

BRICS Challenges Unipolar World and US Dollar Hegemony

BRICS Summit draws clear red lines on Syria, Iran

By [Global Research News](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

The BRICS just became impossible to ignore. At the close of the Fifth annual BRICS Summit in Durban, South Africa last week, there was little question that this group of five fast-growing economies was underwriting an overhaul of the global economic and political order.

The eThekweni Declaration issued at summit's end was couched in non-confrontational language, but it was manifestly clear that western hegemony and unipolarity were being targeted at this meeting.

The BRICS hit some major western sore spots by announcing the formation of a \$50 billion jointly-funded development bank to rival the IMF and World Bank. Deals were signed to increase inter-BRICS trade in their own currencies, further eroding the US dollar's status as the world's reserve currency.

A series of unmistakable challenges were dealt to old world leaders: reform your institutions and economies – or we'll do it ourselves.

Intent on filling a leadership void in global economic and financial affairs, the BRICS also began to draw some firm political lines in the sand.

For starters, the summit was focused on development in Africa – a resource-rich continent where competing economic interests have drawn increasingly polarized geopolitical battle lines in the past few years. The BRICS were invited to the African table via their newest member state, South Africa, and have used this opportunity to fully back the African Union (AU).

The AU has been Africa's attempt to integrate and unify the continent economically – via the establishment of a single currency and development fund that could bypass the very punishing IMF – and militarily – via the establishment of security/defense organizations and joint military forces, among other things.

AU success would necessarily mean less old-style western imperialism in the region, reducing exploitative foreign economic activities and excluding foreign forces like the US military's African Command (AFRICOM) from engaging in the African military theater.

At the heart of the Summit's agenda lies the BRICS' determination to anchor any emerging global order in "multilateralism" – whether by demanding permanent seats within the UN Security Council, forging alternative economic constructs that will shift the balance of power

their way, or proactively influencing outcomes in global conflict zones.

Syria and Iran

The Durban summit therefore was not going to ignore the two most prominent issues on UN Security Council's docket – Syria and Iran.

Last week, the BRICS collectively rejected any further militarization of these problems, advocated political solutions negotiated through diplomatic initiatives, expressed concern over unilateral sanctions and warned against infringement on the “territorial integrity and sovereignty” of these nations.

The eThekweni Declaration says about Iran:

“We believe there is no alternative to a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. We recognize Iran's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy consistent with its international obligations, and support resolution of the issues involved through political and diplomatic means and dialogue.”

And on Syria, the BRICS fully backed the Geneva principles as the framework for resolving the two-year conflict:

“We believe that the Joint Communiqué of the Geneva Action Group provides a basis for resolution of the Syrian crisis and reaffirm our opposition to any further militarization of the conflict. A Syrian-led political process leading to a transition can be achieved only through broad national dialogue that meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society and respect for Syrian independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty as expressed by the Geneva Joint Communiqué and appropriate UNSC resolutions.”

The BRICS positions on Iran and Syria cannot, however, be viewed solely within the parameters of the summit's declaration. For starters, the statement is nothing new – the BRICS have been advocating these points in some form or another since they issued their first foreign policy communiqué in November 2011.

To understand the depth and breadth of commitment behind these Mideast stances, one needs to look beyond the sanitized, diplomat-speak of the summit environment. India, Brazil and South Africa, for instance, don't offer up much commentary on Syria and Iran – they leave that to their UNSC permanent-member colleagues in Russia and China, who are the BRICS' front-men on these issues.

Earlier in March, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Moscow on his first foreign trip as head of state, and told audiences there: “We must respect the right of each country in the world to independently choose its path of development and oppose interference in the internal affairs of other countries.”

A clear warning against aggressive western interventionism, Xi's visit with Russia's Vladimir Putin emphasized the importance of their “strategic partnership” in geopolitical affairs.

On Syria, in particular, Russia has taken the BRICS lead with the blessing of its fellow members – including China – so Moscow's view of the situation is a critical one to analyze.

The Russians have recently released a concept paper on the importance of their participation in the BRICS – a view that is likely to reflect similar priorities at the highest levels of fellow member states.

