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They are few*



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Align with BRICS or be left behind

The 22-24 October BRICS summit at Kazan, Russia (p. 7), accepted a new category of “partner state” into the fold, accepting 13 nations for accession and emphasising that no nation will be excluded. “It is open to all those who share BRICS values”, said Russian President and host Vladimir Putin. Those values—including an insistence on national policy independence, dialogue rather than war to solve conflicts, and “people-centric” economic growth—are non-negotiable for the 23 BRICS members and partners, representing 4.6 billion people, around 57 per cent of the world’s population.

But really, those values are universal. Western nations must have the courage to realise that their civilisation is declining and make an urgent change of course, as anti-war advocate and Julian Assange’s father John Shipton wisely told viewers of Russian media during his attendance at the summit. (Almanac, p. IV) The alternative is the descent into a terrifying combination of war, ever-present terrorism and a deep cultural dark age—if we are not all obliterated by a nuclear exchange.

Facing “two wars with the potential to become global, it is essential to restore our ability to work together towards common goals”, Brazil’s President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva told the BRICS summit. With “radical changes ... under-way across the globe”, Putin declared the necessity to set aside differences. BRICS countries, he said, “represent different continents, development models, religions, and distinctive civilisations and cultures”, but they are all “like-minded sovereign states” when it comes to equality, mutual respect and well-being. Therefore, the BRICS has “assumed responsibility for the future of the world”.

The BRICS way was underlined by the first sit-down meeting in five years between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who saw past their differences to boost the transformative BRICS process underway. These are the adults in the room, capable of putting aside petty concerns for the greater good. Putin observed that BRICS has been “compelled to respond to the burgeoning demand in the world for such cooperation” by expanding its format. With “no hegemonic aspirations”, BRICS even



BRICS nations are unfurling a “change in the geopolitical alignment of the world”, John Shipton told RT. Photo: brics-russia2024.ru

welcomes NATO or EU states.

President Xi asserted that BRICS has become “a system-forming factor in the creation of equal, orderly multipolarity”. The BRICS founders urged that a new financial order is “long overdue” and “cannot be postponed”, but that progress must, in Lula’s words, be “approached seriously, cautiously and with technical solidity”. As Putin has previously made clear, the partners will make haste slowly—it is not yet time for a BRICS common currency—but alternative mechanisms to fund development such as the New Development Bank were showcased, and new ones proposed, including a new BRICS investment platform. Putin made clear the era of IMF-World Bank control is over. (Back page feature.)

The demand for a new financial architecture has huge traction even across the heart of the Anglo-American allied world. Perhaps nowhere more so than in Australia, thanks to the Citizens Party’s campaign to put clear alternatives on the table. Australia has an added incentive to pursue the BRICS approach. Not only will it boost our economy, it will take the target off our backs. Rupert Murdoch’s *NT News* publishing—astonishingly—former Ambassador John Lander’s warning that Northern Australia is “increasingly becoming a potential threat” to Beijing, followed the news that the government will spend a cool \$7 billion on US-made medium- and long-range missiles to arm Royal Australian Navy ships. (p. 10)

The BRICS summit has drawn attention to the “US’s diminishing global influence”, wrote Geoff Raby, Australia’s ambassador to China in 2007-11, in the *Australian Financial Review* on 25 October. Putin has *not* been sidelined as an international pariah; the summit was attended by “the largest number of heads of state to date”; the march to de-dollarisation was strengthened; and the summit convened in the “bullseye in the heart of Eurasia from where the new global order is emerging”.

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BRICS now 4.6 billion strong

By Elisa Barwick

At their 22-24 October summit, BRICS added thirteen nations as new “partner states”. Joining Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia¹, are: Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Nigeria, Uganda, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Turkey, Bolivia and Cuba. Partner nations will be officially confirmed soon, bringing nearly 1 billion people into the BRICS fold. The BRICS grouping will encompass over 23 nations and 4.6 billion people—around 57 per cent of the world’s population—confirming its status as the “Global Majority”.

