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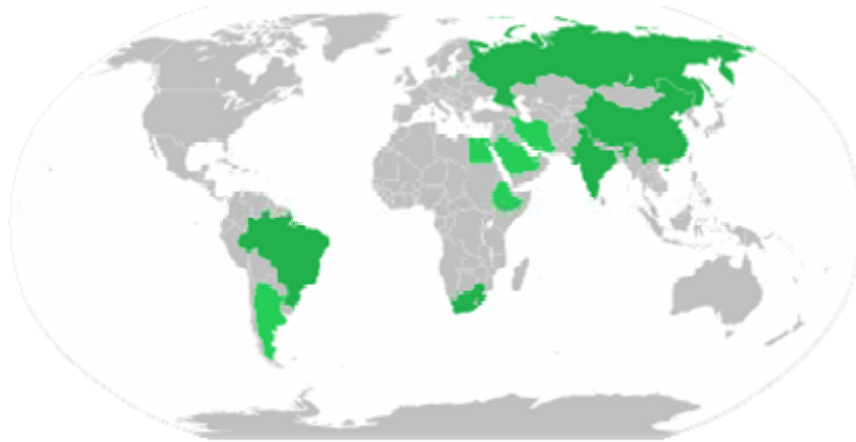
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By Javier Tolcachier/ Another world is possible
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What is growing with BRICS?



Sources: Rebellion

At its recent XV Summit in Johannesburg, the economic bloc made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, announced the invitation to join as full members six new countries: Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and Iran, which will complete their accession as of January 1, 2024.

More than 40 countries had indicated their intention to join this group and twenty-three have already formally applied for membership. Founded in 2009 and expanded with South Africa in 2010, BRICS is now embarking on a phase of expansion that merits understanding in terms of its geopolitical, but also social and historical impact.

One of the questions, which could indicate the course of this association that already groups 46% of the world's population, is the criteria by which new members have been chosen and the possible projection of new admissions.

As with any question, the edges are multiple, so it is good to shell it from different points of view.

The economic point of view

There is no doubt that among the priorities considered by the acting governments are the possibilities of strengthening the economies of the bloc, which together with the new entrants will add up to around 36% of global GDP.

An essential point, declared and already implemented through various agreements, is the intention to dispense with the US currency in bilateral trade. The scope of this measure, coupled with the possibility under consideration of an exchange currency composed of a basket of currencies called R5 (by the initials of the national denominations: real, ruble, rupee, renminbi (yuan) and rand), constitutes a serious challenge to the monetary hegemony of the dollar established after the Bretton Woods agreements.

The use of the dollar, which succeeded the pound sterling as the reference currency and since 1971 abandoned the backing in gold, has allowed the US not only to save conversion costs and influence through the setting of interest rates by the Federal Reserve in the world economy, but also to afford and partially finance a huge deficit through the issuance of its own currency. Two conditions usually imposed in reverse by international credit agencies under their aegis on other countries.

To offer alternatives in this regard, BRICS has created a new financing entity called the New Development Bank (NDB) based in Shanghai, placing former Brazilian Prime Minister Dilma Rousseff as its president.

From the point of view of economic development, this strong enlargement of the bloc contemplates above all the possibility of guaranteeing access to energy sources under favourable conditions. Except for Russia and to a lesser extent Brazil, the other BRICS countries rely on imports of non-renewable energies such as oil and gas, while Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates are among the world's top suppliers of crude oil. Argentina has grown as a producer of natural gas and shale, being also a major exporter of food and main reservoir – along with Chile and Bolivia – of lithium, considered the new "white gold".

Moreover, as China is the largest economy in the group and one of the main drivers of BRICS expansion, these steps should be analyzed in parallel with the realization of infrastructure projects contained in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

New infrastructure for old trails

This initiative, which is now ten years since Xi Jinping announced it in an official visit to Kazakhstan, has attracted the interest of 155 countries, which in various ways have

associated or support it. It is a gigantic infrastructure project that aims to compensate for the connection deficits that hinder multilateral trade. Traced on the ancient trade routes that caravans traveled by land through the Silk Road and recreating the maritime journey of Admiral Zeng He during the Ming dynasty, the BRI contemplates the construction or improvement of ports, railways, roads, industrial enclaves, including sources of water and energy supply and digital connectivity in many countries of the global South whose lack torpedoes their possibilities of exchange of products and services.

Although conceived from China to favor the multiplication of its commercial possibilities, invest, expand the economic activities of its own companies and also enable the development of its economically depressed interior, this project radically modifies the map of the world communication routes whose unequivocal stamp was stamped by the interests and needs of the former colonial powers.

Collateral effects of no less importance are the need to maintain peace in the territories involved in order to advance smoothly in construction, but also the strong level of new indebtedness that infrastructure investments always imply. On the other hand, the transfer of technology and training in its management also entails dependence on the installation of technological standards, which is evidenced in the hard resistance of the West to the challenge that this poses to its previous supremacy in this field.

A crucial stretch of the maritime section of the project that connects Southeast Asia with the ports of Istanbul and Athens, gateways to different points in Europe, is the one that crosses the Red Sea, whose entry and exit points are Djibouti, where China maintains a military base, and the Suez Canal under Egyptian administration. Ethiopia, another of the new guests to the BRICS, which lost its exit to the sea since the independence of Eritrea, maintains its foreign trade through a railway line built by China that connects its capital Addis Ababa with the port of Djibouti.

