

Russia's Global South Strategy and Policy Implications for Korea

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I. Introduction

Today's international situation is characterized by fierce competition among great powers. However, a key characteristic of this competition is its complex nature. In addition to the hegemonic struggle between the United States and China, the Russo-Ukrainian War has further solidified the hostile confrontation between the West and Russia. Furthermore, following the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, the so-called "Global South" has emerged as a new power in global international relations. These countries generally maintain a neutral stance toward the confrontation between Russia and the West that followed the war, while pursuing strategic autonomy. Global South countries are actively pursuing multilateral cooperation to advance their national interests within BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the G20.

Moreover, bilateral cooperation between Russia and China is deepening to unprecedented levels. Simultaneously, based on their

close ties with the Global South, the two nations are establishing themselves as powerful challengers to the United States' hegemony. As a result, a structural transformation and restructuring of the international order, previously dominated by the US and the West in the post-Cold War era, is underway.

Since the outbreak of the war, the Russian government has faced strong opposition and pressure from the West. Led by the United States, the West has pursued a policy of isolation against Russia while simultaneously implementing the most severe economic sanctions in history. The Putin administration is not only countering the West's strategy to create a failed state for Russia, but is also pursuing an offensive and ideological foreign policy aimed at escaping international isolation, establishing a multipolar order, and expanding Russia's sphere of influence. With the establishment of a multipolar system as its core goal,

Russia is making every effort to build cooperative relationships with countries in the Global South, centered around the BRICS alliance, across all sectors (including military, energy, minerals, food, and healthcare). In this context, Russia's Global South strategy can be considered a top priority for Putin's fifth term in office, a key pillar of his foreign policy and his new trade policy, evading economic sanctions against Russia.

II. Russia's Global South Strategy

The term "Global South" refers not to countries geographically located in the Southern Hemisphere, but to countries classified as economically developing and politically non-Western. The Global South gained attention after the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War because some countries within this region, based on their considerable economic power, began to exercise political autonomy between the West and Russia. While these countries do not directly support Russia, they have attempted to maintain friendly relations with both Western countries and Russia, opting not to participate in or passively participating in economic sanctions against Russia despite strong calls from the West, including the United States.

1. Goals and Tasks of Russia's Global South Strategy

According to the priorities and directions of foreign policy, as defined in the new "Foreign

Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," approved by President Putin on March 11, 2023, the goals and tasks of Russia's Global South strategy can be summarized as follows:

First, it promotes a multipolar world order through cooperation with countries in the Global South. The tasks for this are as follows: ① Dismantle the hegemonic foundations of the West, including the United States, and suppress attempts by the West to obstruct cooperation with Russia and countries in the Global South; ② Strengthen the potential of BRICS, the SCO, the CIS, the EAEU, the CSTO, and the RIC (Russia, India, and China) and elevate their international roles; ③ Support regional and subregional integration in the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East; ④ Neutralize Western attempts to impose pseudo-humanist and neoliberal ideological principles, and foster constructive dialogue and partnerships among diverse cultures, religions, and civilizations.

Second, it is about engaging in the security of countries in the Global South. The tasks for this are as follows: ① Establish broad cooperation with countries in the Global South to neutralize Western attempts in the military sphere; ② Implement political and diplomatic measures to prevent the use of military force in violation of the UN Charter and counter interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states; ③ Use Russian forces to repel and prevent armed attacks against Russia and/or its allies, resolve crises, and maintain (restore) peace; ④ Sup-

port allies and partners in ensuring their national defense and security and neutralizing attempts at external interference in their internal affairs; ⑤ Promote the creation and improvement of regional security and crisis resolution mechanisms in areas of vital Russian interests.

Third, the strategy aims to expand economic cooperation with countries of the Global South. The tasks for this are as follows: ① Reform the global trade, monetary, and financial systems to expand the participation of countries of the Global South in global economic governance; ② Reduce the Russian economy's dependence on the West by developing an international payment infrastructure independent of the West and expanding the use of domestic currency in payments with countries of the Global South; ③ Geographically diversify economic relations by strengthening Russia's position in the global market and increasing non-raw material and non-energy exports, while shifting its focus to countries of the Global South; ④ Encourage regional and inter-regional economic integration processes that serve Russia's interests, with the aim of forming a "Greater Eurasian Partnership" at the levels of the Russian-Belarusian Union, the EAEU, the CIS, the SCO, and the BRICS; ⑤ Leverage Russia's geographical position and transport potential to enhance national economic development and Eurasian transport and infrastructure interconnectivity; ⑥ Prioritize the socio-economic development of post-Soviet countries and countries of the Global South

that are friendly to Russia, and promote international development based on this.

Fourth, Russia seeks to spread a favorable perception of itself in the countries of the Global South. The tasks for this are as follows: ① Popularize Russia's achievements in culture, scholarship, education, and the arts in the Global South and strengthen Russia's image as an attractive country for living, working, studying, and tourism; ② Support the spread of the Russian language in post-Soviet countries and the Global South, strengthen its position as an international lingua franca and one of the official languages of international organizations, including the UN, and promote Russian language research and use; ③ Develop public diplomacy mechanisms involving individuals and organizations sympathetic to Russia in the Global South; ④ Strengthen the presence of Russian mass media in the global information space, improve the efficiency of utilizing modern information and communication technologies, including social networks, improve international mechanisms and norms for information production and dissemination, and strengthen cooperation in the information sector with countries of the Global South that are favorable to Russia.

