



## "THE ROLE OF RUSSIA IN BRICS: GLOBAL SOUTH AND CONTEMPORARY MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

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### **Abstract**

*Russia has been playing a dynamic role in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as part of its multi-vector policy. The presence of Russia in BRICS has strengthened multilateral financial cooperation, enhanced trade and economic cooperation, deepened humanitarian interaction and extensively contributed to global peace, security and harmony in the contemporary multi-polar world order. Russia has changed its foreign policy priorities in the post-Cold War period. Russian leadership has vehemently condemned the Western-dominated world order. Economic compulsions and national development goals have prompted Russia. Post-Cold War developments have forced Russia to establish the Eastern Economic Forum (2015), developing trade agreements with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Russia has been playing a vital role in the annual BRICS meetings, the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, informal BRICS leaders' summits, and the revival of the Russia - India - China trilateral summit on the sidelines of the G – -20 summits. Thus, Russia has played a significant role in the contemporary multipolar world order. BRICS has emerged as one of the most critical organisations in the contemporary multi-polar world order. Russia has strongly advocated reforms in global multilateral institutions. Russia has been playing a significant role in international security and global governance. Russia is playing a vital role in the contemporary global world. BRICS emerged as one of the most formidable organisations in the post-Cold War periods. There is a rivalry between the United States of America and China; popular authoritarianism and growing protectionism have disrupted the liberal international order. Due to the decline of the United States and the rise of China politically and economically, the institutions of the liberal international order are under stress. The contemporary world is witnessing a multi-polar world order. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa have played pivotal roles in the modern global world. China will challenge the United States regarding military, economy, science, and technology. Countries have redesigned their foreign policy priorities and agenda according to the prevailing global international order. Russia's practical and dynamic role in BRICS has challenged the hegemony and hierarchy of the United States. In this context, this research article will critically elucidate the pivotal role of Russia in BRICS with particular reference to the Global South and the contemporary multipolar world order.*

**Key Words:** *Russia, BRICS, Global South, Multipolar World Order, hegemony, New World Order, multi-vector policy.*

### **Introduction**

Russia has strongly advocated and demanded reforms in the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Russia has been playing a significant role in the contemporary global world order. BRICS has emerged as the most powerful institution in the post-Post-Cold War period. BRICS represents the continents of the Global South, i.e. Africa, Asia and Latin America. Each continent represents one country. BRICS countries have everyday colonial experiences, except for Russia. BRICS countries have vehemently condemned the hegemony of the USA and Western dominance in the contemporary global order.



BRICS has emerged as a tremendous multi-polar institution in the contemporary global world. There is much diversity among the BRICS Countries, but they still have common perspectives and agendas on global issues. BRICS has been implementing policies very effectively to influence contemporary international politics. BRICS has extensively discussed various issues ranging from reforms in multilateral institutions to disaster management, climate change, public health, and terrorism. Thus, BRICS has attained a unique position in the contemporary multi-polar world order. Despite divergences, BRICS countries have come together and fought on various international fronts.

Jim O'Neill coined the word BRICS. Jim O'Neill is an economist at Goldman Sachs (G.S.), a U.S. multinational company. Jim used the acronym in his publication "*Building Better Global Economic BRIC*" in 2001. Jim O'Neill has forecasted that Russia, India, China and Brazil will emerge as solid economies in the future. Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov conceived the idea of a Russia – India - China (RIC) trilateral summit during his visit to India. India, Russia and China play a more significant role in the contemporary world order (Kumar, 2022; Raman, 2022).

Liberal internationalism and liberal international order have provided the basis for the emergence of BRICS. BRICS has provided an alternative set of rules and systems to the liberal international order (Kumar, 2022; Raman, 2022). BRICS countries have challenged the hegemony of the U.S. in the Liberal International Order (LIO). The institutional structures, policy perceptions and rules, part of liberal internationalism, will determine the future global order. BRICS nations have been effectively participating in humanitarian intervention. "*Humanitarian intervention is an offshoot of political liberal internationalism*", which strongly advocates human rights (Kumar, 2022; Raman, 2022). BRICS countries are very cautious and have shown their autonomy while accepting the principles of the Liberal International Order (LIO).

