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Should BRICS be taken Seriously?

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Members of BRICS pose essential geopolitical and geo-economic questions in their challenge to the supremacy of Western institutions. The BRICS plays a vital role in the Global South's push to overhaul the Western-dominated global system. The concept of multipolarity is gaining popularity, particularly as the BRICS nations take the lead in establishing a more diverse and inclusive global framework that offers greater economic opportunities and reduces reliance on Western countries and institutions. In addition, the Bloc advocates alternatives to the predominantly Western financial system, aiming to facilitate local commerce by using its own currencies. Establishing a new currency among the group's members has become a priority. Global energy dynamics, particularly in the petroleum industry, may be influenced by key oil-producing countries that are now members of BRICS. Moreover, China's significant control over rare-earth mineral reserves is an additional concern for Western countries. Furthermore, BRICS nations are considering establishing a grain market that could have a substantial impact on global commodity prices. Russia, as the foremost wheat producer, champions this initiative aggressively. The main objectives of BRICS are to strengthen economic self-sufficiency, challenge Western financial systems, and expand its global influence. The attempt by China and other members to challenge the current dominance of the dollar in worldwide finance and commerce warrants careful consideration and should not be dismissed. President Trump's aggressive tariff strategy against BRICS members has achieved limited economic goals, but has unintentionally strengthened alliances within the Bloc.

Keywords: *Anti-USA; BRICS; geostrategic; Global South; multipolarity; tariffs; Trump; US dollar*

Introduction

This article presents an analytical essay that aims to interpret the current geopolitical relevance of BRICS. In January 2025, I had a definitive response ready to this question presented in the title of this article. Eleven months later, I hold a more nuanced view. Since then, three significant transformations have transpired in international politics. They left the world in astonishment, if not shock. New distinct realities have emerged, impacting global events. BRICS, both as a group and its members individually, have and will not escape the consequent repercussions and their effects.

Following Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election last November and until his inauguration seven months ago, it was widely presumed that his second term would mirror the first. On inauguration day, he promptly caused upheaval

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worldwide. He delivered more catastrophic news to allies and adversaries in the ensuing days and weeks. What had been recognised as US foreign policy until that moment abruptly became history. He started to upend the world order. He established a new framework for his nation's foreign relations through a series of Executive Orders.

At that time, Vladimir Putin was perceived as consolidating Russia's control over Ukraine. For Europeans, that was a daunting prospect. Over the past few months, that hold has not weakened. The extent of its consequences remains uncertain. Currently, Putin is having difficulty drafting the concluding narrative for his strategy in Ukraine. So is Trump. His summit with Trump in Alaska was crucial to his endgame in Ukraine. In the weeks following that meeting, nothing tangible has come about, and Trump begins showing signs of Putin fatigue. Putin has continued with devastating bombings, including on the capital, as if there is no peace or settlement in sight.

The bombardment by Israel and the US of facilities in Iran added another complication for other members of BRICS, as Iran has been expecting either material or moral support from its fellow members. By now, these members are painfully aware of Trump's actions against India for its purchases of Russian petroleum products. On an unrelated matter, Brazil has not escaped Trump's wrath either. Neither country has escaped these tariffs. India has seen significant trade and economic disruptions due to Trump's tariffs on Russian petroleum imports, leading to reduced imports and the exploration of alternatives, while also experiencing export losses from retaliatory US tariffs.[1]

BRICS as an Organisation

Before examining the existential implications for BRICS and its members, a succinct historical context is required. Brazil, Russia, India, and China became the inaugural quartet of nations to establish the Group in 2008. South Africa joined in December 2010. Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are now full members. Saudi Arabia's official membership was finalised in July 2025, but it remains undecided about joining BRICS as a full member. In addition to full members, BRICS has established a tier of "partner countries" that participate in initiatives and summits; these currently include Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Interest in BRICS remains high, with more than thirty additional countries expressing interest in joining the Bloc. Its expansion has brought challenges and opportunities, such as issues around admission criteria and the diversity of new members.[2] It pursues energetically its objective of reshaping international relations and exerting influence on economic and financial matters. Hence, BRICS serves as a forum for emerging economies to voice their concerns, coordinate policies, and advocate for reforms in global institutions. BRICS is committed to promoting international

[1]Business Desk, "Trump hits bull's eye with US sanctions", *Times of India*, 27 October 2025.
[2]Habib Badawi, "BRICS Expansion: Geopolitical Consequences and Global Alliances," *International Dynamics Review*, 9 September 2023.

cooperation toward common goals within a global framework that is more inclusive and diverse.[3]

The BRICS has emerged as a geopolitical force, particularly in the Global South, and, when united, may significantly impact international relations and the global economy by presenting further challenges to the existing international hierarchy, which is predominantly governed by Western states and spearheaded by the United States (US). The expanded Group, predominantly comprising emerging economies, exhibits remarkable statistics. It accounts for approximately 45 per cent of the world's population and about 36 per cent of global land area. In international commercial exchanges, recent statistics indicate that BRICS members account for approximately 24 per cent of total global trade (specifically, trade volume), with a larger share of around 44 per cent of the global economy when measured by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). In addition, the members generate an estimated 40 per cent of the world's GDP measured by PPP, which accounts for differences in the cost of living between countries. These members control 44 per cent of global oil production, 36 per cent of natural gas, and 78 per cent of world coal production, as well as approximately 72 per cent of rare earth minerals reserves.[4]

Since its establishment, BRICS has evolved from primarily focusing on economic and trade cooperation to addressing political and security issues. The organisation functions under a structure with three pillars: economics and money, politics and security, and cultural and interpersonal exchanges. This coalition has several objectives, primarily focused on challenging the dominance of Western institutions and advocating for a multipolar global structure that reformulates the Western-centric global order. Economic collaboration that promotes self-sufficiency and reduces reliance on Western ideals is advocated. To do this, international relations must be reformed, and their impact on economic and financial matters must be diminished. This process will function as a platform for emerging economies to synchronise policies and promote reforms in global institutions, integrating multilateral mechanisms into major entities to enhance solidarity and cooperation for the Global South. With that approach, it aims to reform the global governance system. In the financial sector, it seeks to reduce the dominance of the US dollar in international trade. It aims to develop a single currency among its members through a process of de-dollarization.

However, the rivalry between India and China substantially impedes BRICS-led de-dollarization by hindering a cohesive strategy and presenting both strategic and practical obstacles to progress. China vigorously promotes the worldwide status of its currency by advocating for Yuan-backed initiatives. India continues to exercise considerable caution. It is fighting complete decoupling from the dollar due to concerns about economic stability and growth, with suspicions that actions favourable to China may enhance its rival's supremacy within BRICS and globally.[5] The absence

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[3]Waseem Ishaque, "Geopolitical & Geostrategic Imperatives of BRICS Expansion in the Evolving Multipolar World," *Taihe Institute*, 8 February 2024.

[4]Stewart Patrick and Erica Hogan, "BRICS Expansion and the Future of World Order: Perspectives from Member States, Partners, and Aspirants", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 31 March 2025.

[5]Mark Cogan, "Is BRICS De-Dollarization Program a Step Too Far for India?" *Geopolitical Monitor*, 16 October 2024.

of mutual trust compels both parties to emphasise bilateral advantages and uphold distinct banking and commercial systems. Consequently, the efforts by the BRICS to create a single payment system or a shared currency are impeded by these conflicting objectives. The rivalry between India and China for influence, economic dominance, and strategic independence constrains BRICS de-dollarization to fragmented, bilateral initiatives rather than facilitating a significant global transformation. Internal rivalry signifies that, rather than concerted actions undermining dollar supremacy, India and China frequently pursue parallel yet uncoordinated strategies. Nonetheless, each entity aims to optimise national benefit rather than collective unity inside the bloc. This fragmentation impedes fundamental change, hinders efforts to establish a BRICS reserve currency, and preserves the dollar's dominance in global commerce.[6] Consequently, de-dollarization is a slow process, with most BRICS nations preferring local-currency arrangements to extensive integration or a unified monetary policy.

