

BRICS EXPANSION AND THE EMERGING MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER: PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The growth of the BRICS is a major step towards the transformation of international politics and the establishment of a multipolar world order. The original BRICS group was formed to include Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, the five largest economies in the world, and has since grown to include other key economies, bringing its demographic, economic, energy and geopolitical heft. This growth has reinforced its international interests, and its advocacy for reform of international institutions, particularly from the Global South perspective. However, it has also created significant challenges in terms of institutional unity, different national agendas, economic inequality, geopolitical competition, decision-making and no shared strategic goals. The key contradiction is the fact that BRICS is a joint bloc of emerging powers while at the same time being a competitive bloc of states seeking independent national interests. This article will explore the issues with BRICS expansion and its impact on a new multipolar world order. It doesn't suggest that BRICS should be seen only as a counterbalance of the West or only as a short-term alternative to the current international system. Instead, it is a flexible alliance that allows for newly emerging and nascent powers to strive for autonomy, representation and influence in global governance. Whether it will have a future impact will rely on the ability of its members to transform their collective economic and demographic clout into lasting cooperation in institutions. Three scenarios are examined: Consolidated multipolar cooperation, Continued loose institutional coordination and fragmentation due to internal contradictions.

Keywords: BRICS, BRICS Expansion, Multipolarity, Global South, International Order, Global Governance, Emerging Powers, Liberal International Order

1. Introduction:

The world system is in a process of a radical transformation. The post-Cold War period was frequently characterized by predominance of United States and institutions associated with Western-led liberal international order. However, distribution of global economic and political power has gradually changed. The economic powerhouse of China, the growing influence of India in the global arena, the geopolitical role of Russia, economic strength of Brazil and the rise of other emerging powers have led to a rebalancing of international capabilities. One of the most

obvious institutional manifestations of this shift is the expansion of BRICS. It started out as four developing countries: Brazil, Russia, India and China, and later added South Africa and, more recently, expanded its scope even more. The significance of this development goes beyond addition of individual countries. A growing number of States from Global South are increasingly utilizing BRICS as an expanded forum to represent their interests in global economic, political, developmental and strategic issues.

The initial idea behind BRIC was mostly economic. In late 1990s, O'Neill (2001) foresaw a new group of countries- BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) that would have a significant influence on global economy. The group BRICS, however, showed that it was not just an economic grouping and can not be interpreted solely as such. It took the turn of becoming a political platform for newly emerging powers to gain influence in international institutions and autonomy in international affairs. There are arguments about the importance of BRICS expansion within context of power transition. There are arguments about the importance of BRICS expansion within the context of power transition. Finally, as Organski and Kugler (1980) stressed, the internal system of states may shift in ways that result from a shift in their relative powers, as rising powers eventually want to increase their influence relative to others, which is proportionate to their growing material strength. In this view, BRICS is a mechanism of institutionalisation whereby emerging powers demonstrate their discontent with current distributions of influence. The notion of multipolarity has also been subject to reevaluation in the light of emerging international political landscape. Waltz (1979) pointed out that capability distribution among the major states is one trait of international system. As a result, economic and political capacity of non-Western powers is affecting the nature of global politics. It is important to note that BRICS is no monolithic bloc, however. It has a diverse membership in terms of their political institutions, economic systems, strategic interests, regional priorities and relationship with the Western powers. India and China, for instance, work together in terms of BRICS as well as engaging in strategic competition. Russia aims to consolidate its role in evolving international system, while Brazil often focuses on development and environmental management, as well as multilateral diplomacy. The Gulf and other new members have their own interests which revolve around energy, investment, trade and strategic autonomy. The strength and weakness of BRICS is this diversity. The diversity of its composition means it is widely geographically represented but hard to coordinate.

While it is true that emerging powers are not a political bloc because they are not all discontent with the existing international order, they do share this dissatisfaction, as Kahler (2013) states. This article, then, addresses the conflict between the increasing “sum of parts” of BRICS and the fact that the group remains relatively internally divided. The larger the membership, greater its representation and geopolitical importance becomes, but the more difficult consensus becomes.

