

14TH BRICS SUMMIT - AN ANALYSIS

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China hosted the 14th BRICS Summit 2022 in virtual mode. It was held on June 23-24 and was chaired by President Xi Jinping from Beijing. Leaders of Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa along with representatives of other countries attended the summit. The summit took place in the backdrop of evolving global alignments as Russia-Ukraine conflict surges.

In his opening address, President Xi Jinping stressed that the five BRICS countries need to cooperate for global tranquillity, stability, development and should support one another on issues of core interests rejecting hegemony and divide.¹ The BRICS members and other leaders emphasised their commitment to territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries.²

On the eve of the summit, Iran and Argentina applied for membership to join BRICS. Iran confirmed it a few days after the summit. While Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez stated at a meeting afterwards that his state wishes to have a full-membership of the association.³ Apart from these,

¹ "BRICS poised to advance global causes," *China Daily*, June 28, 2022, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202206/28/WS62ba6539a310fd2b29e68f92.html>

² "Key points of 14th BRICS Summit Beijing declaration," *Tass*, June 23, 2022, <https://tass.com/world/1470585>

³ "Iran, Argentina apply to join BRICS bloc after recent summit: Report," *Business Standard*, June 29, 2022, https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/iran-argentina-apply-to-join-brics-bloc-after-recent-summit-report-122062800935_1.html#:~:text=Argentina%20and%20Iran%20have%20applied,state%2Drun%20Tass%20ews%20agency.

Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt also showed interest in joining the BRICS group.⁴ Admittance of more countries through 'BRICS Plus' (an expansion process) will definitely add more value to the grouping and help BRICS nations to establish closer ties in Asia, Middle East and South America.

BRICS in China

The BRICS summit 2022 hosted by China covered wide-range of topics but especially focused on renewing multilateralism, rejecting hegemony and keeping a balance in world politics.⁵ Under the theme of "Forging High-quality Partnership for a New Era of Development", all BRICS nations stressed on the need for joint coordination on climate action, pandemics and creating an environment for global development.⁶ President Xi Jinping in the keynote address stated that group politics and bloc confrontation is pushing the world towards instability, leading to a security dilemma.⁷ All BRICS members agreed on the need to reject zero-sum games ,building a framework for international politics based on justice, fair-play and global development.

On the side-lines of BRICS 2022- China's High-level Dialogue on Global Development

President Xi Jinping also presided a High-level Dialogue on Global Development under the theme titled, "Foster a Global Development Partnership for the New Era to Jointly Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".⁸ The dialogue was attended by all BRICS members and by the Presidents and Prime Ministers of various states like Egypt, Algeria, Argentina, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan etc.

The key issues discussed were solidifying international development cooperation, speeding up implementation of the UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development and means to promote development. President Xi Jinping stressed the need to create a united, equal, stable and inclusive high-quality global development partnership and such efforts will strengthen the cooperation

⁴ "BRICS expects Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to join group soon," *Middle East Monitor*, July 14, 2022, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220714-brics-expects-egypt-saudi-arabia-and-turkey-to-join-group-soon/>

⁵ "At BRICS summit, China sets stage to tout its governance model," *Al-Jazeera*, June 22, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/6/22/at-brics-summit-china-seeking-stage-for>

⁶ "Forging High-quality Partnership For a New Era of Global Development," *BRICS 2022 China*, June 24, 2022, http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/dtxw/202206/t20220624_10709767.html

⁷ "President Xi Jinping Delivered a Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the BRICS Business Forum," *BRICS 2022 China*, June 22, 2022, http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/tpxw/202206/t20220627_10710501.html

⁸ "President Xi Jinping Chairs and Delivers Important Remarks at the High-level Dialogue on Global Development," *BRICS 2022 CHINA*, June 25, 2022, http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/dtxw/202206/t20220625_10709986.html

under the Global Development Initiative.⁹ President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa in his remarks said that we all share the mutual desire for increased representation and progressive perspective in global government institutions.¹⁰ As emerging and developing economies, it is up to us to put the global south on the trajectory of progress, prosperity and self-reliance and to structure an inclusive and equitable international order. The leaders attending the dialogue supported the proposal of GDI by Beijing and there was a collective consensus that development is the bedrock of security.

Pakistan's absence at the High-level Development Dialogue hosted by China

Pakistan was not present at the dialogue and according to Pakistan's Foreign Office Spokesperson, China being the host engaged with Pakistan prior to the summit, and it was clarified by Beijing that decisions regarding invitations to non-member states are taken in consultation with all BRICS members. Regrettably, one-member blocked Pakistan's participation.¹¹ Later, Pakistan congratulated China on successfully hosting the BRICS summit, expressing its hope that future decisions would be more "inclusive".¹²

Russia in BRICS

Russian President Vladimir Putin was welcomed to the 14th BRICS virtual summit along with the other member states. Since the Ukraine war, this was the highest level gathering in which President Putin participated.¹³ In his remarks, he stated that challenges like fight against terrorism, conflict resolution, criminal use of emerging technologies etc. are all forms of organized crimes and should be dealt through joint efforts. The President of Russia also noted that the world economy has come to a standstill because of 'selfish' actions of some states, which are wrongly employing financial mechanisms to shift their mistakes to the rest of the world.¹⁴ He also rejected economic sanctions, and called for unity between the developing economies so a true multi-polar system based on the

⁹ "President Xi Jinping Chairs and Delivers Important Remarks at the High-level Dialogue on Global Development," *BRICS 2022 CHINA*, June 25, 2022, http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/dtxw/202206/t20220625_10709986.html

¹⁰ "President Cyril Ramaphosa participates in the High-Level dialogue on Global Development," June 24, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye3-A9b_lAo

