

BRICS Conference

Leaders and senior officials from five of the world's top emerging economies convened in Johannesburg for a three-day BRICS summit. The bloc—whose members are Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—represents 40% of the world's population and a quarter of its GDP. The two main issues on the agenda were the expansion of the group and de-dollarisation. Whilst the summit showed how China and Russia are pushing BRICS to engage with the Global South, with an eye to offsetting Western influence, the goals of the other BRICS members remained unclear. South Africa claimed more than 40 countries expressed an interest in joining the bloc, with nearly two dozen formally applying to do so. Countries known to have an interest include Algeria, Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. But despite this interest, BRICS summits have failed to significantly advance cooperation because Brazil and India have expressed concern about Beijing's and Moscow's goals of using BRICS to challenge the G-7. Brazil and India have deep ties with the US and Europe and simply do not have the same geopolitical tension with the West as China and Russia do. The conference ended without any substantive details on how the group will supplant the dollar. Adopting a new currency seems to be the only way members can supplant the dollar. Though the possibility has been widely discussed in the media, there's no indication of any progress being made.

UN Mission to Afghanistan Documents Extrajudicial Killings

More than 200 former Afghan soldiers and officials have been killed extrajudicially since August 2021 despite a general amnesty announced by the Taliban immediately after its takeover. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) – in its first report since the Taliban takeover two years ago – documented 800 cases of serious human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and enforced disappearances. UNAMA recorded almost half of all extrajudicial killings of former government officials and Afghan security forces during the first four months of Taliban rule. “UNAMA's report presents a sobering picture of the treatment of individuals affiliated with the former government and security forces of Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of the country,” the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, said in a statement accompanying the release of the report on Tuesday. Since the Taliban took over in 2022, they have on the whole pardoned former regime officials and workers, but they made clear those who were part of the secret service, who committed untold massacres against the Taliban would not be pardoned and this was necessary to shore up their regime. When the US put the Northern Alliance into power in 2001 both US army personnel and the warlords who the US collaborated with carried out all type of massacres to shore up their position. Whilst the UN report tries to paint an image of the Taliban have blood on their hands, the US two decade occupation has resulted in their hands dripping with blood.