2. Literature Review:

Since the inception of the BRIC concept in early 2000s, the academic body's discussions on BRICS have changed significantly. Initial research on Brazil, Russia, India and China focused largely on shifts in global economic power. The BRIC economies were first theorised by O'Neill (2001) as emerging markets with growing economic power which would become a key force in the world economy. Later the economic aspect was expanded to explore BRICS as a political grouping aiming to have more influence in global governance. This change is significant to grasp the current debate around BRICS expansion and the rise of a multipolar world order. A first strand of literature looks at BRICS as an emerging coalition of rising powers. As emerging powers are striving to gain recognition and influence in international institutions, they are also trying to maintain strategic autonomy, argues Hurrell (Hurrell, 2006). In this view, cooperation between the emerging states is not necessarily political unity. Instead, it is a reflection of common concerns on distribution of power in current global institutions. Similarly, Narlikar (Narlikar, 2013) shows that emerging powers can put together coalitions with interests that remain quite different in their own countries. The scholarship should be seen as a stepping stone to understanding the expansion of BRICS despite some significant differences between its members. A second literature is devoted to BRICS and “new” global governance. With emergence of other powers, Kahler (Kahler, 2013) suggests that there are pressures for institutional change in a durable and contested global governance.

Likewise, Hale et al. (2013) characterize the current global governance as being in a state of “gridlock” as more actors and different interests are becoming more powerful and making it harder to make decisions collectively. This view is very applicable when it comes to expanding membership of BRICS, as the more people that are added, the more representative the group is, and the more difficult it becomes to coordinate. A third thread is about multi-polarity and shifting balance of international power. Waltz emphasized the distribution of capabilities as being central to the structure of international politics, in his structural realist work. (Waltz, 1979) This view sees economic and strategic emergence of China, India, Brazil, Russia and other emerging powers as a cause of a shift in overall configuration towards the multipolar. Haass (2008), however, has a more nuanced view, which posits that international politics is now more “nonpolar” than it is simply a move toward the more traditional multipolar world. This is significant because while BRICS can help diversify the distribution of power, they cannot necessarily form a unified alternative pole. The field of scholarship that is equally important is BRICS and liberal international order. Ikenberry maintains that current liberal order is institutionally resilient, but is under pressure for adaptation and reform in wake of redistributions of power. (Ikenberry, 2011) Therefore, it is important to note that BRICS should not be taken as an automatic threat to liberal international order. Instead, it calls for changes in international financial and political structures could simply be a bid to make international governance more representative. This is in contrast to other more power-transition-influenced interpretations, which focus on the competition between powers in place and the emerging powers. There are also major internal inconsistencies in BRICS, as revealed in the literature. Collective action is complicated by differences in political systems, economic structures, foreign-policy orientations and regional ambitions. India-China rivalry is especially important, as both nations aim to become more influential in international arena while playing a competitive game of strategic jockeying in Asia. Indian efforts to achieve

strategic autonomy and strive for multiple alignments with great powers are noted by Pant (Pant, 2016). Such scholarship implies that India's involvement with BRICS should not be interpreted as being aligned with the bloc led by China. Another key analytical angle is problem of collective action. When group members have variable preferences and incentives, as Olson (Olson, 1965) shows, the larger the group, the greater the problems in organizing collective action. This theoretical insight is particularly applicable to expansion of BRICS. More members can mean more resources, more legitimacy, more geographic spread, and, more problems in consensus-building. This means that larger BRICS grows, the more representative it will be of developing world, but less united as a group it may be. The study of BRICS has been becoming a topic in recent literature that focuses on agency of Global South. Instead of seeing developing countries as subjects of rules created by big powers of Western origin, this literature highlights their ability to influence international institutions, norms and economic structures. The contemporary international order is becoming pluralistic as several actors are involved in the generation and modification of international rules, says Acharya (Acharya, 2014). In BRICS, we see an extension of this. It offers emerging and developing countries an institutional forum to voice their collective demands on issues of representation, development, finance and international governance. Although there is increasing literature, there is a crucial gap in research. Current literature tends to focus on either BRICS as an economic alliance, on institutional role of BRICS in global governance or on overall shift towards multi-polarity. Much less focus has been placed on internal issues which could limit its ability to influence new multipolar world order, and dynamics between these countries and BRICS. The paradox effect of expansion, meaning that the more states join, the greater the economic and geopolitical influence of group, while the more members there are, the more the event raises the differences over national interests, foreign-policy approaches, economic models and strategic orientations, requires more

systematic investigation. This article aims to fill this gap by analyzing BRICS expansion with a combination of viewpoints of power transition, multipolarity, institutional cooperation, and collective action.

