

BRICS 11 - Strategic Tour de Force

By Pepe Escobar – August, 2023

Chinese President Xi Jinping defined all the major decisions embedded in the 15th BRICS summit in South Africa as “historic”. That may be seen as an understatement.

It will take time for the Global South, or Global Majority, or “Global Globe” (copyright President Lukashenko), not to mention the stunned collective West, to fully grasp the enormity of the new strategic stakes.

[President Putin](#), for his part, described the negotiations on [BRICS expansion](#) as quite difficult. By now a relatively accurate picture is emerging of what really went down on that table in Johannesburg.

India wanted 3 new members. China wanted as many as 10. A compromise was finally reached, with 6 members: Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Argentina and Ethiopia.

So from now on it's [BRICS 11](#). And that's just the beginning. Starting with the rotating Russian presidency of BRICS on January 1, 2024, more partners will be progressively included, and most certainly a new round of full members will be announced at the BRICS 11 summit in Kazan in October next year.

So we may soon progress to BRICS 20 – on the way to BRICS 40. The G7, for all practical purposes, is sliding towards oblivion.

But, first things first. At that fateful table in Johannesburg, Russia supported Egypt. China went all out for Persian Gulf magic: Iran, UAE and the Saudis. Of course: Iran-China are already deep into a strategic partnership, and Riyadh is already accepting payment for energy in yuan.

Brazil and China supported Argentina, Brazil's troubled neighbour, running the risk of having its economy fully dollarized, and also a key commodity provider to Beijing. [South Africa](#) supported Ethiopia. India, for a series of very complex reasons, was not exactly comfortable with 3 Arab/Muslim members (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt). Russia assuaged New Delhi's fears.

All of the above respects geographic principles and imprints the notion of BRICS representing the Global South. But it goes way beyond that, blending cunning strategy and no-nonsense realpolitik.

India was mollified because [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov](#), at the table in Johannesburg negotiating on behalf of President Putin, and highly respected by New Delhi, fully understood that a new, single BRICS currency is a long way away. What really matters, short and medium term, is [expanding intra-BRICS trade in their national currencies](#).

That was stressed by [New Development Bank \(NDB\) president Dilma Rousseff](#) in her report to the South African summit hosts – even as Brazilian President Lula once again emphasized the importance of setting up a work group to discuss a BRICS currency.

Lavrov understood how New Delhi is absolutely terrified of secondary sanctions by the US, in case its BRICS role gets too ambitious. Prime Minister Modi is essentially hedging between BRICS and the completely artificial imperial obsession embedded in the terminology “Indo-Pacific” – which masks renewed containment of China. The Straussian neo-con psychos in charge of US foreign policy are already furious with India buying loads of discounted Russian oil.

New Delhi’s support for a new BRICS currency would be interpreted in Washington as all-out [trade war](#) – and sanctions dementia would follow. In contrast, Saudi Arabia’s MbS doesn’t care: he’s a top energy producer, not consumer like India, and one of his priorities is to fully court his top energy client, Beijing, and pave the way for the petroyuan.

It Takes Just a Single Strategic Move

Now let’s get into the strategic stakes. For all practical purposes, in Eurasian terms, BRICS 11 is now on the way to lord over the [Arctic Sea Route](#); the International North South Transportation Corridor (INSTC); BRI’s East West Corridors; the Persian Gulf; the Red Sea; and the Suez Canal.

That blends several overland corridors with several nodes of the Maritime Silk Roads. Nearly total integration in the Heartland and the Rimland. All with just a single strategic move in the geopolitical/geoeconomic chessboard.

Much more than an increase of BRICS 11 collective GDP to 36% of the world’s total (already larger than the G7), with the group now encompassing 47% of the world’s population, the top geopolitical and geoeconomic breakthrough is how BRICS 11 is about to literally break the bank on the energy and commodities market fronts.

By incorporating Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, BRICS 11 instantly shines on as an oil and gas powerhouse. BRICS 11 now controls 39% of global oil exports; 45.9% of proven reserves; and at least 47.6% of all oil produced globally, according to InfoTEK.

