

# **The Role of BRICS in Global Security**

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“The United States should take it easy – even we are not confident about the future of BRICS!”

*(Da Wei, Director and Research Professor,  
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Relations)*

If we compare the world before the end of the Cold War and after it we will see enormous changes. Now we will not have two rivaling blocks with the US and the USSR at the head. Ideological confrontation will become an issue of the past. Market economy will replace socialist system. Democracy will be the feature of a wide range of countries, both in the West and in the East. Bipolar world will become a part of the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States will try to establish a unipolar system where it will determine the actions of all the countries in accordance with the American national interests. But this initiative will fail because of a new phenomenon – a rise of several developing economies whose role in economic, financial and political spheres will be increasing by large rates. The world order will be transforming into a multipolar one. Soon, in the 2000s, a BRICS group will emerge that will encompass five quickly developing economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Despite all the criticism and negative prognosis for this platform from foreign (mostly Western) experts BRICS exists. Moreover, it is developing and, step-by-step, it is making progress. From discussions on economic and trade issues the countries moved on to focusing also on global security problems that embrace a number of economic, energy, development, financial issues, as well as such challenges as terrorism, conflicts, territorial disputes, use of military power, nuclear proliferation, organized crime, cyber crime, poverty, demographic problems, climate change, etc.

International security is one of the main topics of the discussions within the leading organizations of the world. BRICS is not an exception. It is absolutely clear for everyone that the system of international security today does not work properly because the main institutions that are responsible for maintaining peace and security do not correspond to the realities of the modern world. The central point here is that most countries cannot or do not want to change this order. The first thought is clear: they cannot because of a lack of global influence. But why do not some states want to improve the security system? Obviously, because the current situation brings dividends and gives a lot of benefits and opportunities to impose their own rules of the game on others.

Here, the main feature of BRICS is that these countries together have enough **power and will to change the world.**

It is necessary to talk about two dimensions of security in the context of BRICS. Firstly, **the global dimension.**

The BRICS nations support the central role of the United Nations in maintaining and promoting peace and security all around the world. They declare that all peacekeeping and peacemaking activities (such as preventive deployments and post-conflict peace-building) should be taken on the basis and in accordance with the UN Charter and universally recognized norms of International law. The BRICS countries advocate the adherence to such universal principles as respect for sovereignty, unity, independence, territorial integrity, non-aggression, equality.

The group also emphasizes the necessity of the comprehensive reform of the United Nations Organization (including the UN Security Council (UNSC)). With Russia and China holding the seats of the permanent members of the UNSC, India, Brazil and South Africa aspire to play a more significant role. Within different groups and formats (G4 – German, India, Japan and Brazil; L69 – around 40 countries of Asian, African and Latin American regions) they call for increasing (widening) the

UNSC permanent membership. They prove their positions referring to the fact that the UN was established after the Second World War, and since that time the global balance of power has changed completely. The UNSC was reformed only once, in 1963, when the number of its members increased to 15. Meanwhile, now there are 193 UN members instead of 113 at that time. Besides, while more than 70 per cent of the issues under discussion are connected with Africa, no country of this continent has a permanent seat. An increased number of conflicts and the inability of the international community to settle them show the “inadequacy” of the old institutions and their anachronistic character. An evident conclusion is that the Security Council should be reformed, and Russia and China (as well as other permanent members) support these aspirations. But how should it be transformed? Who will preserve the veto power? What will be the results of such changes? These questions do not let the decision to be made. Two alternative proposals were made by a High-Level Panel. According to them either India, Brazil, Germany, Japan and two African states were to become permanent members without veto power or the structure was to be changed completely and instead of permanent members the UNSC was to consist of rotating ones. However, the consensus were not found because of the unwillingness of the P5 to lose their superiority, of the uncertain results of such a reform (India, Brazil and South Africa approach the foreign policy in a different way than the West does: Indian policy of non-alliance, South African preference for regional solutions to regional problems, Brazilian position on the non-meddling into the domestic affairs are contrary to the policy of the Western countries). Also, there are some concerns that with more countries having a permanent seat in the UNSC the decision-making process will be highly hampered. So, until the main powers agree on all disputable issues, the process will not be led out of a deadlock and moved off dead center.

The similar situation has emerged with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). With the developing economies producing more than 50% of the world GDP (only BRICS members give around 27% of the world GDP on PPP,

whereas China has outpaced the US in terms of this indicator), the BRICS states combined hold only 15% of the voting rights in these two organizations. The IMF quota reform carried out in 2009 included the increase of the quota shares of the emerging economies (BRIC), minimizing the privileges of the developed countries at the Board of Directors and introducing the mechanism of electing the directors. Meanwhile, it has not come in power because the US Congress has not ratified it. Among the aspects that should be changed or improved (regarding the IMF) are the diversification of international reserve currencies, decision-making process, the mechanism of the selection of IMF seniors, etc. But here again (in both cases) we see the clash of interests between the Western countries and the emerging powers that cannot be overcome without any concessions from both groups. However, neither of them is ready to sacrifice its interests.