3. Historical Evolution of BRICS and Its Expansion:

Evolution of BRICS is one of the most exciting development in the world relations of contemporary time. Initially an economic idea, an investment economist's term, it soon spread into a meaningful political, economic and diplomatic alliance of newly emerging players to change the game of world governance. BRICS nations have transformed from a "dialogue among four fast-growing economies" into a meaningful forum of intergovernmental dialogue, which has become an important part of the global south, in the last 20 years. This development is in line with overall structural transformation of global system, which is characterized by relative loss of Western economic power, emergence of emerging economies and growing call for a more just and multipolar world order. Official sources of BRICS state that it is a change from an economic concept to a political and diplomatic mechanism of enhancing voice of developing countries in the governance procedures of the world. The brainchild of BRICS was in 2001, when Jim O'Neill, a Chief Economist at Goldman Sachs published an influential report named Building Better Global Economic BRICs. Brazil, Russia, India and China had population, economies and developmental paths that they needed to change twenty first century's world economy. O'Neill predicts; "in coming decade or two, world economy will be powered by expansion of Brazil, Russia, India and China. (O'Neill, 2011) When that time arrived, BRIC was just a group of economic and not political entities meant for investors. This report did trigger some general comment on changing power balance in world economy. BRIC had been born during period of globalization and liberalization of trade and rapid industrialization of China and India. These trends posed a threat to supremacy of Group of Seven

(G7) economies and underlined increasing importance of emerging markets.

Initially, acronym was employed in financial sector, but Brazilian, Russian, Indian, and Chinese governments realized that strategic advantages of institutional cooperation. The first key diplomatic success was achieved in 2006 when Foreign Ministers of four countries met on sidelines of United Nations General Assembly in New York. The leaders of BRIC met for first time at G8 Outreach Summit in 2006 and BRIC was then formally set up by regular consultations between ministers of these countries, according to Ministry of External Affairs of India. This was stage of shift from an economic to a diplomatic forum. First BRIC Summit was held in Yekaterinburg Russia on 16 June 2009, which marked a significant milestone. Yekaterinburg Declaration highlighted a number of key priorities including need for reform of international financial architecture, more representation of emerging economies, multi-polarity, respect for international law and a strengthening of multilateral cooperation. The financial crisis of 2008 accentuated political salience of BRICS, due to lack of economic governance in West, as mentioned by Oliver Stuenkel (Stuenkel, 2017). The summit revealed that, beyond economic designation, BRIC was now a political alliance pushing for a change in way global governance is set up. Second major phase of evolution of BRICS was taken place when South Africa was invited to join in 2010. South Africa officially attended third BRICS Summit in Sanya, China in April 2011. The addition of South Africa had a positive impact on group's legitimacy as it brought Africa into BRICS group, boosted political representation of developing countries, added geographical diversity and enhanced concept of South-South cooperation. South Africa's joining made BRIC a BRICS, and brought more diversity into representation of Global South, the official BRICS documents state. The term 'new global order' is being transformed into 'multi-central' or 'new centres of authority', as Amitav Acharya (2018) states. South Africa's inclusion added to BRICS' vision to unite the emerging economies of different continents. The expansion of this

institution stated the members of BRICS' growing trust in tackling problems in the international arena together. The institutionalist perspective is reflected in formation of BRICS as a multi-dimensional institution (Keohane, 1984). Since South Africa joined BRICS, BRICS began to develop institutions. Instead of being an annual encounter, BRICS increasingly began cooperating in various areas such as foreign affairs; finance; trade; health; education; agriculture; science and technology; digital governance and dialogue on security matters. The institutional growth marked increasing trust of BRICS members to solve international problems together as a group. Robert Keohane asserts that international institutions can help to promote cooperation because they can help make things less uncertain and less unpredictable. (Keohane, 1984)

This institutionalist view is seen in transformation of BRICS into a multi-dimensional institution. The most important institutional accomplishment of BRICS states was achieved at Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil in 2014. Two big institutions were set up New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). New Development Bank to be created to finance sustainable development and infrastructure in emerging economies. The CRA was established to strengthen financial stability and make a liquidity support in case of a balance-of-payments crisis. Since 2015, BRICS started their focus on reform of international governance institutions, shifting from a forum for discussions to a coalition of institutions in process of development. (Stuenkel, 2017) The reform of United Nations, reform of quota system at IMF, governance in World Bank, reform of WTO, sustainable development and digital economy and climate governance were key priorities. Weiss and Wilkinson argue that, in order to be legitimate in a world of power change, "global governance institutions must evolve." (Weiss, 2019) The biggest change in history of BRICS came during 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg (2023). For South Africa's accession, it was first time in its history that it agreed to a significant expansion. The members joined were Egypt and Ethiopia, Iran and United Arab Emirates and Indonesia.

