

p-ISSN: 2521-2982

e-ISSN: 2707-4587

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# GPR

**GLOBAL POLITICAL REVIEW**  
**HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y**

**VOL. X, ISSUE IV, FALL (DECEMBER-2025)**

**DOI (Journal): 10.31703/gpr**

**DOI (Volume): 10.31703/gpr/.2025(X)**

**DOI (Issue): 10.31703/gpr.2025(X.IV)**

Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal

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Article Title

BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures

Abstract

This article analyzes the power structure in the world, in which BRICS is seen as a transformative force in the process of forming a wide multilateral global power structure, from the point of challenge to the long governance based on the hegemony of Western institutions. The main objective of the study is to examine how BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) promote multi-polarity by way of promoting economic cooperation, advocating for institutional reform, and creating alternative models of development and governance. The research applies A.F.K. Organski's power transition theory, guided by a qualitative methodology that uses secondary sources in the form of government reports, scholarly articles, and institutional data.

**Keywords:** Multi-Polarity, BRICS, Alliances, Western Bloc

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**Pages:** 54-61

**DOI:** 10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).06

**DOI link:** [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025\(X-IV\).06](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).06)

**Article link:** <https://gprjournal.com/article/brics-and-the-rise-of-multipolarity-redefining-global-power-structures>

**Full-text Link:** <https://gprjournal.com/article/brics-and-the-rise-of-multipolarity-redefining-global-power-structures>

**PDF link:** <https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rv1olA2.pdf>

Global Political Review

p-ISSN: [2521-2982](https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr) e-ISSN: [2707-4587](https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr)

**DOI (journal):** 10.31703/gpr

**Volume:** X (2025)

**DOI (volume):** 10.31703/gpr.2025(X)

**Issue:** IV Fall (December-2025)

**DOI(Issue):** 10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV)

Home Page

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Citing this Article

<b>o6</b>	<b>BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures</b>		
<b>Authors</b>	Sadia Fayaz	<b>DOI</b>	10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).o6
		<b>Pages</b>	54-61
		<b>Year</b>	2025
		<b>Volume</b>	X
		<b>Issue</b>	IV

Referencing & Citing Styles

<b>APA</b>	Fayaz, S. (2025). BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures. <i>Global Political Review</i> , X(IV), 54-61. <a href="https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).o6">https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).o6</a>
<b>CHICAGO</b>	Fayaz, Sadia. 2025. "BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures." <i>Global Political Review X (IV)</i> :54-61. doi: 10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).o6.
<b>HARVARD</b>	FAYAZ, S. 2025. BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures. <i>Global Political Review</i> , X, 54-61.
<b>MHRA</b>	Fayaz, Sadia. 2025. 'BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures', <i>Global Political Review</i> , X: 54-61.
<b>MLA</b>	Fayaz, Sadia. "Brics and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures." <i>Global Political Review X.IV</i> (2025): 54-61. Print.
<b>OXFORD</b>	Fayaz, Sadia (2025), 'BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures', <i>Global Political Review</i> , X (IV), 54-61.
<b>TURABIAN</b>	Fayaz, Sadia. "Brics and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures." <i>Global Political Review X</i> , no. IV (2025): 54-61. <a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).o6">https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).o6</a> .



# Global Political Review

[www.gprjournal.com](http://www.gprjournal.com)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr>



Volume: X (2025)

URL: [https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025\(X-IV\).06](https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2025(X-IV).06)

Issue: IV-Fall (December-2025)



Cite Us



## Title

### BRICS and the Rise of Multi-Polarity: Redefining Global Power Structures

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#### Abstract

*This article analyzes the power structure in the world, in which BRICS is seen as a transformative force in the process of forming a wide multilateral global power structure, from the point of challenge to the long governance based on the hegemony of Western institutions. The main objective of the study is to examine how BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) promote multi-polarity by way of promoting economic cooperation, advocating for institutional reform, and creating alternative models of development and governance. The research applies A.F.K. Organski's power transition theory, guided by a qualitative methodology that uses secondary sources in the form of government reports, scholarly articles, and institutional data.*