Within the context of BRICS, it is essential to reflect on the connection between China and Russia and their respective aims. The connection between China and Russia over the Ukraine war is founded on a mutual aversion to US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) hegemony, with both nations reinforcing narratives that attribute the conflict to Western power politics. This convergence does not imply shared goals; instead, they strategically converge to subvert the Western system while meticulously managing potential rivalries, especially within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). These dynamics directly affect their roles and competitiveness within BRICS, as both want to enhance their influence while confronting divergent agendas and power imbalances.[7] China and Russia have advocated expanding the BRICS to offset Western influence. China's economic pre-eminence, accounting for almost 60% of BRICS' GDP, affords it significant leverage in shaping the bloc's agenda. Russia used BRICS to evade Western sanctions and establish economic alliances; yet, its influence is far inferior to China's, thereby accentuating the existing disparity in their bilateral relationship.[8] China seeks to formalise greater economic connectivity, exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative, while Russia emphasises political and security collaboration to resist Western influence.[9] Competition sometimes arises within the BRICS, particularly about expansion and the interests of various members. Russia and China consistently collaborate on issues that challenge Western hegemony, balancing competition with practical cooperation.[10]

The subsequent facts require scrutiny to substantiate the assertion that the geopolitical significance of BRICS has increased, transforming into an anti-Western platform

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[6]Michael Corbin, "BRICS and de-dollarization, how far can it go?", *Responsible Statecraft*, 3 June 2024. 2025].

[7]Emmanuel Frimpong Sarpong and Hagan Sibiri, "Building a bloc from BRICS: Assessing China's strategic interests and influence", *APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute*, 19 December 2024.

[8]Nora Ni, "China's Growing Influence from BRICS Expansion", *Emory Economics Review*, 17 January 2025.

[9]Stewart Patrick, Erica Hogan and Others, "BRICS Expansion and the Future of World Order: Perspectives from Member States, Partners, and Aspirants", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 31 March 2025.

[10]Mariel Ferragamo, "What Is the BRICS Group and Why Is It Expanding?", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 26 June 2025.

that attracts interest from numerous nations. The economic strength of the BRICS nations is not only a number but a consequence of their collaborative endeavours. By 2025, the aggregate GDP of BRICS nations, measured by PPP, will surpass that of the G7, with BRICS accounting for around 40-44% of world GDP by PPP, compared with the G7's roughly 28%. International Monetary Fund figures[11] indicate that the recent expansion of BRICS has increased its aggregate share of world production in PPP terms, thereby reinforcing its standing above the G7.[12] However, in nominal GDP terms (not adjusted for PPP and using standard exchange rates), the G7 remains ahead. Still, the gap is narrowing as BRICS expands and its members' economies proliferate. BRICS is a growing entity in the global economy.[13] In 2024, IMF projections showed that BRICS GDP growth outpaced the world average. That collective GDP grew by 4 per cent versus a global average of 3.3 per cent, and for 2025, BRICS was projected at 3.4 per cent versus a 2.8 per cent world average. The fastest-growing BRICS economies for 2025 are Ethiopia (6.6 per cent) and India (6.2 per cent).[14] The IMF routinely updates these statistics in its World Economic Outlook reports, underscoring BRICS's increasing significance in the global economy and its collective ability to drive global economic growth, especially relative to traditional economic blocs like the G7.

As these statistics demonstrate, the expansion of their economies underscores their resilience and capacity to stimulate global growth. It also poses geopolitical and economic threats to the existing international order. The extension may facilitate a shift towards a multipolar world, allowing emerging nations to express their concerns and align policies. As a counterweight to Western hegemony, BRICS has become a reality.[15]

Expansion of BRICS

Over the past few years, the Group's increasing vitality and enhanced representation, impact, and attractiveness on the world stage have been commended. The steady transformation of global power dynamics has garnered attention as the Group continues to engage nations from the Global South. Mainstream media and social channels have consistently covered the Group's actions and its growing potential to become a significant global influence. Headlines such as these frequently emerged.

- Growing BRICS shows power shift.
- Dollarisation is a long-term trend.
- BRICKS attractive to ASEAN members.

[11]World Economic Outlook, "A Critical Juncture amid Policy Shifts", *International Monetary Fund*, April 2025.

[12]Kelly Bogdanova, "How BRICS sees the world", *RBC Wealth Management*, 2 October 2025.

[13]Marcus Lu, "G7 vs. the World: GDP, Population, and Military Strength", *Visual Capitalist*, 4 July 2025.

[14]Spencer Feingold, "BRICS: Here's what to know about the international bloc", *World Economic Forum*, 20 November 2025.

[15]Arpita Trivedy and Moududa Khatun, "Importance of BRICS as a regional politics and policies," *GeoJournal*, 88, (2023) 5205–5220.

- BRICS urged to push multilateralism.
- Global South to build a more just world order.
- More nations keen to join BRICS.
- Advancing peace, development for all.
- Putin's plan to eclipse the West.
- We've just had a glimpse of the world to come.
- Growing BRICS, a force to be reckoned with.
- The summit in Russia should be a wake-up call for the West.

As a result, the global balance of power was poised for redefinition, with the BRICS emerging as an essential group. It led to a challenge against Western dominance in the worldwide order. The BRICS nations offer a compelling counterweight to the US and its allies via their growing power, strategic alliances, and alternative economic models. The geopolitical competition between these factions underscores the evolving dynamics of global government, commerce, and technology in a progressively multipolar world.

The BRICS nations utilise their collective power to contest the supremacy of Western financial institutions. Predictions about the US dollar's substitution in international trade began to proliferate. The BRICS-West competition manifested itself in several relevant fields. Both groups compete to excel in advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and renewable energy. The Global South emerged as a contentious arena for commerce and resources, with both factions competing for access to essential minerals, energy markets, and trade routes. Thereby countering the hegemony of Western nations in global affairs, trade relations, and financial activities, while aligning these efforts with its extensive and ambitious core goals. The backing of BRICS's advocacy for reforms in international organisations gathered momentum. To align the United Nations and the World Bank with the reality of a multipolar world and a greater representation in major bodies, such as the UN Security Council.

In reality, the substantial economic difficulties that BRICS members are experiencing should neither be overlooked nor ignored. Their existing economic influence remains relatively disjointed. India is an ascendant economic superpower. Brazil, South Africa, Russia, China, and Iran are experiencing significant financial difficulties to varying degrees. Brazil is grappling with sluggish growth, high inflation, and elevated interest rates. The currency has devalued substantially, forcing the central bank to hike rates, which led to slower GDP growth.[16] For Brazil, the US's imposition of severe tariffs in July 2025 is causing even more headaches. South Africa's economy is stagnating, with GDP growth barely reaching 0.6% in 2024 and projected to remain weak. Public finances are strained, with the debt-to-GDP ratio near 80% and the government struggling to raise new revenue without resorting to unpopular tax hikes.[17] Russia's economy, already much weakened by war and sanctions, is starting to buckle under fiscal pressures. The budget deficit target for

[16]Jamilex Gotay, "Brazil in review for Q2 2025: Slowed growth, heightened credit risks", *NACM News*, 19 September 2025.
[17]Hannah Marais, "South Africa economic outlook," Deloitte Insights, 27 June 2025.