Saudi Arabia hosted and joined in BRICS processes and its accession has been discussed. Enlargement process will be conducted as part of overall objective of BRICS to promote cooperation among Global South countries and to further increase their contribution to international governance, official sources stated. This helped to significantly enhance the demographic, economic and geopolitical strength of BRICS. "Extension of BRICS is illustrative of expanding countries' attempts to shape institutions," says Stewart Patrick (Patrick, BRICS expansion, the G20, and the global order, 2024). As one of the largest developing and emerging economies in the world, expanded BRICS is a much larger share of the world's population, global GDP (PPP), energy production and world trade.

3. Drivers of BRICS Expansion:

The rise and development of BRICS is one of the biggest geopolitical phenomena of twenty-first century. The establishment of BRICS as an economic forum was the result of the countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China and South Africa becoming a group to affect the way the world is governed with a growing group of countries expected to join. Membership of new entrants is a result of significant shifts in international politics, economics and security. BRICS expansion is not some monolithic movement, but result of numerous interlinked drivers such as a transition in international economic power, discontent with current international systems, emergence of multipolarity, increasing South-South collaboration, energy security issues, financial diversification and geopolitical rivalry. Transformation of the global economy is among the biggest reasons behind expansion of BRICS. Since the beginning of the twenty first century, the emerging economies have been experiencing fast economic growth, and thus the increase of their role in global GDP, trade, investment and industrial production. The decreasing economic power of old western powers has increased interest of new ones in increasing their influence in global governance institutions. The BRIC group of countries—Brazil, Russia, India and China and their influence on the world economy was first claimed by Jim O'Neill who

stated; “The world economy will be increasingly driven by BRIC countries—BRICs will be Brazil, Russia, India, and China.” (O'Neill, 2011) This has been forecast, which has come true. BRICS is gaining popularity in countries throughout Asia, Africa and Middle East as a forum that better represents current economic reality than institutions that were founded after Second World War. The rising power of BRICS is thus intricately bound up with a rebalancing of world economic power from Atlantic North towards Global South. General dissatisfaction with functioning and organization of international institutions such as IMF, World Bank and United Nations Security Council is another factor. It is in view of many developing countries that these institutions still reflect political reality of 1945 and not economic reality of 21st century. The right to vote, leadership and authoritativeness is still heavily skewed towards advanced Western economies. Ngaire Woods (2010) points out: “Governance systems of IFIs have not followed pace set by changing nature of global economy. Similarly, Weiss and Wilkinson argue that international institutions must adapt to changing power configurations in order to be legitimate. (Weiss, 2019) The slow shift from a unipolar international order led by United States to a multipolar order is another factor. After Cold War, US had an unmatched political, military and economic influence. That has been transformed by emergence of Chinese power, strengthening of Indian economy, strategic resurgence of Russia and presence of the Middle Powers with ever increasing influence. John J. Mearsheimer (2014) states that there are two types of powers – Great powers are trying to maximize their share of world power. (Mearsheimer, 2014) A realist view of expansion of BRICS can be interpreted as a balancing exercise, aiming at enhancing political influence of emerging powers via collective action. The 2023 Johannesburg Declaration reaffirmed group's support for a more representative and fairer international system and a renewed and reformed multilateral system. Global South's voice should be heard and amplified. BRICS expansion has also been spurred by wanting to make collective voice of Global South more resonant. Throughout history, a

significant number of developing countries were omitted from agenda of global governance, from beginning of Cold War, in various areas such as international finance, climate change, debt relief, sustainable development, trade negotiations and technology transfer. BRICS, writes Oliver Stuenkel, is most ambitious initiative by emerging powers to collectively shape global governance. (Stuenkel, 2017) Incorporation of African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries expands geographic and political diversity of BRICS and makes it more representative and legitimate forum for developing countries. One of main aims of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) bloc, according to official documents of bloc, is 'enhancement of role of countries of Global South' in international sphere. One of other major drivers is growing significance of South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is based on mutual advantage, technical cooperation, infrastructure development, technology transfer and investment cooperation and capacity development instead of traditional North-South development model. Since years, BRICS has been gradually institutionalizing cooperation in subsequent fields of activities such as ministerial meetings, academic forums, business councils, scientific cooperation, health cooperation and digital governance. In years gone by, BRICS has slowly and steadily institutionalized cooperation in the following areas of activities: ministerial meetings, academic forums, business councils, scientific cooperation, health cooperation and digital governance. Energy has started to play an increasing role in explanation of BRICS expansion. The great energy producers represent a significant boost in organization's influence in global energy markets. The addition of the countries of the extended BRICS alliance has granted them massive oil reserves, natural gas fields, key minerals and strategic sea trade routes, in addition to the potential for renewable energy. Daniel Yergin writes; “Energy continues to be a key determinant of national security and geopolitical influence.” (Yergin, 2020) BRICS' participation of key energy exporters enhances its ability to shape global energy security matters, energy transition, sustainable development and