#### Keywords:

[Multi-Polarity](#), [BRICS](#), [Alliances](#), [Western Bloc](#)

#### Introduction

Multi-polarity in international relations is described as a global power being dispersed among two or more states as opposed to concentrated into a single (unipolarity) or two (bipolarity). Throughout history, pre-World War II bore a multi-polar world order, compared to the bipolar one in the end of world war and the beginning of the Cold War where the United States and Soviet Union were competing ideologically and geopolitically. In 1991 with the end of the Cold War that saw the USA as the only superpower, the global order was underpinned by institutions including the United Nations, the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank shaped by American influence within (Papa, 2014).

But the balance of power has been increasingly diversified as emerging economies have grown in sheer size and influence, tumbling the tireless application of a single power. This development is now budding for scholars and policymakers to view this as a return to multi-polarism, when no single country can dictate the global outcome unilaterally. By creating space for new actors, particularly those from the Global South, the environment has allowed for new actors to seek to influence and represent



themselves in international governance. Multi-polar world has demonstrated the inefficiency of existing institutions to reflect and encompass the spectrum of existing power and calls on much needed reform and new frameworks to impose a more balanced and inclusive global order (Unay, 2013).

Even though it remains a unipolar world with the United States the sole superpower, multipolarity with India, Russia and China becoming regional and world powers is a developing trend. Yet these nations are not merely attempting to enhance their personal strength - but they are also attempting to destabilize the conventional Western hegemony in the system of world governance. This can be observed in the economic, political, and security fields where all the upcoming powers are in search of other visions other than Western spearheaded structures. With the kind of money being spread around, emerging economies have the opportunity to use their power to grow and technological capabilities while deepening new alliances that transcend the old Western power structures (Papa, 2014).

As a result, global order has become more complex, and more interconnected, with more actors playing economically, politically, and militarily powerful roles. The process of multi - polarism is that of cooperation and competition among countries, but each individual state will take into consideration its own self - interests as well as the necessity of strategically agreed countries. This condition has paved the way for new coalitions like BRICS which seek to speak on behalf of what is called the Global South, in order to get a more equitable and more transformed global governance.

### Research Objective

- To analyze the role of BRICS in promoting multi-polarism in the international arena

### Methodology

The study uses qualitative research design to investigate BRICS within the framework of multipolarity. The data used for this research are the secondary data, as it generates very broad spectrum information from numerous sources, which provide a good base to study what are the BRICS objectives, policies and influence. Data sources include government reports, International Organization

data, scholarly articles and academic publications and books.

### Theoretical Framework

A.F.K. Organski's power transition theory creates a compelling framework for understanding dynamics of BRICS in regard to multipolarity (Organski, 1968). This theory supposes that the world is hierarchical, with a dominant power at the top end, other great powers of lesser rank, and the rest, other medium and small states. If a rising challenger catches up with or overtakes a declining hegemon, it is most likely that systemic war will ensue, and argues that the rising power may grow dissatisfied with the current order and therefore consider challenging it (Kim & Gates, 2015). Power transition theory is particularly relevant to BRICS in the context. It gives a lens through which to understand the contribution of BRICS promoting multipolarity. It offers a path through which some dynamics of power shifts and their implications in global stability, may be seen. This research applies this theory in an attempt to contribute to a deeper understanding of how BRICS manages the pain and potential of a multipolar world.

### Emergence of BRICS

The BRICS alliance, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has emerged as the most important non Western alliance in the present day global arena. BRICS emerges as an alternative model for international cooperation in a context of deepening dissatisfaction with Western dominated global institutions. This study focuses on understanding BRICS: how they formed, what they are aiming at, the areas of cooperation, its challenges and its influence over global governance (Unay, 2013).

BRICS is not an acronym and it is not a trade bloc; the original conception of BRICS was an alliance of big emerging economies with common interests. Formally established in 2009, the group came into being at the first BRIC summit in 2009 and while South Africa was invited to join in 2010, it became BRICS in 2010. The advent of BRICS constituted a collective will to challenge its hegemony over Western founded institutions and to embark on a new kind of socioeconomic and to a lesser extent political cooperation (Russo, 2018).