2025 has been sharply revised upward (to 2.6% of GDP, up fivefold from previous years). In many regions, severe deficits have emerged as resources are diverted to military spending.[18] China's financial troubles stem from structural factors: a significant slump in the property sector, ageing demographics, weak consumer spending, and ballooning public debt (now close to 100% of GDP). From these data, it is concluded that "Beijing knows it has a credibility problem."[19]

Sanctions have undermined Iran's economic stability while grappling with severe financial challenges. Inflation surged to 37 per cent by March 2025. The loss of oil export revenues exacerbates hardships for the restless population. Coherent governance becomes more difficult, and the risk of internal instability intensifies. Iran is experiencing significant financial difficulties in 2025, as evidenced by widespread hyperinflation, a collapsing currency, soaring unemployment, food shortages, and crippling poverty rates. Major media outlets, international organisations, and specialised analysts document these issues. Sanctions, catastrophic inflation, currency collapse, government mismanagement, corruption, and geopolitical instability drive Iran's financial crisis.[20] International organisations forecast declining growth and worsening poverty affecting up to 80% of the population. The crisis is widely covered and analysed in global news, academic research, and policy briefings, providing multiple independent sources for the statement about Iran's significant financial difficulties.[21]

Facing a fractured position after open conflict with Israel and joint Israeli-US military actions, Iran is recalibrating its foreign policy in the Middle East. Iran's traditional strategy of supporting proxy groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis is under strain. Iran's post-conflict recalibration features diminished regional leverage, constrained military capacity, reduced overt support for Hamas, and a more defensive diplomatic posture, while key regional players — Israel and Turkey — step into the power vacuum left by Iran's retreat.[22] Consequently, Iran faces growing international isolation, sanctions, and diplomatic setbacks. The regime's image and rhetoric have shifted from offensive to defensive. Its vulnerability has been laid bare on several fronts. The country's strategic options are shrinking; Iran is recalibrating away from confrontation, both out of necessity and due to internal divisions. The ceasefire and rebuilding agreements in Gaza further restrict Iran's capacity for direct support to Hamas, necessitating a shift towards less confrontational regional diplomacy.[23]

Seeking international legitimacy, economic relief, and maintaining what remains of its regional influence have become the top priorities. In these endeavours, the regime is eagerly looking to its fellow BRICS members and expecting much from

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[18]"Russian budget deficit will increase to 2.6% from 1.7% of GDP in 2025 - Finance Ministry amendments", *Interfax*, 24 September 2025.

[19]Logan Wright, "The Strategic Logic of China's Economic Data," *Rhodium Group*, 11 September 2025.

[20]Samriddhi Vij. "From Resistance to Recovery: The Iranian Economy's Fight to Survive", *ORF Middle East*, 18 July 2025.

[21]Parisa Hafezi, "Iran risks severe economic downturn, unrest as renewed UN sanctions bite", *Reuters*, 22 October 2025. In mid-December 2025, President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran declared that his country faced insurmountable problems and admitted he had no idea how to fix them. https://trib.al/KAGkrED.

[22]Jon Gambrell. "News Analysis: Iran out in the cold as Mideast unites in support of Gaza ceasefire", *Los Angeles Times*, 12 October 2025.

[23]Abdulrahman Al-Rashed, "The three powers after Iran's exit", *Arab News*, 27 October 2025.

them to assist Iran in its hour of need. However, BRICS members supporting Iran in its needs, whether political, economic, or diplomatic, may face several significant consequences, including tensions with Western powers, especially the US. In this context, it should be noted that the US has a long-standing practice of imposing "secondary sanctions" against countries and companies that do business with Iran, particularly targeting its energy, banking, and military sectors. Thus, BRICS members risk facing sanctions and trade disruptions.

Because the BRICS primarily comprise emerging economies, they require foreign financial and technological assistance to advance. The bulk of BRICS nations cannot produce sufficient foreign direct investment for their growth without dependence on the G7 countries. Despite its increasing global impact, BRICS presently lacks the internal coherence and strong economic integration required to confront the G7 as a single entity, with its members still heavily reliant on the G7's economic engines for progress and stability.[24] Rao used this table for statistical comparison. With 10 members, the BRICS+ bloc accounted for around 29% of the global economy in 2025, while the G7 still dominated.

Country	Group	GDP 2025 (USD Billions)
US U.S.	G7	$ 30,337
DE Germany	G7	$ 4,922
JP Japan	G7	$ 4,389
GB UK	G7	$ 3,730
FR France	G7	$ 3,283
CA Canada	G7	$ 2,330
IT Italy	G7	$ 2,460
CN China	BRICS	$19,535
IN India	BRICS	$ 4,272
BR Brazil	BRICS	$ 2,307
RU Russia	BRICS	$ 2,196
ID Indonesia	BRICS	$ 1,493
AE UAE	BRICS	$569

As of 2025, the G7 and BRICS are the two most prominent global coalitions in terms of economic strength, population size, and geopolitical sway.[25] BRICS has recently expanded its membership and now competes with, or exceeds, the G7 on some critical parameters. Nonetheless, the excitement around the decline of the G7 and the conventional financial governance structure has pervaded the media in recent years. The G7 remains robust, but the anticipated alternative governance structure, the BRICS, has yet to become operational.[26]

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[24]Pallavi Rao, "Charted: How BRICS Stacks Up Against the G7 Economies", *Visual Capitalist*, 15 January 2025.

[25]The G7 represents advanced economies, while the BRICS members represent mostly developing economies.

[26]Herbert Poenisch, "Brics' plans to replace the G7 are thin on the ground", *OMFIF*. 14 August 2025.

G7 vs BRICS (2025)

Indicator	**G7**	**BRICS**
GDP (PPP, % world)	28-28.4%	40-44%
Total GDP (PPP, $)	$52.4T	$56T
Population (%)	9.6%	56%
Oil reserves (%)	<15% est.	35.2%
Critical minerals processing (%)	10-18%	Higher resource base, less processing
Renewables capacity	High investment, advanced	China/India/Brazil are leading

As BRICS evolves and amplifies its impact, its contribution to shaping the future of international affairs is hindered by the complexities of a multipolar world and its diverse composition. Its internal problems and rivalries gradually eroded this coherence. BRICS must address the internal difficulties that may jeopardise its unity. Russia views the significant participation of several countries in BRICS as a favourable reflection of its international stature. It has intentionally embraced the development and expansion of BRICS to destabilise the unipolar Western world. In 2024, Putin leveraged his BRICS presidency as a strategic opportunity to dismantle Russia's international isolation further and actively undermine the Western-led global system. Russia seeks to circumvent international sanctions and acquire banned technology and equipment through the BRICS by exploiting supply network gaps, particularly in collaboration with China. This enables Russia to maintain its military capabilities notwithstanding Western export restrictions. Putin has utilised BRICS to foster alliances across politics, security, economics, and culture, aiming to reduce the US's global prominence and influence by establishing an alternative to Western-dominated global institutions. This is part of his strategy to divert global focus from the Ukraine crisis and position BRICS as a counterbalance to the G7. In addition, it serves as a mechanism for Iran and Russia to explore countering Western sanctions and subvert the liberal international order with the principles upheld by Western nations.

Many political systems of member states employ different governance styles and generate ideological differences, ranging from India's democracy to China's one-party state. Geopolitical tensions between India and China regarding border issues hinder cohesive decision-making. Economic inequalities arise from significant variations in economic size and degrees of development among individuals.