One of the ways to alleviate the independence on the “Western-based” and “Western-governed” institutions is the creation of alternative ones. The brightest example of such an approach is the New Development Bank and the Currency Reserves Pool that were launched at the BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, in 2014. Apart from the fact that the BRICS Bank is to become a direct competitor of the World Bank, this initiative is also very important as a first step to the institutionalization of the BRICS and its transformation into the full-fledged international organization. Of course, it is too early to make such declarations but it is significant to bear in mind this tendency when talking about the prospects of BRICS.

It is also noteworthy that the BRICS members are active UN peacekeepers. They contribute to the UN peacekeeping activity by providing troops and devoting more attention to training the personnel. India is the third largest provider of contingents (after Pakistan and Bangladesh). From 2004 to 2012 this country has supplied the UN with more than 100 000 people. Peacekeeping is an integral part of the Brazilian foreign policy, while South Africa is one of the key participants of the operations (mostly in Africa). So does China that has also become an active donor (in

terms of financial resources and military personnel) for the UN peacekeeping activities. As for Russia, it is an obvious underachiever in this very sphere; however, it dominates in the supply of planes and helicopters for the UN operations.

To this end it is necessary to mention the R2P concept (Responsibility to Protect) that was adopted by the UN in 2005 and used in practice in 2011 during the crisis in Libya. The principle stipulates that if any government cannot or does not want to protect the population from crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing, the international community has to take this responsibility and ensure peace, law and order by collective intervention (authorized by the UNSC). This concept was perceived with great caution by BRICS members. Firstly, most of them remember their colonial or semi-colonial past and interference into the domestic matters of other states even with a desire to put an end to violence and human rights abuses is not always justifiable (it is well-known that a path to the hell is with good). Sometimes Western countries use the R2P concept only as a pretext for toppling anti-western regimes and advancing their own interests. That is why the BRICS group is in favour of peaceful resolution of crises without the use of military power, but through diplomatic means and a comprehensive dialogue between all the parties to a conflict.

The BRICS countries affirm the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They stand for the adoption of a Convention on International Terrorism by the UN, which will help to promote cooperation and strengthen counter terrorist activities. These states are also deeply concerned with the nuclear proliferation and interested in strengthening the mechanisms of controlling nuclear weapons, technologies and materials (and other weapons of massive destruction). Among the aspects raising serious fears are the Korean Peninsula problems, Iran's atomic programme, etc. What is more, India being a de-facto nuclear power, is not the signatory of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is becoming a factor of instability and a security threat, particularly, in the context of Indo-Pakistani conflict. There are great prospects for the cooperation in this area,

developing joint projects and technologies included, not to mention the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty which, being ratified till now by only two BRICS members (Russia and China), could become an important mechanism of arms control if enters into force. Moreover, the BRICS members are discussing the creation of more effective system of international information security and countering cybercrime. They are providing assistance to the less-developed countries to help them fight against poverty, hunger, natural disasters, and a lack of clean water or energy resources.

If we analyze **the regional dimension** we will get very controversial results. It is difficult to find a more diverse group than BRICS. Five rich ancient civilizations with their own cultural traditions, mentality and characters, with endless territorial and border disputes, religious and ethnic conflicts, rivalry in economic and political spheres – these countries seem to be absolutely incompatible. A lot of Russian and foreign experts and researchers argue that such a variety does not leave any chance for BRICS to become a really strong economic and political power which would be able to use its heft to influence global processes and reshape the world. However, this “incompatibility” may affect favourably and result in a reverse outcome.

Each country of the BRICS group has something to share with other member states: China has its huge human potential (cheap workforce is one of the main reasons of its economic rise), Russia can supply others with natural resources which are so necessary for quickly emerging and developing industries like India and China. India in its turn is well-known as a large supplier of software and Indian engineers and technologists are acknowledged to be among the best ones in the world. In 2014 around 15% of startups in Silicon Valley (the US) were founded by Indians (they account for the largest number of foreigners establishing technical companies. Brazil has very close economic ties with the other BRICS members. Moreover there are a lot of investment opportunities in these countries, and the states are interested in strengthening cooperation in this very sphere, whereas the most attractive industries

are infrastructure, information technologies, communications, energy and extraction of minerals, manufacturing, agriculture, etc.

Of course that does not ensure regional security, but that creates a situation when each country is interested in promoting and advancing cooperation, which itself leads to the striving for avoiding conflict escalation and creating the atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust.

As it has already been mentioned, BRICS is a group of very different and, in some ways, rivaling states. The brightest example here is a knot of contradictions between India and China which represent a wide range of unsolved problems, starting from border disputes (Aksai-Chin, the State of Arunachal Pradesh), “fight” for the leadership in the Indian Ocean and in the South and Southeast Asia and ending with China’s hegemonistic aspirations (the main concerns are caused by the “Belt and Road Initiative” declared in 2013 and consisting of “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “Maritime Silk Road”), its close (from the Indian point of view, too close) ties with Pakistan and the Dalai-Lama issue, not to mention a large-scale war in 1962 and a number of small clashes happening till now. In spite of all that these two countries not only cooperate in trade and economic spheres, but they are also likely to carry out joint initiatives in other spheres, such as military cooperation and security issues that are very sensitive for both of them. Does that mean that the rivalry is left in the past? Of course, it does not. India (as well as China) considers its neighbour a major adversary. But that means that we (and almost the whole world with us, let us put aside the United States<sup>1</sup>) can hope that today the “zero-sum game” no longer attracts anyone, and India and China understanding all the negative sides of the “ignoring” or strongly competing with each other opt for peaceful cooperation rather than tensed coexistence. Let us call this relationship “the partnership of necessity” where both sides may not want, but have to live together peacefully for the sake of mutual benefit.