They believe emerging economies only played a very small role in decision making in the

international system. For example, the IMF and World Bank reform for which the BRICS members have vociferously argued for increasing their representation and voting power in those global bodies. The setting up of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) of BRICS is not merely indicative of their zeal to sever relationships with Western influences in the finances but goes further to implement them. They are initiatives that represent BRICS' attempt to set out a set of alternatives to the conventional ways of the global finance and multipolarity of rules of the global economy (Naik, [2018](#)).

According to BRICS, the emphasis on relationships, which benefit from working in context, brings pragmatism into the alliance. It facilitates diplomatic and strategic cooperation between member countries and offers a bloc voice for member countries in international forums. Coordination on matters such as climate change, development, and security, and support for the development visions of emerging economies are facilitated through the development of such a development. Furthermore, at a time when political tensions, geopolitical tensions between a United States and China and Russia are increasing, BRICS creates a space for dialogue and collaboration, to help make the world a more stable place (Muhammad, [2023](#)).

### Formation

The formation of BRICS is based on the attempt by its member states to form an alternative to the power bloc in an international system dominated historically by Western countries. First coined by economist Jim O'Neill in 2001, when he termed this fast growth emerging markets as "BRIC" (Brazil, Russia, India and China), the term distanced from the economic label to a formal alliance. It was at its first summit, in 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia, that the group was officially founded. South Africa joined the group in 2010, making of it BRICS and expanding the group's geographic range to three continents. Similarly, BRICS is founded on the basic virtue of promoting economic growth, coordination of emerging economies, and deciding for international institutions to reflect a more symmetrical distribution of global power (Chakraborty, [2018](#)).

### BRICS' Development Key Milestones

BRICS summit held in Russia in 2009 is the official formation of the BRICS as a political alliance. The members also promised to elevate economic cooperation and advocated revolutionary change at international financial institutions. BRICS' inclusion of South Africa in 2010 broadened its global reach, showing that emerging economies in diverse places will now be represented by BRICS. The NDB and CRA were rolled out at the sixth BRICS summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, in 2014 from which it launched to offer financial support for infrastructure and sustainable development projects, as well as a financial safety net to support the cushioning of member countries' economies in times of crisis. Members have met at the annual BRICS summits, launched since 2009, that provide a forum to debate economic, political and security matters. The BRICS Business Council, BRICS Think Tank Council and BRICS Women's Business Alliance have further institutionalized cooperation (Muhammad, [2023](#)).

### Key Areas of Cooperation

Collaboration within BRICS is mostly based on economic transaction. Most important in this area are the New Development Bank (NDB) which was set up in 2014 to finance infrastructure and development projects in BRICS countries and other emerging politically, economically and financially developing countries. So instead, the NDB is trying to serve as a counterpart to institutions like the IMF and the World Bank that often give their loans with political and economic strings attached. BRICS' aspiration to create a parallel financial infrastructure that bears its values of equality and non interference in domestic affairs is symbolized by NDB. To act as a liquidity safeguard for members of the BRICS, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) was also launched. These BRICS countries have a \$100 billion financial buffer pool that acts to strengthen their financial independence from Western institutions (Lagutina, [2019](#)).

The BRICS make efforts to enhance the positions of its members in multilateral forums, particularly in the UN, IMF and G20. On such issues, BRICS aligns and seeks to magnify the voice of the emerging economies in these institutions. Buying into the BRICS members' drive to change the status of the UN Security Council to include more permanent seat holders in the new emerging economies will

serve to upset Western domination of world decision making organs. It also shows a united will on the part of BRICS to depict a more fair international economic order. This is at the heart of an advocacy of IMF and World Bank reforms to make emerging markets' voices stronger when they should be, for instance, allowing BRICS countries greater influence in shaping global financial policies.