BRICS summit has greater relevance for Russia. Russia is focussing more on economic and political issues within the BRICS. Russia has determined to expand its foreign policy coordination among BRICS countries. BRICS is an integral part of Russia's multi-vector policy. It has been reflected in Vladimir Putin's concept of the Russian Federation. The following are the objectives of the idea of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation with particular reference to BRICS:

- (i) Developing strategic cooperation with BRICS countries
- (ii) the nature and working of the international financial system to strengthen the Russian economy
- (iii) To enhance the multi-vector character of Russian foreign policy
- (iv) Promoting bilateral relations with BRICS member states
- (v) To increase the cultural presence of Russia in the contemporary global world (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation; Nivedita, 2023).

### **Russia's Concerns at the BRICS**

After the disintegration of the USSR, Russia became a newly emerged sovereign state. Russia has to consolidate Russian society politically and culturally and fulfil the aspirations of post - soviet ethnic groups. The hegemonistic policies of the West have forced Russia to develop its proximity with the Global South. Participation in BRICS and developing relations with the Global South countries fulfills Russia's national interests (Kharitonova, 2022).

*"BRICS has remained a strategic priority for Russia since 'its long-term geopolitical confrontation with the West'" (Kharitonova, 2022). Vladimir Putin has pointed out that Russia prioritises BRICS in its foreign policy priorities. Russia can restore its superpower status by establishing good relations*



with the Global South and actively participating in the various multipolar institutions in the contemporary world order (**Kharitonova, p.188, 2022**).

### **As A. Lukin's statement on BRICS**

*“The role of Russia in this transitional world is only just beginning to take shape. The country is positioning itself as the linchpin of Eurasian integration. Whether it has enough resources to sustain this project is unclear. What is clear is that Russia cannot afford an open-ended confrontation with other powers because of its heavy economic dependence on the West . . . Moscow should revive its role as a kind of bridge between Europe and Eurasia, allowing for the transmission of certain European political standards to Eurasia while also making clear to Europeans that Eurasian countries, including Russia, have their traditions, and will not accept the wholesale imposition of Western values where these contradict their moral principles”*( **Oxana Kharitonova, 2022, p.188; Lukin, 2016**)

Russia would like to resolve the conflicts among BRICS countries and will act as the bridge to resolve the conflicts and disputes. Russia has played a vital role in the India – China border conflict in 2020. Russia has de-escalated the conflict between India and China by actively negotiating with both countries. Russia has organised a Foreign Minister meeting in Moscow to resolve the differences. It indicates the dynamic role of Russia in the contemporary global world (**Kharitonova, 2022**). Russia has initiated dialogues and discussions through diplomatic means. Russia has created a positive atmosphere to resolve the border conflict peacefully. The economic crisis created by the West has led to the weakening of ties between BRICS countries. Russian Higher School of Economics (Moscow) stated that BRICS countries had achieved development by 2020, and now BRICS countries have every right to take active participation in global governance (Oxana Kharitonova, 2022)

In the view of Timofey Bordachev, a Member of the BRICS Russia Expert Council,

*“New Russia does not have a stake in the competition of imperial ambitions, but it does have a stake in closer international co-operation and in the creation of really e"active formats of interaction that can provide an alternative to the growing chaos in the global economy and global politics. It is largely because of this that BRICS is gradually shifting from its original mission of serving as a platform to express the consolidated opinion of new, growing economies in a world dominated by the US and its allies to an agenda that o" ers the world new solutions that reflect the changes in the international environment”* (**Oxana Kharitonova, 2022, p.189; BRICS et al., 2020**)