2. Russia's Global South Strategy in a Multilateral Context: BRICS

According to the "Russia's Concept of Participation in BRICS," adopted in 2013, the creation of BRICS, spearheaded by Russia in 2006, was the most significant geopolitical event of

the 21st century. Approximately a decade later, amidst the impact of massive uncertainty caused by prolonged war and sanctions, Russia has further emphasized the importance of BRICS as it strives for a multipolar world. In particular, the recent expansion of BRICS represents a significant turning point and starting point in its history, and a milestone that positions BRICS as a key player in Russia's vision of a "World Majority" encompassing the global South.

The expanded BRICS has the potential to develop into a robust grouping and a huge market, with seven of the G20 member countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Turkey, and Indonesia) and four of the ten ASEAN member countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam) participating.

As of 2023, BRICS nations account for approximately 50% of Russia's total trade. China and India—both economic powerhouses—along with Turkey, a NATO member increasingly aligned with BRICS, comprise Russia's top three trading partners. Russia is expected to continuously strengthen its complementary advantages through multilateral cooperation as well as bilateral relations, focusing on reforming the international monetary and financial system, expanding local currency settlements among BRICS countries, diversifying energy export markets and strengthening energy security, and establishing a mutual cooperation system in Russia's priority areas of economic modernization and technological innovation, as outlined in the "Concept of Participation of the

Russian Federation in BRICS."

Some have predicted that Russia's role and importance within BRICS would be overshadowed by the economic powerhouses of China and India, but experts emphasize that in reality, Russia is taking on an even more proactive role. It is particularly noteworthy that at the 16th BRICS Summit, Russia urged China and India, currently embroiled in border conflicts, to put aside their differences and move toward shared goals, strengthening its role as a regional mediator and arbitrator. In other words, Russia is expected to prioritize maintaining and sustaining the momentum of regional cooperation by promoting political interaction while simultaneously promoting economic interaction among member countries.

3. Russia's Global South Strategy in a Regional Context: The Middle East, Africa, and Latin America

In response to strong sanctions from the West, including the United States, Russia is pursuing a new foreign policy strategy based on cooperation with the so-called Global South countries. The core objectives of this strategy are to balance global hegemony, establish a multipolar system, structurally transform the world economy, expand new national and cross-border payment systems, and diversify international economic cooperation mechanisms.

Since the Ukrainian War, Russia has been strengthening its diplomatic presence in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, seeking to assemble allies to establish a multipolar

order. Of course, Russia's international political influence differs from that of the hegemonic powers of the United States and China. However, Russia should not be viewed simply as a regional power. Above all, Russia is a major global supplier of oil and gas and a leading exporter of nuclear power, dominating the global market. Russia possesses production and supply capabilities and price competitiveness in the global energy market, surpassing the United States in nuclear power and fossil fuels. It is also one of the world's largest suppliers of grain and fertilizer, which are directly linked to food security. Compared to China—which boasts advanced technology, manufacturing export competitiveness, and market size that threaten the United States—Russia possesses a completely different level of global influence. Russia is actively pursuing its Global South strategy in the Middle East, Africa, and Central and South America, based on its overwhelming conventional military power, including nuclear weapons capable of countering the United States, hypersonic missiles, and cutting-edge defense systems such as the S-400, as well as its ability to provide food and energy, which are fundamental to national survival and economic security.

III. Policy Implications

The Russian government has identified the key objectives of its Global South strategy as overcoming international isolation resulting from Western sanctions and expanding its sphere of influence to transform the international order. Policy implications related to this

are as follows:

First, there are implications at the global level. Russia is pursuing a more aggressive foreign policy, aiming to transform and restructure the Western-centric world order. The Russian government actively pursues the construction of a multipolar world based on strategic cooperation with the Global South across various sectors. In particular, Russia is pursuing a strategy of leveraging the rise of the Global South—no longer as an abstract concept, but a concrete reality emerging in the changing world order.

Second, there are implications for the Korean Peninsula. Russia has recently been reassessing the strategic value and importance of North Korea, further increasing its interest in Korean Peninsula issues. Against this backdrop, security risks on the Korean Peninsula, such as the possible deployment of North Korean troops to the Ukrainian front and the provision of Russian military technology, are growing. Unlike previous periods, Russia is approaching its relations with North Korea from a strategic perspective. Most importantly, Russia's post-war policy toward North Korea itself is being pursued as an extension of its Global South strategy.

Third, there are implications for the international economy. Russia is making every effort to escape Western economic sanctions. For example, Russia is significantly reducing the dollar's role in energy trade with China and India by using local currencies. Furthermore, Russia is pursuing the emergence of alternative trade, currency, and financial systems with countries

in the Global South, aiming for de-dollarization, and promoting regional economic integration.

In conclusion, given that a significant number of countries in the Global South are also paying attention to Russia's strategic moves, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon and explore effective counter-measures. **KIEP**