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BRICS and Camp David: Two very different meetings

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Within days of each other, two very different meetings of world significance were held. The meetings sharply frame the choices. What kind of future these two meetings represent deserves to be analyzed and compared.

At an Aug. 18 summit at Camp David military base outside of Washington D.C., President Joe Biden framed an aggressive military alliance, with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida dutifully in attendance. This trilateral military pact of the United States, South Korea and Japan is directly aimed at China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). The military bloc's creation is understood as concretizing a new Cold War against China.



(Left to right) China’s Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, Brazil’s Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, South Africa’s Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and India’s Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar attend a BRICS foreign ministers’ meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, June 1, 2023.

Credit: Reuters

Whether the recent agreement holds together or not, the Camp David summit is a further step in Washington’s strategy of inserting tensions, instability, and continuing provocations in the region in an attempt to block China’s development and its growing regional trade with its neighbors. Is Washington attempting to mask to the world the U.S. economic decline by asserting its military dominance in the Pacific?

In sharp contrast, the XV BRICS Summit held under the theme of “BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism” opened four days later in Johannesburg, South Africa. This Summit focused on building an open world economy that supports trade and promotes cooperation. Concrete plans for African development were a recurring theme.

BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. These five countries, which have a combined total population of 3 billion, or 40% of the world’s people, have widely different political and economic systems. But they are all developing countries and were all colonies or neo-colonies.

At the conclusion of the gathering, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that six more countries were admitted to BRICS: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

At the BRICS Meeting, President Xi Jinping of China stressed deepening cooperation among emerging countries to make the international order more just and equitable, rather than a bloc to promote confrontation. His speech declared: “Emerging countries are becoming more and more relevant in the international arena. This summit will very much contribute to the shaping of a new global economic and political order. It will help change the current situation when it comes to international relations.”

Military alliances and occupations

Since 1945, the overwhelming U.S. military presence in Japan and South Korea has exerted extreme and constant political pressure on every country occupied by U.S. troops and military bases. There are still 53,700 U.S. troops in Japan on 120 military bases — more bases than in any other country. Some 26,400 U.S. troops are stationed on 73 bases in South Korea, including Fort Humphreys, the largest overseas U.S. military base.

This new Camp David military pact follows Washington’s revival and upgrading of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue — commonly abbreviated as the “Quad” — among four countries: the U.S., India, Australia, and Japan. The Quad holds joint military exercises that openly target China.

Another military alliance — the AUKUS trilateral security pact among Australia, Britain and the U.S. — has given cover to U.S. naval and air training missions in the region. Under that pact, the U.S. and Britain will assist Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines.

China is the top trading partner of more than 120 countries, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Australia. U.S. corporate interests are consumed with the task of how to reverse this economic reality and contain China, in the Asia-Pacific region and globally.

U.S. military pacts increase global insecurity.

Rather than focusing world attention, resources, and the vast scientific and technical knowhow on the escalating climate crisis, U.S. corporations focus on quick profits from war. Every U.S. politician will feel the pressure to vote for even more increases in military funding allocations. According to the National Priorities Project, the full military budget of the U.S. is \$900 billion — more than the next 10 countries combined and 40% of the world total.

While the security pact devised at Camp David won't reverse the declining economic power of the U.S., it will intensify global insecurity.

The BRICS group of nations' embrace of more equitable trade and development is a challenge to U.S. sanctions imposed on 40 countries. The growing ability of countries to use their own currencies in direct trade is a threat to the power of the almighty dollar. The BRICS economies have overtaken the G7's global gross domestic product.

The atmosphere of solidarity and cooperation exemplified by the BRICS cooperation mechanism is helping to propel development across the African continent. Forty countries have expressed the desire to become a member, including many in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

BRICS represents the growing aspiration for a more balanced global order. This threatens imperialist domination and injects positive energy and new confidence to the world.

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