Under the banner “Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security”, Russian President Vladimir Putin laid out the shared mission of BRICS nations in his opening presentation: “We are all witnessing the dynamic growth of BRICS and the strengthening of its authority and influence in global affairs. The BRICS states possess truly immense potential in terms of political power, economy, science, technology, as well as human development. Furthermore, we are united by shared values and a common worldview.”

The diverse but like-minded sovereign states, said Putin, “have assumed responsibility for the future of the world not in word but in deed. ... This is the essence of the BRICS strategy on the global stage, which responds to the aspirations of the largest part of the international community, which we refer to as the global majority. This approach is especially relevant in the current conditions when truly radical changes are underway across the globe, including the shaping of a multipolar world.”

Meeting with Putin ahead of the summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the revolutionary mandate of the group: “BRICS is perhaps one of the most important platforms to consolidate the broad developing world and emerging market countries. It is a system-forming factor in the creation of equal, orderly multipolarity and generally accessible inclusive economic globalisation.”

Peace and development

The leaders of BRICS founding nations addressed the “restricted format” session of the conference on 23 October. An “expanded format” meeting followed and the next day a “BRICS Plus/Outreach format” convened. Delegations from 35 countries and 6 international organisations participated in proceedings, with representatives of many national organisations. Dozens of meetings took place on the sidelines, including among the many heads of state and government in attendance.

Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed the new BRICS partners as a “landmark event in the evolution of the international situation”. He laid out his suggestions for BRICS in the larger meeting: “As the world enters a new period defined by turbulence and transformation, we are confronted with



Representatives of country delegations and institutions at Kazan. Photo: brics-russia2024.ru

pivotal choices that will shape our future. Should we allow the world to descend into the abyss of disorder and chaos, or should we strive to steer it back on the path of peace and development? ... The more tumultuous our times become, the more we must stand firm at the forefront, exhibiting tenacity, demonstrating the audacity to pioneer and displaying the wisdom to adapt. We must work together to build BRICS into a primary channel for strengthening solidarity and co-operation among Global South nations and a vanguard for advancing global governance reform.”

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted BRICS “as a diverse and inclusive platform”. He stressed that “our approach must remain people-centric. We have to give the world the message that BRICS is not a divisive organisation but one that works in the interest of humanity.” Modi therefore favoured the effort to reform global institutions rather than replace them, and called for “moving forward on the basis of consensus”. The unique platform of BRICS, said Modi, represents “a model for dialogue, cooperation and coordination”.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who spoke remotely due to a minor accident, pointed out: “We represent 36 per cent of global GDP by purchasing power parity. We have 72 per cent of the planet’s rare earths, 75 per cent of the manganese and 50 per cent of the graphite. However, financial flows continue to flow to rich nations. It’s a Marshall Plan in reverse, in which emerging and developing economies finance the developed world. BRICS initiatives and institutions break with this logic.”

President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa insisted that “The world cannot afford a region-wide escalation of the conflict” in the Middle East—pointing to South Africa’s action through the International Court of Justice to stop Israel’s actions against Gaza. “We must remain committed to the peaceful resolution of all disputes through negotiation and inclusive dialogue”, he advised. “We must safeguard the ability of states to pursue independent foreign policy. We must safeguard the multilateral system, because it is the cornerstone of international relations, and foster an environment of peace and development.”

A new financial platform

An announcement of a new BRICS reserve currency had already been dismissed by Putin as premature (“Putin previews BRICS summit: Make haste slowly”, AAS, 23 Oct.), but the arrangements discussed left no doubt that a new financial order is still the goal. All BRICS nations, Putin told the BRICS Plus/outreach session, “share similar aspirations, values and a vision of a new democratic world order”; but, he cautioned, “The transition to a more just international

1. Saudi Arabia, which has not officially signed off on BRICS membership, did have representatives at the forum and is still in close dialogue with BRICS, according to President Putin.

system is not easy. Its development is being hampered by forces whose thinking and actions continue to be aimed at dominating everything and everyone. Under the guise of a rule-based order they are imposing on the world, they are actually attempting to contain growing competition and prevent the independent development of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that they cannot control."

