

## **BRICS+: Towards a Dual Multilateral System of International Relations and Global Governance**

**FIKD - 07 May 2024, Salah Hannachi**

The power game between the United States, Russia, and China, continues to reshape the landscape of international relations. India is playing intermediation. The European Union is still groping for its role in this great powers scramble. Its enlargement, along with NATO expansion, is proving to be a source of great tension with Russia. New strategies from middle powers and pivotal countries such as Brazil, Iran and Turkey are emerging, complicating these tensions and the system of international relations. It is against this backdrop that, in 2023, the BRICS group expanded to include five new countries. It looks set to continue expanding and playing an increasingly important role in the system of international relations. The BRICS + partnership with Africa, in the Central Hemisphere, south of Europe, is becoming an important issue. It is important for energy, natural resources, investment and labor, capital goods and consumer markets, and population movements. It also determines the weight of the BRICS+ in global governance, GG, in the face of the Multilateral System dominated by the West.

Tunisia offers its position and human resources as a link between the two basins of the Mediterranean and as a junction point between Europe and Africa in a central energy and development corridor in the Central Euro-African Hemisphere.

To clarify the contours of this emerging world of tomorrow, the Ibn Khaldoun Forum for Development organized a conference-debate on May 7, 2024, on the BRICS + as an emerging player in the international geopolitical arena, introduced and moderated by Mr. Salah Hannachi, former Ambassador and Vice-President of FIKD.

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### Executive summary

Circumstances, events and strategy have transformed BRIC from an acronym for a Wall Street concept into BRICS+, a concept for a system of international relations.

Invented in Wall Street in 2001, after the end of the Cold War in 1991, as a financial and economic concept, BRIC was taken up by Russia in 2009, who turned it into an essentially geopolitical concept. It evolved into BRICS in 2011, then BRICS+ in 2023, to become a holistic paradigm for a system of international relations, both geopolitical and goeconomic. This new paradigm

advocates a mission to build a Global Community of Shared Interests working in respect, dignity, sovereign equality and consensus, to achieve a Mutually Accelerated Growth (MAG) and insure a greater contribution of the EMDCs in Global Governance. The concept calls for a better balance between security and development, and for greater consideration to the new priorities and challenges facing the world community since 1991, such as Climate Change, the Anthropocene, COVID-19, and so on. The concept also calls for culture and civilization to be taken into account in international relations, and for grassroots involvement to be stepped up, made possible today by new transport, information and communication technologies.

The BRICS+ paradigm incorporates some of the concepts of the G77 and takes into account the emergence of new players. It requires membership in the UN and aims at better taking into account the context and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than the paradigm of the current Multilateral System, developed 75 years ago, after the end of the Second World War in 1945 by the victors and essentially in their favor.

The BRICS+ doctrine goes beyond the doctrine and strategy of reconstruction, or the purely security-oriented strategies of balance of power, and mutually assured destruction, MAD, of the post-war era of the last century. Its thesis is that emerging global economic value chains, logistics and trade today add to the challenge of a balanced mission of security, an equally pressing mission of a balanced mission of development and mutually accelerated growth, MAG.

This interdependence broadens the spectrum and flexibility of possible intervention and crisis management beyond purely security-based approaches, to better cope with tensions, conflicts and challenges, and make the most of opportunities.

The disparities and conflicts between its members may become even more challenging, as BRICS+ expands. They represent a formidable governance challenge to the BRICS+ system. They may even represent a challenge of survival and sustainability. A mitigating threat to this threat, however, lies in the strategic importance of BRICS+ for leading members such as Russia, China and even Iran. The strong commitment of these members is indeed today and will be in the future, a decisive factor, in the future of BRICS.

On the other hand, the natural and very likely reluctance of the incumbent members of the current Multilateral System to accept reform, and the political and technical challenges of implementing radical reform, will mean that the reform of the current system advocated by BRICS+, even if accepted, will be slow and time-consuming.

These considerations lead to the anticipation that the new international order will be characterized, for some time, perhaps for a long time, and perhaps for the better, by the emergence of a dual, bicameral multilateral system of global governance. Other mechanisms, such as BRF, TICAD, etc., may be articulated as support or complementing systems to these two main systems.

This Dual Multilateralism will be a kind of bicameral governance, made up of the system represented by the current titular Multilateral System, as a kind of upper house, and the BRICS+, as a kind of new G77 or lower house.

**This dual system creates, for countries and actors, state and non-state, and for Tunisia, the imperative of dual membership and dual intervention in both systems.**

## I. Introduction

BRIC is an acronym coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs Chairman Jim O'Neil, and adopted by Wall Street as an investment concept. It stands for Brazil, Russia, India and China. BRIC remained in hibernation until 2006, when Putin took it up and put it into orbit in the geopolitical space.

Indeed, on assuming the presidency of Russia after Yeltsin, and probably long before, Putin became aware of his country's grievances, shared with many other countries, against certain geopolitical practices. Unilateralism, the extraterritoriality of sanctions and the militarization of the system of international relations, the abuse of the dollar as the international currency of reserve and payment, etc., were common practices and grievances. They had increased considerably during the unipolar era, which prevailed after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. These practices have led to tensions in international relations, trade wars, conflicts, crises, interminable wars, serious disorders, refugee problems and human suffering in Central Europe, the Balkans, Central Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, etc.

Putin also acknowledged the major grievances that Russia shares with many countries, including some BRIC members, against the current Multilateral System. These grievances concern the bias of the structure, the obsolescence of the mission and objectives, and the operational inefficiency of this system, both with regard to the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions. Finally, Putin was particularly frustrated by the failure of his repeated attempts to make Russia a member or even a partner of NATO, and by his unsuccessful efforts to make his country a member of "House of Europe". He was also alarmed by the West's repeated refusal to enter into a security arrangement with Russia, and by NATO's continued expansion.

**2022: Sabotage of Nordstream I & II**



**2022: War in Ukraine and fracture of the Eurasian Continental Bridge**



**Europe House from Vladivostok to Lisbonne**



All these developments have contributed to a growing rift between Russia and the European Union, and between Russia and the Collective West. They have led Putin to abandon his dream of a Eurasian continental bridge "From Lisbon to Vladivostok" and to turn East and South in search of an alternative strategic space, a strategic "lebensraum".

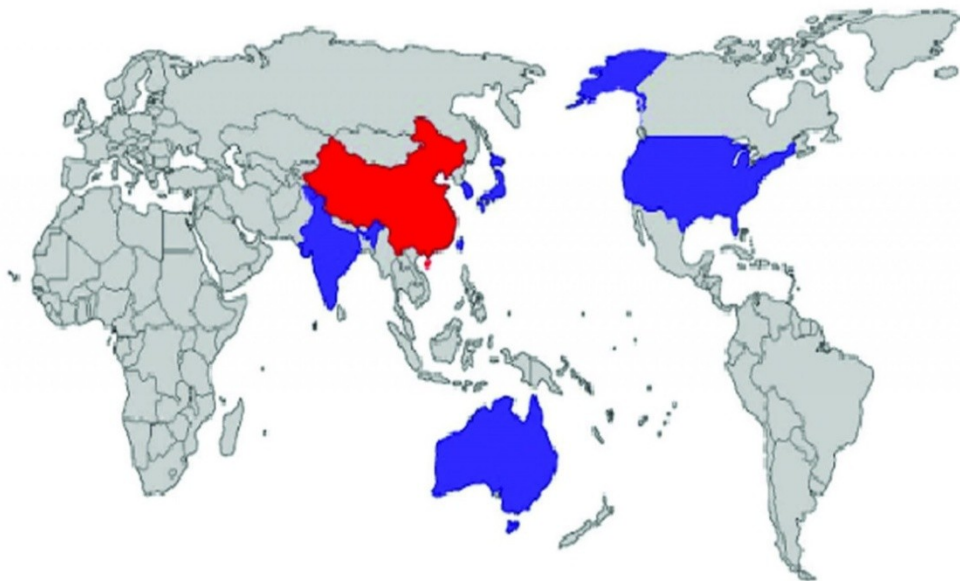
In doing so, Putin turned to BRIC, recognizing the concept's geopolitical and geo-economic potential and the advantage of its ready-made acronym. Putin saw in BRIC the potential of a possible strategic response to these grievances, and above all as a counter-response to the security expansionism of

the USA and NATO. He saw in it a kind of globalized counter-NATO, and a modernized replacement for the Warsaw Pact.

Indeed, in 2006, in addition to Russia, BRIC included Brazil in the Western Hemisphere, a leader in Mercosur and South America, independent in its diplomacy and close to Russia in its socially oriented political paradigm. BRIC also included India and China in the Eastern Hemisphere, two countries historically and ideologically close to Russia. Both countries are also recognized powers in the emerging new multipolar international order and acknowledged leaders in the Global South and the historic G77. In addition, two BRIC members, Brazil and India, shared a strong aspiration to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. As such, they shared, with Russia, a strong conviction of the need for radical reform of the current Multilateral System of Global Governance, GG.

For its part, China shared Russia's concerns about the security expansionism of the USA, and of NATO. The more so that it was beginning to pivot towards the Pacific, in particular the South China Sea, through the creation of alliances such as QUAD and AUKUS. Moreover, BRICS+'s footprint conveniently complements BRI's footprint and China's global infrastructure building strategy.

