



A painting of a Palestinian woman by famous Palestinian artist Malak Mattar.

To us, this painting represents, “The collective strength of the weakest of the weak to achieve peace and justice for all.”

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POEM AND PICTURE: NAJIM HIKMET AND ABBAS MOMANI

This news and views letter is brought out with the purpose of disseminating the information about rapidly changing geo-political and economic coordinates in the world. The South is expanding, getting stronger, and demanding structural changes in the global governance.

We will bring this newsletter more often and make it available on various social media platforms free. Your suggestions are welcome regarding reaching out to more people and for the content improvement also. Unless stated otherwise, all pictures are taken from the internet and open sources.

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BRICS: The Emerging Multilateral Platform

In 2001, Jim O'Neill, an economist at Goldman Sachs, identified Brazil, Russia, India and China as emerging market economies that should be accommodated in G7 to make the Global North more inclusive. It is ironic that BRICS – the group formed by the emerging market economies has evolved into a platform providing an alternative domain of trade and development to the countries of the Global South.

The first formal summit of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) was held on 16 June 2009 in Yekaterinburg (Russia). In December 2010, South Africa became the 5th member, and it became BRICS. Formed in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the first summit of BRIC demanded that the emerging market economies and developing countries must have a greater say in the international financial institutions. The other emphasis was on establishing a transparent, inclusive, equitable and rule-based multilateral trade system. The demands made by BRICS countries could not be accommodated by Bretton Woods financial institutions and the trade authority WTO, which were designed by the global North to facilitate imperialist exploitation.

BRICS countries then decided to set up independent institutions to provide financial resources to the countries of the global South. In the 2014 summit at Fortaleza (Brazil), agreements were signed to set up a New Development Bank (NDB) and a Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). The NDB was set up to support infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other countries of the Global South, and CRA was to provide contingency loans to tide over current account deficits. Since 2015, the NDB has started functioning, but CRA is yet to become functional.

The NDB is different from the existing development banks. It is a multilateral development bank free of any domination from the Global North. It is a development bank headed by a group of emerging market economies of the Global South. The membership of the bank is open to all members of the United Nations. Apart from the founding members, Bangladesh, Egypt, the UAE and Uruguay became members of the NDB. Prospective members are Uzbekistan, Colombia. Ethiopia and Zimbabwe are also about to join NDB. The initial authorized capital of the NDB is USD 100 billion divided into one million shares. The initial subscribed capital is USD 50 billion, equally divided

among five founding members. The agreement on NDB specifies that every member will have one vote and no member will have veto power.

The central focus of the NDB is on supporting infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries, other emerging market economies and developing countries in general. Loans offered by NDB are dollar-denominated and also denominated in the local currency of the borrowing country. By 2022, finance worth USD 30.23 billion was approved for 71 projects submitted by founding member countries. Subsequently, a number of projects submitted by Bangladesh were financed. Bangladesh became a member of NDB in September 2021. During COVID-19, the NDB made provisions for emergency loans to help countries.

In the historic Johannesburg BRICS summit, 2023, six new members were included. These were Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Argentina's President Javier Milei later decided that Argentina would not join BRICS. In the Kazan summit of 2024, delegates came from 36 nations and six international organisations, including the United Nations. The platform of BRICS was further expanded in this summit. This time full membership was not offered to any country. Instead, thirteen countries were invited to become BRICS partners. These were: Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Algeria and Turkey did not join as partner members. Later, in January 2025, Indonesia was given full membership in BRICS. In 2026, BRICS has 11 full members and 10 partner members. The expansion is obviously not going to stop here. According to official sources, there are many more countries that have shown interest in joining BRICS.

The expanded BRICS with 11 members represents 45 per cent of the global population, 37 per cent of global GDP (measured according to purchasing power parity) and 45 per cent of global oil production. The group is geographically well spread out and technologically well equipped. In material terms, BRICS does offer a robust institutional base for the countries of the global South. Organisationally, BRICS is an institution with a difference. Countries of the global South are of different sizes and of different political, cultural, economic and technological backgrounds. To form a group with such heterogeneity and function democratically, insisting on consensus in most matters is no small accomplishment [1].

[1] https://focusweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/JM_The-Struggle-for-Alternatives-ed.pdf

TIMELINE OF BRICS MEETINGS IN INDIA

9 Feb 2026, New Delhi: 1st BRICS Sherpas Meeting

Officially commenced India's 2026 Chairship; mapped out mutual frameworks for the upcoming tracks.

24 April 2026, New Delhi: BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers and Special Envoys on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The delegates exchanged views on situation in Gaza, the Palestinian issue, provision of humanitarian aid, and conflicts in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Sudan. The members could not reach a consensus due to differing perspectives on West Asia conflict. India issued a Chair's statement on the BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

11 May 2026, New Delhi: 2nd BRICS Sherpas Meetings

14–15 May 2026, New Delhi: Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Delegates held discussions surrounding global and regional matters. Reforms of the global governance system, and many other issues. A comment on this important meeting is given in the following pages.

3 June 2026, Puri (Odisha): DRR Meeting

The working group of DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) met in Puri, India, which was the first in-person meeting in this domain. The meeting focused on key areas including community-based disaster risk reduction, financing for disaster risk management, multi-hazard early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and the use of science, technology and innovation to strengthen disaster resilience. Participants witnessed a demonstration of the Odisha State Disaster Response Force (ODRAF) on water rescue preparedness at Ramchandi.