BRICS drawing red lines



Putin and Xi say the one way to end the Syrian crisis is through dialogue [Xinhua]

For all the BRICS, financial and economic considerations are the driving momentum behind the formalization of this strategic coalition. There is, say the Russians, “a common desire of BRICS partners to reform the obsolete international financial and economic architecture which does not take into account the increased economic power of emerging market economies and developing countries.”

But for fundamental economic shifts to take place, a simultaneous rebalancing of political power worldwide must also occur.

Moscow believes that the BRICS “can potentially become a key element of a new system of global governance primarily in the financial and economic areas. At the same time, the Russian Federation stands in favor of positioning BRICS in the world system as a new model of global relations, overarching the old dividing lines between East and West, and North and South.”

It’s a bold new world, but there’s real value in some of the old ways. For one, the BRICS are big proponents of the Rule of Law in global affairs, concepts the West often tosses around, but rarely adheres to in pursuit of its own strategic interests, i.e. interventionism, regime-change, militarization of conflict.

For the Russians, an absolute BRICS priority is “building on the commitment by the participating states to the rule of law in international relations, to progressively expand the foreign policy cooperation with BRICS partners in the interests of peace and security with due respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states and non-interference in their internal affairs.”

The BRICS are backing the UN model to help achieve these basic principles. For them, the vehicle is not what is broken – the problem lies with its drivers. And in particular, the notion that regime change, sanctions and military intervention are acceptable tools in international affairs.

The BRICS, according to Moscow, can “enhance in every possible way interaction within the UN as well as to preserve and strengthen the UN Security Council’s role as a body bearing the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security; to prevent the use of the UN, first of all the Security Council, to cover up the course towards removing undesirable regimes and imposing unilateral solutions to conflict situations, including those based on the use of force.”

As an aside, it’s hardly a coincidence that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad sent a widely-reported letter to the BRICS during the Summit. Here, after all, was the head of state of a sovereign nation requesting the help of the newly-ascendant BRICS in protecting the territorial integrity of Syria by rebuffing “blatant foreign interference” in contradiction of the “UN Charter.”

That letter hit all the BRICS soft spots: Rule of Law in international relations, preservation of global peace and security, peaceful resolution of conflict, de-militarization ... and recognition of the importance of the BRICS in the new world order.

Assad’s letter came one day after the Arab League gave Syria’s seat away to an external-based opposition coalition backed by Syrian foes – a move the Russians called “unlawful and invalid” and a hindrance to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

It may be that BRICS intended to set an example here. Receiving this letter at the summit clearly bestows legitimacy on Assad and his claims – and it is hard to imagine that this was not an event coordinated in advance.

Moscow’s positions on the Syria issue cannot be seen out of the context of these shared BRICS principles. The Russians may have more at stake in what is going on in Syria – as others do in Iran – but these are consistent red lines in what the BRICS hope to achieve globally.

And they are willing to bet on it too. Part of the wager is that faltering western economies are so far gone on their current trajectories, that only “time” is required for these global shifts to materialize.

In any regard, shortly after the Summit concluded Russia vowed to prevent any measure in the UN Security Council to give Syria’s seat to the opposition.

The potential for chaos looms large though as a new political order emerges, and as a collective the BRICS will not be shy about pushing their agendas hard – a task made easier by the considerable clout they now share.

On his flight back from Durban to Moscow last Thursday, Putin ordered surprise large-scale military maneuvers in the Black Sea, which borders Syrian-foe Turkey – a move most observers took as a warning for foreign interventionists in Syria.

It is unlikely that BRICS nations would go to such lengths to draw red lines and not defend those positions. How this would transpire in the cases of Syria or Iran is uncertain – it is unlikely we are going to see a BRICS army fighting battles anytime soon. On the other hand, these strategic relationships are likely to give way to coordinated military positions and some special forces planning for exactly these kinds of scenarios.

This is not hard to fathom. BRIC was just an acronym created by Goldman Sachs to describe

some fast-growing emerging economies a few years ago. Today, they are engaged in bilateral military exercises, funding banks, building institutions, and remapping global priorities for the 21st century

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