**QUAD Alliance: USA + Japan + India + Australia, China, a major trading partner for QUAD**



## II. The Genesis of BRICS+

### A. Genesis of BRICS+ as a Geopolitical Concept

Putin then set about leveraging the BRIC as a response to the grievances of Russia and many other countries, especially developing nations, against the current order of international relations, dominated by the USA, the G7 and the Collective West. In 1999 and 2004, NATO was further enlarged, despite Russia's vehement objections. It should be pointed out that this expansion, under the Clinton administration, took place despite the very strong domestic US objections. The US Chief of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, the former US ambassador to Moscow, William Burns, now

Director of the CIA, as well as the famous George Kennan, architect of the strategy to contain the USSR during the Cold War, all advised against such an expansion.

In 2006, French President Chirac's envoy, Courdault Montagne, transmitted to Condoleeza Rice, Bush Jr's US State Secretary of State a proposal, strongly endorsed by Russia, of a USA-EU-Russia arrangement for a NATO-neutral Ukraine. Rice rejected the proposal exclaiming: " Here goes France again, trying to bloc our efforts to expand NATO!".

Thus, in July of the same year, Putin invited the BRIC leaders to a first meeting on the sidelines of the G8 Summit in St. Petersburg. Two months later, in September 2006, Russia invited the BRIC Foreign Ministers for a first official meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. In 2007, in Germany, in a memorable speech at the Munich Security Conference, Putin strongly and confidently deplored the unilateralism and militarism of the USA and the West in international affairs. He was first to signal the potential importance of the BRIC in the new international order.

In 2008, at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, US President Bush announced that Georgia and Ukraine would soon join NATO, despite renewed strong opposition from both French President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel.

In 2009, the first official BRIC summit took place in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The summit quickly invited South Africa to become a member, an invitation it quickly accepted. In 2011, Nelson Mandela's South Africa, in the Central Hemisphere, a recognized leader of the African Union's NEPAD, and a member of the African Troika, which Japan was the first to invite to the 2000 G8 Summit in Okinawa, became a member, transforming BRIC into BRICS. South Africa's accession helps BRICS to cover all three hemispheres and complete the Group's geopolitical coverage.

### **2011: South Africa joins BRICS in the Central Hemisphere**



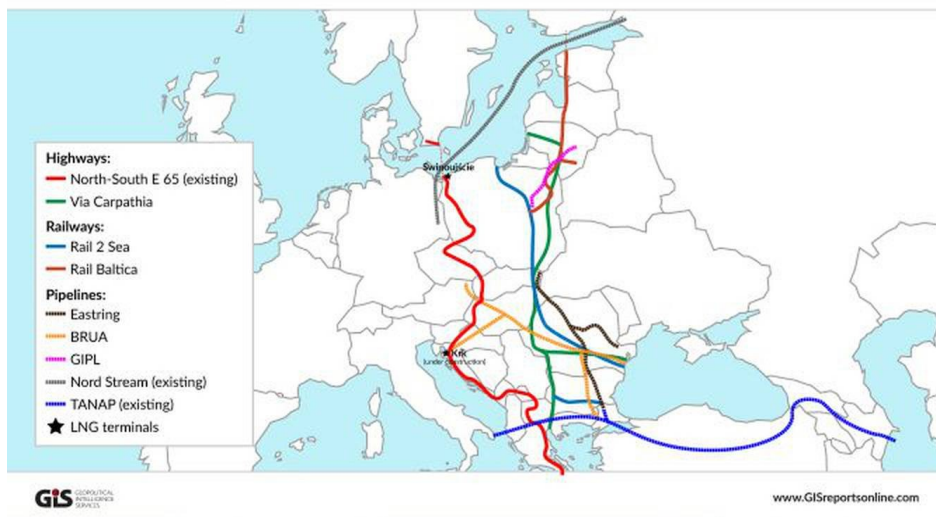
In 2015, with the support of the USA, Poland launched the "Three Seas Initiative" between a number of Eastern European countries bordering the Baltic, Aegean and Black Seas. The initiative promotes a vertical North-South curtain of infrastructure projects controlled by the West. The initiative further separated Russia from its Western European neighbors, heightening fears of Russia's isolation and accelerating its pivot to the South and East.

**The Three Seas Initiative launched by Poland, an emerging NATO partner**



**An infrastructure curtain separates Europe and Russia**

**Three Seas Initiative projects**



Thus, from a concept for Wall Street investors, BRIC has evolved into BRICS, a geopolitical concept, positioning itself as a counter-power to NATO, the G7, and the Collective West, and as a replacement for the Warsaw Pact for Russia.

## **B. The Genesis of the Geoeconomic Dimension of BRICS+**

A MAG doctrine, Mutually Accelerated Growth, adopted at subsequent summits added a geoeconomic dimension to the concept's initial geopolitical dimension. In 2014, on July 15, the first day of the 6th BRICS Summit, in Fortaleza, Brazil, a New Development Bank (NBD) was launched. A Currency Reserve Arrangement (CRA), and other institutions were also launched, reminiscent of the IMF and Bretton Woods institutions, and also reminiscent of ABII, Asian Bank for Infrastructure Investments and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This new geo-economic dimension complements the BRICS' original geopolitical dimension. The doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of member countries and clients and the principle of non-conditionality of credits were proclaimed as fundamental principles of BRICS and its new institutions. The doctrine of project-based financing rather than reform-based financing contrasts with the practices of the Bretton Woods institutions. It extends its outreach to many developing countries, especially those of the G77.

The importance of civilization, cultural exchange and interpersonal exchanges between grassroots populations, People2People, was confirmed in the Declaration of the XV Summit. It creates a new consensus, the BRICS+ Consensus, which contrasts with the doctrine and practices of the Washington Consensus.

## **C. BRICS+ Agenda**

These geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural features have further increased the attractiveness of BRICS+ for both existing and potential members. BRICS advocates a mission to :

### **1. EMDC**

- Bringing together Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs) to work together in mutual respect, in sovereignty and in dignity, to promote mutually accelerated growth, MAG, security and exchanges between peoples and civilizations. Thus, BRICS brings together the emerging countries of China and Russia with the developing countries, especially those of the G77.

### **2. MAG**

- Working to promote mutually accelerated mutual growth, MAG, in a win-win paradigm for the system of international relations

### **3. Building a Global Community**

- Building a Global Community of Shared Interests,

### **4. Radical Reform of the Multilateral System**

- Working towards greater respect of the UN Charter and of international law, and towards achieving a radical reform of the current Multilateral System for a renewed mission, greater focus on development, and better representation and greater voice for EMDCs.

## 5. Dedollarization

- Launching a better alternative to the current international system of financing, reserve and payment currencies, and interest and exchange rates. This has become necessary to mitigate extraterritorial abuse of the dollar, to reflect the global eastern shift of the World economy, and to hamstring the dollar-financed wars and military bases.

### 1. EMDC

The current multilateral system of global governance was set up in 1945, primarily to ensure post war reconstruction, security, peace and a balance of power between the protagonists of the Second World War. The system, drawn up essentially by and in favor of the victors of the war, marginalizes the vanquished, in particular Germany, Japan, etc., although they were front-line protagonists of the war and are now major players in the international system. It also marginalizes many third party countries, not protagonists in the wars of the West and the two world wars, in South America, Asia, etc., and countries that were not yet independent or born, in Africa, Asia or even Europe in 1945.

In this respect, the BRICS believes that the current Multilateral System needs updating and radical reform to give better representation and a stronger voice to new countries and EMDCs, emerging markets and developing countries. In the same way, it argues, reform must bear on both the structure, the mission and the objectives of the Multilateral System of Global Governance, GG. It must evolve towards a win-win paradigm, based on harmony, taking into account globalization, and giving greater priority to development and exchanges between peoples and civilizations.

The “forever” wars, conflicts and tensions around the World, are a glaring proof of the shortcomings of the current Security Council and the Multilateral System. They give a high profile and legitimacy to the grievances of the BRICS. These grievances and frustrations are reflected in the votes, most likely coordinated, of members of the BRICS+, at the UN, on the Ukraine War and Gaza. They are also reflected in their unprecedented outspoken and independent positions on international issues. They illustrate the West's loss of moral authority, and its claim to the universality of its values and paradigms. They also highlight the loss of its hold on global governance.

The concept of EMDC allows bringing in the G77 countries and other developing countries in the BRICS+ concept. It brings them together, in an UN-like concept, together with China and Russia, which can hardly be described as developing countries. It allows BRICS+ to act as a sort of G77 augmented geopolitically by Russia, a military superpower and geoeconomically by China, as an economic superpower armed by huge trade surpluses, know-how and capacity for global infrastructure investment.

These developments have, at the same time, further increased, excessively may be, both members' and non-members' expectations in the advocacy power of the BRICS+.

Thus, the BRICS+ phenomenon appears and should be analysed as a movement of advocacy of the empowerment for all countries under-represented and/or underpowered in the current multilateral system of international relations, not just its members.

