

Why Are African States Joining BRICS?

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

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Geopolitical changes and the reconfiguration of economic architecture towards the Global South, under the rapidly-growing influence of BRICS+ (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) on the global stage are driving majority of African States to move away the United States draconic hegemony, its hidden ambiguity and obscurity, as well as rules-based political order combined with authoritarianism. Without much doubts, African States are increasingly showing skyline interest in BRICS+, primarily due to its distinctive-focused objectives including global peace, the strategic development paradigms, food and energy security directions in the 21st century and beyond.

Ultimately, African States are shrugging off relations with the Western and European world, alternatively settling for better beneficial economic cooperation and targeting to tap existing opportunities with countries in the Global South. Researchers and policy experts have argued that the main aim within the association is to create conditions for the sustainable development for BRICS+ member countries and their people. There are other several factors or reasons, but for Africa the central question remains what concretely these countries wanted to gain from BRICS+ association. This article explores some of the driving reasons:

Exemplary Leadership

At least, Africa is in search for an exemplary leadership for the next decade. What is really needed is statesmanship, leaders who understand and recognise clearly the basic principles of shaping the future of global collaboration, particularly in the economic architecture. Generally Africa views China, Russia, India and other members of BRICS upholding and advocating for the principles of equality in political participation, respect for sovereignty and integrity as well as complete fairness both in bilateral and multilateral cooperation. That however, the exceptionally poor choice of new BRICS members (Ethiopia and Egypt) in Johannesburg has increasingly wretched the BRICS pursuit of global peace and security. The destructive ill-discipline of two new members was observed when BRICS foreign ministers abruptly closed a meeting in New York in late September 2024, due to Egypt and Ethiopia crashing over UN Security Council reforms, as they apparently considered South Africa and Nigeria would be unsuitable choices as non-veto-voting permanent members. (See further reports on Ethiopia and Egypt's blatant conflict over Somaliland, in the Horn of Africa).

Beneficial Economic Cooperation

Acknowledging the current low levels of development, African leaders have consistently been forging a broader relations with external powers, on one hand. On the other hand, African States expressed absolute frustration over economic exploitations, foreign multinational financial institutions' stringent conditions and Western hegemony. As an alternative step, majority are now consolidating their positions based on a balance of

interests, and simultaneously prioritizing economic cooperation and partnerships with BRICS, particularly China and Russia. According to information sources monitored, many African countries in the continent have expressed the desire ascend and ready to strictly adhere to the principles outlined by BRICS+ association. Applications filed by African countries conform to the agreed guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedure for BRICS membership expansion. With optimism, it is however expected approx. 15 African States' applications for membership would be approved during the late October summit – under the motto “Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security” – in Kazan, capital city of Republic of Tatarstan. In practical terms, BRICS' unique enlargement will, in the near future, embrace potential new members from the Global South and Global East.

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Despite the challenges, African States have high hopes and will explore the possibility of taking concessionary loans, and/or securing adequate funding through BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) which was established in 2015. For the NDB is in steady evolutionary process, but hopes to forge economic partnerships within BRICS+, and facilitate access to diverse markets, enhance trade and investment opportunities across emerging economies. At its annual board meeting, from August 29 to 31, 2024, in South Africa, the NDB restated its insights to offer a more inclusive and flexible approach to financing, support the reshaping long-term development goals, better suited to the unique needs of BRICS members and other developing countries.

In addition, BRICS+ has set significant task to ensure a fairer interconnectedness between states, and enlist their active participation in the reconstruction of global economic architecture away from existing unipolarity. In order to realize this, BRICS plans to introduce new financial payment systems. The concept of 'de-dollarization' and the term 'multipolarity' are now admired by majority of developing countries in the Global South. An appreciated driver for this process is BRICS platform created to resonate broader common objectives, to engage in steadfast reforms and no doubt, to roadmap better alternative socio-economic and political directions.

While African States continue to forge alternative economic and governance structures that challenge the the Britton Woods institutions, multinational financial system, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund with their existing dynamical network still operate in nearly all countries across Africa. Egypt and Ethiopia (both BRICS members) are engrossed with funding from IMF and the World Bank. For example, Egypt, struggling with economic challenges, recently secured an \$8 billion bailout from the western-dominated International Monetary Fund, while Ethiopia, facing financial strain and internal crises of its own, also turned to the IMF for a \$3.4 billion loan. This suggests that a significant departure from

dollar reliance and existing financial institutions remains a distant prospect. According to June report from the World Bank, Africa's real GDP growth, which dropped to 3.1 percent in 2023 from 4.1 percent in 2022. Looking forward, however, the economic outlook is more positive, with growth expected to increase to 3.7 percent in 2024 and 4.3 percent in 2025, highlighting the strong resilience of African economies, as it targets access to new markets, investment and technology.