While recognising the "cornerstone" role of the UN Charter for interstate relations, Putin demanded that other postwar structures be modernised. "An effort to reform UN development institutions and global financial structures has long been overdue." The world has changed but "this did not pave the way to any changes or shifts in the management of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or other multilateral development banks" (p. 16). A new financial framework "free from any dictate", he said, "must enable countries from the BRICS group, as well as those across the Global South and East, to attract more investment and focus on investing in infrastructure and technology projects."

At the BRICS expanded format, President Xi stated: "The current developments make the reform of the international financial architecture all the more pressing. BRICS countries should play a leading role in the reform. We should deepen fiscal and financial cooperation, promote the connectivity of our financial infrastructure ... The New Development Bank should be expanded and strengthened. We must ensure that the international financial system more effectively reflects the changes in the global economic landscape."

President Lula said that BRICS would move forward through the Interbank Cooperation Mechanism, which allows national development banks to establish credit lines in local currencies, and through the NDB which "currently has a portfolio of almost 100 projects ... It was designed to succeed where the Bretton Woods institutions continue to fail. Rather than offering programmes that impose conditionalities, the NDB finances projects aligned with national priorities. ...

"Now is the time to move forward with creating alternative payment methods for transactions between our countries. It's not about replacing our currencies. But we need to work to ensure that the multi-polar order we desire is reflected in the international financial system. This discussion needs to be approached seriously, cautiously and with technical solidity, but it cannot be postponed." He spelled out the urgency: "As we face two wars with the potential to become global, it is essential to restore our ability to work together towards common goals."

Forward plans

In the expanded forum, Putin reviewed the proposals of Russia's BRICS chairmanship, including:

- A new BRICS investment platform to support national economies with financial resources;
- A BRICS Grain Exchange, to ensure fair, predictable prices for products and raw materials, to protect national markets from speculation and artificial shortages, expanded over time to include other agricultural products and commodities;
- A joint energy research platform to ensure global energy security;
- A BRICS logistics and communications platform for transport route coordination.

The Kazan Declaration welcomed the new Partner Country category, pressed for reform of the UN and Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and World Bank), and called for peace and development. Signers committed to the use of local currencies in trade and development of correspondent settlement and payment systems; exploration of the connection of

BRICS countries' financial markets infrastructure; a feasibility study for an independent cross-border settlement and depositary infrastructure (BRICS Clear); a BRICS re-insurance company; and strengthening of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement for short-term balance-of-payments problems.

Asked during his press conference about alternative payment systems, Putin replied: "we are not inventing a separate common system, since we are doing well with what we have". In his speeches, however, Putin pushed creation of "a new BRICS investment platform that would become a powerful tool for supporting our national economies and provide countries of the Global South and East with financial resources." Putin also proposed that former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff's term as head of the NDB (ending in July 2025) be extended, particularly "since Brazil is presiding over the G20 this year, and next year it will take on the BRICS presidency." This would ensure continued expansion of "the great bank of the South", as Lula called it, to support physical economic growth of member nations. ("Platform for escaping West's financial straitjacket gets stronger", AAS, 4 Sept.)

Reporting to the Summit, Rousseff specified that "There are enormous unmet needs in development financing. Expanding the role of the New Development Bank is an essential condition for addressing this need." Iran had announced at the 10-11 October BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Moscow that it "intend[s] to become a member of this bank".

Modi and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian reported on the benefit to Afghanistan and all Central Asia of the International North-South Transport Corridor—from Russia through the Caspian Basin across Iran to the port of Chabahar on the Arabian Sea. The El-Dabaa Nuclear Power Plant, being built by Russia in Egypt, was raised by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

Putin affirmed in his concluding press conference that "BRICS is not a closed format; it is open to all those who share BRICS values. The group's members are prepared to work towards identifying joint solutions without external impositions or attempts to enforce narrow approaches upon anyone. BRICS is compelled to respond to the burgeoning demand in the world for such cooperation." BRICS accepts even EU or NATO nations, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed, exhibiting "an atmosphere in which each other's interests are taken into account", he said. "It is an atmosphere where there are no hegemonic aspirations."