## 2. MAG

BRICS+ also advocates that the system of international relations must take better account of the community-based construction of the Global Village that the World has become today, by establishing village values of harmony and community spirit. Today's system of international relations needs win-win paradigms for tackling global challenges, balanced development and MAG (Mutually Accelerated Growth), as much as it needs lose-lose paradigms for balancing power and MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction).

The EMDC concept and the MAG concept are both conveniently adapted to China's capacity and emerging strategy of global infrastructure building and development.

## 3. Building a Global Community

The BRICS' globalist orientation contrasts with the growing post-COVID-19 isolationism and protectionism of the USA, the EU and the G7. The rise in competitiveness of Japan, South Korea, the ASEAN countries and now China and India, etc., has led the USA and a growing number of industrialized countries to gradually reverse their narrative and advocacy of market rules and international free trade. These developments have also led to trade conflicts, tariff wars, exceptions to WTO rules and extraterritorial unilateral sanctions. Aggravated by COVID-19, they have resurrected a populist discourse of nationalism, deglobalization and a return to the logic of proximity in industrial production, investment and supply and production chains.

It's worth noting, however, that globalization is a historical movement which is difficult to reverse. Technological advances in transport, communication, outsourcing of manufacturing and even R&D, supply chains, etc., are challenging the borders of nation-states, as they have challenged the city walls of the 15th and 16th centuries. They call into question the capacity of these borders to accommodate or contain today's trade, economic, social, political, cultural exchange, innovation, , technological and scientific development. Globalization may be slowed down or blocked for a time, but it is impossible today, in the 21st century, to reverse the course of its paradigm. It is as difficult to do so as it would have been to reverse the paradigm of the nation-state of the 19th and 20th centuries and return to the paradigm of the city-state of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Instead of regressing back to isolationism and protectionism, countries have put into place new mechanisms and arrangements to cope with Globalization. These mechanisms are aimed at managing global challenges such as population growth, pandemics, resource scarcity, climate change, global warming, waste and pollution, and so on. Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey

and Australia, for example, have set up a multilateral system, MIKTA, to deal with Globalization. Indonesia used this multilateral system to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Indonesia calls on MIKTA's multilateralism to combat COVID-19.**



Like any village, the Global Village needs village values and governance paradigms of proximity, of co-esse, co-existence, conviviality, living together and harmony. The global challenges of today's world cannot be met with wars, sanctions, lose-lose or even win-lose paradigms, and purely security-based solutions. They require paradigms of constructive competition and innovation, as in sport and science, rather than paradigms of destructive competition, as in war.

The EMDC, the MAG and the Global Community Building concepts, are well suited for a global Marshall plan.

Global cultural policies, institutions and events take an entirely different outlook in the Global Community building effort. They assume the functionalities, importance and urgency of cultural policies and events on a communal or national level. They also allow countries to leverage to advantage their soft power and cultural capital. It leads some Arnold Toynbee the British historian to develop the concept of a Civilization, as a more adequate unit of historical analysis than the concept of a Nation-State. It leads some geopolitical analysts to describe China more as a Civilization-State than a Nation-State.

**4. Radical Reform of the Multilateral System**

BRICS member countries strongly advocate a radical reform of the current Multilateral System, principally the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. They consider that these institutions were set up in 1945, and coseived in the light of overriding concerns with peace, security and reconstruction. They were also conceived, narrowly in the light of the priorities of the victorious protagonist countries of the Second World War.

Security appeared as the paramount concern. It continued to prevail even after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991. A lose-lose paradigm of Cold War and balance of power and terror, MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction), was established between these countries and has governed international relations since the end of the Second World War in 1945. This essentially security-based bipolar paradigm, continued briefly as a unipolar paradigm from 1991 until 2017, and has muted today spontaneously into a multipolar, but still essentially security-oriented, paradigm, witness the on-going multiple threats, crises and wars.

After seventy-five years, many new players have emerged, and the international context has changed radically. This leads the BRICS+ to argue that the current representation structure and mission of the Multilateral System needs to be updated. It must take into account these changes and the endless crises and wars that have characterized the unipolar period since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It must take into account the new global challenges, which cannot be adequately addressed within the current, lose-lose paradigm, and testify to the urgency of this update and reform.

## 5. Dedollarization

The unilateral freezing of Russia's dollar assets following the invasion of Ukraine has caught the attention of all observers and holders of dollar assets, regardless of their relationship with the United States. The decision put the long-standing debate on dedollarization back on the agenda, to mitigate the risk of unilateral and extraterritorial confiscation and other abuses of the dollar's status as an international reserve and payment currency.

Dedollarization is also debated as an imperative to help better take into account the new shift of the World economy to the Eastern Hemisphere and the new weight of Asian, especially East Asian, economies.

Finally, Dedollarization is debated as an imperative to end the USA's so-called "endless wars", facilitated by the status of the dollar as the international reserve currency and currency of international payments, and balance of payments deficits.

These concerns have put "Dedollarization" at the top of the BRICS+ agenda and on the agenda of many other countries. The issue of dedollarization may, in fact, have been one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates applied for membership, and why member countries invited them to join BRICS+.

## III. The XV<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit

### A. The Dilemma of Expansion

During the last 14 summits since the creation of BRICS+, i.e. since 2009, the question of expansion has not been raised. Recent developments in international relations have helped to put it on the agenda for the XV<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit in August 2023, in Johannesburg, South Africa. In fact, the membership criteria and admission protocol were not finalized until August 2023 for the expansion decision. The principal points concerning expansion are:

## 1. Eligibility

### - EMDC

Eligible members are emerging markets and developing, UN member countries. The EMDC concept is reminiscent of the simpler "developing countries" concept of the G77 and the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia. It brings together Russia and China, which can hardly be described as developing countries, with developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, and Europe.

### - UN, UNSC & SDGs

Acceptance of the UN Charter, the SDGs, international law and commitment to radical reform of the UN are also fundamental criteria for membership. New members must also accept all the Group's past decisions. An important past decision is the BRICS' already stated support for the candidacies of Brazil, India and South Africa for permanent seats on the UN Security Council.

### - Positive relationships and contributions

Candidates for membership must also have good relations with existing members and the potential to make a positive contribution to the Group.

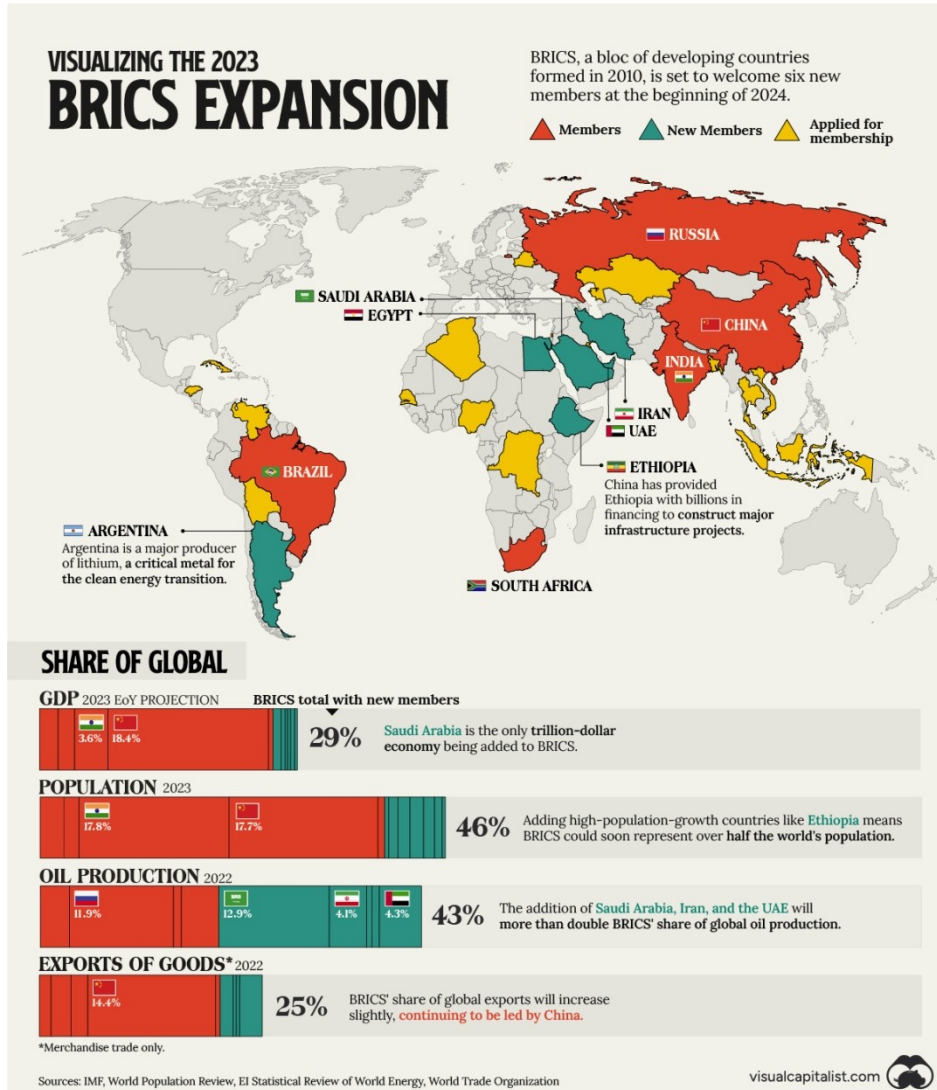
## 2. Participation in the XVth Summit

Sixty(60) countries attended, forty (40) expressed interest, twenty-three (23) requested membership, and six (6) were invited to join the Group. One country changed its mind and declined the invitation. Different statutes are recognized:

- a. "BRICS+ Partners": the status of countries which applied but were not invited,.
- b. "Friends of BRICS+": the status of countries, which expressed interest in BRICS+ but did not apply to join.