Meanwhile among current members of BRICS, China with a cutting-edge maintains the most admirable robust economic relations with Africa, especially under its policy flagship the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which it started in 2013 to establish beneficial economic relations and equal opportunities and foster cooperation in the different parts of the world. China's private sector is now likely to lead trade and investment in Africa, while new initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will promote the growth of region. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this amounted to a record \$282 billion in total trade volume in 2023. Trading largely in military arms and weaponry, Russia has a meagre \$25 billion trade statistics with Africa.

Africa's Security Expectations

An analysis and monitoring show that Africa in dare need of peace and of security, an ingredient for development. Further analysis also highlights African countries' divergent interests in politics, economy and social spheres. The same applies to their foreign policies with external partners, while majority still pursues a multi-alignment strategy, engaging with both the U.S. and the other major powers.

The current Commander of the U.S. Africa Command, **Michael E. Langley**, stated that the purpose of the command is to work alongside African military personnel to support their military operations. The White House official documents categorically stated that Africa Command "will strengthen our security cooperation with Africa and create new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of our partners in Africa. Africa Command will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa."

Over the past decades, Africa's security objectives have remained fragmented, and in many countries the United States African Command (AFRICOM), responsible for U.S. military operations, including fighting regional conflicts, has terribly failed to attain their purpose of creating military bases on the continent. It has huge yearly budget for sustaining military relations with 53 African States.

With the changing geopolitical tides, African Union (AU) and individual African States now envision to re-align with BRICS+ to address peace and security questions throughout the continent. BRICS+ has become Africa's salvation. Russia has contributed immensely towards the expulsion of Europeans, particularly France out of French-speaking States in West Africa. These included Burkina Faso, Malian Republic and Niger. The Horn of Africa is still in delicate fragile situation. In a few other places such Mozambique, Guinea and Chad partially get financial support for military operations from Europe and the United States.

The Declaration adopted at the XV BRICS Summit held in South Africa, reiterated absolute commitment to inclusive multilateralism towards supporting peace and security in Africa. It underscored "commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences and disputes through dialogue and inclusive consultations in a coordinated and cooperative manner and support

all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises.”

It finally stressed commitment to multilateralism and to the central role of the United Nations which are prerequisites to maintain peace and security. And for this, it is imperative to refrain from any coercive measures not based on international law and the UN Charter.

Critical Weak Points

In reaction at the first stage in deciding whether to expand, BRICS has to guide against its internal instability and possible negative influence. The association should seriously consider the importance of reviewing and working on its basic instruments, instead of making any hasty decisions. BRICS is looking to the Global South – developing countries with sharp disparities but together account for 40 per cent of the world’s GDP and 80 per cent of its population.

Many analysts have made powerful narratives that BRICS policies may not bring any real change because of diverging interests in politics, economy and culture. Many have different perceptions about the essence of what often referred to as a multipolar world. While expressing readiness to leverage unto BRICS platform which is largely considered symbolic in the current geopolitical situation, there are many practical things that are difficult to promote. Notwithstanding that, new BRICS members have multiple domestic issues to settle and still have to traditionally rely on western institutions. Shifting their alliance away from these institutions implies driving a sharp-edged dagger into the dynamics of their economic development. Russia has made an economic impact especially in Africa and Asian countries, in addition to China and India, despite the fact that its agenda is dominated by the Ukraine war.

BRICS Under Russia’s Presidency

Today, new players representing the Global South and Global East have stepped onto the international political stage. The geopolitical ambitions of the new global players are buttressed by their economic potential. Their numbers are growing, according **Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov**, and to support his argument, he made reference to **President Vladimir Putin** who said at the G20 extraordinary summit on November 2023, that a “significant portion of global investment, trade and consumer activity is shifting to the Asian, African and Latin American regions, which are home to the majority of the world’s population.”

At the Primakov Readings held in Moscow, Sergey Lavrov further remarked “the trends shaping the multipolar order are new realities. The unbalanced and unfair model of globalization is becoming a thing of the past. The emergence of new global development centres, the increasing self-awareness of many developing countries and their refusal to blindly follow former colonial powers.

As often understandably described, BRICS countries represent about 46% of the world’s population and over 36% of global GDP, according to recent estimates by global financial institutions. As an informal association, its aim is to amplify the voice of major emerging economies to counterbalance the Western-centered global order and related structured institutions. In a nutshell, BRICS, as a symbol of multipolarity, overlooks its role in highlighting the huge deficiencies and enormous challenges of the existing international framework. It was founded in 2006 by Russia, Brazil, India and China, with South Africa

joining in 2010. In January 2024, it expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

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