12–13 June 2026, Indore (M.P.): 16th Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

The Agriculture Ministers' meeting adopted the "Indore Declaration". The key initiatives outline in the declaration include BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence to boost climate resilience and productivity, launch of BRICS AGRIN (Agro Inputs, genetic resources and Information Network), creation of the Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in seed system, establishing a BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture for technology driven farming systems.

22-23 June 2026, Delhi: 16th BRICS National Security Advisers' (NSA) Meeting

Discussions in this meeting were centred on "Non-traditional Security Challenges Confronting the World Today." The delegates deliberated on actionable strategies regarding cyber-security, artificial intelligence, terrorism, supply-chain resilience, and food and energy security.

23–24 June 2026, Bengaluru: Heads of Space Agencies (HOSA)

This meeting was hosted by ISRO. The members focused heavily on debris-free space missions, long term sustainable operations, and establishment of a BRICS Space Economy Framework. Progress was made on defining terms of reference for the proposed BRICS Space Council.

25–26 June 2026, Gurugram (Haryana), 11th Energy Ministers' Meeting

The meeting adopted a Joint Communiqué and officially launched the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage. The delegates recognised the ongoing vital role of fossil fuel in global energy mix underscoring the necessity of adopting cleaner technology. They also discussed plans to handle cross-border energy trade.

BRICS FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING: A COMMENT

The Foreign Ministers' meeting was held in New Delhi on 14th and 15th of May 2026. The meeting was attended by foreign ministers of all member countries except China. Trump's visit to China was scheduled around same time, so Chinese foreign minister could not come to Delhi. China was represented by Chinese Ambassador to India. The meeting was also attended by foreign ministers and representatives of partner countries.

As in the case of deputy foreign ministers' meeting, in this meeting also the joint declaration could not be worked out. The conflicting positions of Iran and UAE on the ongoing war in West Asia did not allow the participants to reach a consensus. Consequently, Ministry of External Affairs released the 'Chair's Statement and Outcome Document at BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

The meeting's agenda covered a large canvas, which included positions on global and regional developments, reforms in global governance, and issue-based cooperation and coordination in various spheres like climate crisis, digital world, agriculture and food security, and others.

The Chair's Statement made no specific mention of the US-Israeli attack on Iran and Iran's response to this attack. No mention was made of the 'Strait of Hormuz' or Iran's attack on Israel and the US military bases in Gulf countries. It only stated, 'There were differing views among some members as regard to the situation in the West Asia/Middle East region. BRICS members expressed their respective national positions and shared a range of perspectives.'

Lack of consensus on these issues has been interpreted in western mainstream media as indicating fractures in extended BRICS. And others have expressed disappointment at meeting's failure to take an unambiguous anti-imperialist stand with regard to developments in West Asia. However, these judgements are made without taking into consideration the cardinal feature that defines the group. BRICS is not a collective based on political alignment of its members.

It is a platform which facilitates engagement and consensus among members countries with differing priorities, competing interests and sometime active political tensions and military conflicts. BRICS, as a platform has successfully navigated through such



Call on Prime Minister by the BRICS Foreign Ministers

complexities. And the consensus that is reached in BRICS meetings on the issues relating to peace, sovereignty, territorial integrity, humanitarian aid etc. is no small achievement for the platform.

In the foreign ministers' meeting in Delhi, the ministers expressed grave concern on the situation of occupied Palestine, continuous bombing on Gaza, denial of humanitarian aid and use of starvation as tool for killing. They firmly reiterated their support for granting Palestinian people their legitimate rights of self-determination and return. This would mean establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable state of Palestine within the internationally recognized 1967 borders, which included Gaza strip and West Bank with East Jerusalem as the capital.

The Chair's statement included one more clause demanding action with regard to Palestine. It said that Gaza Strip was an inseparable part of occupied Palestinian territory. Therefore, Gaza and West Bank should be unified under Palestinian Authority. The ministers called on international community to support Palestinian Authority in undergoing reforms to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of Palestinian people for independence and statehood. (A member took objection on this clause.)

The ministerial meeting demanded immediate implementation of ceasefire in Lebanon and condemned Israel for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. The ministers asked for recall of Israeli military forces occupying Lebanon.

After the obstruction in flow of vessels in strait of Hormuz, unimpeded flow of maritime commerce through international waterways has become a major concern for all countries. The question of ensuring the navigational rights was raised in the

meeting with respect to freedom of vessel movement in Red Sea and BAB Al-Mandab strait. The ministers recommended enhanced diplomatic efforts in this direction. The dialogue should cover the peace negotiations in Yemen in totality. The urgency to address the humanitarian crisis of Yemen including food security and access to basic services was raised in the meeting. (Objection was Raised against this perspective by one member country.)

The meeting expressed disapproval of unilateral economic and secondary sanctions imposed arbitrarily. Such sanctions violate international law and undermine the principles of UN charter. The ministers reaffirmed that BRICS countries do not impose or support sanctions which are not authorised by United Nation's Security Council.

The ministerial meeting expressed serious concern over strangulation of Cuban economy through sanctions, and demanded that sanctions should be lifted with immediate effect as specified in the United Nations General Assembly resolutions.

Apart from these politically sensitive subjects, there was broad consensus and enthusiastic response on non-controversial issue like reforms in global governance. Members demanded larger representation of EMDC countries in UN Security Council, IMF, World Bank, etc.

Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering support for strengthening a non-discriminatory, open, equitable, transparent, fair, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system. They underscored the importance of the efforts to facilitate fast, low-cost, more accessible, efficient, transparent, and safe cross-border payments among BRICS countries and other nations which can support greater trade and investment flows. In this regard, they encouraged the continuation of discussions of BRICS

Cross-Border payments initiative. The Ministers recognized that BRICS countries are key players in world food production. They have a critical role in enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability, ensuring global food security and nutrition. In this regard, they appreciated the continued elaboration of the initiative to establish a grain trading platform within BRICS (the BRICS Grain Exchange), and its subsequent development and expansion into other agricultural products and commodities. There were substantive deliberations on the question of climate crisis. The Ministers resolved to remain united in pursuit of goals spelt out in Paris Agreement and UNFCCC. A wide range of initiatives were discussed with reference to combat global warming. These included biodiversity, forest cover, resilient infrastructure and so on. The meeting also covered deliberations on Information Communication Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Space technology. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment that the technological advancement should be used for peaceful and developmental purposes in a more inclusive, accessible, sustainable and interoperable manner.

The Ministers recognised valuable contribution of Partner countries to BRICS cooperation. They reaffirmed their commitment to consolidate and strengthen BRICS in line with the spirit of mutual respect and understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, inclusiveness, continuity, full consultation and consensus.

The heterogenous group in BRICS and its rule to proceed only through consensus does not allow BRICS to choose a radical trajectory and take a great leap forward towards a just and equitable world order. But it sustains the solidarity within the group and presents itself as a truly democratic platform for the countries of global south. It does proceed slowly and steadily towards a new world order.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addressed a press conference in New Delhi on 15 May 2026. He emphasized that there is no military solution to the region's conflicts, and that a negotiated settlement is the only viable path forward. He stated that Iran would warmly welcome constructive contributions by India to stabilize the regional crisis.

A Glimpse of History: Bandung Conference



Bandung Conference, Indonesia, 1955. Photo: From Internet.

End of WWII was marked by United States dropping atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was an announcement that US would take over position of the hegemon in post war world order.

The colonial powers of Europe and newly emerged imperialist world of Global North decided that they did not want war among themselves. They also did not want the complete chaos on the economic front as witnessed during the interwar period. It was then decided to setup a rule-based world order that would work to the advantage of the imperialist world. United Nations was established in 1945, to maintain global peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and promote social progress, better living conditions and human rights. The economic order in the capitalist world was delineated in the Bretton Woods conference held in 1944.

The end of WWII also marked the beginning of liberation of erstwhile colonies from their colonial masters. The newly liberated countries of Global South, and those who were expecting to get free, hoped that United Nations will protect their sovereignty, and Bretton Woods institutions will provide them development support in terms of providing finance and sharing technology. This was not to be so.

Korean war began in 1950 and continued till 1953. United States had bombed every available piece of infrastructure in the northern part of Korea by the end of 1951. Old colonial powers still retained military hold over their colonies, and the US was forging new military alliances in Indo-China region to encircle Soviet Union and China. China was repeatedly threatened by US that if any military intervention was initiated by China in the case of Taiwan, US would use nuclear weapons.

So far as development aspirations of Third World were concerned, US dollar was given the status of world currency. In this way, the US acquired control over all the economies of capitalist world. Bretton Wood institutions were primarily involved in restoring Europe, and little space for the development aspirations of Third World.

This was the background in which a conference of newly liberated Asian and African countries took place on 18-24 April 1955, in Bandung (Indonesia). The heads of twenty-nine Asian and African countries, as well as representatives from colonies that had not yet won their independence, gathered at Bandung. The conference was attended by Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Chou En-Lai (China), U-Nu (Burma), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Sukarno (Indonesia), and many others. These leaders who

had emerged from respective freedom struggles in their countries, could see that the colonial designs and accompanying violence would continue to cloud the post-colonial era. A united and robust resistance by the newly liberated world of Asia and Africa was required to build a new world order.

Sukarno in his opening remarks to the conference said, "Asia and Africa will prosper only when they are united. Even the safety of the world at large, cannot be safeguarded without a united Asia and Africa. I hope that this conference will give guidance to mankind, will point out to mankind the way which it must take to attain safety and peace. I hope that it will give evidence that Asia and Africa have been reborn, nay a new Asia and new Africa have been born.' The discussions on the conference primarily focussed on peaceful coexistence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation states and equality of all races and all nationals. In this context, military alliances and bases built around Asia, and threats of nuclear attacks were strongly criticised. The ten principles elaborated in this regard were put down in the final communique of the conference.

Essentially the ten principles argued for an international order rooted in the principles of UN Charter (1945). In 1955, seventy-six countries had signed onto the UN Charter, which held treaty obligations towards its signatories. However, about eighty territories, including most of the African continent and a majority of the Pacific islands,

remained under colonial control of countries, who were signatories to the charter. As countries gained their independence from the late 1950s to the 1970s, they joined the United Nations as full members. The UN Charter was then, and remains now, the most important consensus document in the world, which has been blatantly violated all along by the imperialist countries.