¹¹ "FO confirms Pakistan's participation in BRICS summit was blocked by a member," *The News International*, June 27, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/969587-fo-confirms-pakistans-participation-in-brics-summit-was-blocked-by-a-member>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Russia's Welcome at Brics Summit Shows Disconnect with West," *The Wall street Journal*, June 23, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-welcome-at-brics-summit-shows-disconnect-with-west-11656020361>

¹⁴ "BRICS Summit-Vladimir Putin took part in the 14th BRICS Summit, held via videoconference and chaired by China," *President of Russia*, June 23, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/68696>

universal norms of international law could be formed.¹⁵ The Russian President also proposed that BRICS partners should explore 'reliable alternatives' for international engagements and an international reserve currency based on a basket of BRICS currencies could be created.¹⁶ President Putin's presence and participation reflected Russia's strategic importance to various states across the globe.¹⁷

The US has criticized the Russian welcome at the BRICS summit and has indicated that it shows disengagement with the West. The US also criticized President Xi for blaming the US for 'weaponizing' the global economy through its sanctions and mocked China for using the forum of the BRICS summit to criticize Washington, decrying Western sanctions, while flaunting its development and security initiatives.¹⁸

India in BRICS 2022- Balancing the Equation

Previously, India participated in the fourth Quadrilateral Dialogue Summit along with Australia, United States and Japan on May 24, 2022. Therefore, it became somewhat of a challenge for New Delhi to perform a balancing act between East and the West. However, India took a safe passage by supporting the BRICS group without criticising the West. Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on the significance of BRICS in the post-pandemic world of economic recovery. He agreed that BRICS countries have similar views regarding governance and global economy.¹⁹ He stated that institutional reforms in BRICS have increased the effectiveness of the organization. Practical initiatives like establishment of Vaccine Research & Development centre, establishment of shared satellite constellation, etc. were lauded by him.²⁰ India managed to strike a balance between West and the East playing 'neutral' to anti-West messaging.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Western sanctions are 'weaponizing' world economy, China's Xi Jinping says ahead of BRICS summit," *CNN*, June 23, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/06/23/asia/xi-jinping-brics-summit-china-russia-sanctions-economy-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁷ "Russia's Welcome at Brics Summit Shows Disconnect With West," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-welcome-at-brics-summit-shows-disconnect-with-west-11656020361>

¹⁸ "Western sanctions are 'weaponizing' world economy, China's Xi Jinping says ahead of BRICS summit," *CNN*, June 23, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/06/23/asia/xi-jinping-brics-summit-china-russia-sanctions-economy-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "English Translation of the Opening Remarks by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at XIV BRICS Summit 2022," Ministry of External Affairs- *Government of India*, June 23, 2022. https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35434/English_Translation_of_the_Opening_Remarks_by_Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modi_at_XIV_BRICS_Summit_2022

Brazil and South Africa at BRICS 2022

President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil at BRICS Summit 2022 suggested closer ties between businessmen from BRICS countries so that agreements could be signed for the “mutual gains” for the states involved. President Bolsonaro’s remarks largely focused on trade, entrepreneurship and infrastructure building of member states. He proposed Brazil’s admission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which will contribute in making Brazil a safe and stable hub for investment.²¹ He echoed and backed President Xi’s idea of economic integration, stating that Brazil has opened its doors to the world for business.

While the South African President Cyril Rampaphosa in his remarks focused on the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of people across the globe, lauding the launch of BRICS Vaccine R & D Centre. In his brief remarks, he focused on climate change, poverty, intra-BRICS trade and what efforts could be made to stimulate global economic recovery.²²

Conclusion

In a nutshell, it could be said that a coalition of five quite dissimilar countries have come a long way and conducted the 14th summit of this partnership demonstrating some modest yet positive outcomes from this cooperation. The joint Beijing Declaration is like a handbook of 76-points for the BRICS members, which laid down a future framework to achieve the goals of global development. Some other practical initiatives by BRICS include Contingent Reserve Arrangement for countries whose currencies are buffeted by global economic trends, New Development Bank, BRICS payment system (alternative to *SWIFT* payment system)- another mechanism to sidestep sanctions imposed by West, Digital BRICS task-force (DBTF) etc.

All in all, the overall tone of the 14th BRICS summit was more comprehensive than in the past and can be viewed as a gateway to a larger scale of global development partnership.²³ The document of BRICS 2022 reflects that difference of opinion exists between BRICS members over Russian actions in

²¹ “Bolsonaro advocates closer ties among Brics business communities,” *AgenciaBrasil*, June 22, 2022, <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/politica/noticia/2022-06/bolsonaro-advocates-closer-tiers-among-brics-business-communities>

²² “President Cyril Ramaphosa: 14th BRICS Heads of State Summit,” South African Government, June 23, 2022, <https://www.gov.za/speeches/14th-brics-heads-state-summit-23-jun-2022-0000>

²³ “China Has Urged the West To Read The New 14th BRICS Summit Declaration Carefully. This Is What It Says,” *Silk Road Briefing*, June 28, 2022, <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2022/06/28/china-has-urged-the-west-to-read-the-new-14th-brics-summit-declaration-carefully-this-is-what-it-says/>

Ukraine. This however, could prove to be problematic if the war in Ukraine continues.²⁴ While it is unlikely that BRICS will alter the global economic landscape, it can provide a strong counter-narrative to the west-centric economic system and notions of development.

²⁴ “What are the key takeaways from the 14th BRICS Summit? | Worldview with Suhasini Haidar,” | *The Hindu*, June 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyeiQwNR2kI>