

Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey Could Join BRICS

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The BRICS seem really close to expanding. Now, according to information from the group’s International Forum, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey have expressed interest in applying for membership. Previously, Iran and Argentina had already asked to join the alliance. With this, it is evident that emerging countries around the world see in the BRICS a way to improve their international relations and contribute to the construction of a new world order.

Purnima Anand, president of the BRICS International Forum, said July 14, that three more countries could join “very soon” the group that is currently made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. According to her, representatives of the Saudi, Egyptian and Turkish governments have shown interest in entering the BRICS and are already forwarding the procedural requirements to formalize the candidacy.

“All these countries have shown an interest in joining and are preparing to apply for membership. I think this is a good step, because expansion is always positively perceived; this will clearly increase the influence of BRICS in the world (...) I hope that the accession of countries to BRICS will happen very quickly, because now all representatives of the core of the association are interested in enlargement. So, it will be very soon”, she said.

At another point of her speech, Anand also stated that the access may not occur “all at once”. In this sense, it is expected that one or two accessions will occur each time if the countries are actually accepted to join the group in the future.

In fact, Anand’s words confirm some previous expectations that emerged in recent similar pronouncements made by other authorities of the group. For example, the head of the Department of International Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, **Li Kexin**, had stated on one occasion that not only these countries but even Indonesia had expressed interest in joining the BRICS:

There are several countries currently ‘at the door,’ for example, Indonesia, Turkey,

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Argentina (...) I believe there is a shared understanding that we [the BRICS] need to enlarge, get 'new faces'.

Indeed, the explanation for why so many countries are interested in the BRICS is simple and can be seen in the words of Argentina's Ambassador to China, **Sabino Vaca Narvaja**, during a recent interview:

"We are interested in joining the BRICS because it is a cooperation mechanism composed entirely of emerging economies. There are no strings attached and all cooperation is mutually beneficial".

While the economic blocs and political alliances led by the countries of the "geopolitical north" are almost always ruled by rigid ideological principles, linked to agendas such as neoliberalism, eco-capitalism and the western model of "democracy", the BRICS, being a strategic and pragmatic group for the cooperation among emerging nations, is in no way interested in the political agendas followed by its members or in the ideological principles of their governments. What matters in the BRICS is to strengthen the multilateral partnership in order to reach more advanced levels of development, without political interventionism or ideological requirements.

This is undoubtedly of interest to countries that are somehow "disapproved" by the West for the way they manage their domestic politics, suffering boycotts, sanctions or simply reprisals for accessing some benefits in international society. In the BRICS, what is found is a path focused only on non-ideological cooperation - or, in other words, "no strings attached", as said by Narvaja.

This non-ideological aspect has an essential strategic advantage: allowing rival nations to join the BRICS simultaneously, despite their conflicts of interests. The group makes it possible for states with divergent interests to overcome their disagreements in favor of a greater common good. This is precisely the case for China and India, for example - and it will also be the case for Iran and Saudi Arabia, if their applications are accepted.

It is necessary to note how the expansion promises to increase the importance of the BRICS in international decision-making processes. Currently, the group already houses 42% of the world's population and holds 24% of the global gross product. With the possible joining of new members, these numbers will also increase and consequently the group will become even more relevant. Most of the world's consumer middle classes will be within the BRICS or in some way integrated into it - considering the economic blocs of which the group's members are part.

In practice, this major economic relevance means bargaining power in the international scenario - which undoubtedly interests emerging states and contributes to the formation of a multipolar world order.

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