## 3. Membership

A letter of application is sent by the applicant country to the host country of the BRICS Summit. The Summit Sherpas examine eligibility and submit applications to the Foreign Ministers of member countries. These, in turn, place them on the agenda of the Group's Summit Leaders for decision by unanimity.



## B. Summit Declaration

Several points are worth noting in the Declaration of the XV<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit. The first point is its insistence on the concept of the Global Community. This contrasts with growing isolationism and protectionism, and with Western talk of de-globalization. The concept of Mutual Accelerated Growth (MAG) also represents a new concept and a major departure from the classic paradigm of geopolitical competition or rivalry. In particular, it contrasts with the concept of autarkic growth. It also contrasts with the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) of the Cold War era.

**Declaration of the XV BRICS Summit, August 2023 Preamble A strategic partnership based on :**

**A. 8 Principles**

**B. 3 Pillars**

**C. 5 Challenges**

<b>A. 8 Principles</b>	<b>B. 3 Pillars</b>	<b>C. 5 Challenges</b>
<b>1.</b> Mutual respect	<b>P1.</b> Safety	<b>1.</b> Global community
<b>2.</b> Sovereign equality	<b>P2.</b> Development	<b>2.</b> MAG
<b>3.</b> Solidarity	<b>P3.</b> Civilization	<b>3.</b> SDG
<b>4.</b> Democracy		<b>4.</b> P2P: Cultural exchange
<b>5.</b> Opening		<b>5.</b> Sys Multilateral reform
<b>6.</b> Collaboration		
<b>7.</b> Inclusion		
<b>8.</b> Consensus		

It is also interesting to note that the Declaration maintains the principle of consensus in decision making. It is reaffirmed despite the larger number of members and the new great disparities in profiles, resources, priorities and social models between them. Equally interesting is the concept of "Civilization", elevated to the status of the third pillar of BRICS+. Equally important is the new emphasis on P2P exchanges, between young people and grassroots populations.

**C. European membership in BRICS**

French President Emmanuel Macron expressed interest in attending the August 2023 BRICS Summit, but was not invited. He may simply have wanted to attend as an observer country and meet the leaders of the Group's participating countries, or address the BRICS-Africa conference on August 24. Macron may also have wanted to explain French policy in Africa. Finally, he may have wanted to discuss BRICS membership policy, in particular its possible openness to membership by European EMDCs, or even France, the other G7 countries and Western countries. It would be interesting to know who opposed his invitation. Probably not

**IV. Impact of BRICS+**

BRICS+ is a concept still under construction. It has evolved from an investment concept in 2001, to a geopolitical concept in 2009, and today to an integrated holistic geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geocultural concept, as reflected in the Declaration of the XV Summit 2023. There are as yet no systematic impact studies from any angle, let alone a global impact study. We can make, however, an attempt at evaluation. The assessment must specify the point of view of the assessment, which is no longer solely that of Jim O'Neil.

**A. Geopolitical Impact**

From a geopolitical point of view, it can be said that BRICS has already contributed to the peaceful reshaping of the international order. It has contributed to the birth of a strong and probably durable movement, similar to the G77, advocating radical reform of the current Multilateral System. It represents a "conservative attempt by the powers of the South [and the EMDCs] to secure what they see as their rightful place on the world stage" (Vijay Prashad).

Similarly, BRICS+ has helped to shape international reactions to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, in a way unexpected by the Global West. It has also contributed to a greater awareness, especially for the Global West, of the limits of sanctions and the costs of unilateralism and extraterritoriality. It has radically changed the context, the calculus, of the dangers of other conflicts in other regions around the World. It has put radical reform of the current multilateral system back on the agenda. Finally, yet importantly, it may have re-invigorated mirror-image attempts among the incumbent Western powers to unite in order to protect the status quo and their privileges in decision-making in the current Multilateral System and in Global Governance.

It has thus contributed to the birth, not of a bipolar world order, but rather of a dual multipolar multilateral system of international relations and global governance.

## **B. Geo-economic Impact**

In 2014, five (5) short years after its first meeting in 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia, as a geopolitical concept, the BRICS added a geo-economic dimension, drawing inspiration from the Brettenwoods and the recent BRI/AIIB systems. It launched the New Development Bank (NDB), a bank with \$50 billion in subscribed capital, to finance infrastructure and climate-related projects. By 2022, i.e. within eight years, the NDB had granted \$32 billion for new roads, bridges and water projects, at a rate of \$4 billion a year.

China, Russia and Iran, are strongly interested in the geopolitical dimension of BRICS+ as a possible countermeasure to NATO expansionism, which is outreaching today even to Eas Asia. For China, the geoeconomic dimensions is also of strategic importance. Indeed, BRICS+ complements BRI's footprint. The EMDC concept allows BRICS+ to include in its global geoeconomic reach areas and countries outside the historic silk-road direct footprint, such as countries of Latin Aamerica and Central and Western Africa.

The explicit inclusion of climate-related projects contrasts with other infrastructure banks, such as BAII (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and with the unfunded Paris Agreement of COP 21 in 2015.

It is expected that China and the other BRICS founding members, new and future members, will work hard to increase the NDB's resources and interventions. They will also be able to optimize them with those of the AIIB, other multilateral institutions, and with the resources and interventions of their own sovereign institutions. For many countries, these institutions represent a complement, or even an alternative, to existing ones.

### C. Soft impact

Values, comparative paradigms of political governance, models of liberal democracy versus authoritarian regimes and other political and civilizational paradigms, have become frequent themes in geopolitical narratives, rivalries, discourses and one-upmanship.

South Africa has taken the initiative to take Israel to the International Court of Justice over the Gaza war. This was certainly in recognition of the unfailing support it had received from the Palestinian leadership during its struggle against apartheid. The initiative nevertheless took the form of revenge and a platform for moral outbidding, helping BRICS+ to turn the tables on the Court's judgment and condemnation of Putin for the war in Ukraine.

It also took the form of a backlash against the West's frequent admonitions about liberal democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and a revolt by Africa and the EMDC against the perceived double standards of the established international order. By accusing Israel and bringing it before the International Court of Justice, in the face of that country's vehement opposition and that of its powerful allies in the USA and Europe, the initiative marked a turning point in the history of international relations.

South Africa could not have taken this initiative before the rise of BRICS+. Nor could it have done so on its own, without the Group's support. The initiative illustrates South Africa's new soft power and independence. It also illustrates the effectiveness and soft power of BRICS+. The initiative has considerably enhanced South Africa's prestige, but also signalled the change that is taking place in international relations.

## V. SWOT BRICS+

### A. Strengths and opportunities

#### 1. Resources and Assets Power

Expansion has resulted in a BRICS+ covering a large land mass, a large population, with remarkable control over key choke points in global logistics and maritime routes, over energy and significant natural and agricultural resources, and with significant potential for investment, markets and international trade.

#### Resource strength: BRICS+ resources

<b>Surface area:</b>	45.74 million km <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Population:</b>	3,385.80 million people	
		40% -> 46% of the world
<b>GDP:</b>	\$30.30 trillion	25% -> 29% of the world
<b>Oil production: (A new OPEC!)</b>		43% of the world
<b>Goods exports:</b>		25% of the world
<b>Foreign exchange reserves</b>	\$6.50 trillion	

(2018):

The broad coverage of energy sources is reminiscent of OPEC. More than OPEC, the remarkable coverage of the energy sector includes both the supply and demand sides. It includes both China's as a main importer of energy and its main energy suppliers, namely Group members Russia, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran. It greatly enhances China's energy security, and insures its strong commitment to BRICS+. BRICS+ is sometimes, compared to the G7. Its expansion has brought it much closer to this group:

**The G7 and BRICS+**

	<b>GDP (trUS2023 \$)</b>	<b>% of world GDP</b>
<b>I. G7</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>II. BRICS 10</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>29%</b>
BRIC 5	27.7	26%
Saudi arabia	1.1	1%
4 Other	1.5	2%
<b>III. Rest of the world</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>28%</b>
Total World GDP	<b>105.7</b>	<b>100%</b>

**BRICS+ growth potential to 2050**

<b>I. G7</b>	= 50%
<b>II. BRICS</b>	= 189%
Egypt	= 650%.
Ethiopia	= 1170%

Future expansions will further strengthen the power of BRICS+ and its position in the resource sector, in the global economy, and in the system of international relations in relation to the G7, the G20 and all other groupings.