### **Russia, BRICS and Global South**

India is not happy with the nature and functioning of the Security Council of the United Nations. India strongly advocated for reforms in the Security Council of the United Nations. India strongly believes active participation in BRICS will further its foreign policy agenda and United Nations Security Council membership. India has developed a strategic privileged partnership with Russia. India - and Russia have strategic defence cooperation, and India feels comfortable where Russia plays a more significant role in the various multi-polar organisations, i.e. the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS and RIC. BRICS is playing a more significant role in the contemporary multi-polar world. Rajan Kumar(2022) and Venkat Raman(2022) have pointed out that “*Status seeking*’ and ‘*hedging*” are two core motives of India and China at BRICS. India uses the same strategy the USA applied to China( Kumar, 2022; Raman, 2022).



India would like to further its multilateral strategy through BRICS. India's main objective is to develop a good network with BRICS countries. India has been working with BRICS countries on various issues, i.e. maritime security, culture, global climate change, institutional reforms, education, terrorism and pandemic control. India strongly believes in democracy, human rights, sovereignty, and non-intervention. India is consistently playing an active role in BRICS. The Taliban situation has created new opportunities for BRICS to play an active role in the contemporary global world (Kumar, 2022). India strongly condemned China's aggressive behaviour with particular reference to the Doklam and Galwan standoff. Countries in Asia have considered China an Asian hegemony due to its belligerent behaviour. BRICS countries must develop mechanisms to resolve the border conflicts within the BRICS for the progressive development of BRICS countries.

BRICS member states are significantly different in terms of foreign policy priorities, economies and political environments, but BRICS countries united in the name of multilateralism and various contemporary global issues. Most of the BRICS countries suffer from socio-economic inequalities, and BRICS countries can work together to overcome these inequalities. Since the USA left Afghanistan recently, it is an excellent opportunity for BRICS to play a significant role in Afghanistan. BRICS countries can ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan. There is great significance for BRICS in the contemporary world order. BRICS countries have been strongly advocating their foreign policy priorities and objectives in the wake of ever-fast-changing geopolitics; the development of Russia – China relations, changing political regimes, and complex India - China dynamics; India – Brazil's relations with the USA have enabled the BRICS countries to work together in the contemporary global world.

BRICS countries' priorities on foreign policy, national interests, governance mechanisms, maritime cooperation, cultural paradigms, capital flows, natural disasters, Covid -19 pandemic. Thus, BRICS has attained much relevance and significance in the contemporary world. BRICS countries have political systems with more authoritarian systems in Russia and China and democratic structures in India, Brazil, and South Africa. BRICS countries have been steadily working on strengthening egalitarian systems. Despite changing political regimes in BRICS countries, member countries have continued their spirit in going ahead with the objectives of BRICS. BRICS countries strongly believe in the multi-polar world order. Russia and China share joint political authority and assertiveness in the contemporary multi-polar world order. China is a strong economic power, and Russia is a robust military power; India, Brazil and South Africa being solid democracies, have defended their strategic and economic interests.

BRICS countries have different historical political backgrounds, i.e.. India was associated with non-aligned movements and maintained strategic balance and neutrality towards the USA and Russia to protect its national interests. India and China have border conflicts, which may affect the working style of BRICS. Nevertheless, due to Russia's friendly intervention, India plays a more significant role in the various global governance institutions and South Asia, particularly concerning issues with Pakistan. India has successfully pushed the agenda of counter-terrorism in BRICS meetings and summits. Brazil has strongly supported the BRICS during the "Lula and Dilma Rouse" regimes. These regimes also supported poverty elimination measures and development in economic growth, which aimed at dynamic changes in the livelihood of the citizens in the vast Latin American Country. Bolsonaro has taken the reforms in favour of the U.S. statements and undermined the policies of Lula and Rouse. These developments have led to suspicions and doubts among the scholars of the BRICS. Bolsonaro eventually brought out reforms and participated actively in the BRICS summits. Russia has



also actively participated in the Central Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and played a dynamic role in global politics. BRICS countries have represented distinct historical-cultural perspectives. Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2013 also strongly advocated value systems for peaceful co-existence. BRICS countries have asserted against the U.S.-led multi-polar system.