The Importance and Role of the Global South

The phrase "Global South" has recently attracted increased attention in conversations about solidarity among developing countries, which advocate reforms to the Western-centric global order and a transition away from Western hegemony. The Global South is increasingly gaining power and challenging the long-standing domination of the Global North. This shift carries substantial political implications and is propelling the global order toward a fairer, more logical trajectory. The Global South aims, on the one hand, to establish and maintain peaceful coexistence with the West, while, on the other hand, to protect its own rights and interests and strive to assume a more influential position in international affairs.

Japan[27] and the EU[28] have recognised the emergence of the Global South, its influence on global affairs, and the need to foster ties with these countries. Disregarding the complaints of developing countries could lead to a contentious relationship between developed and developing nations.

The revival of the concept signals enduring frustration with inequalities embedded in the global order.[29]

The Global South has achieved significant economic and political prominence, thereby challenging conventional ideas about power distribution. Countries from the Global South, such as China and Brazil, have a considerable influence on international affairs. BRICS, with its substantial economies, has the potential to bolster the power of the Global South and disrupt established institutions. By 2030, China and India are expected to have the largest economies, while the combined Gross Domestic Product (calculated on PPP) of the original BRICS nations currently already exceeds that of the G7. China's exports to developing countries have exceeded those to developed countries. Its investments in developing countries are reconfiguring the global power structure.

The inclusion of Egypt and Ethiopia in BRICS has strengthened China-Africa collaboration and will expedite advancements in Africa. The Belt and Road Initiative has strengthened relations between China and Africa. Turkey has expressed its desire to become a member of BRICS, and Russia supports Turkey's admission to this organisation. Currently, it is still considered a “partner country”. Once it is accepted as a full member, Turkey will be the first NATO member to join the group. The harmonisation of Turkey's membership in both NATO and BRICS can be achieved

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[27]Japan included the phrase “Global South” in its Diplomatic Bluebook for the first time in 2023, thereby recognising the collective rise of developing nations, their growing aspirations for strategic autonomy and the consequential shift it has brought to the global order. The presence of emerging and developing countries, also known as the Global South, has been growing in response to the challenges facing the international community in recent years.
Diplomatic Bluebook, p. 003.

[28]Josep Borrell, a former highest-ranking diplomat of the EU, openly acknowledged that the era of Western dominance has unequivocally come to an end. He cautioned against the Union's tendency to portray global relations as a conflict between Western countries and the rest of the world. He pointed out that the EU's connections with the Global South have been prioritised as one of the four primary objectives of the EU's geopolitical agenda. https://geopoliticaleconomy.com/2024/02/26/western-dominance-ended-eu-josep-borrell/

[29]Erica Hogan and Patrick Steward, “A Closer Look at the Global South,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 20 May 2024.

by acknowledging the distinct functions and objectives of each organisation. By joining BRICS, Turkey would be able to expand its global alliances, reduce its economic dependence on Western nations, and bolster its trade opportunities. In addition, Turkey intends to leverage the BRICS platform to further its ambitious diplomatic goals and amplify the growing anti-Western sentiments that have emerged from the conflict between Israel and Hamas since October 2023.

> Turkey's leaders want to remain in NATO. Yet they are also keen to continue trading with Russia; they discuss Western decline and position the country as a champion of the developing world. … The country's geographic location, regional clout, and rising defence industrial capacity make Turkey a valuable partner for navigating the challenges of multipolarity and disorder.[30]

The unity and ability to adjust strategies within the Bloc are essential for its continued effectiveness on the global stage.

> It emphasises the imperative of adaptability and strategic adjustments to ensure the continued effectiveness and unity of the BRICS on the international stage. This research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how the BRICS navigate geopolitical challenges and adapt their strategies in the aftermath of significant global events.[31]

This was apparent when Ukraine was unable to secure support from numerous influential states in the Global South at an international conference in June 2024, which had a detrimental effect on its efforts to isolate Russia. Several of these countries, including India, South Africa, and Mexico, abstained from signing the final agreement, demonstrating their hesitation to take a firm stance against Russia without its involvement. The conference's failure to garner extensive global backing, particularly from key non-Western nations, diminished its ability to address the conflict and promote sustainable peace effectively.

The increasing importance of the Global South and the growing confidence of countries within BRICS are transforming the global system and questioning the long-standing supremacy of the Global North. These changes have substantial political consequences and are directing international affairs toward outcomes these countries consider more equitable.

Multipolarity

Multipolarity refers to a global arrangement in which power is distributed among multiple states, rather than being concentrated in a single state or an exclusive group. Generally, the development of multipolarity in international politics aims to address complex global issues and benefit all participating countries. This system promotes worldwide cooperation and inclusivity. As a result, smaller alliances emerge

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[30] Asli Aydintasbas, "It's Time for America and Turkey to Reconcile: Washington and Ankara Cannot Afford to Remain Estranged," *Foreign Affairs*, 6 June 2024.

[31] Eman Jokhio, "The Implications of the Ukraine War on BRICS Unity and Strategies," *SSRN Research Paper Series*, 12 February 2024.

as middle powers, and they acquire greater significance when driven by mutual objectives. Russia and China are promoting a multipolar global structure by actively contesting the liberal democratic order and the hegemony of the US. Russia intentionally utilises the concept of multipolarity to promote its own interests and mitigate the impact of actions by Western powers. Its objective is to reconfigure the global framework by using entities such as BRICS. The intragroup dynamics of the BRICS have the potential to shape the group's collective actions and interactions with global powers. BRICS aims to establish a multipolar global structure by fostering collaboration among countries in the Global South and providing alternatives to organisations predominantly controlled by Western powers. BRICS indicates a shift in geopolitics and the increasing assertiveness of emerging nations. This shift has the potential to affect several fronts in international politics and to have geopolitical and geostrategic consequences. The world must be ready for an economic shift to a multipolar system. Henceforth, economic progress may be reconciled through a redefined global alliance, trade, and politics.[32]

Lately, Russia has added another dimension to its efforts to mitigate the application and impact of sanctions. With the understanding and agreement of other BRICS members, it has declared that any country seeking to join BRICS must satisfy a vital criterion: it must refrain from imposing "illegal unilateral sanctions" against Russia. According to Russia, this is intended to facilitate the smooth integration of new members into the organisation while maintaining the current mechanisms of cooperation and the "BRICS culture" that has developed over the past 15 years.[33] In this obvious move to thwart US and EU sanctions, Russia is pursuing a deliberate strategy within BRICS that could reshape the international order. For Russia, BRICS has the potential to eventually become "one of the core regulating institutions of the multipolar world order" with the group's adoption of the principles of multipolarity in international affairs.[34]

> The contours of a multipolar and multilateral world order are being shaped on the basis of this new political and economic reality; this is an objective process. ... The promotion of the principles of multipolarity in international affairs will enable countries to jointly solve the most complex global problems for the common benefit.[35]

New members admitted in compliance with Russia's membership conditions will increase the threat to Western economic paradigms and alliances. With Putin promoting BRICS as a geopolitical force against Western power and influence, the world must prepare for an economic shift toward a multipolar system.

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[32]Waseem Ishaque, "Geopolitical & Geostrategic Imperatives of BRICS Expansion in the Evolving Multipolar World," *Taihe Institute*, 8 February 2024.

[33]"Eye On West's Sanctions, Putin Sets New Condition For Countries Seeking To Join BRICS," *Hindustan Times*, 19 June 2024.