Apart from peaceful coexistence, sovereignty and equality, the discussions in Bandung conference also envisioned a New International Economic Order (NIEO). A section of its final communique discussed in detail the cooperation among countries of global South. Several concrete proposals were outlined for economic, technological, political and cultural cooperation. As imperialism had only seen fit to develop the colonies as sites to produce raw materials, much emphasis was placed on the need to stabilise commodity prices and develop domestic capabilities to process these commodities before export. There was also a call to establish the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development in order to finance investment in these countries. The special United Nations Fund for Economic Development was established in 1958, which transformed into United Nations Development Program in 1965. United Nations Conference for Trade and Development was established in 1964. Bandung conference was not just any conference. It was special. It was a gathering of representatives of millions of people, almost half of the population of the planet, which marked a major transition in



Sukarno at Bandung Conference, 1955.

THE BANDUNG TEN PRINCIPLES INCLUDE:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter;
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations;
3. Recognition of the equality of all races and nations, large and small;
4. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries;
5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, individually or collectively, in accordance with the UN Charter;
6. Abstention from the use of collective defense arrangements to serve the interests of major powers; Abstention from exerting pressure on other countries;
7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other countries;
8. Settlement of international disputes by peaceful means such as negotiations, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation;
10. Respect for justice and international obligations.

the world order. The conference was a celebration of the beginning of decolonisation process and contemplation of its implications for the humankind. The leaders who spoke in the meeting brought with them the voice of their people, who were colonised, oppressed and humiliated for centuries. Roeslan Abdulgani was the secretary general of Bandung conference. He introduced the word 'Bandung Spirit', which was described as, 'the spirit of love for peace, anti-violence, anti-discrimination and development for all, without trying to intervene for one another wrongly, but to pay a great respect to one another.' The Bandung Spirit was not confined to the speeches and thoughts of leadership. It was rooted in the freedom struggles of third world carried out by ordinary men and women.

Bandung conference was followed by number of conferences and meetings of third world countries. As a result, several third world regional groups for mutual cooperation came into existence in 1950s and 60s. Two big follow ups carrying the Bandung Spirit were emergence of Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 and formation of Group of 77 in 1964. In 1974, proposals for the 'New International Economic Order (NIEO)' demanding transfer of resources and technology to the developing countries were placed in United Nation's General Assembly. 'The Declaration on the Establishment of a NIEO' was formally adopted on 1 May 1974. However, the NIEO project suffered from inherent weakness. The UN General Assembly's resolution was non-binding and could not pressurize the developed countries to provide the requisite developmental support to the newly liberated countries.

Secondly, the Group of 77 was heterogeneous. It comprised of many poor countries in Africa as well as the resource rich petroleum exporting countries. The 'Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)' was formed in 1960 to retrieve control over their oil resource from the multinational companies of England, France and USA. But in 1973, when OPEC countries restricted the extraction and export of oil, and oil prices increased sharply, the poor oil importing countries suffered gravely from the oil shock. At the same time, OPEC countries earned a fortune from the increased price of the oil.

The petro-dollars earned by the Sheikhs of West Asia were deposited in the American and European commercial banks. The commercial banks of Europe and USA used this excess liquidity to offer easy loans to the developing countries of Africa and Latin America. The resulting debt crisis of 1980s ravaged these economies. When the poor countries approached IMF for help, Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was imposed on them forcing them to devalue their currencies and remove all restrictions from exports and imports.

In 1990, the socialist block led by Soviet Union also disintegrated. Thus began the era of neo-liberal economics and unipolar world order. The export-oriented growth model enforced on the developing countries compelled them to compete with each other rather than cooperate. Permanently trapped in a situation of debt and austerity, the word 'Bandung spirit' was dropped from the lexicon of developing countries.

The beginning of 21st century gave a new turn to the

For Western Media, everything that happened in the world between 1945 and 1990, can only be explained by the Cold War and nothing else. The USSR has disappeared, and the Cold War along with it, so any position similar to those at that time makes no sense. Consider the absurdity of this attitude and the incredibly contemptuous - even racist - prejudice that underlies it. The true history of Bandung Conference and the Non-Alignment that emerged from it, demonstrated that the Asian and African peoples undertook an initiative at that time by themselves, and for themselves.... Non-Alignment was already "Non-Alignment" on the model of globalisation that the imperialist powers wanted to impose on the newly independent countries. Non-Alignment proceeded from a refusal to submit to the requirement of this reasserted imperialist globalisation. Today, the countries of South are again confronted with an imperialist globalisation project of which they would be the victims. Their willingness not to submit to its requirement places a "rebirth" of Non-Alignment" on globalisation back on the agenda.

- Samir Amin in "The Long Revolution of the Global South", Monthly Review Press, 2019.

world capitalist production structure. The financial crisis of 2008 demonstrated the fragility of Dollar centric financial and monetary architecture. At the same time, a few economies of Global South registered a very rapid rate of growth. The great leap taken by Chinese economy in manufacturing and technology was unprecedented. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa were identified as countries transitioning toward advanced economic status – the Emerging Market and Developing Economies. These countries came together and formed BRICS. In less than two decades, the geopolitical economic scene has altered drastically. The post war imperialist world order set by the United States is plagued with multiple fractures. The military overextension of imperialist block is demanding a heavy cost politically and economically. The status of Dollar as the reserve currency has weakened significantly. The unstable huge bubble of finance that engulfs the world economy can burst any day. The end of present imperialist-neocolonial world order is imminent.