Bridged started as an economic bloc, but has since grown into technological and security cooperation. BRICS countries do work together in space research, clean energy and digitalization in the area of science, technology and innovation. For example, an example is the BRICS ICT Working group that has promoted joint research and development in ICT. Security domain is addressed by BRICS through its agenda of probing on matters like terrorism, cyber security and regional stability. It includes BRICS summit held annually which comes on the table of matters of common concern for the member states while they consider about counter terrorism strategies. The larger alliance, however, is the BRICS and it has its share of security cooperation that is limited by divergent threat perceptions and political priorities among the members (Chakraborty, [2018](#)).

### **Challenges and Limitations**

Nevertheless, BRICS is affected by significant issues that limit the extent of its strength as an alliance. The BRICS Union has members who have extremely varied political frameworks, economic arrangements and foreign policy objectives. These are China and Russia, which are single party states, India, Brazil and South Africa are democracies. The diversity in politics may cause a challenge to development of cohesive groups which will make policies and strategies. Moreover, regional rivalries and border conflicts (e.g. between India and China) make attempts at deeper integration more difficult because they can test the relations and reduce trust, even among the allies (Mic, [2021](#)).

Although the economy of China is developing fast, the rest of the countries are several years behind in the growth path. The tension could come if some members see China's dominance in BRICS as counterproductive to the chances of the alliance being equal. External geopolitical pressures such as the U.S.–China tensions or the sanctioning of Russia diminish Africa between BRICS' ability to act as a

single block in sustaining global affairs. Even more, there are also ideological constraints on the unified action within BRICS. Oddly, the priorities alone in foreign policy of the member states differ, which may lead to conflicting stance in the issue of international affairs. For instance, even if Russia and China will not always go along with US policies as they claim but India, Brazil, and South Africa remain closer to the West, it makes difficult for a unified chorus on the main points (Lagutina, [2019](#)).

However, it is considered being limited but BRICS has appeared to have an impact in global governance in breaking traditional Western dominated system and calling for change in the international institutions. Institutions like the UN, IMF and World Bank have consistently been called by BRICS to reform and to better reflect the diversity of modern world power. Conversations continue to arouse over the need to increase their representation of emerging economies within the governance structures of such institutions as BRICS. In the case of, for example, BRICS, countries in this group have called for wider representation in the United Nations Security Council, with permanent seats that are located in further international geographical parts — Africa, Asia and Latin America.

BRICS can modify norms, re-define and reformulate relations of governance in a multi-polar world with its economic projects and lobbying. The establishment of the NDB and CRA is a true endeavor to replace the financial system dominated by the West. The lenders in this side are needed especially by the developing countries that have to face IMF like terms of loans. In providing more flexible lending practices, BRICS is a credible alternative to development financing that can go some way towards reducing dependence on Western led institutions and towards diversifying economic order (Mic, [2021](#)).

### **BRICS and Multi-Polarism**

BRICS has played an important role in strengthening the multipolar push against the hegemony of the traditional Western powers in global governance and for a more equitable world order. BRICS is a coalition of five major emerging economies namely, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and plays a major chunk in the world's population and economic output. BRICS is a collective that makes up around 40% of the world's population and

approximately a quarter of the world's GDP meaning it represents a large portion of the world economy (Russo, 2018).

Although BRICS has succeeded in proving multi-polarism, its success has been mixed. It is on the one hand the alliance has managed to set up the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), which is an alternative to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. BRICS are thus creating an arena for these institutions to mitigate BRICS reliance on Western lending institutions and promote multi-polar economic governance (Lagutina, 2019).

In contrast, BRICS has been held together poorly by internal divisions and competing national interests. However, the alliance's members vary greatly in levels of economic strength, political ideology, and regional priorities, limiting this effective bloc to little more than an expression of differing positions on a number of global issues. For instance, as an example, India and China's border problems often lead to a split in the alliance overall. Absence of unity can sometimes undermine the ability of BRICS to respond decisively to the Western power especially when it comes to its role in enhancing multi-polarism (Mic, 2021).

### Theorization of Challenging or Complementing Existing Power Structures

BRICS is questioning the present-day domination of the U.S. and close partners in the international governance by proposing reforms in the international institutions, such as UNSC, IMF and the World Bank. It requires more representation of the emerging economies by arguing that the current order was not a mirror of the current power balance of the world, which is a change that practically leaves the strongest states and their sizes amplified.

