrainian border in the early days of the war.

In Africa, wheat prices have already skyrocketed by 45 per cent due to supply chain disruption.

South Africa is fundamentally committed to multilateralism and has long called for reforms in the multilateral system to make it more equitable and contemporary, such as giving an African nation a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. A multipolar world is seen as desirable, and the BRICS counterparts China and Russia are viewed as better partners than the Western hemisphere in this respect.

Western countries are accused of hypocrisy in their condemnation of the Russian war of aggression, and South Africa likes to point to Western military interventions such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.²⁸ The fact that such comparisons are misleading and that the framework conditions under international law were quite different in the cases mentioned tends to be ignored. However, in a statement on 8 April 2022, Naledi

Pandor explained that South Africa's neutral position with regard to the war in Ukraine did not mean that it condoned Russia's violation of international law. In this respect, it is interesting to note that South Africa is generally highly sceptical of regime-change ambitions on the part of the West, but this seems to be less of a concern when it comes to Russia seeking to bring down the government in Kiev.²⁹

However, in view of the fact that we are already more than nine months into the war, the focus is now primarily on its economic consequences for South Africa. Issues with food security and the sharp rise in the price of fertilisers and raw materials such as steel are a problem not just for South Africa but for the continent as a whole. According to UN estimates, 44 per cent of the

wheat consumed in Africa comes from Russia and Ukraine, and wheat prices have already skyrocketed by 45 per cent due to supply chain disruptions. The African Union (AU) has warned of a food crisis of catastrophic proportions. Moreover, it is unclear whether EU member states or G7 countries will still be able to fulfil their commitments towards the Global South if they themselves are forced to redistribute resources to deal with internal economic and social pressures while providing unbudgeted financial and military support to Ukraine.³⁰

Russia (along with China) has also been positioning itself in Africa in other areas, carving out an important role. As such, as of now, Russia is: Africa's principal arms supplier (ahead of France, the US, and China);³¹ a buyer and licensed



Deceptive impression: Despite Nelson Mandela shining in blue and yellow outside Cape Town city hall, his party, the African National Congress, still gives Moscow credit for its support in combatting apartheid, which has consequences for South Africa's position on Russia's war against Ukraine. Source: © Shelley Christians Jordaan, Reuters.

prospector of valuable raw materials; an exporter of agricultural equipment; and, via the Wagner Group, a provider of private security services.

The courting of South Africa and other influential actors on the continent has been underway for some time, but it has intensified in the months since the war began. In June, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Niger, Senegal, and South Africa. This was partly in his role as G7 chair, in order to discuss food supplies, but also with a view to bringing African countries more on side as political allies. In July, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Egypt, Congo, Uganda, and the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Explaining Why: Old Attachments and New Dependencies

If the preceding remarks about how Brazil, India, and South Africa view the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have shown one thing, it is that their perspectives differ from the prevailing view in the West in many ways. While Berlin, Brussels, and Washington mostly perceive the conflict as a kind of proxy war in the escalating systemic conflict between the democracies and autocracies of this world, this world view does not tend to be shared by the three countries we are examining in this article, and they are certainly reluctant to join one of the two blocs as classified by the West.

Dependencies in key sectors make it difficult for emerging countries to turn their backs on Russia.

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Instead of a debate oriented towards abstract ideals such as freedom and democracy, the dominant view in Brasilia, New Delhi, and Pretoria focuses more on their own historical experiences and specific interests. Colonial experiences can be just as important as foreign policy traditions or economic and military

dependencies. And while each of the three countries has its own unique view of the war in Ukraine and the international order, a few generalised conclusions can be drawn that help explain why the three countries are far from aligned with the West against Russia and China.

1. **History:** As the example of South Africa has shown, the former Soviet Union's support for African liberation movements has still not been forgotten. This was particularly evident in the vote at the UN General Assembly on 2 March, when all the countries in southern Africa that are still dominated by former liberation movements abstained.³² In India, too, the fact that the USSR always stood faithfully by New Delhi's side in the Kashmir conflict continues to play an important role. Although relations between Brazil and Russia were mostly neutral and limited to minor trade agreements during the Soviet era, the two countries have gradually intensified their strategic partnership since the late 1990s. Clearly, it is not in Brazil's interest to jeopardise this history of bilateral relations.
2. **Foreign policy traditions:** India, Brazil, and South Africa are following a long foreign policy tradition by refusing to side with the West in condemning the war in Ukraine, but also not clearly siding with Russia. Particularly during the Cold War, many developing and emerging countries deliberately steered clear of aligning themselves with either of the two great powers in order to avoid being drawn into their conflicts. The original Non-Aligned Movement was formed in the 1950s from the many newly established states of Africa and Asia, as well as from Latin American states, most of which had gained their independence in the 19th century. In the UN, this movement is manifested in the Group of 77. Such movements are once again gaining importance, such as in Latin America, where a new vision of the international system is being propagated in line with the idea of "No Alineamiento Activo", characterised by new actors, new alliances and rivalries, and new challenges.³³