Meanwhile BRICS has expanded with 11 full members and 10 partner countries. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is joined by around 150 countries. Trade and investment among countries of Global South have acquired significant proportion. There is a promise to replace the existing order with a multipolar world.

This is a period of interregnum because the configuration of new world order is yet to acquire a concrete form. At this crucial juncture of history, a look back at history provides a perspective for understanding the strengths and challenges of present developments. In 1950s and 60s, the New International Order was envisioned in terms of rights of sovereignty and equality of the newly independent nations. These rights were demanded in the framework of a people friendly socialistic development paradigm – be it the 2nd five year plan of India or Arusha declaration of Africa. The freedom struggles of colonies had a solid mass base of working people. Therefore, New International Order was envisioned in terms of directly uplifting the lives of working people.

The coming together of countries of Global South in the present era is not explicitly defined in terms of an alternative to the neo-liberal development paradigm. The workers and peasants of these countries do not as yet have a clear perception of how their lives will change in the evolving multipolar world order. But participation of working peoples is a necessary condition to ensure that the new world order ensures peace and development for all. It is then of utmost importance that Bandung Spirit is revived at the ground.

(Based on the "The Bandung Spirit", Tricontinental Dossier number 87.)

Many things happened before Bandung Conference. One such major event was Asian Relations Conference also.

A glimpse of the conference is presented here for the readers:

ASIAN RELATIONS CONFERENCE (ARC) 23 MARCH - 2 APRIL 1947

Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Head of the provisional government of India organised Asian Relations Conference, which was attended by 193 delegates and 51 observers from 34 different contingents including Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, China, Philippines, Vietnam, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and others.

The long night of India is coming to an end. We were fatalistic. We believed that it was destined that we should be dependent and exploited; that we should be dominated and subjected. Alas! alas! alas! that that period was ours; but no longer, not from tomorrow's dawn; nay, not from this hour when we part.

Fellow Asians, as I called you the other day, my comrades, my kinsmen, arise; remember the night of darkness is over. Together, men and women, let us march forward to the Dawn.

- Sarojini Naidu, as the President of the Asian Relations Conference.

- The delegates, I believe, represent easily more than half the world's population, even omitting Japan and Korea, whose representatives we miss here today, and if we add the observers also this Conference will represent the much greater part of the whole world.

- Welcome Address of Sir Shri Ram, Chairman of the Reception Committee of ARC

INDONESIA



Early Inhabitants & Foundations, and The Confluence of Religion & Trade

Human habitation in the Indonesian archipelago (a group of many islands) stretches back hundreds of thousands of years. The modern demographic foundation was built by Austronesian peoples, who migrated to the region around 2,000 BCE. They brought agricultural skills, advanced seafaring capabilities, and wet-rice cultivation, establishing coastal villages that eventually evolved into sophisticated maritime kingdoms.

Indonesia's geography—straddling the vital Malacca Strait—made it the ultimate trading hub connecting China, India, and the Middle East. This strategic position allowed global trades to continuously reshape the local culture and belief systems. First Indian traders brought Hinduism and Buddhism, and then Muslim merchants from Persia and China introduced Islam to the people of this land. By the 16th century, Islam became the dominant religion, giving rise to powerful sultanates like Malacca, Aceh, and Demak.

Colonization & The Anti-Colonial Struggle

Attracted by the lucrative spice trade (particularly nutmeg and cloves), European powers arrived in the early 16th century.

- The Dutch East Indies: The Dutch East India Company (VOC) systematically monopolized trade, and by the 19th century, the Dutch government took direct control, establishing the Dutch East Indies. They implemented oppressive economic systems like the Cultivation System (forced cash-cropping), exploitation, and political fragmentation.
- The Nationalist Awakening: The early 20th century saw the birth of a unified Indonesian identity, galvanized by the 1928 "Youth Pledge" (Sumpah Pemuda), which proclaimed one motherland, one nation, and one language (Bahasa Indonesia).
- Japanese Occupation & Independence: Japan

occupied the islands during WWII (1942–1945), shattering the illusion of Dutch invincibility. Following Japan's surrender, nationalist leaders Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta declared Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945. A brutal four-year diplomatic and guerrilla war against returning Dutch forces ensued until the Netherlands officially recognized Indonesian sovereignty in 1949.

The Post-Independence Eras: Sukarno to Suharto Sukarno's Rule (1945–1967)

As Indonesia's charismatic first president, Sukarno focused on nation-building, uniting a wildly diverse population under the national philosophy of Pancasila (Five Principles). Externally, he championed the Global South, hosting the historic 1955 Bandung Conference, which birthed the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) was very strong in Indonesia, and the country was developing on the socialist principles. However, by mid 1960s, the economic problems became large as Sukarno took the clear side of the Soviet bloc. The Communist Party of Indonesia was growing and it created a rift with the military of Indonesia which was also of considerably bog size. The western powers and the CIA of the US played their games to destabilise the Sukarno regime. The CIA supplied these rebels with money, modern automatic weapons, and even an independent fleet of B-26 bombers flown by American and Taiwanese mercenary pilots in late 50s. Failing in their attempts, US changed its strategy and started giving direct aid to the right-wing leadership of Indonesian army. This led to a bloody coup, which failed but military leader General Suharto took power from Sukarno, followed by a massive anti-communist purge, resulting in almost a million deaths.