The BRICS have formed NDB and CRA as one of the methods of complementing and providing alternatives to the existing power structures instead of simply destroying them overnight. The NDB is an example and its development financing, especially, is not subjected to the stringent conditions usually extended to the developing countries by IMF or World Bank; as such, it is becoming more given to the developing nations. That assists the BRICS in facilitating the development based on the principles of non-interference of the alliance and the respect of national sovereignty (Uzoma et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the issue of Western influence is indirect and quantified in its strategy in the context of air BRICS, which remains a constituent of the broader economic system on the planet. To take a case in point, China and Russia have frequently claimed that we need to be more aggressive in resisting the dominance of the U.S. although India, Brazil and South Africa tend to be open to collaborate more constructively with the institutions of the West. The price, in this case, is a trade-off where BRICS can play within the existing system, but at the same time encourages a slow change which disturbs the system but not entirely annihilates it (Fotopoulos, 2014).

### BRICS as Strategic and Economic Alliance

The BRICS represents an unprecedented structure of alliance not duplicated elsewhere in the context of NATO or other Western led alliances. BRICS is a different alliance of various countries with varied political systems, economic systems and strategic interests compared to these alliances which are usually formed on similar ideological, political or security interests. The negative aspect of such diversity, since at times, they may be a cause of conflicts, is that BRICS is able to include more interests and perspectives, primarily those of the emerging and developing economies (Russo, 2018).

What is unique about the BRICS is that it emphasizes more on economic and developmental collaboration than commitment to military alignment or political alignment. CRAs, NDBs and do are indications of the desire of BRICS to develop an alternative financial platform, which is based on the infrastructure development and sustainable development. Together with the exercise of non-interference and sovereignty principles, this would be a model of cooperation that other emerging economies would like to avoid West initiated structures which can be occasionally accompanied by political strings (Uzoma et al., 2024).

In addition, the BRICS alliance does not have to operate under the usual formalized obligations held by military alliances. Because BRICS members can easily hem upbed without the constraints of rigid alliance structures, this flexibility allows them to work in conjunction. The emergence of this soft alliance along the lines of economic, not ideological or collective security, is a model that is probably best suited to a multi —polar world where countries may

not wish to become so identifiably dominated by one bloc (Fotopoulos, [2014](#)).

### **Implications for the Future of Alliances in a Multi-Polar World**

BRICS model is an indicator to the changing nature of alliances in the multi polar world. Countries are looking to broaden the number of people with whom they are allied, and ones with flexible cooperation and mutual benefit may be more common than ones based upon rigid ideological or military commitment. BRICS shows that alliances are possible without the usual Western held paradigm, and allows countries to work with other nations on shared interests without being tied to one hegemonic power or politically purist ideologies (Sivsiivadze & Kupreishvili, [2024](#)).

If other countries want to pursue a higher degree of autonomy for their foreign policy, they may look in the future to the BRICS model as an alternative to more hierarchical alliances. But the focus on economic cooperation, development financing and political reform on the part of BRICS indicates that future alliances could become increasingly based on pragmatic goals rather than on pure political alignment, perhaps mirroring the blurring and completely interrelated character of a multi pole world (Carey, [2016](#)).

### **Potential Impact on Future Alliances**

Numerous other regional coalitions and structures have sprung on the peripheral of the BRICS success in establishing their own financial institutions and demanding more emerging economies amongst them in global governance. Other organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the African Union are observing the BRICS model and would like to borrow some of its strategy. The example of China and SCO of Russia is that the latter has begun to consider more deep types of economic cooperation and development projects as seen in the case of BRICS (Sivsiivadze & Kupreishvili, [2024](#)).

The value of BRICS to most developing nations is also by ensuring that it respects the sovereignty and non interference motifs that are abhorrent to most nations accepting aid with strings attached by the west. BRICS has therefore served as an example to the Asian nations, African nations, and Latin American countries in seeking solutions to how they

can cooperate without necessarily going through the western systems. Going on with that instance, Asian Infrastructure investment bank (AIIB) which is being pushed by china and being billed as another BRICS-style financial option that seeks to offer financing options to developing economies which are ready to take without a condition remains in the news (Fotopoulos, [2014](#)).