[34]https://tvbrics.com/en/news/vladimir-putin-russia-to-promote-integration-of-new-brics-members/

[35]https://english.news.cn/20240614/ead5369e863347d387937fce2af69208/c.html

Anti-Western actions by Russia

Before exploring the specific components of this strategy, it is crucial to examine the actions of two notable BRICS members who have already demonstrated their opposition to the West. Russia is one of the original members of BRICS. The central theme of the 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) held from 5 to 8 June 2024 was "The Formation of New Areas of Growth as the Cornerstone of a Multipolar World" and stressed the importance of new centres of influence emerging to offer alternative perspectives on global issues and participate in the formation of a new world order. The development of these new growth areas requires active participation from countries and regions ready to take responsibility for their future, such as the BRICS. In his address, Putin emphasised the need for Russia to shift its traditional reliance on the Global North towards the Global South, highlighting the importance of strengthening economic ties with friendly countries and facilitating the transition to a multipolar world economy.[36]

The 2024 Summit in Kazan did not take place in isolation. Russia made extensive preparations to establish agenda priorities, create institutional frameworks, and build consensus among existing members, prospective members, and other interested parties regarding the policies under discussion. It focused on advancing efforts to reshape the global order in a new form of multilateralism. This transformation could turn the forum, which is often dismissed in many Western quarters as a minor geopolitical distraction, into a significant global force. BRICS is transitioning from an entity primarily defined by its potential to one actively leading the way in international economic and geopolitical transformation. Thus, it demonstrates that the potential benefits of joining BRICS extend beyond geopolitics.[37]

> Whereas last year's South African summit had as its central theme the issue of expansion, the Kazan summit appears likely to aim to transform BRICS into a multilateral institution designed to compete with, and eventually replace, the US-dominated, rules-based international order, which serves as the foundational organizing principle for organizations such as the G7, NATO, and the European Union.[38]

Both Russia and Iran, both of which are under rigorous US sanctions, have been diligently working for several years to reduce their reliance on the US dollar. Also in June 20214, these two countries announced that they had initiated discussions on a comprehensive strategic partnership with the serious intention of expanding their cooperation in several domains.[39] Upon careful analysis of these diplomatic efforts, in which Russia plays a central role, it becomes evident that the global order is

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[36]https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-06-04/Basic-facts-about-St-Petersburg-Intl-Economic-Forum--1u9z2ffmrqE/p.html

[37]Philip Heijmans, "Xi, Putin Score Wins as More Asia Leaders Aim to Join BRICS," *Bloomberg*, 21 June 2024. Bloomberg is widely recognised as a powerful and influential force in the global financial industry, offering comprehensive coverage of news, statistics, and analysis and maintaining a substantial presence in the business and economic sectors.

[38]Scott Ritter, "Russia and Brics: A New Multilateralism," *Energy Intelligence*, 11 June 2024.

[39]"Iran, Russia diplomats discuss comprehensive strategic partnership," *PRESSTV*, 22 June 2024.

transitioning away from reliance on the dollar as countries seek to detach themselves from the US-dominated international financial system.

Multifaceted Anti-Western Approach by BRICS

- **US Dollar**

The BRICS are aggressively endeavouring to reduce the global economy's dependence on the US dollar and challenge its dominant position. The BRICS countries are actively working to reduce this dependence and are devising strategies to achieve this goal. They are promoting the use of their own currencies in trade transactions that will minimise the influence of the dollar, especially in cross-border payments.

For them, the global hegemony of the dollar has hampered international cooperation among states, prompting these countries to seek an alternate settlement mechanism to safeguard their economic progress. Nevertheless, it seems improbable that any other currency will present a substantial threat to the dollar as the prevailing global reserve currency in the foreseeable future. However, the BRICS coalition is gaining appeal as emerging nations strive for stability and economic autonomy from US sanctions.

The transition is a complex process and requires overcoming significant barriers. Establishing a unified currency among BRICS members is challenging due to the intricate political and economic dynamics within the Bloc. The dollar's dominant position is securely entrenched, however, as it serves as the principal reserve currency for central banks worldwide and is the main currency used in global transactions.

Although there are differences between de-dollarization, dethroning the dollar, and promoting an alternative global financial system, BRICS "has enough critical economic mass to pursue an alternative to the existing dollar-based system."[40] Notwithstanding this, BRICS, with its aspirations, presents a possible obstacle to the dollar's supremacy in the global financial framework. However, the fact remains that different perspectives and agendas make it doubtful if they can completely synchronize their objectives. However, the significance of the alliance in the emerging multipolar world is clearly apparent. It has the potential to serve as a cohesive force to attain independence from Western financial and capital markets.

However, it is worth noting that, according to IMF data, the share of the dollar in global central bank reserves declined to 59.2% in the third quarter of 2023.[41] This decline in international reserves is part of the de-dollarization movement, actively promoted by BRICS countries, with Russia and China leading the way in lobbying for a shift away from the dollar's dominance. In 2023, the dollar's share in international payments outside the eurozone decreased to 60%, down from its previous 80% dominance in trade financing. It has been reported that global reserves are experiencing a gradual decline in the value of the dollar, which is being replaced by currencies

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[40] Kim Catechis, "Consider This: Will BRICS+ dethrone the US dollar?," *Franklin Templeton Institute*, 15 May 2024.

[41] https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2024/06/11/dollar-dominance-in-the-international-reserve-system-an-update

not traditionally used.[42] Reducing the dollar's share in international payments would undermine one of the three pillars of its role as a global reserve currency.[43]

The likelihood of the BRICS achieving its de-dollarization goals is doubtful. Owing to the widespread use of the dollar and the lengthy process of establishing a new currency that will gain global trust, it is unlikely that the BRICS countries will achieve substantial divergence from Western nations in financial and monetary policies in the near to medium term. The attainability of de-dollarization as a final objective is uncertain.

- **Minerals**

The BRIC countries collectively possess nearly 73% of the world's rare-earth material reserves. Western nations have been striving to reduce China's control over these resources. Chinese companies are indeed strengthening their dominance. They are expanding their business activities, enhancing their logistics network, and lowering prices. In doing so, they pose a challenge for competitors to keep pace with them. Chinese enterprises are also steadily expanding through acquisitions. This trend is causing increasing concern for Western governments and rendering businesses in free-market democracies financially unviable.[44]

China relies on the importation of essential minerals. The significance of importing these minerals lies in their critical role in numerous key industries, including national defence, military sectors, and nuclear plants. Although China has a dominant position in the processing of essential minerals, it continues to import raw ore.[45] This emphasises the necessity of the country having a diverse supply chain to ensure resilience. China imports these minerals from multiple nations and plays a significant role in their extraction, accounting for 60% of global rare-earth production and almost 90% of their processing and refining.[46] The country is also actively investing in new and existing mining projects in Asia and Africa.[47] China holds a substantial edge in the global supply chain for critical minerals, which includes a set of 50 minerals recognised by the US as having significant strategic importance.[48] These considerations underscore China's resolute commitment to securing the essential minerals vital to its strategic sectors and national security.