Suharto changed the orientation of the political economy and the society towards Western-aligned

global markets. The situation in Indonesia remained politically stable from 1967 to 1998, almost three decades under Suharto's regime, but the poverty and prosperity grew with a widening gap at two ends.

Modern Indonesia: Demography, System & Economy

Demography: Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country (over 280 million people) and boasts the world's largest Muslim-majority population (roughly 87%). It is highly diverse, spanning over 17,000 islands and containing more than 300 distinct ethnic groups, with the Javanese being the largest.

Political System: Today, Indonesia is a vibrant, stable presidential representative republic. It features a multi-party system and direct presidential elections. Power has shifted significantly toward regional governments through extensive decentralization policies enacted post-1998. The current political framework values consensus-building, though it frequently navigates complex coalitions between secular nationalist and moderate Islamic parties.

Political Economy: As Southeast Asia's largest economy and a G20 member, Indonesia operates a mixed economy. It is rich in natural resources, heavily relying on palm oil, coal, and increasingly strategic minerals like nickel (crucial for the global electric vehicle battery supply chain). Under recent

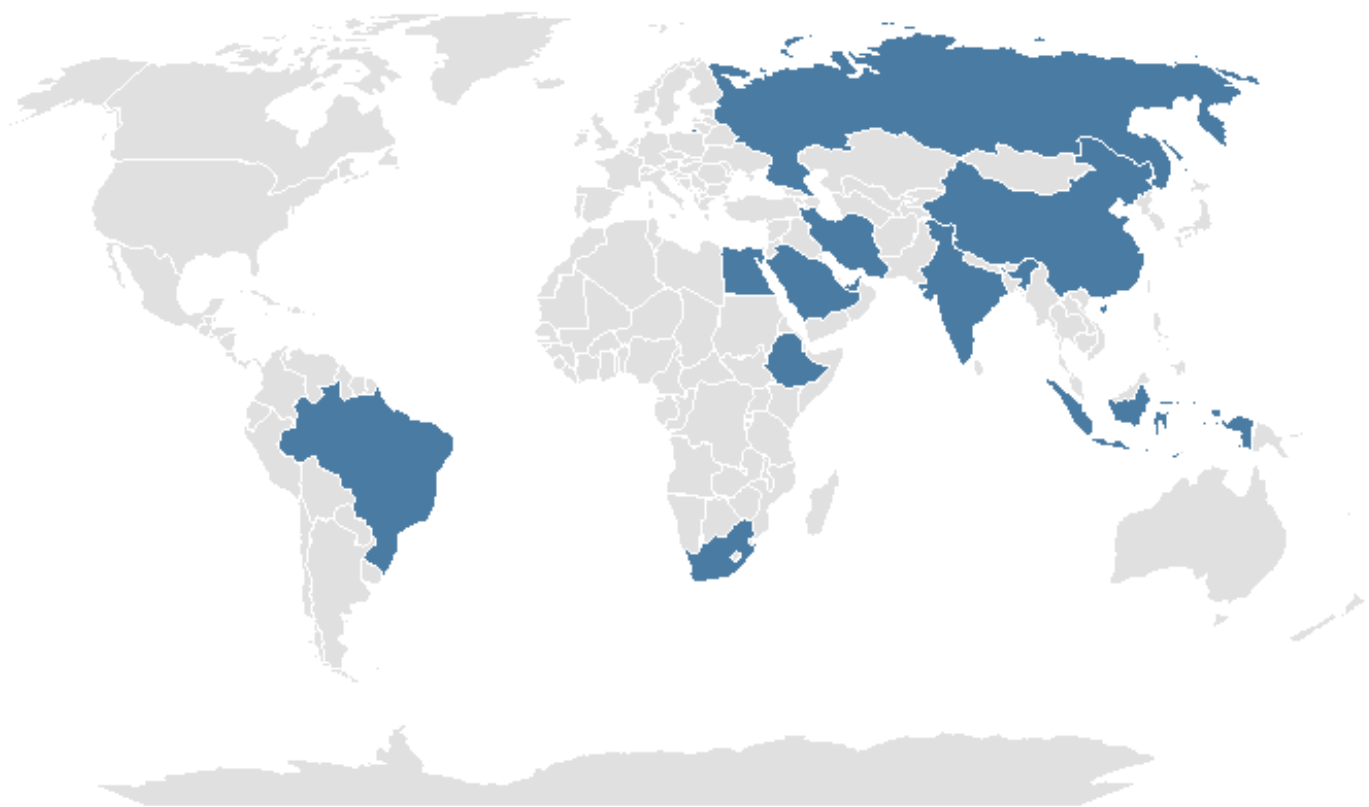


administrations, the country has focused heavily on domestic processing of raw materials ("downstreaming") and massive infrastructure development.

Global Footprint: BRICS, BRI & the Global South Indonesia officially joined BRICS as a full member in January 2025, becoming its first Southeast Asian member. This move allows Jakarta to access alternative development financing via the New Development Bank (NDB), hedge against Western financial volatility, and promote de-dollarization in regional trade. Over the last one decade, China has come very close in terms of the trade and other fields also like education with Indonesia. Now 20,000 Indonesian students are studying in China. China has built its high-speed train from Jakarta to Bandung under BRI. But at the same time, Indonesia has continued its relations and doing joint military exercises with USA.