**2. Position Power**

In addition to its "Resource Power", achieved through remarkable control of resources and markets, BRICS+ adds a very strong "Position Power". Like in the Chinese game of Go, BRICS+'s "Force de Position" comes from the Group's coverage of certain continental trade belts and the world's most important maritime routes, choke points, straits and energy corridors. BRICS+ covers the Strait of Hormuz, the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. It also covers the isthmus between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Throughout history, this isthmus has been the corridor for the overland Silk Road and other major continental trade routes from China through Central Asia and through Iran to ports on the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. New railroad and landraod commercial transport technologies today, transform this historical ancient Silk Road trade middle

corridor, and Alexander of Macedonia's war corridor, into a multifunctional, multimodal and strategic continental corridor. It is worth noting that China and Iran recently signed an agreement worth almost \$400 billion to finance several infrastructure projects in Iran. Good geostrategic positioning in these regions is to a great degree what modulates, at least in part, the position of China and BRICS+ on the Gaza war, Middle East conflicts and the situation in Afghanistan.



### 3. Soft Power

Soft power, driven by culture, civilization, and interpersonal exchange and so on, is now a recurring theme in geopolitical discourses, considerations and rivalries.

BRICS+ members such as China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc., are the cradles and custodians of some of the world's greatest and oldest civilizations and religions. These members leverage their cultural influence both internationally and in their respective geopolitical neighborhoods.

In addition, some BRICS+ members host the headquarters of important international institutions such as Mercosur in Brazil, the Shanghai Conference Organization in China, the League of Arab States in Egypt, the AU and the ECA in Ethiopia, and so on. During his recent visit to Egypt, the President of Brazil gave a speech at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo.

These elements endow the BRICS with great soft power and reinforce its doctrine and strategy of respect, dignity and sovereignty. The experience of certain members of the Group, such as China, Iran, etc., is an inspiration to BRICS+ members in leveraging this soft immaterial power at the

service of development strategies and international relations. China, for example, has established an extensive global network of Confucius Institutes. BRICS+ can leverage Soft power and culture to as a response to the attack of Collective West's claim to the absolute superiority and universality of its own social paradigms. In particular, this soft powe can be deployed to respond to the West's harsh criticism of the alternative social and political paradigms prevalent in some BRICS+ member countries, especially China and Russia.

## B. Weaknesses and Threats

### 1. Disparities

The BRICS+ is characterized by major disparities in terms of area, population, level of development, social and political paradigms, profile and level of industrial and technological development, military power, and so on.

#### Disparities within the BRICS+ group

	Largest	Smallest
<b>Area (million km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>17.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>
<b>Population (millions)</b>	<b>1377.80</b>	<b>4.10</b>
<b>Density (p/km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>364.00</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>GDP (\$ trillions)</b>	<b>19.00</b>	<b>0.16</b>
<b>GDP per capita (\$000)</b>	<b>78.00</b>	<b>3.70</b>

These disparities can be great sources of diversity, enrichment and cultural cross-fertilization. They can also be sources of differences in priorities, orientations, and of fragility. The consensus rule in BRICS+ collective decision-making can turn these disparities into a daunting management and governance challenge. These disparities may even represent threats to the Group's sustainability and survival.

### 2. Conflicts

There are many internal, intramuros, conflicts between certain members within BRICS+, such as the China-India border dispute, the Egypt-Ethiopia dispute over the Renaissance Dam on the Nile, the Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry over the leadership of the Islamic world, etc. These conflicts represent significant internal weaknesses within BRICS+.

In addition to these intramuros conflicts, some members bring into the Group a baggage of extramuros conflicts with outside countries, sometimes even with major powers outside the Group. Iran's conflict with the United States and Israel is a case in point. India's membership of QUAD, the Indo-Pacific issue, Saudi Arabia's and the United Arab Emirates' security arrangements with the USA, etc. These conflicts represent yet another type of challenge, even threat, to the cohesion and sustainability of BRICS+.

Thus, disparities, intra muros and extramuros conflicts are sources of weaknesses and represent real threats to the sustainability and even survival of BRICS+. They represent a formidable challenge for the management, governance and leadership of the Group.

### 3. Consensus Rule

The consensus rule for decision-making is regarded by the Group as a signature and fundamental rule reflecting the doctrine of equality and respect for sovereignty among BRICS+'s members. It contributes to the cohesion of the Group and to mitigating the challenge of disparities and intramuros and extramuros conflicts. However, it also represents a daunting challenge to the management, governance, of the Group, and to its reactivity to outside events, opportunities and threats.

It is important to underline that the Consensus rule applied to the decisions of the the XV<sup>th</sup> Summit in August 2023. Each one of the five members, through the consensus rule, had therefore a veto right on the expansion decision and on the invitation of each new member. By deciding on expansion, BRICS members have thus all chosen to accept the corollary challenge of greater disparities and conflicts introduced into the Group by the expansion decision.

It is doubtful, however, that the consensus doctrine can be maintained in the face of growing disparities and conflicts and future expansion. The consensus rule was already a challenge for a 5-member BRICS. It is even more so today for the 10 member BRICS+. It will become a formidable challenge for governance and decision-making. A solution has to be designed, as the Group expands.

#### C. BRICS+ Sustainability

Internal disparities, intramuros and extramuros conflicts are in themselves a challenge to the BRICS+ leadership. They also, constitute a major challenge to the Group's effectiveness, cohesion, solidarity and perhaps even to its sustainability and survival. The consensus rule in decision-making compounds the challenge.

Members are well aware of the challenge and some even try to contribute to its mitigation. So far, China and India have been able to control their border disputes over the Indo-Pacific and QUAD. China's soft strong leadership was able to bring, for example, Saudi Arabia and Iran closer together. Is this rapprochement sustainable? Will members and leadership in the BRICS+ be able to do so for all other internal and external conflicts?

## VI. The XVI<sup>th</sup> BRICS+ Congress

Circumstances, events and strategy have transformed BRIC from an acronym for a Wall Street investmnr concept into BRICS+, a full-fledged system of international relations. In October 2024, in Kazan, Russia, at the XVI<sup>th</sup> BRICS+ Summit, the Group's ten members will meet under the presidency of Putin, its initiator, still at war in Ukraine, with NATO and the Global West. Putin, the visionary Chess player and strategist, will join forces with his best friend Xi Jinping, the Go player. Both will be debating with the other members of the Group how best to consolidate and advance BRICS+, surmount its disparities and conflicts, and ensure the success of the Summit, with the challenging

consensus rule and in the light of an international context in crisis. It will be interesting to see what the Summit, under Russian leadership, and the new membership, will decide concerning the following issues:

- A. Rush to BRICS+**
- B. Expansion**
- C. European Membership**
- D. Dedollarization**
- E. Consensus Rule**

#### **A. The Rush to BRICS+**

The BRICS+ Consensus, the doctrine of non-interference, its position on major conflicts and issues in international relations, its control of resources, the NDB policy of project-based, non-conditional financing, despite the bank's still small size, are all attracting strong interest from many outside countries and creating a rush to join the Group. For many countries, membership in, partnership with, and even simple proximity to the Group will be an attractive complement or even, for some, an alternative to the IMF and the Bretton Woods system, and the entire current Multilateral System.

Outside the Group, very many countries have expressed strong interest in membership. Within the Group, there seems to be a debate on the challenge of the continued expansion and openness of BRICS+ membership. No matter what the outcome of the debate and the hesitation, the rule of consensus in decision-making will very likely limit expansion to a small number of countries.

The XV<sup>th</sup> Summit has created the following categories:

1. BRICS+ Members
2. "BRICS Partners", status given to countries who applied to membership, but were not invited to join,
3. "Friends of BRICS", status given to those countries which have expressed interest in working with BRICS, without applying for membership.

The likely decision of the XVI<sup>th</sup> Summit of 2024 at Kazan is that BRICS+ will accept a limited number of members and strengthen the privileges of BRICS Partners and Friends of BRICS+.

#### **B. Expansion**

Algeria, Nigeria, Venezuela, Kazakhstan and Belarus are the countries most likely to apply and be invited to become members. Their membership would considerably enhance the BRICS+'s "Resource Power", i.e. its territorial mass, demography, and control of energy and resources. The membership of these countries will also contribute the BRICS+ potential in labor, infrastructure and consumer markets and trade, and expanded geopolitical coverage in Africa, South America and Asia. Expansion

would also strengthen BRICS+ “Position Power”, i.e. its geostrategic positioning and control of international supply logistics.

The war in Ukraine and the shutdown of Nordstream I and II, which is likely to last, have significantly increased the strategic value of three complementary Africa-Europe energy corridors, the Atlantic Western Corridor, the Central Continental Corridor, and the Eastern Red Sea Corridor. This energy paradigm increases the strategic value of Algeria and Nigeria, as members of BRICS+. The Lagos-Alger Central Corridor complements the Lagos-Rabat Atlantic Corridor in Morocco, and the Eastern Corridor along the Red Sea, which the accession of Egypt, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia has guaranteed BRICS+ coverage. The Algeria-Nigeria membership, members of the Troika, will further strengthen BRICS position in Africa.