- **Grain**

The BRICS countries are also exploring the establishment of a grain exchange, which could potentially impact global commodity pricing and challenge Western-

[42]https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/imf-dollar-s-stealth-erosion-in-global-reserves-being-replaced-by-non-tradition-currencies/ar-BB1o05GI?ocid=BingNewsSerp
[43]Huileng Tan, "A group of emerging nations could soon start knocking down one key pillar of dollar dominance," *Business Insider*, 28 May 2024.
[44]Jon Emont, "China Is Winning the Minerals War," *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 May 2024.
[45]Zeyi Yang, "How China hopes to secure its supply chain for critical minerals," *MIT Technology Review*, 13 September 2023.
[46]Jessica Long and Tina Tong, "Four key critical minerals in China likely to be under the spotlight at AFA 2024," *Fastmarkets*, 24 February 2024.
[47]Bonnie Glaser and Abigail Wulf, "China's Role in Critical Mineral Supply Chains," *The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF)*, 2 August 2023.
[48]https://www.energy.gov/cmm/what-are-critical-materials-and-critical-minerals

dominated markets. A proposal to establish a grain market under the BRICS framework has been endorsed by Russia and is seen as a challenge to the prevailing Western global system. China and India are significant contributors to global wheat production, although Russia is the world's largest wheat exporter. This has the potential to significantly influence trade and collaboration worldwide.

The BRICS alliance accounts for 42% of global grain production and 40% of world consumption. With the inclusion of its four new members, BRICS has an estimated annual grain output of 1.24 billion tonnes with consumption at 1.23 billion tonnes. Russia, China, India, and Brazil account for the lion's share of production and the only major exporters in the group are Russia and Brazil.[49]

Russia is exerting pressure on its BRICS partners to establish an inter-bloc grain market that enables commerce among member nations. Putin perceives it as an additional opportunity to subvert the prevailing Western global system. That will not only bolster commerce among members but will also significantly influence trade and collaboration worldwide.

Challenges facing BRICS

In the shift towards a multipolar world, the BRICS bloc faces several challenges. Countries in the Global South are increasingly aligning with the BRICS to diversify their alliances and reduce reliance on Western nations. The rising threat of war intensifies rivalry between the BRICS and the West, shaping the global landscape. BRICS advocates for a vision of collective prosperity and multipolarity, whereas the West protects democracy and economic stability. The outcome of this contest depends on each party's ability to adapt, innovate, and form alliances in a more divided world. Regardless of the result, the era of unchallenged Western supremacy has entered a new phase of global interaction, characterised by shared, disputed, and negotiated power across multiple domains.

Only time will reveal whether a consensus among its members will be achieved. Currently, BRICS holds negligible significance and poses no significant threat to the West. Only its members can determine whether to eliminate that label or increase that threat. Failure will result in adverse consequences for the Group. Individual members may equally suffer due to their membership. Before attention is focused on the positions of Brazil, India, and Iran, it is imperative to explain Trump's views on BRICS and the consequential actions he has taken regarding the Bloc and its members.

Attitude of Trump towards BRICS

BRICS must evaluate Trump's disposition towards the Group, which is unfavourable, if not overtly antagonistic. He has already intensified his confrontational stance towards BRICS. Ten days after the January 2025 inauguration, he revealed his strategy. The

[49] Arvin Donley, "Proposed BRICS grain exchange worth monitoring," *World-Grain.com*," 9 May 2024.

warning to BRICS was severe. His subsequent declaration of global tariff implementation was brutal. He unequivocally and publicly cautioned the BRICS coalition, collectively and individually, against altering the status of his nation's currency. He explicitly warned that drastic economic repercussions would follow if they attempted to establish a rival currency or to diverge from the dollar in international commerce. Noncompliance would lead to massive tariffs and the forfeiture of access to US markets. In a later statement, he asserted that his threat had successfully suppressed the Bloc and deterred the group from manipulating the US currency. *The Times of India* titled their report on Trump's action: "'BRICS is dead'."[50]

The attitude of the US and Europe will influence the destiny of BRICS. Their actions may prompt the Bloc to pursue geopolitical neutrality or establish an alternative political and economic structure that could circumvent Western sanctions. This may lead to increased hostility towards the West and hardened attitudes towards BRICS. The demand to contest unilateralism and sanctions-driven diplomacy champions sovereignty, non-intervention, and the reform of multilateral institutions, embodying a narrative of inclusiveness for nations traditionally marginalised by the G7-led framework. It wields significant influence in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, where confidence in Western-led paradigms diminishes.

The tension between Western countries, particularly the US, and the BRICS, notably Iran, has increased recently. The US attack on Iran reinforced BRICS unity against what its members perceive as Western unilateralism. It deepened the strategic divide between BRICS and the West, potentially accelerating the Bloc's efforts to build alternative economic and diplomatic frameworks. It also raises the risk of further instability in global markets and international relations, with the BRICS likely becoming more assertive in opposing Western military interventions and advocating for a multipolar world. Iran's integration into BRICS was already framed as a move to reduce dependence on the US dollar and to challenge Western dominance in global affairs. The strike no doubt accelerated Iran's pivot toward fellow members in BRICS, deepening its economic and diplomatic ties with China, Russia, India, Brazil, and South Africa, as it seeks support and alternatives to Western-led systems. Polarisation between the BRICS and Western powers will deepen further. The attack undermined the credibility of international institutions and agreements, which BRICS members often cite in their calls for a multipolar, rules-based order.

Tensions within BRICS

The escalating tensions between the US and China, Iran, Russia, and South Africa are pushing the BRICS into a combative phase. Intensifying its anti-Western stance to its logical conclusion in pursuit of one of its main aims may even become problematic and counterproductive for some of its members, such as India and Brazil, who would have to support it despite its accompanying complications for their bilateral relations. The expansion of BRICS may challenge consensus-based

[50]https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/brics-is-dead-trump-says-threat-of-100-tariffs-stopped-bloc-from-playing-games-with-us-dollar/articleshow/118225735

decision-making and a cohesive vision even more. Fault lines already exist and are showing.

- Brazil obstructed Venezuela's accession.
- So did India with Pakistan's accession.
- Argentina declined an offer to participate.
- Saudi Arabia remained reluctant to embrace full membership for a long time despite engaging in certain BRICS activities. Multiple factors affect its indecision. The aspiration was to preserve robust relations with the US and China while avoiding antagonism. Considering regional antagonisms, there may have been apprehension about Iran's presence and role in BRICS. The changing significance of BRICS as a potential counterbalance to Western dominance was undoubtedly a factor that was carefully considered to avoid complicating Saudi Arabia's geopolitical alliances, especially with the US, following Trump's recent visit to the Kingdom. In perhaps a further sign of diplomatic sensitivities, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister skipped the discussions at the 2025 Summit in Brazil entirely.
- The inability to produce a common statement during the BRICS foreign ministers' conference in Brazil in April 2025. The primary cause was the differences in approaches to UN Security Council reform, which involved explicitly endorsing new permanent seats for Brazil, India, and South Africa. Egypt and Ethiopia formally objected to the focus on South Africa and advocated for a more comprehensive African consensus. That led to no statement being released.
- Due to the International Criminal Court's arrest order for Putin, he did not attend both the 2023 and 2025 Summits in South Africa and Brazil. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov participated in both.
- Premier Li Qiang led the Chinese delegation. Observers noted that Xi's absence did not indicate a lower importance for BRICS in China's foreign policy. Instead, they highlighted changes in China's diplomatic priorities amid the evolving global landscape. Xi's absence meant the Chinese leader was missing a key opportunity to showcase China as a stable alternative to the US. That is an image Beijing has long looked to project to the Global South.
- Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi represented Iran. He attended the Summit on behalf of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The predicament in which BRICS members find themselves on essential matters is most vividly illustrated. Suffice it to mention the cases of Brazil, India, and Iran, and to explain Saudi Arabia's position.