global energy value chains. The purpose of strategic diversification is an important incentive for expansion. There has been a growing concern about usage of US dollar, too, and this has been one of reasons for expansion of BRICS. Many emerging economies are trying to increase their financial independence through use of local currency, alternate payment systems, financial cooperation in region and a diversified reserve assets. The dollar remains primary reserve currency but BRICS has been working to establish financial systems to reduce dollar's dominance. (Eichengreen, 2011) The bloc's efforts to improve financial resilience are further reflected in establishment of New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). Some states seek to be more strategic, not solely with respect to their alignment with one geopolitical group. Council on Foreign Relations points out that expansion of BRICS group is part of a growing trend of countries wanting to increase clout of Global South and also seek reforms of Western-led financial centers and less reliance on them. This has led to rise of BRICS as an alternative platform for countries to be more free in their foreign policy. The demand for financing of infrastructure in developing countries is still huge. Some of complaints against traditional lending institutions have been their extensive policy conditionalities, lengthy processes of approval and governance asymmetries. New Development Bank is an alternate source of funding for infrastructure and sustainable development. For Stuenkel, NDB is an example of the change in discussion forum of BRICS from an informal bloc to an institution building group. Another driver of growth of group of BRICS is institutional development of cooperation between the countries (Stuenkel, 2017). The increasing institutional recognition of it has encouraged many countries to become part of BRICS, recognizing it as an influential forum of global governance.

4. Problems of BRICS Expansion:

The enlargement of grouping has accentuated its global presence and influence but has also brought with it a number of political, economic,

institutional, and strategic challenges. A key issue is the political, economic, foreign policy and regional interests that differ among the member states. Some members try to resist the domination of the West and advocate a multipolar international order, while others have extensive economic and strategic ties with West, particularly with the United States and Europe. Adopting more members having different geopolitical orientations may, therefore, complicate the process of making consensus. Yet another is that there is no clear institutional organization nor common strategic vision. BRICS is also more informal than the European Union, in the sense that it is more consensus-based and flexible in its cooperation, and thus less able to reach consensus and formulate and implement a joint policy. The economic differences between members are also a challenge because of presence of developed and resource-heavy economies and developing economies. Internal conflicts between and among members such as issues with China and India and conflicting interests in Middle East may weaken unity of members. The expansion of New Development Bank and other BRICS institutions may also complicate decision-making process including criteria for membership, voting procedures, leadership, and future trajectory of New Development Bank. Lastly, it is claimed that deepening of BRICS is not necessarily correlated with a viable alternative to prevailing western-led international system. If the organization expands quickly, it may result in a larger group that is less integrated and less unified in purpose if institutional structures, economic coordination and common agenda are not strengthened. The biggest challenge for a broader BRICS is to integrate its increasing membership and economic weight into conductive collective action, institutionalization and durable cooperation.

4.1 Increasing Diversity of National Interests:

The first big issue arising from BRICS expansion is growing diversity of national interests. The initial set of BRICS had actually a big difference between them. These inequities have been growing in number with expansion. A member has various priorities when it comes to international

security, trade, energy, climate change, development, monetary policy, regional conflicts, and relations with the United States and Europe. It is therefore easier to get agreement on general concepts than on specific policies. For instance, members are commonly in consensus that there needs to be more representation of developing countries in international institutions. But they can also have different views on what right model of reform is, what United States role is needed, what are international security crises and what are sanctions and trade restrictions, as well as regional conflicts. This is a difference between normative consensus and policy consensus. In her study of emerging powers, Narlikar shows that developing countries often act together with widely shared interests but have divergent interests in specific negotiations. (Narlikar, 2013)

