



BRICS appeal mounts in multipolar world

Description

ALBAWABA – In the early 2000s, the term BRIC was created, referring to the economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. In fact, after the first meeting of the RIC group that included Russia, India, and China in 2005 in St. Petersburg, first Brazil and later South Africa in February 2011 joined the group.

The BRICS countries, with about 42 percent of the world's population, have been gradually marginalized in the past decade. In the meantime, 2022 is considered an important turning point in the history of the group and its future role in the world.

Holding dozens of successful meetings and summits between 2009 and 2022, BRICS has made many achievements, such as strengthening respect for the basic principles of international law, supporting the principle of non-intervention and standing against unilateralism.

Also, although BRICS is not an official alliance and there are geopolitical differences between members, the broad's common interest in strengthening economic mechanisms has drawn widespread attractiveness.

Reasons for the future importance of BRICS

BRICS has pursued cooperation, mutual respect, equality, solidarity, cooperation in international forums, maintaining global peace and security, maintaining the rules of international law, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries in the past decade.

The move towards a multipolar system of global instead of a US-centered unipolar one offers greater opportunities among group members. The formation and continuation of BRICS have been accompanied by the welcome or skepticism of many small and large actors.

Despite the differences, the West did not see the group as a threat, but the BRICS move towards unifying the positions of the members and official alliance will certainly cause more serious attention to be paid to this issue. The year 2022 was full of important geopolitical events for BRICS members. As many new organizations have contributed to change in the different world orders, BRICS has also tried to be a key factor in changing global geopolitics.

South Africa has been in the leadership position of the BRICS group since the beginning of 2023. Therefore, it seems that it will use this period to promote the interests of South Africa, partnership with key players, leadership based on the agenda of BRICS, and pursuing reforms in the United Nations.

The presence of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as the new president of Brazil in 2023 coincides with the return of Brazil's foreign policy to a global role, paying attention to multilateralism and multipolarity. Lula will give more energy to BRICS-Brazil relations by supporting BRICS.

In fact, strengthening the role of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) as well as the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a move away from the hegemony of the United States, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank for most of the BRICS members, especially China.

As China's geopolitical tensions with the United States increase, BRICS could be a rival to the power of the G7. Also, political coordination among countries and the formation of alternative payment systems and non-dollar currency for global trade are incentives for Moscow and Beijing to pay more attention to BRICS and win-win cooperation. BRICS is a 'card' for Russia to assist in developments related to the Ukraine crisis and to maintain communication and trade channels.

As Russia distances itself from dependence on the dollar by buying the Chinese yuan, the plan to create a new BRICS reserve currency is in the interest of this country and to bypass the sanctions. In fact, Western approaches to isolating Russia have created broad political incentives for members to move toward the gradual development of a non-dollar financial system, trade in domestic currencies, or the creation of a common or new currency. From this point of view, BRICS can still weaken the hegemony of the dollar by buying gold.

In the past decade, India has roughly doubled its GDP per capita and is certainly taking a serious look at the economic potential of BRICS. Also, India can use BRICS as a platform to advance its growing political power in the world and now believes that it has the right to have its own opinion.

Increasing members

The 'BRICS Plus' was created in 2017 and has invited non-BRICS officials in previous years. Last year, China also supported the process of expanding the membership and cooperation of "BRICS

Plus.”

In December, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke of the expansion of BRICS members to an organization consisting of 15 to 17 nations. In fact, apart from having the conditions and the decision of the organization, the number of BRICS members may be triple.

Meanwhile, the pursuit of determining the standards and procedures of the process of accepting new members is in the circumstances that more than 12 countries have applied to join the BRICS group.

Non-BRICS countries such as Middle East actors have already been invited to BRICS events such as the first “BRICS Plus” dialogue. As more countries join, BRICS will become “BRICS Plus,” or some other name. Also, the process of accepting new countries may be realized by the end of the year.

BRICS seeks to expand its membership, stabilize itself and even compete with the G20. However, the future of BRICS as a factor in global geopolitics depends a lot on the type of positions of India, Russia, and China.

Actors of the Middle East and BRICS

In the last decade, a new restructuring has taken place in the global economy. Therefore, BRICS pays attention to strengthening political, security, economic, financial, cultural, and people-to-people cooperation. At the 14th BRICS summit in June 2022, new possibilities for economic cooperation were discussed. Also, BRICS’ attention to developing alternative trade and financial routes, economic recovery, diversifying the economy, minimizing costs, developing e-commerce, market integration, and cooperation with other countries has made BRICS an attractive group for Middle Eastern actors.

Therefore, it has become more important for some Middle Eastern actors such as Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and even Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Also, energy sources and petrochemical markets can be the engine of BRICS.

Additionally, with the gradual weakening of the existing world order, strengthening global governance and maintaining global peace is of particular importance in BRICS.

Meanwhile, for many actors in the Middle East, multilateralism, and national interests play a role in paying more attention to BRICS. Also, the participation in the BRICS group can provide diplomatic space, cooperation with other international players, and more independent foreign policy to achieve national interests.

BRICS’ attention to anti-terrorism, disarmament, and nuclear non-proliferation is another motivation for Middle East actors to pay attention to BRICS.

In recent years, BRICS has developed close ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Apart from the areas of convergence, the BRICS-GCC partnership sought to promote geopolitical cooperation, stability, and security needs.

Meanwhile, relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia withered, and Riyadh has moved eastward for new geopolitical allies.

Therefore, the Saudi desire to join BRICS has mounted. In fact, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are potential candidates for BRICS membership, as the Russian president confirmed his support for the Saudis joining. Also, as a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and a population of 100 million, Egypt is willing to participate in BRICS and take advantage of its benefits.

Turkey has shown interest in joining the group as well. Turkey's possible membership is still being discussed.

Iran, part of the important geopolitical multiplicity of Eurasia and the largest holder of hydrocarbon reserves in the world, has applied to join the BRICS group. This approach is Iran's second step towards the East after joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This seems to have more support from Moscow.

Vision

Although many in the West worry that BRICS will become a geopolitical-political coalition, economic cooperation within BRICS is still limited despite the differences between BRICS members, its institutionalization and cohesion are weak. Russia and China may see BRICS as more anti-Western, but India still does not want its anti-Western face.

Meanwhile, the expansion of BRICS with the presence of Middle East actors will bring challenges and opportunities.

For Middle East actors, the opportunities for BRICS membership are certainly greater than the challenges, despite the increase in international power, BRICS influence and the emerging multipolar world order.

In the past year, the interaction between the Middle East and BRICS actors has grown significantly.

Also, with the beginning of the preparation process of Middle East actors to join BRICS in 2023 in South Africa, acceptance as a "dialogue partner," or "observer country" or "official member" can in turn have various political, economic, and geopolitical consequences for the Middle East.

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