**Algeria** is a close friend of both China and Russia. It applied for membership in 2023. It was not invited. It is almost certain to apply and be invited this year. Algeria will contribute its status as a North African country and as the third member of the African Union Troika. It will also contribute its weight in the energy sector and its position on the Western Mediterranean, south of the Latin EU. It has already declared its interest in the NDB. It will also contribute its position on the future Route 2 of the Trans Sahara road system and on the future Lagos-Alger Trans-Saharan gas pipeline. These two infrastructures form the major backbone of a future multimodal, multifunctional central corridor between continental Africa and the European Union. This corridor becomes imperative after the war in Ukraine and the sabotage of the Nordstream.

Algeria will also bring into the Group its Western Sahara conflict with Morocco and its complicated relation with Morocco and France.

**Nigeria** will bring its status as a member of the AU's African Troika, its position on the Atlantic, its demographic weight, and its weight in the energy sector. As with Algeria, the war in Ukraine has reinforced Nigeria's status as a strategic alternative energy supplier to Europe, via the Nigeria Morocco Atlantic pipeline and the future Lagos-Alger Trans-Saharan continental gas pipeline.

**Venezuela** will bring its weight in the energy sector and its independence from the United States. Its accession will correct Argentina's exit and consolidate South America's presence in the BRICS+, unless Brazil objects to its exclusion from Mercosur. **Bolivia** is also a possible candidate to reinforce Latin America's position in the BRICS+, especially after Argentina's reversal decision on membership.

**Kazakhstan** will contribute its status as a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and a core member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) advocated by Russia. It will also contribute its status as a Central Asian country, where China first announced its BRI Silk Road initiative in Astana in 2013. Finally, Kazakhstan will contribute its vast territorial mass and capital of energy and natural resources. The BRICS+ will be greatly reinforced by the candidacy and admission of countries such as **Turkey, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia**.

**Belarus** contributes its status as a transit country to the EU. Politically, culturally and ethnically close to Russia. Its invitation as a European country will also set a major precedent. Its admission will signal the extension of the BRICS+ concept to European EMDCs such as **Serbia and Hungary**, and other European countries.

Expansion will increase disparities and make maintaining the consensus rule in BRICS+'s governance even more difficult than it already is. In turn, it will considerably strengthen the BRICS+'s energy security and resource management, on both the supply and demand sides. It will also considerably strengthen the Group's "Position Power", i.e., its geostrategic position on the Atlantic and in the Western Hemisphere, the Mediterranean, the Central Hemisphere, and in Central Asia.

### C. European Membership

It will be interesting to see whether Indonesia, Mexico and Morocco apply. It will be interesting to watch whether BRICS+ will invite to membership countries from NATO or from the EU. It will be particularly important to watch whether European countries, such as Serbia and Hungary, which Chinese President Xi Jinping included in his recent European tour, will apply. The importance of Belarus' application and membership of BRICS is that it will set the precedent for the eligibility of European EMDCs for BRICS+ membership. The question of European countries' eligibility for BRICS membership may have been the motive behind French President Macron's interest in attending the XV Summit in 2023 in South Africa.

European membership will represent a major paradigm shift in the status of BRICS+ and a game changer in international relations.

### D. Dedollarization

Russia's surprising resilience to sanctions after the Ukraine war had taken the West by surprise. This is due to the fact that the Russian economy's preparation for such sanctions had already begun in 2014, probably in anticipation of the conflict with the West over Ukraine, following the color revolution in that country, conceived and carried out by the USA. This preparation had already taken into account Russia's exclusion from the Swift international payment system.

At the XVI<sup>th</sup> BRICS+ summit, under Russia's presidency, the search for an alternative to the dollar, for an international currency or group currency in one form or another, is therefore likely to make considerable progress towards reality.

This scenario is plausible, not so much as revenge for Russia's confiscation of its dollar assets, but rather as a continuation of the de-dollarization process already underway in Russia. It is also a necessity in response to the new economic, commercial and financial reality of the world, particularly the rise of Asia.

Finally, dedollarization is also advocated as a means of contributing to peace and the demilitarization of international relations. It will do so by reducing the temptation and trap of domestic and electoral politics pushing for the extraterritorial instrumentalization of exchange rates, interest rates, reserve and payment currencies, and the financing of wars through balance-of-payments deficits.

However, de-dollarization must and will be designed and implemented responsibly, and in such a way as to mitigate the negative impact on the global economy. Indeed, it must take into account the catastrophic impact of a hasty and vengeful de-dollarization on the economies of the USA and the EU, economies which are very important to the global economy and also very important to many BRICS+ members, and particularly important to China, a leading BRICS+ member.

### China's trade with QUAD 2023(\$USbn)

	Total	Export	Import	Balance
USA	664.5	500.3	164.2	336.1
Japan	318.0	157.5	160.5	-2.9
Australia	229.1	73.8	155.4	-81.6
India	136.2	117.7	18.5	99.1
Total	1,347.8	849.3	498.6	359.7

#### E. Consensus Rule

The XVI<sup>th</sup> BRICS+ Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024, will almost certainly debate the Consensus Rule, but will probably retain it for this round. The consensus doctrine is a distinctive feature, both symbolically and politically important for the Group.

Overtime however, this signature doctrine of the Group will become unsustainable, as the BRICS+ expands and it will have to evolve. It can evolve towards a majority rule or, more likely, towards a decision-making system privileging some members as for the UN Security Council, in the UN System. It may also evolve towards a bicameral decision-making rule as in the U.S. Congress.

#### VII. Tunisia in the BRICS+

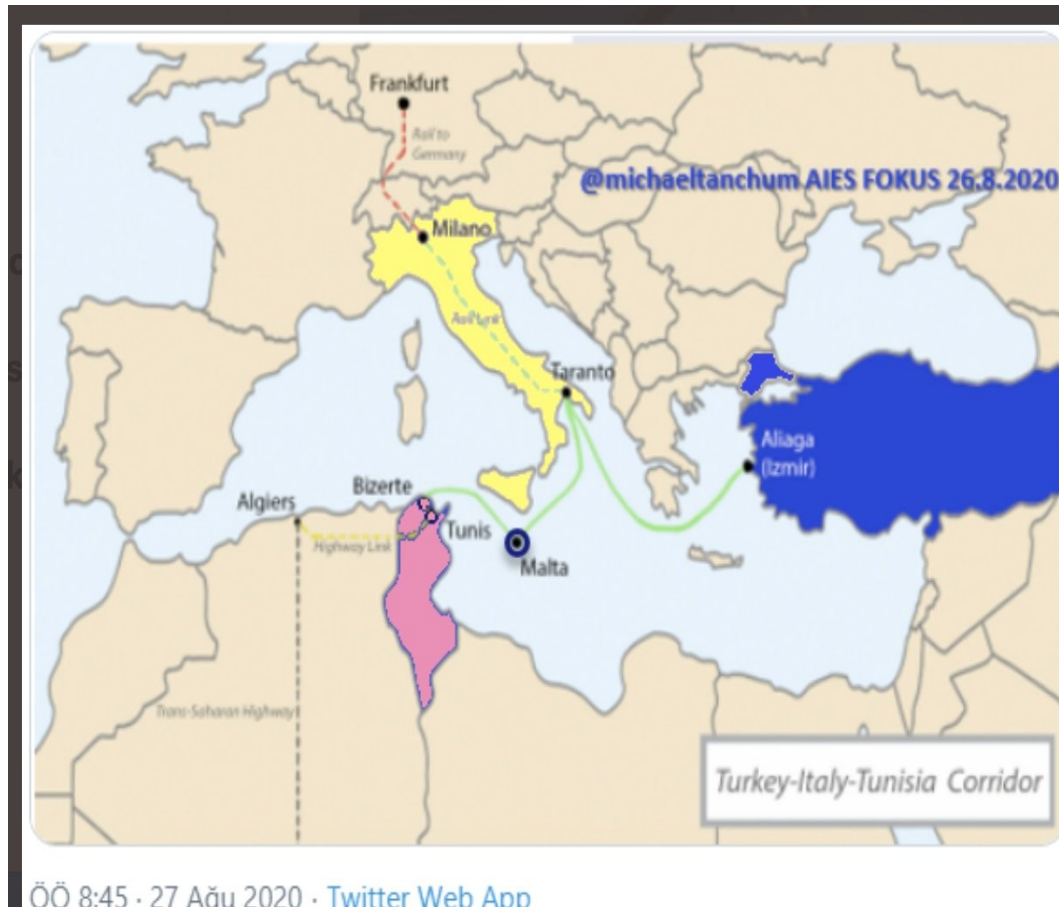
##### A. Tunisia at the XV<sup>th</sup> BRICS+ Summit

In the Maghreb region, Algeria is almost sure to apply again, for the second time, for membership. It will be interesting to see whether Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia will follow suit and apply for membership in the BRICS+. In 2023, at the XV<sup>th</sup> Summit in South Africa, Tunisia expressed interest in joining the BRICS but did not apply. Tunisia's Foreign Minister attended and gave a speech at the BRICS-Africa conference on August 24. Tunisia may want to apply in 2024. Even if it is not invited, its application will earn it the status of "BRICS+ Partner". This status will widen the space and opportunities for its diplomatic actions and negotiations. Equally important, the partnership with BRICS+ will enable Tunisia to make better use of its position and human resources.