China has emerged as a significant player after the 2008 financial crisis. While preserving its ideological core and values, China has eventually emerged as one of the major global economic powers in the U.S.-led Liberal International Order (LIO). Ideological rigidity and flexible pragmatism have strengthened BRICS countries economically. South Africa was made a lateral member of the BRICS in 2010 (Raman, 2022; Zongyi, 2022). The name South Africa is initially not mentioned according to Jim O'Neil's concept. BRICS has become more inclusive by adding South Africa as one of its members. It has added equity and inclusivity to the BRICS. Nelson Mandela fought against the anti-apartheid movement, and it added the southern paradigm of BRICS. According to IMF projections and database, BRICS nations will contribute close to 50% of world GDP by 2030 with the current 22%. BRICS countries are economically influential in several aspects. China has emerged as the world's largest industrial and manufacturing hub and has achieved milestones in research and development. India has been doing exceptionally well, particularly regarding the pharmaceutical industry, information and communication technology and services, and science and technology. Brazil and South Africa are enriched with ecological, mineral, water, and other natural resources. Russia has emerged as one of the largest energy suppliers to the world.

Demographic trends play a vital role in realising the economic aspects of BRICS. Brazil, India, and South Africa have significant population's ages 0–14 years and will convert as a workforce by 2030–2040. Thus, BRICS will play a more significant role in the ensuing years. Trade Intensity Index (TII) and Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) have increased trade intensity among BRICS countries. Direct and foreign direct investment (FDI) contributed immensely to robust economic growth despite COVID-19 restrictions (Kumar, 2022). The trans-oceanic zone has played a dynamic role in maritime interactions. It originated from Russia, covering South America and connected through the Indian Ocean. The political economy of BRICS countries can be strengthened through effective maritime interactions (Raman, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters have affected globalisation and the economy worldwide. Economic development can be achieved through cooperation among the BRICS countries. BRICS nations have firmly dealt with the COVID-19 scenarios. BRICS nations have adopted various monetary policies and new programmes to empower the citizens through various welfare programmes. BRICS called for the improvement of public health, digitisation, financial assistance, artificial intelligence, supply networks, and the improvement of humanitarian and medical supplies to combat the COVID-19 situation in the global world (Kumar, 2022)

### **Russia and Multipolar World**

Russia plays a predominant role in the contemporary multipolar world order due to its military resources, unique history and culture and massive economic resources. Post-Soviet leadership has adopted a reactive and pragmatic approach. Russia's foreign policies have become more offensive, assertive and self-confident. Russia is a revisionist power. The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation has given more importance to multipolarity and multilateralism. Hence, Russia is predominant in various multipolar institutions, i.e. BRICS, SCO, and the Russia – India – China Trilateral Summit (Gerrits, 2019).



### **Significance of 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit at Johannesburg, South Africa (August 24, 2023)**

The 15th BRICS summit occurred in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 22 to 24, 2023. It has been successful in many ways. BRICS countries have invited 06 countries to become members of BRICS. Now, the strength of BRICS countries is Eleven. BRICS has emerged as a global multipolar organisation that will address various contemporary global issues. From the 'Middle East region': Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE, apart from Ethiopia and Argentina from Africa and South America, have become members of the BRICS multipolar organisation. BRICS will be dealing with political and economic issues in the new world order. Global South countries will immensely benefit from the BRICS. More than 40 countries have shown their interest in becoming part of BRICS. Despite the US and Europe's policies to isolate Russia over the Ukraine issue and the ICC international warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin, BRICS has achieved milestones in this regard. Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had a conversation with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi before the summit and met him on the sidelines of the BRICS summit. Recently, Iran has become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization( SCO)

Indian Ambassador to Russia D.B. Venkatesh Verma's statement on BRICS :