4.2 India-China Strategic Rivalry:

The ties between India and China are likely one of the biggest internal tensions in BRICS. Both countries are emerging powers, want to see more presence of developing nations, favour multipolarity, are members of BRICS group and want more influence in international institutions. But they also play strategically. Unresolved territorial disputes, regional influence competition, competition in Indian Ocean, competing infrastructure projects and strategic partnerships with other powers affect their relationship. This poses a basic conundrum. China and India must maintain their influence in order to have BRICS. Their strategic rivalry does not allow for in-depth integration of politics. In context of India's foreign policy, as Pant explains, country is trying to strike a balance between engagement with major powers and safeguarding its strategic autonomy. (Pant, 2016) India will not like any BRICS format, which can function as a tool for Chinese strategy.

4.3 China's Dominant Economic Position:

The other is the overwhelming economic power of China. China's economy is larger than other most of BRICS. This raises questions about how influence is spread within organisation. The main concern is whether BRICS can continue to be a

truly collective entity when one member has significantly stronger economic resources than others? This concern becomes particularly important in development finance; infrastructure; trade; technology; payment systems; and investment. It is not the issue of Chinese dominance per se, but rather an issue of China becoming so dependent on its own economic resources that it becomes too reliant on BRICS. Narlikar (2013) states that rising powers often want to lead and do not want to be led by other powers. Other BRICS countries may thus be willing to cooperate with China, but not under Chinese leadership of the whole group.

4.4 Divergent Political Systems:

The inclusion of other countries in BRICS has enhanced political pluralism. It has varying constitutional capacities, political systems, governance frameworks, human rights norms, and diplomatic traits. The variety in this leads to a high degree of difficulty in political integration. But diversity in political sphere does not have to be a blocker to cooperation. BRICS has not been conceived as a political bloc, similar to European Union. Some of its flexible features are derived from fact that members do not have to emulate each other's domestic political systems. However, political disagreements can pose an issue with regards to BRICS' ability to formulate joint statements on issues of human rights; international conflict; democracy; humanitarian intervention and international law. In process of expansion, a paradox emerges. The more countries join the BRICS group, the more legitimate it may become—at the same time, the harder collective action becomes. The more the merrier with geographical representation, larger markets, more energy resources and more diplomatic influence. But it simultaneously generates more negotiating positions; greater economic diversity; competing regional priorities; and increased coordination costs. That is, perhaps, the institutional challenge in the expansion of BRICS at its heart.

4.5 Absence of a Strong Central Institutional Structure:

The annual summits, rotating Presidency, ministerial meetings, working groups and Consent formation have proven to be the key pillars of BRICS throughout its history. It has a less sophisticated supranational system, like one of European Union. This is flexible, and makes implementation difficult. Political endorsement without binding commitments, standardized implementation, effective monitoring and sanctions for non-compliance. The more people who join the greater the institutional weakness becomes. As Hale, Held and Young (2013) contend, modern global governance often takes place through 'largely uncoordinated institutional structures'. This is reflected in BRICS – but it can prove to be a weakness of itself due to its institutional flexibility. Consensus becomes more challenging as number of members increases. Consensus is important because it safeguards notion of sovereign equality, principle of political autonomy, and trust between members. It can, however, also yield lowest-common-denominator result. It can be possible that an ambitious proposal fails due to failure of one or more members. This is a typical collective action problem. Olson (1965) showed that collective action is harder to organize in large groups because the incentives and capacities of the individual members vary. (Olson, The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups, 1965) The economies of member countries of BRICS are very distinct. Some are those related to industrial economies, to energy exporters, to agricultural exporters, to financial centres, and to commodity-dependent economies. As a consequence, their trade interests vary. An energy exporter, for instance, might focus on energy demand stability, investment in hydrocarbons and high energy prices. One important energy importing member may focus on low-cost energy, diversifying supplies and renewables. This renders it difficult to make common economic policy.