- Brazil's position in BRICS has strengthened and become more central following the US's imposition of massive tariffs on Brazil, as the country pivots away from its reliance on the US. Trump's tariffs, among the highest ever imposed on Brazil, have acted as a unifying force within BRICS, pushing Brazil to coordinate more closely with China, India, Russia, and South Africa.

Brazil currently holds the BRICS presidency and is actively engaging allies to forge a multilateral response to Trump's policies. President Lula has openly stated that Brazil is shifting toward a less US-centric, more autonomous global stance, prioritising cooperation with the Global South and fellow BRICS members, and leading efforts toward greater South-South economic integration. Brazilian officials are emphasising sovereignty, resisting US pressure, and promoting new financial and trade platforms within BRICS. For Brazil, Trump's tariff policy has had both challenges and opportunities. It has reinforced both Brazil's leadership role and overall unity within BRICS, positioning Brazil as a driver of South-South cooperation and champion of a new, rules-based order beyond the West. Brazil also faces 50% tariffs on many of its US-bound exports, not because of trade imbalances, but because of Trump's anger at what he calls a "witch hunt" against his ally, Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro, who has been charged with plotting a coup following his election loss in 2022. This breakdown in relations could be Trump's intention: push these countries to the brink so they'll agree to trade deals heavily lopsided in Washington's favour. That strategy appeared to be effective with Japan and the European Union. Hitting these BRICS economies with eye-watering tariffs could push them closer together, strengthening the resolve of a group that appeared to be losing whatever momentum, purpose, and unity it had, and even considered dead by Trump.

- India holds a significant and complex role within BRICS, utilising the coalition to promote its strategic objectives, advocate for the Global South, and pursue institutional transformation in global governance. It regards BRICS as an essential platform for advancing a multipolar world and fortifying developing economies. India's economic involvement in BRICS is significant, with trade volumes totalling $399 billion in 2024; yet it experiences a trade imbalance, mainly due to energy imports and the acquisition of manufactured products. It is just these energy demands, sourced from Russia, that prompted Trump to impose additional tariffs on India. It depends on Russian oil for over 40% of its crude requirements, amounting to about 1.5 million barrels per day in 2025, following Western sanctions that have restricted Russia's market presence. Trump escalated duties on Indian exports to 50% to penalise India's augmented purchases from Russia, contending that these transactions funded Russia's activities in Ukraine. Notwithstanding external pressure, India continues to import energy from Russia due to its lower pricing, with refiners expected to further augment imports, despite tariffs that jeopardise trade benefits and strain US-India relations. This positions India among the nations involved in Trump's tariff conflict. The situation is noteworthy, especially considering that before Trump's inauguration in January 2025, Indians seemed to exhibit the most enthusiasm for his second term. During his initial tenure, he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi appeared to be steadfast allies. This has prompted India to engage in introspection, revealing constraints to its global influence despite its vast size and expanding economy.
- Following its official admission in January 2024, Iran assumes a progressively pivotal and strategic position within the Bloc, leveraging the group to mitigate

Western sanctions, elevate its global standing, and strengthen commercial relations with China, Russia, India, Brazil, and South Africa. Iran utilises BRICS to access diverse markets and other financial avenues, reducing its reliance on the US dollar and pursuing relief from prolonged restrictions imposed by Western countries. This encompasses utilising novel payment mechanisms advocated by BRICS, including cross-border transactions in national currencies and prospective affiliation with the BRICS-led New Development Bank for unconditional investment loans. Iran, a significant oil and gas producer, aims to enhance its energy exports and infrastructure investments by collaborating with BRICS nations, particularly China and Russia. Engagement in forthcoming BRICS commodities exchanges or payment systems may facilitate Iran's petroleum exports, primarily within the group, circumventing sanctions-related limitations. Iran used its BRICS membership to secure diplomatic support during regional tensions, particularly obtaining prominent endorsement during recent military escalations involving Israel and the United States. The bloc's unified denunciation of unilateral military moves against Iran reinforces Tehran's capacity to challenge Western narratives in international forums and enhances Iran's bargaining leverage. BRICS offers a global forum for Iran to advocate within the Global South, enhance ties (notably with China and Russia), and engage in high-level discussions about commerce, security, and infrastructure (such as plans for transit lines between the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean). The group collectively promotes enhanced multipolarity and "southern multilateralism," in accordance with Iran's enduring foreign policy objectives to mitigate diplomatic isolation. Iranian officials advocate for BRICS participation as a strategy to alleviate the nation's economic difficulties. Nevertheless, local analysts warn that substantial benefits depend on internal changes and enhanced partnerships with foreign entities that manage global financial infrastructure. Ongoing Western pressure and internal economic disturbances may constrain short-term advantages if fundamental problems remain unaddressed. Iran's accession to BRICS aligns its geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic objectives with those of other major developing nations, thereby strengthening its position amid ongoing external challenges.

- As of August 2025, Saudi Arabia has not formally joined the BRICS group, but it has received an invitation and participated in meetings as an observer or partner state. Its membership is now under review and contingent on ongoing diplomatic factors, regional dynamics, and strategic interests. Saudi Arabia received an invitation to join the BRICS in the 2023 summit, with full membership set to commence on January 1, 2024. Nevertheless, it did not adopt the proposal by that deadline. Saudi Arabia's ambivalence is shaped by the need to balance its affiliations with both the United States, its vital security and technological ally, and China, its primary oil purchaser. Concerns over regional tensions, evolving dynamics in the Middle East, and an internal assessment of the strategic advantages and disadvantages of joining BRICS further complicate Riyadh's decision-making process. The monarchy has adopted a pragmatic, multipolar strategy, maintaining global alliances while avoiding commitments to exclusive blocs such as BRICS. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has shown interest in joining BRICS, a coalition that other nations have leveraged to broaden their ties and formulate global alignment policies. Riyadh's nebulous BRICS approach warrants scrutiny for three reasons. Their reluctance to pledge membership has become a source of humiliation for the organisation and establishes a detrimental precedent for prospective members. Riyadh's prolonged delay in addressing member nations has caused significant misunderstanding over its position and potentially diminished the group's stature. Any rise in uncertainty accentuates the informal and non-binding nature of the Bloc, further weakening the narrative of a unified entity capable of reaching agreement and formulating innovative solutions to urgent geopolitical issues. Secondly, Saudi Arabia's reluctance indicates that membership in BRICS may have significant repercussions, a concept the Bloc has always endeavoured to circumvent. Saudi Arabia's evaluation is likely influenced by the BRICS invitation to Iran, as well as Russia's belligerent rhetoric and intentions to diminish the significance of the US dollar. These actions might convert BRICS into an anti-Western coalition and threaten Saudi Arabia's economic and security ties with the United States. Moreover, the bloc's incorporation of Iran and the UAE positions these nations on par with Saudi Arabia at a moment when Riyadh aims to assert itself as the regional leader. Third, Saudi Arabia’s policy exemplifies how governments are navigating diverse alliances amid a volatile, unpredictable global order, characterised by the waning power of the West and the rise of multipolarity. Saudi Arabia has a longstanding security dependence on the United States, encompassing arms transactions, training, and assistance. The two countries have advanced towards finalising a bilateral military pact to enhance their ties. Any alignment with Russia or China that may antagonise the United States may complicate Saudi Arabia's arrangements. Riyadh is significantly invested in strengthening economic and diplomatic links with other major nations. China is Saudi Arabia's foremost commercial partner, while Riyadh is Beijing's primary supplier of crude oil. The relationship has intensified as the monarchy seeks to diversify its economy, evidenced by the extensive strategic cooperation established between the two nations in 2022. China has taken on a more prominent diplomatic role as the facilitator of the 2023 reconciliation agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. During Putin's visit to Riyadh in December 2023 to negotiate oil price collaboration, the Russian president asserted that bilateral ties had reached an "unprecedentedly high level." Saudi Arabia cannot afford to estrange China or Russia. Nonetheless, it cannot jeopardise its relationships with the West by supporting China and Russia's efforts to establish an anti-Western coalition in any manner. Saudi Arabia has implemented a sophisticated strategy within BRICS, enabling it to adapt to evolving global circumstances, including changes in US leadership. Rather than attempting to extract promises from governments in the Global South, nations and multilateral organisations should embrace uncertainty and develop sophisticated avenues for substantive collaboration.