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held their first official meeting since 2019 on the sidelines of the BRICS leaders' summit. Both leaders welcomed the deal made ahead of the summit to resolve the border conflict that arose in 2020 and made clear that they are committed to restoring normal, full relations for their mutual bilateral benefit, the benefit of the BRICS process, and the world. Only by reconciling, both leaders said, could they provide an example to other nations and assist in the drive for new multipolar relations. The rapprochement is backed up by a joint plan to "make India a manufacturing hub", RT reported. Photo: X/Modi

This article includes reporting by EIR News Service.



The BRICS 'vector of human development'

By Elisa Barwick

22 Oct.— “The upcoming US presidential elections will not be the most important event of the year for the world community and will not determine the further course of history. No matter how much Washington would like it to be. The BRICS summit will be that event”, declared the head of Russia’s Federation Council (Senate) Valentina Matviyenko, writing on Telegram on 19 October.

“[T]he vector of human development”, she asserted, “will be established in Kazan, and not in the ‘wavering [United] States’”. The three days of the BRICS summit and the negotiations of the leaders of the world majority in the capital of Tatarstan will have a decisive influence on our future”.

It is too early to report conference outcomes, but the BRICS leaders’ summit being held in Kazan, Russia on 22-24 October could turn out to be “the largest foreign policy event that has ever been held in our country”, according to Russian Presidential Aide Yuri Ushakov. His boss, President Vladimir Putin explained why: The centre of growth of the world’s physical economy has shifted to the BRICS nations, he told assembled media agencies after a Business BRICS Forum on 18 October, and that shift will only increase. But the BRICS process, he stressed, “has a universal character” which “will have an overall positive impact” on the world, not only BRICS members. (p. 10)

Thirty-two nations confirmed their attendance for the BRICS summit, with tens of thousands of participants making the journey to the Russian city. Some 34 nations are seeking membership or partnership with BRICS, which currently comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

New financial institutions

As the current global financial order fails, the expanding BRICS grouping represents the kernel of an alternative financial system—one that is multipolar, that is, not controlled by a single hegemon, and is anchored in people-centric economic development rather than profit-gouging.

Hot on the heels of the International Monetary Fund Conference, which took place in Washington, DC on 21-26 October, the BRICS forum will discuss alternatives to the Bretton Woods financial framework (and its institutions the IMF and World Bank) which was sidelined after the death of its key instigator, US President Franklin Roosevelt, and broke apart in 1971 when the USA unpegged the dollar from gold.

The year of Russia’s chairmanship saw countless deliberations on this topic, with over 200 meetings



The BRICS summit opens! Photo: brics-russia2024.ru

culminating in this week’s summit. Events preliminary to the summit included the 10-11 October BRICS finance ministers and central bank governors conference, and the Business BRICS forum on 18 October.

“The IMF and the World Bank are not performing their roles”, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told the finance gathering. “They are not working in the interests of BRICS countries.” It is necessary, he added, to form “new conditions or even new institutions, similar to the Bretton Woods institutions, but within the framework of our community, within the framework of BRICS.”

A report issued at the event, titled “BRICS Chairmanship Research: Improvement of the International Monetary and Financial System”, documented initiatives to protect payments systems from sanctions, including payments in local currencies; a BRICS central bank platform for payments, including potential for settlements in digital tokens (distributed ledger digital currencies); and BRICS exchanges for trade in key commodities including gold, oil, wheat and strategic metals. Another topic was the crushing debt burden imposed by the US dollar order on developing countries and the need for abundant cheap credit.

Speaking 18 October at the BRICS Business Forum, President Putin previewed the gathering as a signal moment in the fight for the economic sovereignty of nations. Describing BRICS as the “driving force of worldwide economic growth”, he provided a survey of the group’s achievements including flagship transport and logistics projects including the Northern Sea Route and International North-South Transport Corridor.