4.6. Divergent Approaches to United States:

BRICS countries, being a group of emerging nations, have no common ties with United States. The ties between Russia and Washington are extremely hostile. China plays a long game against

United States. India has strategic ties with United States and strategic independence. Brazil's traditional diplomatic tilt has been more toward pragmatism with Washington. The Gulf countries have deep ties with United States in both security and economic fields. It is not analytically valid, therefore, to talk about a BRICS anti-American bloc. As Hurrell points out, emerging powers often employ a mix of cooperation and competition and autonomy, as opposed to being exclusively oppositional to established powers. (Hurrell, 2006) Another challenge concerns international financial governance. Several members of BRICS group have been subject of heavy western sanctions and others have strong ties to western financial systems. This creates varying incentives on issue of dollar dependence, alternate payment systems, financial sanctions, reserve currencies and cross border payments. There may be members whose sole interest is greater financial diversification, as well as those whose interest is in a gradual reform. Therefore, concept of fast substitution of US dollar with an alternative one of BRICS countries is accompanied by serious practical difficulties. BRICS is not a military alliance and has no common foreign policy. It is composed of members who have their own diplomatic relations. They might concur on sovereignty; multilateralism; and a change in international institutions. However, they can have differences on certain wars and geopolitical tensions. This restricts BRICS' ability to be a single strategic player.

5. BRICS and the Emerging Multipolar World Order:

The greatest systemic impact of BRICS expansion is its role in creation of multipolar international system. The Cold War era just ended and America is in throes of an unprecedented power. But ratio of economic power has been significantly shifted. The emergence of China, India, BRIC nations, Gulf economies and other emerging powers has led to a more uneven spread of world power. Changes in distribution of capabilities have an impact on structure of international system, as emphasized by Waltz (1979). From this

perspective, BRICS is both a product and an institutional accelerator of multipolarity.

5.1. BRICS as an Expression of Global South Agency:

Furthermore, BRICS is an indicator of growing agency of Global South. Traditionally, there has been little influence of many developing countries over international financial institutions, international trade rules, technology governance and international monetary arrangements. BRICS offers a forum for emerging powers to align their views. This is especially so since Global South is not only a passive recipient of international rules. Earlier, international order was driven by the influence of Western powers; however, now it is influenced by many different actors as Acharya (Acharya, 2014) states. The full-fledged multipolarity is an integral part of economic power. The collective GDP, population, natural resources, manufacturing capacity, trade potential and energy resources of BRICS countries are significant. The grouping is thus far stronger than other groups in its bargaining power in IMF governance reform, World Bank governance, WTO negotiation, climate finance and development finance. One of the main features of the developing multipolar order is the shift of economic power to political power. While challenging the current global economic system, BRICS does not call into question globalization. It promotes increased representation, financial diversification, development finance, South-South trade and institutional reform. This implies that goal of BRICS is revisionist, not revolutionary. It aims to change allocation of power in international governance, not remove international institutions. A new order is emerging and it simply will not be managed by a single institution. Rather, many institutions are establishing footprints concurrently, such as G7, G20, BRICS, ASEAN, African Union, European Union, SCO and regional development banks. BRICS also helps to contribute to this institutional pluralism. International politics is increasingly a multipolar world with multiple centres of power and influence, as Haass put it in his discussion of a nonpolar world. BRICS is thus

one point of a much wider network of global governance. (Haass, 2008)

5.2. Energy and Strategic Power:

The enlarged BRICS has a significant energy potential. This provides the grouping with potential influence on oil markets, natural gas, transportation of energy, renewable energy and critical minerals. Power can be translated into energy influence. But it is complicated to coordinate, since members have diverse energy interests. Thus, the energy influence of collective of BRICS could be more significant than their energy strategy. The primary question is whether BRICS is a force for smashing the liberal international system or its transformation. It seems the evidence indicates that BRICS is more a reformist and revisionist alliance than an organization that wants to destroy entire system. Its members continue to participate in United Nations; IMF; World Bank; WTO; G20; international trade and global financial markets. So, by no means BRICS is against international institutions in general. Rather it challenges their power distribution.

6. BRICS and Future of Liberal International Order:

One of the central debates is whether BRICS seeks to destroy the liberal international order or reform it. The evidence suggests that BRICS is better understood as a reformist and revisionist coalition rather than an organization seeking complete systemic destruction. Its members continue to participate in United Nations; IMF; World Bank; WTO; G20; international trade; and global financial markets. Therefore, BRICS does not reject international institutions as such. Instead, it challenges their distribution of power. Liberal international order has traditionally been dominated by the Western powers. BRICS is challenging this dominance by calling for more representation, institutional reform, more power for voting and more opportunities for leadership for developing countries, as well as more recognition. This is an important test of the traditional notion of global governance. Many states reap benefits from rules and institutions of

the liberal international order, making it institutionally resilient, Ikenberry (Ikenberry, 2011) writes. Therefore, it is not likely that BRICS would just annihilate current system. A negotiated multipolar order is a potential future, therefore. In this order, Western powers have very much a seat at table, China's influence is growing, India has more strategic autonomy, middle powers have more bargaining power and the institutions of Global South are more relevant. The international system would then become more competitive and at the same time more pluralistic.