*"A measured expansion in BRICS membership was both timely and necessary," "Instead of viewing expansion solely through the prism of big power relations, say its relations with China or the U.S., the bubbling desire for multipolarity in various regions is something that India should embrace and channel within BRICS for its benefit", ( Indian Ambassador to Russia D.B. Venkatesh Verma 2023; Haidar Suhasini, The Hindu, 2023).*

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra has stated that expanding the BRICS will strongly advocate for reforms in the United Nations and more representation of the global south in the Security Council of the United Nations. The Top 10 oil producers are new members of the BRICS, including Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, UAE, Brazil and Iran.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has given the following statement on the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit:

*"Now that we are joined by such major players in the energy market as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates, of course, the topic of energy will shine in a new light and will be in great demand"( Russian et al. 2023, Suhasini Haidar, The Hindu 2023).*

Further, Sergei Lavrov stated that the name of the BRICS will not be changed as it has attained global prominence in the contemporary multipolar world order. Since the United Arab Emirates has become a member of BRICS, UAE's Ambassador to India, Abdunasser Alshaali, has described it as an "important milestone",

UAE's Ambassador to India, Abdunasser Alshaali, told The Hindu:

*"For UAE-India relations, this is an opportunity to continue broadening and deepening our strategic cooperation and economic partnership ( Haidar Suhasini, The Hindu, August 24, 2023).*

The Johannesburg Declaration has included a common strategy to benefit all BRICS countries. Since South Africa has chosen the theme "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism" for the year 2023, it has introduced initiatives in the priority areas and an equitable and transition on climate change issues( Haidar Suhasini, The Hindu, August 24, 2023). Further, South Africa has declared that it will provide



opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area and strongly advocates the participation of women in the peace process( Haidar et al., 2023).

China has expanded the Belt Road and Global Development Initiative( GDI) projects as part of the BRICS roadmap. 15<sup>th</sup> summit has provided an opportunity for both India and China to meet at Johannesburg after the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping interacted with each other. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Lula joined the meeting of President Ramaphosa on August 22-24. Further, BRICS leaders discussed intra-BRICS trading in national currencies( Haidar Suhasini, The Hindu, 2023)

### **India Prime Minister - Shri Narendra Modi's participation in the 15th BRICS Summit**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg under South Africa chairmanship on 23 August 2023. BRICS leaders have extensively discussed various contemporary global issues.

Prime Minister has explained the acronym of BRICS in the following manner: “*B - Breaking barriers; R - Revitalising economies; I – Inspiring Innovation; C - Creating opportunities; S - Shaping the future*” (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi 2023).

### **Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has highlighted the following aspects in the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit:**

*“UNSC reforms; reform of Multilateral Financial Institutions; reform of WTO; to build consensus on its expansion; sending a global message of unity; BRICS Space Exploration Consortium; Offering Indian Digital Public Infrastructure the BRICS member countries; Proposed undertaking skill mapping, skilling and promoting mobility among BRICS countries; protection of Big Cats under International Big Cat Alliance; Proposed establishing a repository of traditional medicine among BRICS countries; BRICS partners to support AU's permanent membership of the G20( Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi 2023).*

Since the 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg had invited the six new members — Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from West Asia; Egypt and Ethiopia from Africa; and Argentina from Latin America to join BRICS formally, it has reflected the global multipolar world order. Twenty-two countries have submitted formal applications, and 40 countries have shown interest in BRICS. BRICS member countries have been frequently attending annual summits. It has led to establishing the New Development Bank (NDB). The NDB has financed 96 projects valued at \$33 billion. BRICS member countries have vehemently condemned the West-dominated global financial institutions, i.e., the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. Security council. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres described them as reflecting “yesterday's world” ( Talmiz Ahmad, The Hindu, 2023).