As Putin noted, total BRICS GDP “exceeds [US]\$60 trillion, and its overall share in global GDP easily surpasses that of the so-called G7. ... In 2023, our group of countries accounted for 37.4 per cent while the G7 for 29.3 per cent.”

“By the end of 2024”, Putin continued, “BRICS countries are forecasted to post 4 per cent growth, on the average. This exceeds G7 growth rates, which is only 1.7 per cent, and the global average, projected at 3.2 per cent.”

To free developing nations from “negative foreign influences”, said Putin, BRICS is building upon relevant development platforms, financial systems, payment tools and mechanisms for sustainable and long-term investment. “Essentially, this is what economic sovereignty is all about: it amounts to a partnership between self-sufficient economies that expands their potential many times over and opens up new opportunities.”

“[T]he New Development Bank plays a pivotal role in the efforts to boost financial cooperation”, added Putin.

Putin previews BRICS summit: Make haste slowly

In a two-hour discussion with heads of leading BRICS media agencies on 18 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin previewed many of the central policy issues that will be on the agenda of the 22-24 October BRICS summit.

Asked about the significance of rapid global geopolitical changes, Putin laid out his perspective of the world: “The most important sign is the emergence of new development centres. ... According to experts, whom

I trust and whose opinions I heed, this development will be focused primarily in BRICS countries. This is the Global South, Southeast Asia and Africa. ... Regarding BRICS countries like China, India, Brazil and South Africa, it is evident that their expanding economic potential will lead to their bigger global influence.”

Putin noted also that expertise is being developed by BRICS countries in specialised and high-tech fields. “This is a natural occurrence, and there is nothing wrong with it. The world is always evolving, and new leaders continuously emerge. We should accept this calmly as a reality and focus on building our relationships with one another accordingly.”

BRICS wants to work with the West, said the Russian President: “What sets BRICS apart from many other international organisations? BRICS was never meant to be created in opposition to anyone. The Prime Minister of India put it best. He said BRICS is not an anti-Western alliance; it is simply non-Western. This distinction is very important and has great meaning. That is, BRICS does not set itself in opposition to anyone. It is a group of countries that work together, guided by shared values, a common vision for development, and, most importantly, by the consideration of each other’s interests.”

Asked about future prospects for BRICS, Putin continued on this theme: “As you see, we are not creating some sort of bloc as an opposition to someone’s interests. This is not a bloc organisation; it has a universal character and I think it will have an overall positive impact on global affairs, including the global economy. If these efforts help develop the global economy, they will also be beneficial for those countries that are not part of this BRICS group. ...

“I believe that the world economic leaders will

“With a solid, powerful and efficient structure, it boasts a substantial capital base, as well as a team of experienced professionals. As a development institution, the bank operates as an alternative to a vast number of Western financial mechanisms. Obviously, we will further develop it as an independent structure, without opposing it to anyone, and will expand its capabilities. We expect the New Development Bank to become a major investor in the largest technology and infrastructure projects in the BRICS space as well as the entire Global South.”



Putin met with media representing, he said, an audience of several billion people. Photo: Kremlin

ultimately benefit from this as well, even despite many of them now having to face certain problems. We are aware of the issues in the eurozone, which is generally balancing on the verge of recession. It will only serve for the benefit of these economies if they maintain proper and sustainable relations with BRICS countries.”

Asked by Chinese media about BRICS expansion, Putin noted that it is very important for all ten BRICS members “to respect the principles on which BRICS was created, and it was created by three countries. The first step was made by Russia, India, and China, we did it together. At that time, we created RIC in St. Petersburg—Russia, India, and China. Later, it started to expand. On the other hand, however, all countries in the group should also respect the new participants’ interests. ... It is clear that expanding the group was a positive and right decision. I am fully convinced that this will undoubtedly boost our influence and authority on the global stage, something we are already witnessing. ...

“I have mentioned many times before, around 30 countries have expressed interest in cooperating with BRICS in some form or participating in its activities. This is a clear and visible impact of our recent expansion. ... However, we need to carefully consider, alongside all BRICS countries, how best to approach further expansion.