The importance of international law and multilateralism is often stressed by BRICS. But there are varying opinions among members on meaning of specific rules abroad. This presents a basic struggle between upholding international rules and trying to change institutions which interpret and enforce those rules. BRICS' stance, then, can be seen as a gesture of making international rules more representative and not a rejection of them. BRICS urges expansion of representation of developing countries in UN system. Special attention has been paid to the reform of Security Council, more African representation, and more for developing countries. Part of success of BRICS in future will depend on its ability to turn its collective diplomacy into tangible institutional change. BRICS is not against globalization per se. Rather, it prefers a globalization based on increased economic sovereignty, diversified trade, South-South investment, development-oriented finance and decreased reliance on a single economic centre. This indicates going from hegemonic globalization to more pluralistic globalization.

7. Future Scenarios:

It is unclear what will happen next with BRICS. There are three general scenarios that can be elaborated. If this optimistic scenario is true, then BRICS is able to handle its internal diversity effectively. It could establish improved institutional arrangements; more development financing; higher-level intra-BRICS trade; more common stand in international institutions; better payment system; and more scientific and technological cooperation. Then, BRICS would

be a mainstay of multipolar world order. The Global South is better represented; pressure for IMF and World Bank reform is greater; international financial governance is more diversified and cooperation between South and South is enhanced. In this model, BRICS is not a highly integrated organisation but a political and economic platform, which is flexible. Members work together where interests overlap, but remain independent where interests differ. This model would keep BRICS alive while not having to integrate politically. The basic features would be on an annual basis, selective economic cooperation, financing for development, diplomatic coordination and partial institutionalization. In this case, the BRICS countries would shape international order while not displacing the already existing institutions. The third scenario is called fragmentation and strategic paralysis'. The third scenario is 'fragmentation and strategic paralysis. A more negative one is increased internal contradictions. The possible causes are that the relationship between India and China is worsening, Chinese and Indian visions are different, the approaches to Western powers are different, economic crises, disagreement on international conflicts, over-membership and failure of reaching a consensus. In this case, BRICS may continue to be a symbol of cooperation but may be less effective for collective action. The organisations it had would remain, but it would be harder and harder to carry out major programme launches. However, possibilities are not limited in this case, as BRICS nations might become a significant element of a pluralistic world order, as in scenario BRICS may not be an alternative to entirety of international system. Rather, it may be one of a number of new sources of global governance. The future system could contain United States and its allies; China-centered economic networks; European institutions; BRICS; regional organizations and Global South institutions. This would be a multipolar order of a pluralist nature. This is not necessarily a peaceful and stable order. Competition can be created by more powerful actors. It might, however, offer more avenues for states to do strategic autonomy.

8. Conclusion:

The expansion of the BRICS is one of the significant aspects of structural shifts in international politics. The growth of its size has enhanced its demographic, economic, diplomatic, energy and geopolitical importance, and have made collective voice of emerging and developing countries more powerful. However, expansion has resulted in significant issues as well. There are reasons to believe that BRICS is struggling to become a strategic alliance, because of divergent national interests, India-China strategic competition, economic dominance by China, differences in political systems, consensus-based decision making, economic asymmetry and China-Western powers relationship. In spite of these challenges, BRICS is still relevant in the formation of a multipolar world order. It is not a system to replace current international system, but rather one to change balance of power in it. BRICS is working towards a progressive reconfiguration of governance power of the world, through institutional reform, South-South cooperation, development finance and diplomatic coordination and demands for increased representation. Both Western dominance and full replacement of existing institutions by the BRICS are therefore not likely to be a feature of future of liberal international order. What seems more likely is a negotiated multipolar order that is becoming more pluralistic and in which there are several great powers and institutional coalitions that compete and coexist. The greatest challenge, and the greatest opportunity, is BRICS' diversity. It has a wide membership and therefore has legitimate authority and global reach, but also means that there is a challenge to collective action as it is a diverse membership. BRICS cooperation could be one of the main pillars of the new world order if it does not aim at abolition of national autonomy. However, when its influence becomes more symbolic than substantive, due to internal rivalries, it can be said that it has had limited influence. How many more states join BRICS will thus be a crucial but not decisive factor in its future course; its institutional capacity, strategic direction and global impact will largely rely on

whether its members can develop these characteristics.

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