With BRICS 11 possibly including [Venezuela](#), Algeria and Kazakhstan as new members as early as in 2024, it may control as much as 90% of all oil and gas traded globally.

Inevitable corollary: operations settled in local currencies [bypassing the US dollar](#). And inevitable conclusion: petrodollar in a coma. The Empire of Chaos and Plunder will lose its free lunch menu: control of global oil

prices and means to enforce “diplomacy” via a tsunami of unilateral sanctions.

Already in the horizon, direct BRICS 11-OPEC+ symbiosis is inevitable. OPEC+ is effectively run by Russia and Saudi Arabia.

A ground-shaking geoeconomic reorientation is at hand, involving everything from routes plied by global supply chains and new BRICS roads to the progressive interconnection of BRI, the Saudi Vision 2030 and massive port expansion in the UAE.

By choosing [Ethiopia](#), BRICS expands its African reach on mining, minerals and metals. Ethiopia is rich in gold, platinum, tantalum, copper, niobium and offers vast potential in oil and natural gas exploration. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, incidentally, are also involved in mining.

This all spells out fast, progressive integration of North Africa and West Asia.

How Diplomacy Goes a Long Way

The BRICS 11 Shock of the New, in the energy sphere, is a sharp historical counterpoint to the 1973 oil shock, after which Riyadh started wallowing in petrodollars. Now Saudi Arabia under MbS is operating a tectonic shift, in the process of becoming strategically aligned with Russia-China-India-Iran.

Diplomatic coup does not even begin to describe it. This is the second stage of the Russian-initiated and Chinese-finalized rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran, recently sealed in Beijing. The Russia-China strategic leadership, working patiently in synch, never lost sight of the ball.

Now compare it with collective West’s “strategies”, such as the [G7-imposed oil price cap](#). Essentially the G7 “coalition of the willing” self-imposed a price cap on Russian crude imported by sea. The result is that they had to start buying way more oil products from Global South nations which ignored the price cap and duly increased their purchase of Russian crude.

Guess who are the top two: BRICS members China and India.

After wallowing in several stages of denial, the collective West may – or may not – realize it’s a fool’s dream to attempt to “de-couple” the West-ruled part of the global economy from China, whatever is spewed out by Washington.

BRICS 11 now shows, graphically, how the “Global South/Global Majority”/“Global Globe” is more non-aligned with the West than anytime in recent history.

By the way, the president of the G77, Cuban leader Diaz-Canel, was at the BRICS summit representing the de-facto new Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):

the G77 actually incorporates no less than 134 nations. Most are African. Xi Jinping in Johannesburg met in person with the leaders of most of them.

The collective West, in panic, regards all of the above as “dangerous”. So the last refuge is, predictably, rhetorical: “de-coupling”, “de-risking”, and similar idiocies.

Yet that may also get practically dangerous. As in the first ever [trilateral summit in Camp David](#) on August 18 between the Empire and two Asian vassals, Japan and South Korea. That may be interpreted as the first move towards a military-political Asian NATO even more toxic than Quad or AUKUS, obsessed to simultaneously contain China, Russia and the DPRK.

The Collective Outstripping of the Global North

The UN lists 152 nations in the world as “developing countries”. BRICS 11 is aiming at them – as they outstrip the Global North on everything from population growth to overall contribution to global GDP growth measured by PPP.

In the past 10 years since the announcement of BRI first in Astana and then in Jakarta, Chinese financial institutions have lent nearly \$1 trillion for infrastructure connectivity projects across the [Global South](#). The upcoming BRI forum in Beijing will signal a renewed drive. That’s the BRI-BRICS symbiosis.

In the G20 last year, China was the first nation to lobby for the inclusion of the 55-member African Union (AU). That may happen at the G20 summit next month in New Delhi; in that case, Global South representation will be close to parity with the Global North.

Claims that Beijing was organizing a malign conspiracy to turn BRICS into a weapon against the G7 are infantile. Realpolitik – and geo-economic indicators – are dictating the terms, configuring the Shock of the New: the G7’s irreversible irrelevance with the rise of BRICS 11.