“One thing is certain: we will not turn anyone away. The doors are wide open. The question now is how to structure this process.” Subject to discussions at the Kazan summit, he added, “we are developing such category as BRICS partner countries.”

Regarding what might be achieved at Kazan, Putin expressed the belief that “any rush would be inappropriate. We are proceeding incrementally, step by step”.

Noting various initiatives such as trade settlements in national currencies, an expansion of New Development Bank capital and use of digital currencies in the investment process, he proclaimed it is time they all become “real working tools rather than declarations”, going beyond mere words.

Financial expert pushes pilot for new reserve currency

The Brazilian economist who served as vice president of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) from its founding in 2015 until 2017, Paulo Nogueira Batista, has proposed a BRICS sub-group to pilot a new reserve currency at a China-initiated BRICS seminar held 23 September in Moscow, Russia.

Nogueira is an advocate for a new international financial architecture, including a new reserve currency with which to issue directed credit to foster physical-economic development. We excerpt here a paper that served as the basis for his speech at the BRICS Seminar on Governance & Cultural Exchange Forum 2024 in Moscow.

Nogueira summarised the urgent need for alternative international financial arrangements: “First, the [US] dollar, the euro, and the Western payments system have been dramatically misused as political and economic weapons. Second, the fiscal and financial fragilities of the US economy raise legitimate doubts about the feasibility of continuing to rely on the dollar as the hegemonic international reserve currency.”

Nogueira reviewed the geopolitical backdrop, noting that “the US is ready to blacklist any country or even person that truly works to create alternatives to the dollar in a practical and effective manner.... This is essential to the full understanding of the political economy of BRICS monetary and financial initiatives. China, Russia and Iran are probably immune to these pressures. The same cannot be said of other countries of the BRICS. Even China may hesitate to pick a fight with the US on such a hot topic.”

Regarding the technical advances necessary for a new financial architecture, Nogueira reported the formation of a group of independent experts under Russia’s BRICS presidency, including himself and economist Jeffrey Sachs, and the BRICS Executive Directors group—both led by Russia’s Executive Director at the IMF, Aleksei Mozhin.

Advances on trade settlement in national currencies and construction of alternatives to the SWIFT payment system are “most welcome”, said Nogueira, but simply by-passing the US dollar and SWIFT network is limited. De-dollarisation without “an alternative reserve currency” is tricky because “only accidentally will there be an

He assured listeners: “We will not rush, but we will move as fast as we can.”

“As for the BRICS common currency”, he replied to another questioner, “we are not considering this issue. Its time has not come yet. We need to be very careful and act gradually, without any rush.”

equilibrium in the balance of transactions in national currencies among countries. An alternative international reserve currency is needed to allow countries to register surpluses and deficits over time.” Otherwise, countries will fall back into some sort of barter, such as using excess currency for a local investment, or back into using the US dollar.

Battista sketched out “the most promising route to a “new reserve currency” (NRC). It “would be a parallel currency designed for international transactions. The national currencies and central banks would continue to exist in their current format, as normal currencies and normal monetary authorities.”

The NRC would be digital, not printed as physical currency. A “New Reserve Monetary Authority—could be established jointly by the participating members. The NRMA would be in charge of creating NRCs and also bonds—let’s call them the NRBs, new reserve bonds—into which NRCs would be freely convertible. The NRBs would be fully guaranteed by the National Treasuries of the members. ...

“A first step, that has been advocated for some time by Russian economists, could be the creation of a unit of account for the NRC, an SDR-like basket in which the weight of the national currencies of the participating countries would correspond roughly to their share in the GDP of the group.”

The hold-up with this plan, says Nogueira, appears to be the effort to gain consensus among all of the diverse BRICS nations. Perhaps, he suggests, “The NRC could be created by a sub-set of the BRICS. The others would join later.” Such action would be a global “game changer”, he assured, emphasising that the entire “Global South” is counting on BRICS to go beyond slogans and proclamations.



Economist Paulo Nogueira Batista Jr. Photo: nogueirabatista.com.br