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<sup>1</sup> The US is one of the countries that are not interested in close and friendly relations between two Asian giants, because such peace would deprive the modern superpower of its influence in Asia and Pacific.

One of the ways of such “peaceful life” is joint membership in different international organizations among which are BRICS, the dialogue format “ASEAN + 6” (ten countries of ASEAN + China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand), and the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization).

The SCO is an organization formed at the very beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with six members: Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan. Initially, the main purpose of the SCO had been to ensure security at the shared borders, but with Uzbekistan joining the partnership in 2001 the organization focused on two fields: economic cooperation and security. Today the SCO is undergoing an interesting phenomenon: two more states – India and Pakistan – are to become its members. Such an enlargement will obviously create difficulties: it may hinder the decision-making process, complicate the work of the organization, threaten some joint projects and initiatives. The reason is absolutely clear: the neighbouring India and Pakistan have been irreconcilable enemies for almost 70 years and it is naïve to imagine that now, within the SCO, they will act in peace and concord. Those who think differently can look at the example of SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation). For the years of its existence it has not managed to make any visible success. Apart from some economic reasons (the absence of complementarity of the economies, similar structure of exports and imports, low-developed infrastructure, high tariffs and non-tariff barriers) the hindrances for strengthening cooperation are never-ending confrontation between India and Pakistan and worries of the small countries of the region about India’s hegemonistic aspirations.

The SCO may face the same destiny. Of course, the main accomplishment of SAARC is the fact that the Association provides a platform for the dialogue between the countries of the region, but I do not believe that it is enough for the SCO. Russia, China and other states, I think, put higher hopes on this organization and “the SAARC way” is an absolute nonsense for them.

The modern world supplies us not only with negatives examples but with positive ones, too. The European Union and ASEAN demonstrate the most successful models of cooperation and it is worth analyzing their integration history (I will focus mostly on ASEAN as an Eastern regional organization).

ASEAN managed to achieve a lot. As for its economic and financial success it is undoubtful (only in Singapore the GDP per capita has increased in 120 times for 50 years). Its role in the international arena has visibly increased. The member states have become much more integrated in the global economy and financial system. Some of them belong to the group of the “New Industrialized Economies” that due to export-led economy, active attraction of foreign investment, increasing access to education rose to the new level of economic and social progress. But what is even more important here, the countries of the Southeast Asia have learned how to live in peace.

The Southeast Asia is a region of several territorial disputes: the Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands, the Senkaku Islands, the Liancourt Rocks, etc. are the main “apple of discord” and factors hampering integration processes along with unevenness of development and disparity between the most developed states here (Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia) and the less developed once (Cambodia, Myanmar).

In 2001 they signed the Manila Declaration under which all the conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means.

Moreover, the ten countries formed ASEAN Regional Forum which became a dialogue platform for the whole Asia and Pacific region. It is the only panel that provides an opportunity for both small and big countries to discuss security issues within the region.

The question arises, how BRICS can achieve the same success? There is no doubt that an absolutely similar form of integration is not proper here. BRICS has never been regarded as an integration group, more like a project, initiated by several countries having common goals and fighting against common challenges. Neither was

it created as an opponent to the West. But now, taking into account tensed political atmosphere and different views on foreign and internal policy, we can say that the world is again divided in the West and in the East, and BRICS is a part of this dichotomy. Of course, the system of international relations is much more complex nowadays than it was 50 years ago, and such a division should be completed with a range of factors, players, connections. However, the fact that BRICS should look for and pave new alternative paths for the development of the world is evident. And the key to success is in an ability to speak with one voice, to act together without rivaling each other and to change the world for the better.

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To sum up, today BRICS plays a very important role in the system of international security. It works as an accelerator of those changes which are on the way now. The group due to its rising economic and political heft, expanding economic size, increasing financial opportunities and active foreign policy are gaining influence over decision-making process in this very sphere.

The main feature and at the same time the brightest opportunity for the BRICS members is their diversity. Representing almost the half of the world population, the most ancient civilizations and the richest cultures, the BRICS states naturally complement and complete one another. Therefore, the most criticized aspect of this group may be the most useful one. A collective approach is vital here, and BRICS has demonstrated its adherence to it so far.

It is necessary to remember that there are too many promises given by various politicians, countries, international organizations of the modern world. These promises are often left without any consequences. The task of the BRICS leaders is not to forget that there should be something more than just ordinary words. The result is needed and the success of BRICS is highly dependent on whether the declarations and vows will lead to **real actions**.