



BRICS a Strategic Bloc Against Western Hegemony

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INTERVIEW

Can the BRICS group of large developing nations, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, possess the potential to emerge as a significant force in international relations? What advantages would Iran's membership in BRICS offer to Tehran? Iran Daily has explored these questions with Shoeib Bahman, a university professor and the head of the Contemporary World Research Institute (*jahanemoaser.ir*).

Iran Daily: Many experts and mainstream media, including Reuters, suggest that the BRICS member nations are aiming to forge a new world order or reshape the existing one. In your opinion, does BRICS have the capability to emerge as a major player in international relations?

Bahman: The BRICS member states hold considerable positions and capacities on the global stage. Together, they encompass 40% of the world's land area and account for 40% of the global population. Presently, these five nations contribute almost 31.5% to the global economy, slightly surpassing the Group of Seven's 30.7% share. Hence, in terms of the economy, the BRICS member states are now on par with their G7 counterparts.

Throughout its years of existence, BRICS has undertaken strategic initiatives that could pave the way for substantial future developments. BRICS nations set up the New Development Bank and a fund, known as Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which aims to help members with balance of payment difficulties. These institutions possess the potential to rival Western-centric international counterparts like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They have already extended billions of dollars in loans to member nations and friendly aligned countries.

The BRICS members are actively in talks to create an interbank system akin to SWIFT. Another striking stride taken by BRICS nations involves conducting trade using their respective national currencies. As a result, BRICS is gradually and steadily organizing itself to extend its global influence and effectiveness.

There's a belief that the financial mechanisms employed by the WB and the IMF fail to adequately address the needs of underdeveloped nations and often seem more aligned with the interests of devel-

oped countries. Many underdeveloped countries are now pinning their hopes on BRICS to support their development. What is your take on that?

Absolutely, there is no doubt about this fact. Take the World Bank as an example; it refrains from extending loans to many countries for various reasons, including their conflicts with Western powers. This is where BRICS can step in as a potential avenue for underdeveloped countries, particularly those with less harmonious relationships with Western nations. The fundamental allure for many nations in seeking BRICS membership is such capabilities it has.

In the current BRICS summit in South Africa, a multitude of African nations' leaders, along with representatives from key international and regional bodies like ASEAN and the Group of 77, are in attendance. This strong presence signifies their interest in either joining BRICS or forging cooperative ties with it. Even countries that maintain relatively smooth political relations with the West are showing an interest in joining BRICS, as seen with certain Arab nations along the Persian Gulf. For instance, Saudi Arabia is exploring mechanisms to conduct a portion of its trade using currencies other than the dollar, a strategy reminiscent of BRICS practices.

To put it in a nutshell, there's a growing interest in BRICS membership, with approximately 30 countries expressing a desire to join its ranks.

Iran is among the countries seeking to become a BRICS member. What benefits would Tehran gain from BRICS membership?

Membership in BRICS could be of critical importance for Iran in several ways, particularly in the economic realm. Given the existing sanctions, Iran faces constraints concerning the import of essential goods and international banking transactions. Furthermore, access to its revenues is also limited. Becoming a BRICS member could potentially alleviate or diminish some of these limitations. Over the years, Iran has sought a loan from the IMF, but due to op-



position from the United States, this loan has not been approved. BRICS' financial institutions could serve as a more viable alternative for Tehran compared to the IMF.

From a political standpoint, joining BRICS would signify a setback to America's attempts to isolate Iran. Collaborating with powerful nations like China, Russia, India, South Africa, and Brazil would bolster Iran's standing on both regional and global platforms. Moreover, it would foster the expansion of economic ties. Naturally, this aspiration works both ways — in other words, BRICS members are also interested in bringing Iran onboard. This is because Iran's strategic geographical location, abundant energy resources, and relatively sizable population make it an appealing and advantageous prospect for the BRICS nations.

Does BRICS possess the potential to emerge as a fresh influential force capable of impacting the existing Western-led unipolar world order?

Indeed, it holds this potential and we are witnessing it unfold at present. BRICS shouldn't be solely perceived as a purely economic entity, despite its substantial involvement in global economic interactions. In addition to their economic pursuits, BRICS member nations are inclined toward fostering a multipolar global landscape in contrast to the prevailing unipolar order and American dominance. BRICS is gradually solidifying into a prevailing trend or strategic pathway within the international system, a development that doesn't sit well with Western powers. Consequently, as BRICS advances alongside other regional and international groups like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which share a stance against the unipolar order, Western nations are simultaneously exploring novel mechanisms to uphold their position and hegemony.

BRICS 2023



Brazil



Russia



India



China



South Africa

Bloc's challenges

However, while BRICS has the potential to confront unipolarity, several challenges remain. The member countries have differing political systems, economic priorities, and strategic interests, which can lead to internal disagreements. Additionally, their individual power and influence may vary, potentially causing imbalances within the group.

Nonetheless, the annual summit and the growing interest in joining the BRICS group signify a shift in the global landscape. Some 50 other leaders who are not BRICS members — among them Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi has confirmed he will attend the talks. As more nations seek to participate, the organization's ability to foster multipolarity, influence international norms, and reshape global governance could become increasingly pronounced.

In closing, BRICS's pursuit of a multipolar world is fueled by its determination to transform international trade dynamics, enhance global influence through collaboration and reform, and establish new norms of governance that are more inclusive and reflective of the world's evolving realities.