##### B. Tunisia's Strategic Contribution to BRICS+

In its application to adhesion to the BRICS+, Tunisia can leverage its position as a pivotal link between the Western and Eastern Mediterranean and The Turkey-Italy-Tunisia maritime corridor project launched in July 2020. This corridor will link, in particular, the future deepwater port of Cherchell in Algeria, Bizerta on the Mediterranean in northern Tunisia, Malta, and Taranto in Italy, to the terminal ports of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the AAG Corridor and the IMEC, on the Eastern Mediterranean basin, the Black Sea and the Red Sea. Membership in the BRICS+ will also enable Tunisia to capitalize its geographical, historical and cultural position as a bridge between Africa and Europe in a Euro-African partnership for development.

**Tunisia-Italy –Turkey Corridor. Michael Tanchum**



Tunisia can also leverage the quality of its Human resources. It ranks well in STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). It also ranks well in knowledge production in the form of publications of scientific articles in international scientific journals, in energy, water, biotechnology materials, etc. Tunisia increasingly attracts value added high technology foreign direct investment, especially in ICT, pharmaceuticals and education.

**C. Tunisia's Entry Points in the BRICS+**

Tunisia will be able to take advantage, as a member or partner, of strategic openings and entry points with BRICS+. Tunisia’s comparative advantages are the same as those it has with the current Multilateral System. BRICS+, however, will better highlight attention, priority, on these advantages and potential outsourcing. Tunisia can contribute:

**1. Diplomacy:**

The new Diplomatic Institute in Tunis, financed by China, as a BRICS+ facility for research, studies, training, internships, workshops and BRICS+ forums, etc., for the Global Community Building

2. **Afro-European Bridge:**  
Its position as a bridge between the two Mediterranean basins and between Africa and Europe on a Central Euro-African Energy and Development Corridor,
3. **Gender Empowerment:**  
Its recognized advances in gender empowerment with the BRICS+ Women's Council,
4. **PISTE:**  
Tunisia can leverage its recognized experience in PISTE (Partnership in Innovation, Science, Technology and Education) knowledge diplomacy, as demonstrated in the SATREPS experience with Japan, and as the BRICS+ engage in leveraging human resource capital, and in innovation and technology diplomacy as a major theme in the global economy and in international relations.
5. **Human security:**  
Its experience in human security policies, i.e., water, energy, environment, agrifood, health and education technologies,
6. **Civilizational and cultural exchange**  
Its triple cultural heritage - Mediterranean, African, Arab, Islamic, Judaic and Christian - providing an entry point for the new awareness of the Civilization dimension in international relations in the 21st century,
7. **Youth and Grass root Population Exchange**  
Youth, sports and exchanges between grassroots populations which are recognized, powerful, and universal keys to global community building.

## VIII. Conclusion : Towards a Dual Multilateral System of International Relations and Global Governance

Circumstances, events and strategy have transformed BRIC from an acronym and a Wall Street concept for investment, into BRICS+, a concept for a holistic system of international relations.

How effective, sustainable and robust the BRICS+ concept will be depends on the stakes it represents for its members and on the degree of their commitment to its role and survival, which vary greatly from one member to another. Russia, the founding member, and Iran, a new member, are strongly committed to BRICS+, essentially for geopolitical reasons. Saudi Arabia is hesitant, and is probably primarily interested in the issue of de-dollarization and energy. China, a core member, which has launched a similar initiative, the BRI, is strongly interested in BRICS+ for both strategic geopolitical and goeconomic stakes. The concept of EMDC in BRICS+ allows China to leverage the G77 concept and to enlarge the reach of its diplomatic action, beyond the strict footprint of its strategic BRI concept.

The challenge for all BRICS+ Members, BRICS+ Partners and Friends of BRICS+, will be to reconcile their action within BRICS+ with their action with the existing Multilateral System and other outside initiatives.

### A. The Challenge of Sustainability for BRICS+

The daunting challenge of the consensus rule and of the disparities compound with the challenge of conflicts, which some BRICS+ members have with one another within BRICS+, or with powers outside the BRICS+. Together they raise the important question of the sustainability and the survival of the BRICS+ system. The high stakes and high level of commitment of some members to the BRICS+ concept mitigate the challenge. Indeed, for some important members, BRICS+ is a strategic part of their international strategies. These members are therefore willing to invest in BRICS+ and do their utmost to insure its survival and sustainability, just as the USA invests in NATO.

In its current composition, the BRICS members all have an important shared stake in the reform of the current Multilateral System. Leading members are able and willing to strengthen BRICS+ and ensure its sustainability, as an instrument of this reform.

For some members, BRICS+ serves other important strategic stakes. For China, for example, BRICS+ reinforces its energy security strategy and has major synergies with RCEP. The concept of EMDC extends advantageously the footprint and completes the resources of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the BAI. Finally yet importantly, for China, as for Russia in Europe, BRICS+ is a preventive strategy against NATO expansionism into East Asia.

For Russia, BRICS+ helps counteract the extraterritorial sanctions imposed on it by the Global West. It also reinforces Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). For Iran, the BRICS+ is a preventive strategy against possible aggression from the USA or Israel. For India, the BRICS+ gives India a great visibility and weight in international affairs. It substitutes for the seat it does not have in the UN Security Council and which it thinks it deserves. It also helps advance its own projects of AAGC and IMEC Corridors.

Thus, all the above members have powerful motives and have the necessary resources to ensure the sustainability and survival of BRICS+ and its survival.

In addition, the principal stakeholders of BRICS+ have taken care to add goeconomic, such as the MAG objective or doctrine, and other incentives, likely to strengthen other members' stakes in, and commitments to BRICS+.

A final and reassuring determinant of commitment to, and sustainability of BRICS+ is that a strong and effective BRICS+ is a particularly important for all BRICS+ members as an insurance and an alternative in the likely case of slow or obstructed satisfactory reforms of the current Multilateral GG System.

## B. China's Commitment to BRICS+

BRICS+ is emerging as a strategic mechanism to China as it is to Russia, and as strategic to both of them as is NATO is to the USA, the EU and the Global West. In addition, BRICS+ has many other important contributions to its national and international relations strategy.

Indeed, BRICS+ in its current form conveniently meshes in with China's energy security strategy. It also meshes in with China's strategy of safeguarding the current East Asian paradigm. China is particularly concerned with protecting the RCEP created in November 2021, from the many major threats that could jeopardize it. These threats may come from the conflict with the USA over the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan, the South China Sea, etc. They may also come from a praxis of NATO expansionism into East Asia similar to the NATO's expansionism in Europe, which led to the war in Ukraine. U.S. security expansionism in East Asia has led to the establishment of security arrangements throughout the East Pacific Asia, North and South, with South Korea, Japan, India, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, etc., such as QUAD, AUKUS, Five-Eyes, etc. These arrangements involve the U.S.' allies, and involve even NATO. NATO, for example, has opened an office in Japan. South Korea and Japan attended the last NATO summit in Spain and will attend future Summits.

This dynamic of security expansionism, often leading to lose-lose or even MAD paradigms, is producing fears and reactions in China similar to those that alarmed Putin in Russia, and led to the birth of BRICS, the war in Ukraine then BRICS+.

For China therefore, BRICS+ is not only as a symbolic favor to its Russian partner, to its G77 friends and to the EMDCs. Nor is it a geo-economic concept only, with strong synergies with BRI. For China, BRICS+ is also, and perhaps above all, a preventive geopolitical concept that is as strategic to her as it is to Russia, in countering NATO expansionism.

There is a major difference, however, between China and Russia. China is the leading trading partner of over 120 countries worldwide. China maintains a significant and extensive international trade on a global scale, with the Global West. Indeed, China is the leading trading partner of the European Union, the USA, Japan, South Korea, Australia, RCEP, ASEAN, etc. It is even a major trading partner of countries in the QUAD, AUKUS, the Five-Eyes (AUKUS + Canada + New Zealand Alliance).

Australia, for example, is a major member of QUAD, AUKUS and Five-Eyes, and of all the security arrangements deemed and perceived to be arrangements set up by the USA to contain China. Paradoxically, Australia is also a member of the RCEP, led by China, and has very substantial bilateral surplus trade with China. In 2023, Australia's trade of almost \$230 billion with China generated a trade surplus for Australia of \$81.6 billion, larger than the total volume of its \$77 billion trade with the USA.

As such, Australia shares with China, and other countries in the region, such as Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, etc., and even Europe, a fundamental stake in peace, stability and prosperity in the region, and around the World, for the regional economy and for the Global economy.

This architecture gives China a broader spectrum of actions and instruments with which to conduct its global diplomatic action and steer its international relations, in the three hemispheres, Asia,

Europe and America. It allows China to have a strategy of strength, made up of hard security, technological, military, economic, and commercial instruments. China complements this Assets-based power with a strategy of position-based power, firmly rooted in its Eastern history and traditions, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), now complemented by BRICS+. China completes asset-based and position-based power with soft power, which it deploys in the form of cultural exchange supported by an extensive network of Confucius Institutes.

For China, therefore, BRICS+, launched by Russia on an essentially geopolitical basis, can become a holistic component of its diplomacy, founded on a new consensus. It complements advantageously its already well-established sovereign BRI strategy of strength by assets, by position and by soft power.