### **Irritants among BRICS Countries:**

There are some irritants among BRICS countries. Military standoffs between Indian and Chinese military forces and growing polarisation have led to tensions among BRICS countries. However, many efforts have been made to work cooperatively to bring harmony between India and China. BRICS countries have initiated various programmes to develop diagnostic and preventive measures for the control of diseases, including a joint epidemiological R&D section with financial aid from the New



Development Bank. Further, the BRICS countries have launched many cooperative measures to deal with climate and other natural disasters. BRICS countries have established a Disaster Response Fund and a Disaster Management Centre to deal with natural disasters ( Mukherjee, 2022). A BRICS Network university has played a vital role in strategic management and knowledge sharing.

There is a strategic rivalry between India and China, and complex geopolitics have created various tensions in the BRICS. However, Russia has taken good diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis between India and China to survive BRICS as the global multi-polar organisation to challenge the U.S. hegemony and hierarchical liberal international order. BRICS has led to the ideational horizon of perceiving International Relations (Mukherjee, 2022). BRICS countries have created an alternate space supported by a value system that is more egalitarian and equal than the present international system. BRICS countries have brought out dynamic changes in the Global South by strongly envisaging postcolonial/decolonial discourse, which had created ideational value to the BRICS idea. In contrast, countries struggle with wide disparities among citizens. BRICS countries have succeeded at multi-fronts in the contemporary multi-polar world order. BRICS countries represent half of the world's major continents. The idea of BRICS is novel and innovative in a fragile geo-political environment. BRICS has immensely contributed to the egalitarian system and institution-building in the global order. BRICS has immensely contributed to economic and social cooperation. BRICS has contributed to an inclusive world order and ideologically immensely contributed to the Global South (Kumar, 2022).

### **Criticism**

Western scholarship is critical of BRICS due to the following factors: (i) BRICS is dealing with economic institutions (ii) BRICS countries are giving more importance to the intra-BRICS heterogeneity ;(iii) asymmetry among BRICS countries (iv) tremendous growth among BRICS countries. Despite Western criticisms, BRICS countries have been doing exceptionally well concerning political and financial aspects( Kumar, 2022).

### **Possible areas of Conflicts and Contestation**

Since BRICS countries have divergent perspectives and opinions, all countries have to work together to achieve political goals. BRICS countries should design a shared vision to assert their presence and dominance in the contemporary multipolar world order. China's Belt Road Initiative project, India's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and Russia's strong ambition for greater Eurasia have posed serious challenges and issues for BRICS countries. Hence, Russia plays a more significant role in developing an institutional mechanism to unite all BRICS countries on one platform (Nivedita, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

Russia has been playing a dynamic role in the BRICS, particularly in developing a common approach to establishing strategic cooperation and bilateral relations among BRICS countries. Regular annual summits have contributed immensely to coordination and created platforms to discuss contemporary global issues. Ministerial mechanisms have contributed to the continued cooperation among BRICS countries. BRICS countries have established business councils of BRICS to promote investment and trade. The establishment of the New Development Bank( NDB) has occupied centre stage in developing and promoting innovation, energy cooperation, science and technology cooperation, commerce, and trade. BRICS has facilitated Russia's essential role in establishing a non-Western





global governance structure. BRICS has immensely contributed to Russia's global aspirations and to creating an alternative world order to challenge the global hegemony of the USA.

The COVID-19 pandemic and global health emergency strengthened the coordination, cooperation and understanding among the BRICS countries. BRICS countries have developed common platforms and strategies to deal with the coronavirus disease. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov has appreciated the visionary efforts of BRICS countries in establishing a vaccine development research centre. BRICS summits also strongly advocated the health mechanisms and policies to deal with infectious diseases. Thus, Russia has immensely contributed to the coordination, global security, innovative growth and global stability. Russian President Vladimir Putin has stated that BRICS is not a closed alliance and will invite like-minded countries to become members of the BRICS – multipolar institution. As a result of this, the membership of BRICS is extended to another 06 countries (Egypt et al. - Middle East); Ethiopia and Argentina - Africa; and South America) At recent BRICS Summit at the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg on August 24, 2023

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