Geopolitical restructuring

Of fundamental importance in these times of redrawing the global geopolitical map and an evident transition to multipolarity, is to note that none of the new members of the BRICS belongs to NATO, nor is it a global partner, which perhaps explains why Turkey, also interested in association and ascending economic pole, is not among the elected. at least for now.

On the other hand, both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are traditional military allies of the United States in the Middle East, a leading role that has been eclipsed by China in its peace mediation efforts crowned by the recent agreement between the

theocratic Saudi and Iranian governments. Both countries in turn have historical differences with Israel, considered an enclave with a nuclear arsenal of direct influence of the United States in the region, which explains the search for balances.

Likewise, the fact that Ethiopia hosts the headquarters of the very active African Union, which claims and exercises key diplomatic influence in Africa's internal affairs, adds elements to the understanding of its inclusion in BRICS+6.

Argentina, for its part, has been, together with Brazil under progressive governments, an important engine of sovereign regional integration instances such as UNASUR or CELAC, which strengthens the multipolar sign and opposed to the alleged exclusivity of US or Eurocentric domination over Latin America. The South American country has been with Egypt, founding country of the Non-Aligned Movement, a historical advocate of a greater balance in global governance.

Precisely the expansion of the BRICS is due in large part to the urgent need to reformulate the functioning of international institutions such as the UN, co-opted in practice by the weight that the United States of America continues to have in its financing.

Cultural diversity and globalization

The imperial appropriation of recent centuries has imposed models of a clear Western cut, subjecting peoples to a relativization or even denial of the contribution of their cultures to the human process.

The formation and expansion of a bloc of countries with diverse cultural roots such as the BRICS+6 constitute not only a reaction to neocolonial continuity in economic and political terms, but also the elevation of other patterns of thought and behavior to a level of parity, thus strengthening diversity.

Ongoing globalization, understood as a process towards which different cultures tend to converge without losing their lifestyle and identity^[1], is very different from globalization, a homogenizing current driven by imperialism, financial groups and international banking. From the globalization perspective, the emergence of nucleations such as BRICS+6 and associated institutions that allow formal interaction and act in turn as a forum for dialogue and an influential pole on a global scale is coherent.

Clearly, the new scope of this emerging association of a global cultural reaction to attempts to standardize the world according to Western corporate desires, supposes an important opening to different possibilities of relative autonomy and relationship between peoples, without paternalistic mediations.

The shadows of BRICS

No one escapes the authoritarian and strongly identitarian characteristics of the governments that make up the BRICS to date, characteristics that have served the global West to revile them as undemocratic or undemocratic regimes.

Beyond the fact that Argentina has maintained a liberal-style democracy since 1983 and Ethiopia, whose democratization process is very recent, the other new partners do not seem to escape the scheme of strong rejection and repression of all types of internal dissidence.

Although it is unpleasant to note, a probable thesis is that the emergence of strongly centralist governments that are not very tolerant of internal divergence – especially if it is supported from the outside – is consubstantial with the need to oppose a firm front to neocolonial domination.

Even so, putting in parentheses the real obstacles that in these countries obstruct the freedom of personal and collective choice and unacceptably oppress those who do not agree with the ruling ideologies, one could ask, not without a bitter taste in the mouth of a humanist, if these traits of intolerance are not the reflection of a majority popular will.

Undoubtedly, the rapid transformations of recent years, the systemic asphyxiation and the lack of consultation with the peoples about their profound aspirations have a powerful influence, leading many to identify with reactionary attitudes or to assert themselves in difference, as is the case of nationalisms or religious fundamentalism. Much more, if they see that, beyond these traits, the social situation in some places, such as China, has improved for millions of people.

And as far as anti-democratic spirit is concerned, it should be noted that none of the critical Western governments lags behind those of the BRICS, since the accumulation of power in the hands of large corporations and investment funds, prevents the votes from being qualified as real elections of the peoples, enabling true systemic alternatives.

Certainly this is a stage of humanity in which all violent behavior needs to be overcome, although these notions of valid future find resistance in old habits.

In this sense, it is the same populations that will have to work on the modification of their interior landscapes, which in turn will have a positive impact on the type and model of social organization that they freely choose.

The Universal Human Nation

An underserved aspect, in this temporal realm marked by immediacy, is the most widespread historical point of view. From this perspective, BRICS+6 is achieving with the inclusion of its new members several of the main civilizations of human history.

The millenary accumulations of Egypt, China, India and the Persian world, the enormous contributions of the Slavic peoples and the Siberian steppe – a concentration in turn of the ways of life of many peoples, through the participation of Russia, Ethiopia and South Africa, two spaces considered cradles of humanity, the articulation with the Arab nation and the contribution of Latin American and Afro-American peoples and cultures form a mosaic, still incomplete, which gives a glimpse of the intertwining and creative renewal of deep mythical sources.

In the declared framework of collaboration between governments and in the strengthening of relations between peoples that will emerge from common action, there is a growing germ that will go far beyond a multipolarism reactive to unipolar domination. It is the emergence of the first planetary civilization in history, which if it adopts a character of true horizontality, inclusion, emancipation and increasing equality of opportunities, will become the foundation of a Universal Human Nation.

In this way, the Human Being will leave behind violent prehistory, heading to continue together its path of liberation as a species.

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^[1] Globalization. Dictionary of New Humanism. Silo. (1996) Magenta Editions.

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