In Europe and in the Ukraine war, Russia did not and does not have, like China, such a broad spectrum of levers, neither with the USA, nor with Europe and the West, nor even with the EMDC. Nor do the USA, in fact. One has to wonder whether the war in Ukraine would have taken place if such levers had existed between the USA and Russia.

**China's commitment to the global economy**  
**ASEAN, EU, U SA are China's top 3 trading partners**  
**QUAD is one China's top 15 trading partners**

2023 Imports and Exports of goods by top 15 trading partners (billions of USD)<sup>[3]</sup>

Rank	Country / Territory	Total trade	China exports	China imports	Trade balance
-	<b>Total</b>	<b>5,340.4</b>	<b>3,103.0</b>	<b>2,237.4</b>	<b>865.6</b>
-	 <a href="#">ASEAN</a>	911.7	523.7	388.0	135.6
-	 <a href="#">European Union</a>	783.0	501.2	281.7	219.5
1	 <a href="#">United States</a>	664.5	500.3	164.2	336.1
2	 <a href="#">Japan</a>	318.0	157.5	160.5	-2.9
3	 <a href="#">South Korea</a>	310.7	149.0	161.7	-12.8
4	 <a href="#">Hong Kong</a>	288.2	274.5	13.7	260.9
5	 <a href="#">Taiwan</a>	267.8	68.5	199.3	-130.9
6	 <a href="#">Russia</a>	240.1	111.0	129.1	-18.2
7	 <a href="#">Vietnam</a>	229.8	137.6	92.2	45.4
8	 <a href="#">Australia</a>	229.1	73.8	155.4	-81.6

2023 Imports and Exports of goods by top 15 trading partners (billions of USD)<sup>[3]</sup>

Rank	Country / Territory	Total trade	China exports	China imports	Trade balance
9	 <a href="#">Germany</a>	206.8	100.6	106.2	-5.6
10	 <a href="#">Malaysia</a>	190.2	87.4	102.9	-15.5
11	 <a href="#">Brazil</a>	181.5	59.1	122.4	-63.3
12	 <a href="#">Indonesia</a>	139.4	65.2	74.2	-9.0
13	 <a href="#">India</a>	136.2	117.7	18.5	99.1
14	 <a href="#">Thailand</a>	126.3	75.7	50.5	25.2
15	 <a href="#">Netherlands</a>	117.1	100.2	16.9	83.2

China's multidimensional geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural approach to international

These relations, compared to the security monolithism of approach of the USA, NATO, QUAD, AUKUS, etc., but also of Russia, enable China to hope to achieve its geopolitical objectives peacefully. They help it achieve its objectives without waging war, in the pure tradition of the art of war of Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese strategist who inspired Mao Zedong, and continues to inspire China's modern strategists.

**The 15 RCEP countries: 10 ASEAN + 5 Non-ASEAN**



**Comparative China-US regional engagement in East Asia and the South Pacific**  
**RCEP=ASEAN + Japan + Korea + Australia + New Zealand**

**China Trade with RCEP minus China (US\$2022bn)**

	Total	Exports	Imports	Balance
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>911.7</b>	523.7	388.0	135.6
<b>Japan</b>	318.0	157.5	160.5	<b>-3.0</b>
<b>South Korea</b>	310.0	149.0	161.7	<b>-12.8</b>
<b>Australia</b>	229.1	73.8	155.4	<b>-81.6</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	40.3	18.9	21.4	<b>-2.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1809.8</b>	992.9	886.9	36.0

**US Trade with RCEP minus China(US \$2022bn)**

	Total	Exports	Imports	Balance
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>520.3</b>	160.2	360.1	-199.9
<b>Japan</b>	307.4	118.5	188.8	-70.3
<b>South Korea</b>	168.6	80.5	88.1	-7.6
<b>Australia</b>	<b>77.1</b>	52.1	25.0	<b>27.1</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	13.4	6.7	6.7	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1086.8</b>	418.0	668.7	-250.7

The question of Taiwan, and China's perspective on security in East Asia, is in some ways reminiscent of the question of Ukraine and Russia's perspective on security in Europe. It generates the same concerns, the same reactions, and strongly engages China in the BRICS+.

**Comparative Regional Commitment China and USA**  
**2023 (\$USbn)**

<b>China-AUKUS</b>					<b>USA-AUKUS</b>				
	Total	Exports	imports	Balance		Total	Exports	Imports	Balance
<b>Australia</b>	<b>229.1</b>	73.8	155.4	<b>-81.6</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>77.1</b>	52.1	25.0	<b>27.1</b>
<b>UK</b>	93.1	74.7	28.4	46.3	<b>UK</b>	295.6	158.2	137.4	20.8
<b>USA</b>	664.5	500.3	164.2	336.1	<b>China</b>	664.5	164.2	500.3	-336.1
	<b>986.7</b>	648.8	348.0	300.8		<b>937.2</b>	374.5	662.7	-288.2

**Comparative Regional Involvement of the USA and China**

**US involvement in the Western Hemisphere**  
**US trade with Mexico, Chile and Mercosur (\$US2022bn)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Exports</b>	<b>Imports</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>855.1</b>	362.0	493.1	-131.1
<b>Chili</b>	48.6	28.9	19.7	9.2
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>120.7</b>	75.7	45.0	35.7
<b>Argentina</b>	29.3	19.6	9.6	10.0
<b>Uruguay</b>	3.8	2.9	0.9	2.0
<b>Paraguay</b>	2.4	2.1	0.3	1.7
<b>Mercosur</b>	<b>156.2</b>	100.3	55.8	49.4

**China's commitment the Western Hemisphere**  
**China's trade with Mexico, Chile and Mercosur (\$US2022bn)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Exports</b>	<b>Imports</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Mexico	103.6	90.9	12.7	78.2
Chili	65.0	26.4	38.6	- 12.2
Brazil	<b>154.1</b>	90.1	64.0	26.1
Argentina	24.4	16.4	8.0	8.4
Uruguay	5.5	2.6	2.9	-0.3
Paraguay	4.5	4.2	0.3	3.9
<b>Mercosur</b>	<b>188.5</b>	113.3	75.2	38.1
Latin America	357.1	230.6	96.8	133.8

China and the USA have very different regional economic and trade relations with their respective neighborhoods in East Asia and with the global economy. They have therefore different diplomatic and security levers. China trades more than the USA with Brazil and Mercosur in the Western Hemisphere, and more with Australia than the USA in the Eastern Hemisphere.

### China's Perspective on Security in East Asia



### C. Towards a Dual Global Governance Multilateral System

For China, Russia, India and all members, BRICS+ extends the scope of development action, as well as the scope of diplomatic and security action.

All these considerations, together with the doctrine of respect, equality and consensus, reinforce the relevance of the BRICS+ concept, and the strength of the commitment of all members, to BRICS+. They are also factors and guarantees of BRICS+ durability and strength as an advocacy for reform of the current Multilateral System.

On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that the principal members of the current Multilateral System will accept easily and quickly the reform agenda advocated by BRICS+. These reforms would deprive them of very important privileges in global governance and in the decision-making of the

current Multilateral System. Nor is it easy to imagine the powerful emerging members of BRICS+ giving up their advocacy of reform and accepting the status quo.

In addition, even if the principle of radical reform of the multilateral system is accepted, implementation is likely to be complex and time-consuming.

This means that the international system is likely to be, for a time, perhaps for a long time, a dual multipolar multilateral system of international relations and global governance. The Global Governance will be assumed, essentially, by the existing Multilateral System, i.e., the UN and the Brettenwoods System on one hand, and by the new BRICS+ System on the other hand. Other systems such as the G7, the G20, TICAD, OSC, BRF, and others, will be part of this architecture of Global Governance.

In this new international order, BRICS+ will act as a new G77, doubly augmented. The new G77, in fact G77+Russia, G78, is augmented by a powerful and newly empowered former member, China, which will act as a provider of infrastructure, investment, finance and technology, with both an assets –based power and a Go-type Position power. The EMDC concept allows Russia to be a member of the new G77, and to act as a strong geopolitical member.

Like the G7, BRF, G20, TICAD, etc., BRICS+ may fulfil the function of a preparatory, a side, and/or complementary process, a consultative chamber, or even an alternative para-UN multilateral system. A dual dialogue with the existing Multilateral System and with BRICS+, in the form of membership, partnership, or friendship is therefore likely to become "a must" for a growing number of countries, if not for all countries, including Tunisia.

China, and the ASEAN, especially Indonesia, were able to play a leadership role in the rapid creation of the RCEP. Despite cultural diversity, and the historical and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which the 15 signatory countries have with oneanother and especially with China, they were able to build a spirit of a "regional community with shared interests" between themselves. Through a holistic equalitarian architecture of security, circular investment (Flying Geese paradigm), development and culture, they have built a strong consensus on peace and stability in the region. They have also built a consensus on the imperative of safeguarding this on-going positive paradigm of regional relations between North-East Asia, ASEAN, and the South and East Pacific, against outside interference and threats.

Will the BRICS+ be able to overcome their disparities and their conflicts and replicate the architecture and experiences of East Asia, ASEAN, and now the RECEP?

Will BrICS+ become a parallel system forming with the existing Multilateral System a Dual Multilateral System of International Relations and Global Governance?