### **Possible Scenarios for the Evolution of BRICS and Multi-Polarism**

BRICS is still in a dynamic global environment, there are various things that might happen and might influence the evolution and impact that it has on multi-polarism. Cohesion of BRICS might also be strengthened by enhancing coordination of member states in policy matters, expansion of BRICS membership to other emerging economies as well. By turning itself into an enlarged BRICS, it may even increase its bargaining power in the international arenas and be more of a counterbalance to the Western influence. Large membership would also require the presence of the correct mechanisms to manage the various interests of new members. When the unification of BRICS turns to be difficult concerning global matters, it might resort to regional collaboration. For example, the Belt and Road Initiative in Asia is the focus of China, and development in Latin America of regional influence is the focus for Brazil. Such a move could enable the BRICS countries to wield some clout in their regions even as the bloc as a whole pulls back on global action (Trachtenberg, [2024](#)).

Faced with ideological and economic rifts in BRICS and with an increase in geopolitical rivalries, tensions may also rise among the alliance. In terms of border disputes between India and China, or a difference of opinion on the U.S., for example, that would make the alliance fragile. As the gap between the interests widens, BRICS can disintegrate, as member states pursue their own individual foreign policies and override collective action. In case BRICS does not become one cohesive block, it may still assist in reforming of the institutions. The BRICS can offer an upper hand and insist on the slightest transformation of forms of global governance by continuing to demand increased representation of the emerging economies in UNSC, IMF, and World Bank (Carey, [2016](#)).

The BRICS system of alliance is unique as it is promoting multi-polarism as well as destroying hegemony. It has a distinctive policy outside the traditional alliances, which is founded on fluid cooperation and respect to sovereignty to what is becoming a new paradigm to grow economies that want their independent ways in a complicated global setting. BRICS has left an indelible mark on world governance and could be one to emulate by other alliances, however, its development will be determined by how it manages to balance internal war and adapt to the emerging global realities. Provided that, it is capable of incorporating a number of national interests, expanding its influence in the global organizations as well as encouraging other alliances to do the same, BRICS will define the future influence on multi-polarism. As the world power is still in the process of shifting to a multi polar order, BRICS can establish its ability to become a transformative power even more, but it will face the challenge of maintaining its relevance as complexity in a regional and economic context continues to rise (Trachtenberg, [2024](#)).

## Conclusion

The rise of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is a significant move to multipolarism and a threat to the already established Western hegemony in the world order. This has helped the BRICS to establish its own footing: that of the emerging economies and the developing countries, through the alliance on mutual economic cooperation and strategic interests and advocacy towards a more

balanced global power structure. Despite this, this alliance is not devoid of challenges. BRICS is segmented into dissimilar political systems, internal conflicts of the region and conflicting national interests which not only complicate the formation of a lasting unity and cooperation but also complicates the process of sticking to the spirit of cooperation. Some of these discrepancies are quite radical but BRICS has been quite successful in unifying on several of these platforms such as opening the New Development Bank (NDB) as a substitute funding source and its collective action in reforming the UN and IMF. The BRICS is more than an economic block; BRICS is also an alternative version of world governance in a post-Cold War world characterized by unipolarity. This is, however, only achievable when BRICS is able to handle internal tensions, develop cooperative structures and possibly, bring in additional members in an initiative to strengthen its muscle. But BRICS, in its present incarnation is not quite powerful enough to restore global power structures to a balanced state but is a huge offset and a good example of a multi-polarism in action. What is left is the fact that BRICS is the mirror of the new multi-polar order, which are alliances, counterbalances, rivalries and competing interests. Whether BRICS will trigger a more equitable balance of power in the world remains unanswered, yet the fact that it is becoming a threat to the existing order is a historic milestone in the history of international relations. The future of BRICS will be determined by the degree of cohesion and flexibility that the bloc has and how well the bloc negotiates its place in a rapidly evolving global world.

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