BRICS



Members' Directory

Country	Population	Area	Export (Bn\$)	Import (Bn\$)	GDP (Tn\$)
BRAZIL	213,421,037	8,515,767	339.695	252.710	2.191
RUSSIA	146,028,325	17,098,246	492.314	293.497	2.072
INDIA	1,428,627,663	3,287,590	431.412	672.140	3.638
CHINA	1,404,890,000	9,706,761	3379.314	2557.497	18.270
SOUTH AFRICA	63,015,904	1,221,031	110.608	107.123	0.380
EGYPT	107,868,296	1,002,450	42.553	84.218	0.396
ETHIOPIA	135,500,000	1,104,300	2.859	17.050	0.119
IRAN	92,417,681	1,648,195	80.900	58.726	0.405
SAUDI ARABIA	33,702,731	2,149,690	320.180	206.940	1.219
UAE	11,027,129	83,600	570.245	470.536	0.514
INDONESIA	288,315,089	1,904,569	258.774	221.886	1.371
BRICS TOTAL	3,524,813,859	47,722,199	6028.854	4942.323	30.575
WORLD TOTAL	8 billion	130 million	25 trillion	23 trillion	107 trillion
BRICS % of World	44%	37%	24%	21%	29%

Note: Data of Population and Area are taken from Worldometer. Data of Export, Import and GDP are taken from World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS).

BRAZIL

Capital: Brasília

Official Language Portuguese

Political System Federal presidential republic

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

Population: 213,421,037

Geography Region - Latin America

Key Neighbors - Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, French Guiana, Peru, Venezuela

Total Area - 8,515,767 km²

Economy Total Export - 339.695 billion US\$

Total Import - 252.71 billion US\$

Nominal GDP - 2.191 trillion US\$

Capital Moscow

Official Language Russian

Political System Presidential Republic

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin

Population 146,028,325

Geography Region - Eurasia

Neighbouring countries - Norway, Finland, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia

Total Area - 17,098,246 km²

Economy Total Export - 492.314 billion US\$

Total Import - 293.497 billion US\$

Nominal GDP - 2.072 trillion US\$

RUSSIA

INDIA

Capital New Delhi

Official Language Hindi/English

Political System Federal Parliamentary Republic

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Population 1,428,627,663

Geography Region - South Asia

Neighbouring countries - Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, Afghanistan

Total Area - 3,287,590 km²

Economy Total Export - 431.412 billion US\$

Total Import - 672.140 billion US\$

Nominal GDP - 3.638 trillion US\$

CHINA

Capital	Beijing
Official Language	Chinese
Political System	Unitary Communist State
President	Xi Jinping
Population	1,404,890,000
Geography	Region - South Asia Neighbouring countries - Russia, India, North Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Vietnam Total Area - 9,706,761 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 3.380 trillion US\$ Total Import - 2.557 trillion US\$ Nominal GDP - 18.270 trillion US\$

SOUTH AFRICA

Capital	Pretoria
Official Language	12 African languages
Political System	Unitary parliamentary republic with an executive presidency
President	Cyril Ramaphosa
Population	63,015,904
Geography	Region - Africa Key Neighbors - Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Eswatini Total Area - 1,221,037 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 110.608 billion US\$ Total Import - 107.123 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - \$379.964 billion

EGYPT

Capital	Cairo
Official Language	Arabic
Political System	Unitary semi-presidential republic under an authoritarian government
President	Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
Population	107,868,296
Geography	Region - North-East Africa Neighbouring countries - Libya, Sudan, Israel, Palestine Total Area - 1,002,450 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 42.553 billion US\$ Total Import - 84.218 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - 395.645 billion US\$

ETHIOPIA

Capital	Addis Ababa
Official Language	Amharic/Oromo/Somali
Political System	Federal parliamentary republic under an authoritarian government
President	Taye Atske Selassie
Population	135,500,000
Geography	Region - East Africa Key Neighbors - Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan Total Area - 1,104,300 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 2.859 billion US\$ Total Import - 17.050 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - 119.03 billion US\$

Capital	Tehran
Official Language	Persian
Political System	Unitary presidential theocratic Islamic republic under an authoritarian dictatorship
President	Mojtaba Khamenei
Population	92,417,681
Geography	Region - Central Asia Neighbouring countries - Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Afghanistan, Pakistan Total Area - 1,648,195 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 80.9 billion US\$ Total Import - 58.726 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - 405.293 billion US\$

IRAN

SAUDI ARABIA

Capital	Riyadh
Official Language	Arabic
Political System	Unitary Islamic absolute monarchy
President	Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
Population	33,702,731
Geography	Region - West Asia Key Neighbors - Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Yemen Total Area - 2,149,690
Economy	Total Export - 320.018 billion US\$ Total Import - 206.940 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - \$1.219 trillion US\$

UAE

Capital	Abu Dhabi
Official Language	Arabic
Political System	Federal semi-presidential elective semi-constitutional monarchy
President	Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Population	11,027,129
Geography	Region - West Asia Neighbouring countries - Saudi Arabia, Oman Total Area - 83,600 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 570.245 billion US\$ Total Import - 470.536 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - 513.546 billion US\$

Capital	Jakarta
Official Language	Indonesian
Political System	Unitary presidential republic
President	Prabowo Subianto
Population	288,315,089
Geography	Region - South-East Asia Key Neighbors - Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste Total Area - 1,904,569 km ²
Economy	Total Export - 258.774 billion US\$ Total Import - 221.886 billion US\$ Nominal GDP - 1.371 trillion US\$

INDONESIA

PARTNER COUNTRIES

Belarus	Nigeria
Bolivia	Thailand
Cuba	Uganda
Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan
Malaysia	Vietnam

Information regarding above “Partner Countries” would also be made available in the coming issues of the newsletter.