3. **Economic and military dependencies:** Whether it is the reliance of Brazil on Russian fertilisers or that of India on Russian arms, these examples clearly show how dependencies in key sectors of the economy or defence make it difficult or even impossible for emerging countries to turn their backs on Russia. Some dependencies have even been exacerbated by the war. For example, African countries in particular rely heavily on grain and cooking oil from Russia and Ukraine.³⁴ Due to the devastation of agricultural land and the blockade of ports in Ukraine, the prices of these goods have skyrocketed, with serious consequences for the countries affected.
4. **Hard-headed calculations:** Today, many countries of the Global South – not just the three discussed in this article – are able to, and indeed do, pick and choose from a vast array of offers of cooperation on economic, development, and security issues. Offers made by the West – if they are made at all – are often tied to conditions, such as standards of democracy and the rule of law, so the Global South does not always view them as the best option. And when offers from the West are absent altogether or patchy – as was most recently the case with vaccine supplies at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic – China and Russia are happy to step in and fill the gap. Countries like Brazil, India, and South Africa are increasingly unwilling to base their decisions on an imagined ideological proximity, and instead make hard-headed cost-benefit calculations that are primarily oriented on their more short-term interests. The accusation of opportunism that this often engenders is increasingly being countered in the Global South by accusing the West of double standards: the West loves to invoke noble ideals, but at the end of the day is just as opportunistic in its actions.
5. **Anti-Western narratives:** With regard to this accusation of Western double standards, the Global South frequently points to military interventions by the US and European

partners without a UN mandate, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, the West's non-intervention or perceived lack of interest in other conflicts – such as Syria – also frequently comes under fire in connection with the debate on the war in Ukraine. Even if such comparisons are misleading and those cases were significantly different from the perspective of international law, the West needs to understand that such narratives are widespread in the Global South. The West is also accused of these oft-cited double standards with regard to the lessons on democracy, the environment, and human rights that it likes to dish out to developing and emerging countries – lessons that, according to critics, are quickly forgotten when it comes to economic or security cooperation with countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia. As far as emerging countries are concerned, the West's calls for Vladimir Putin to be tried by the International Criminal Court ring rather hollow when the US has failed to even ratify that court's statute. In any case, such inconsistencies contribute to the narrative – which is propagated particularly actively by Russia – that the political West only defends the liberal world order because this serves its own security and economic interests.³⁵

All too often, development cooperation fails to address the actual needs of partner countries.

Conclusion: What to Do?

They say a fault confessed is half redressed. This article is an attempt to contribute to this. But there also has to be desire to change and improve. So, we will conclude by briefly sketching out how we could begin to bind democratic emerging countries more closely to the West in the intensifying systemic competition with Russia and China.





A tractor is seen spreading fertiliser in central Brazil: The country imports a considerable part of this important agricultural input from Russia, which is why it has had no intention to clearly distance itself from Moscow.

Source: © Adriano Machano, Reuters.

- **Addressing specific needs:** Appeals for democratic standards and the rule of law are and remain important, including in development cooperation. However, all too often this cooperation still fails to address the actual needs of partner countries. A good start would be to focus more on what countries actually need and are calling for in terms of security and economic policy. For example, Germany could assist with procurement processes and lobby for better access to the EU market or for visa facilitation.
- **Creating equal partnerships:** Cooperation with democratic emerging countries still tends to be asymmetrical. But many countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia have a great deal to offer, particularly at a time when there is a huge need for diversification in the energy sector. In particular, regional powers such as Brazil, India, and South Africa have economic and security-policy potential that should be recognised and harnessed more fully by the West. In any event, lecturing and exerting pressure from above is

counterproductive, and has simply helped to reinforce existing non-alignment reflexes. The West would be well advised to precisely identify the explicit and acute needs of these countries during this global energy and food crisis, and to promote cooperation. For example, in areas such as technology transfers in agriculture, energy infrastructure, and also through a revision of the Mercosur-EU trade agreement.

- **Increasing multilateral cooperation:** Brazil, India, and South Africa are, of course, already represented at various multilateral forums such as the G20. However, in recent years, it was smaller, more informal formats, such as BRICS and the Quad that have manifested a change in the global order. Germany and Europe would do well to launch comparable formats with new partners from the Global South. This would send a symbolic message but also provide an opportunity for closer multilateral exchange and cooperation on a range of topics. In the Quad, for example, this is done in the form of working groups on climate change, technology, infrastructure, and COVID-19. Overall, greater involvement in old and new forums would be a good way to create synergies and thus be more responsive to the needs of other countries. Brazil, for example, has long wanted to become a member of the OECD.
- **Consolidating our own narratives:** The example of how the West was viewed negatively in some parts of the Global South during the COVID-19 pandemic particularly highlights the importance of political communication. This is because, despite considerable support from Europe on vaccine supplies, some emerging countries have been vociferous in their criticism of Europe. Similarly, Europe is now being blamed for causing food shortages in other regions because of its sanctions against Russia. It is vitally important that Europe consolidates its own fact-based narratives in order to counter disinformation campaigns. It has to play catch-up, especially in online and social media, which China and

Russia use in a very targeted way. The people of the Global South have to see the West as a trustworthy partner before the political will for closer cooperation can emerge.

- translated from German -

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