

# MP-IDSA *Commentary*

## Twentieth Anniversary of BRICS and India's BRICS Summit Presidency

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### **S***ummary*

BRICS has a positive role to play as an anchor of geopolitical and geo-economic stability and promote reformed multilateralism.

India will chair the 18<sup>th</sup> BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Summit, scheduled to be held in the second half of this year.<sup>1</sup> While BRICS was established in 2006 at the foreign ministers’ level, it began holding Summits on a rotational basis from 2009.<sup>2</sup> Thus far, India has chaired three BRICS Summits—in 2012, 2016 and 2021.<sup>3</sup> The upcoming 18<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit is significant as it marks the twentieth anniversary of the BRICS grouping’s establishment. It is an occasion to look back on its evolution and discern trends for its future.

## Introduction

BRICS began as BRIC in 2006, and with the inclusion of South Africa, it acquired its present nomenclature in 2010. Five more countries—Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE—were admitted to the group as full members in 2024, followed by Indonesia in 2025.<sup>4</sup> Ten countries—Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam—joined as partner countries in 2025.<sup>5</sup>

In its two decades of existence, BRICS has often been viewed as Russia and China’s attempt to create an anti-West bloc that will eventually succumb to irrelevance under the weight of contradictions among its members. This view is premised on strategic and security divergences among BRICS members, differences in their governance models and deep variations in their economic scales and developmental priorities. Strategic mistrust and security issues between India and China are especially mentioned in this regard. It has also often been derided as a talking shop with no viable future. However, an examination of BRICS’ evolution belies this pessimistic critique. It establishes that BRICS has instead emerged as a force for good and can serve as an anchor for systemic stability.

## A Force for Good

In its evolutionary journey, BRICS has maintained a steady course unaffected by geopolitical instabilities. It has witnessed a fair degree of institutionalisation, as

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<sup>1</sup> Meera Srinivasan, [“Putin Likely to Participate in September BRICS Summit in Delhi: Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister”](#), *The Hindu*, 1 April 2026.

<sup>2</sup> [“When Was BRICS Established?”](#), FAQs, BRICS 2026, Government of India.

<sup>3</sup> [“How Many Times India has been the Chair of BRICS?”](#), BRICS 2026, Government of India.

<sup>4</sup> [“History”](#), BRICS 2026, Government of India.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

evidenced by the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB, or BRICS Bank) in 2015. Over the years, its agenda has broadened and become only more comprehensive. Moving beyond discussions of ‘economic issues of mutual concern’ in its initial years, it has developed three well-defined, articulated core pillars for cooperative activities: ‘political and security cooperation, economic and financial cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges’.<sup>6</sup>

BRICS, which houses 49.5 per cent of the world population, 40 per cent of the GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms and 26 per cent of trade at present,<sup>7</sup> provides a consultative policy coordination mechanism to address global concerns such as terrorism, climate change, food and energy security, and disruptions in the international economy and finance. It seeks to strengthen international trade and financial architecture, and cooperation in agriculture, labour and employment, in ways suited to the Global South and led by its prominent voices.<sup>8</sup> Overall, BRICS emphasises ‘people-centric development, fostering dialogue, and promoting practical cooperation’<sup>9</sup> in the aforementioned issue areas. Its increasing membership provides practical evidence of its growing appeal and approval among countries in the Global South.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech at the 2025 Rio Summit articulated “a people-centric and humanity-first approach” for BRICS processes.<sup>10</sup> In keeping with this, India will promote ‘Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability’ as the theme of the upcoming Summit during its Chairship.<sup>11</sup>

India has expounded the theme in the following manner:

Building for resilience aims at ‘strengthening economic, social, and institutional resilience to navigate global uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, health challenges, and climate risks’. Innovation promotes ‘deploying new and emerging technologies such as digital public infrastructure, fintech, AI, and knowledge sharing to enable effective service delivery and future-ready growth’. Cooperation looks for

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<sup>6</sup> [“What are the Main Areas of Cooperation in BRICS?”](#), FAQs, BRICS 2026, Government of India.

<sup>7</sup> [“What is BRICS?”](#), BRICS 2026, Government of India; [“BRICS GDP Outperforms Global Average, Accounts for 40% of World Economy”](#), BRICS, Brasil 2025, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil.

<sup>8</sup> [“What are the Main Areas of Cooperation in BRICS?”](#), no. 6.

<sup>9</sup> [“EAM’s Address during the Launch of BRICS India 2026 Logo, Theme and Website”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 13 January 2026.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

‘deepening multilateral engagement among BRICS members through enhanced policy coordination, development finance, trade facilitation, reforms in global institutional governance, and people-centric partnerships’. Sustainability pursues ‘accelerating collective efforts toward climate action, green finance, energy transitions, and sustainable development aligned with national and global priorities’.<sup>12</sup>

In this exposition, India views BRICS as a grouping that should help navigate ‘global uncertainties’ by ‘deepening multilateral engagement’ and ‘accelerating collective efforts’. Here, ‘global uncertainties’ most certainly imply economic, technological, climate and natural and other disruptions. They naturally allude as well to geopolitical uncertainties that ultimately cause such disruptions to a great extent. Thus, on the political side, India values BRICS as a process that complements its demand for reformed multilateralism.

### **Not an Anti-West Bloc, but an Anchor of Stability**

Here, it would be apt to address the concern that BRICS is essentially Russia and China’s vehicle for promoting an anti-West bloc. These apprehensions have arisen due to the antagonistic nature of relations between Russia and the West, and to a lesser degree between China and the West. The internal discourse of these two countries and their rhetorical positioning at BRICS meetings may sometimes betray such sentiments. However, the evolution of the BRICS agenda and diverse membership does not support such an assumption.

What cannot be ignored is the unprecedented geopolitical turmoil the world is experiencing, which has even undermined the United Nations. The relative decline of the West is a fact of the present time. This decline has been producing geopolitical and geoeconomic seismic shifts in several unanticipated ways and is likely to continue to do so in the near future.

In this backdrop, BRICS has a positive role to play. It can provide an anchor of geopolitical and geoeconomic stability. Its role as a leading international grouping has become increasingly distinctive. Indeed, it contributes to ongoing efforts for promoting reformed multilateralism as well as multipolarity. Participating in BRICS processes is also a way of expressing strategic autonomy in the current global context. It increases the space available for the Global South. It emphasises reforming the

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<sup>12</sup> [“Theme & Priorities”](#), BRICS 2026, Government of India.

global financial architecture. Ideas such as de-dollarisation, which lack consensus, have not gained traction in BRICS. Still, the argument that international financial transactions in national currencies provide a certain safety and certainty in an increasingly uncertain world has merit. Furthermore, BRICS can be leveraged to promote North–South dialogue.

## **Conclusion**

BRICS reflects the changed reality of the world. It can be perceived as an anti-West bloc only if one expects that countries around the world are committed to preserving the old reality—a post-war international order dominated by the West, which is now anachronistic. India, as a founding member of the grouping, is well aware of this untenable situation. This political clarity should remain unwavering as an underlying principle in India’s promotion of ‘a people-centric and humanity-first approach’ through BRICS.

## About the Author



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