> Ultimately, Saudi Arabia's plan is unlikely to escape scrutiny, which may encourage other nations to follow a similar course.

The high-level meeting between China, Russia, and India on 31 August 2025 in China holds strategic significance for BRICS, representing revitalised collaboration and efforts to consolidate the Bloc amid global tensions and US trade demands. The trilateral discussions reinstate engagement among the three leading BRICS countries (the RIC format), which has not transpired at the highest echelons in six years. This gathering aims to resolve internal divides — specifically the persistent challenges between India and China — and to collaboratively address emerging issues, such as US tariffs on India's importation of Russian oil and the impact of sanctions. Enhancing collaboration seeks to reinforce BRICS's position as a counterbalance to Western dominance and exhibit cohesion in the face of US efforts to undermine the Bloc. The economic and geopolitical background must not be disregarded. All three countries are augmenting bilateral trade deals by utilising their own currencies, thereby diminishing their reliance on the US dollar and promoting the economic independence of BRICS. It serves as a symbolic representation of "Global South solidarity," endorsing sanctions-affected Russia and promoting commercial relations among China, India, and Russia. Intra-BRICS commerce is increasing, particularly in the hydrocarbons sector, alongside active cooperation on technology, supply chains, and climate resilience. The gathering conveys to the global community that, notwithstanding disputes, BRICS states are committed to pragmatic cooperation in trade, finance, and security, thereby bolstering resilience against Western-led disruptions. The meeting may influence BRICS's future actions amid geopolitical issues, with India assuming a crucial role in the organisation's leadership. While significant achievements are unlikely, the symbolism of revitalised unity is essential as BRICS expands and realigns its agenda towards global governance reform, climate action, and trade autonomy.[51]

Conclusion

BRICS operates without formal treaties or military obligations. That distinguishes the Bloc from traditional alliances. This flexibility allows experimentation with international investment platforms, but it also leads to a lack of strategic cohesiveness. The Bloc's effectiveness is hindered by internal divisions and Russia's international isolation due to the Ukraine conflict, which complicates collaborative initiatives and consensus-building on global issues.

In light of rising global tensions, BRICS members see an opportunity to challenge the Western-dominated financial system and enhance their economic influence. They are working towards alternatives to dollar-based trade and finance, but questions remain about their ability to unify amidst internal discord and financial dependencies. The bloc allows members to diversify their international ties and reduce reliance on

[51] Laurie Chen, "'Powerful optics': China's Xi to welcome Putin, Modi in grand show of solidarity", *Reuters*, 26 August 2025.

traditional allies, but this comes with the risk of straining relations with non-BRICS nations, particularly the US and EU.

Internal conflicts persist within the BRICS group, as the Bloc has become more diverse and now employs flexible frameworks for collaboration rather than strict consensus. For instance, India has resisted initiatives perceived as overly antagonistic towards the US, such as the idea of a BRICS currency. Geopolitical tensions, particularly surrounding Russia's actions in Ukraine and shifts in global economic policies, further complicate intra-group dynamics. Despite these challenges, BRICS remains a significant player for the Global South and in international diplomacy, demonstrating resilience against external pressures, such as tariffs imposed by the Trump administration.

Trump's opposition to BRICS, viewing it as a threat to US dollar supremacy, has inadvertently strengthened the Bloc's cohesion and accelerated efforts to reduce dependence on US financial systems. His tariffs have prompted leaders from Brazil and India to assert their sovereignty and resist US intervention, thereby paradoxically strengthening the BRICS during adversity. The bloc's leaders are committed to enhancing collaboration and promoting economic growth through alternative trading platforms and currencies, aiming for financial independence from Western institutions.

However, BRICS faces significant hurdles in achieving these goals, including the dominance of the dollar and geopolitical rivalries among its members. The alliance's potential to influence global power dynamics is notable, as it represents a shift towards a more multipolar world where developing nations can assert their interests. BRICS advocates for a fairer representation of global economies and seeks to enhance cooperation among emerging markets, promoting South-South collaboration.

The expansion of BRICS has geopolitical implications, signalling a broader trend of developing nations challenging Western hegemony. While Russia and China play crucial roles within the Bloc, their strategic partnership is complex and sometimes fraught with tension. Russia has leveraged the BRICS platform to counter Western sanctions and mitigate its international isolation, utilising it to foster alliances across various domains.

As the BRICS continues to grow, it provides developing countries with a venue to express their perspectives and reduce reliance on the US dollar, thereby promoting a de-dollarization agenda. The Bloc's rise poses a challenge to US global leadership, requiring future leaders to navigate a rapidly changing international landscape marked by increased competition among geopolitical blocs.

BRICS is evolving as a recognised force in global relations, dedicated to countering Western dominance while striving for a more inclusive and equitable international order. Its ability to manage internal conflicts and enhance cohesion will be critical in shaping its future influence and effectiveness in addressing global challenges.

While not a comprehensive alternative to Western systems, the BRICS coalition is increasingly relevant strategically and economically, especially amid global realignments, trade tensions, and its advocacy for a multipolar world order. BRICS is important for its potential to shape international norms and amplify the voices of the Global South. However, its internal contradictions constrain its capacity for unified, bold action. The meeting at the end of August 2025 signifies a concerted effort by China, Russia, and India to reaffirm their leadership within BRICS, strengthen trilateral relations, and convey a clear message of unity and independence to the global community amid substantial geopolitical changes and tensions with the Trump administration.

Suppose the following is not already under discussion or execution. In that case, BRICS members may consider adopting these recommendations: establish and oversee a "Global South Investment Fund" to provide resources to essential areas such as infrastructure, technology, and energy, thereby ensuring economic development and reducing reliance on the G7. Establish and advocate for "BRICS Standards" for green energy technologies or for special regulations on commodity trading. Cooperation centred on sustainability may create a cooperative investment fund for climate change efforts, provided the BRICS Development Bank is not already undertaking this initiative, and programs for Educational and Technological Exchange to facilitate talent exchange and technology transfer among member nations.

In conclusion, it is apt to refer to the insightful observation posted on LinkedIn by the Global Diplomatic Forum:

> A critical question: Does BRICS have a concrete plan to reshape the world order, or is it stuck in symbolic posturing and fragmented interests? This question is more pressing than ever, especially as BRICS continues to expand its membership and platform. Is the expansion a step toward greater impact, or is it a dilution of strategic coherence? BRICS stands at a pivotal moment. Its ambition to reshape global order is clear — but ambition alone is not impact. Unless the bloc can turn expansion into coordination, and vision into execution, it risks becoming a larger version of the same old problem: powerful rhetoric, limited reach.[52]

Now, the answer to the question in the title of this article is affirmative, not because of any inherent risk, but to understand the Group's motivations and to interact with it in a less adversarial manner, thereby reducing, and preferably eliminating, its confrontational tendencies. Indeed, the BRICS should be taken seriously, but with caution.

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