Hiroshima Child

I come and stand at every door
But none can hear my silent tread
I knock and yet remain unseen
For I am dead for I am dead

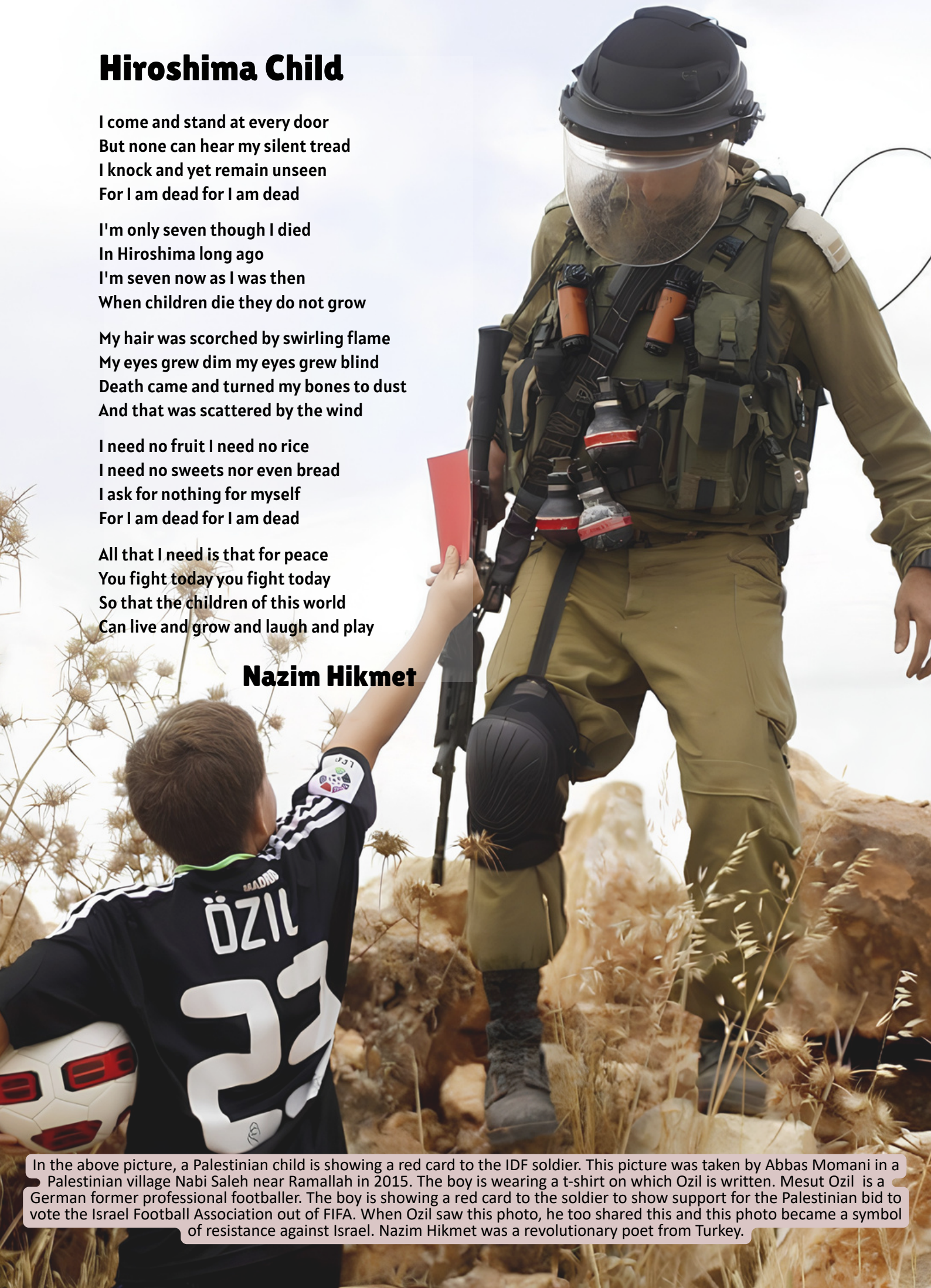
I'm only seven though I died
In Hiroshima long ago
I'm seven now as I was then
When children die they do not grow

My hair was scorched by swirling flame
My eyes grew dim my eyes grew blind
Death came and turned my bones to dust
And that was scattered by the wind

I need no fruit I need no rice
I need no sweets nor even bread
I ask for nothing for myself
For I am dead for I am dead

All that I need is that for peace
You fight today you fight today
So that the children of this world
Can live and grow and laugh and play

Nazim Hikmet



In the above picture, a Palestinian child is showing a red card to the IDF soldier. This picture was taken by Abbas Momani in a Palestinian village Nabi Saleh near Ramallah in 2015. The boy is wearing a t-shirt on which Ozil is written. Mesut Ozil is a German former professional footballer. The boy is showing a red card to the soldier to show support for the Palestinian bid to vote the Israel Football Association out of FIFA. When Ozil saw this photo, he too shared this and this photo became a symbol of resistance against Israel. Nazim Hikmet was a revolutionary poet from Turkey.