

Research article / Научная статья

BRICS Expansion: New Opportunities and Risks for the Formation of a Polycentric World

Oleg G. Karpovich  ✉, Alina V. Chesnokova 

Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ ogk@dipacademy.ru

Abstract. The expansion of BRICS, which in 2024 included countries such as Egypt, Iran, the UAE, and Ethiopia, marked a new stage in the development of the alliance, strengthening its role in the global political and economic system. In the face of increasing international tensions and the fragmentation of the global economy, BRICS has demonstrated its ability to create alternative mechanisms for cooperation based on principles of equality and mutual respect. The Kazan Summit was a historic milestone in the development of the alliance, confirming its ability to adapt to the challenges of the time and attract new partners. The accession of 13 partner countries has not only expanded the geographical and economic boundaries, but also highlighted the need for institutional reforms for more effective management and coordination. The main challenges for further expansion remain some economic and political limitations in the relations between the participating countries, a lack of institutionalization, and limited infrastructure. However, the prospects for the bloc's development include the creation of an integrated economic space, the development of settlements in national currencies, the strengthening of the role of the New Development Bank, and the formation of new international institutions that could compete with Western structures such as the WTO and the IMF. Through these steps, BRICS has the potential to become not only an economic but also a geopolitical center of the Global South, playing a key role in shaping a multipolar world order.

Keywords: BRICS, economy, politics, infrastructure, WTO, IMF, Global South, New Development Bank

For citation: Karpovich, O.G., & Chesnokova, A.V. (2025). BRICS Expansion: New Opportunities and Risks for the Formation of a Polycentric World. *BRICS+: Current Agenda*, 1(1), 34–41. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2025-1-1-34-41> EDN: ETNSME

Funding. This research received no external funding.

Informed consent statement: Not applicable.

Author contributions. All authors made an equivalent contribution to the preparation of the publication. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Article history: submitted July 1, 2025; revised July 22, 2025; accepted August 18, 2025.

Bio notes:

Oleg G. Karpovich, Grand PhD in Jurisprudence, Grand PhD in Political Sciences, Professor, Head of the Department of Public Administration, Institute of Current International Issues, Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 53/2 Ostozhenka, bldg 1, Moscow, 119021, Russian Federation.
ORCID: 0000-0001-9516-3678
E-mail: ogk@dipacademy.ru

Alina V. Chesnokova, Junior Researcher, Institute of Current International Issues, Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 53/2 Ostozhenka, bldg 1, Moscow, 119021, Russian Federation.
ORCID: 0009-0000-7490-5134
E-mail: a.chesno@mail.ru

Introduction

BRICS, established in 2009, has throughout its history remained one of the most promising platforms for cooperation among emerging economies. Following its official enlargement on January 1, 2024, through the accession of Egypt, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia, the association now comprises nine members and plays an increasingly significant role in the global political and economic system. BRICS actively attracts the attention of the Global South and other developing states, positioning itself as a center of an alternative vision of the world order, which is based on several key dimensions [1].

First, BRICS pursues the course of building a polycentric world, a goal that has become particularly relevant against the backdrop of growing tensions between major geopolitical blocs.

Second, the association fosters intergovernmental cooperation in the context of a fragmenting global economy, providing a platform for developing collective strategies.

Third, BRICS offers its member states a unique opportunity not only to strengthen their economic and political positions but also to become part of a large international

association that is gradually transforming into a kind of headquarters for the Global South.

The economic potential of BRICS was impressive from the outset: the bloc accounted for 35.7% of global GDP and over 40% of the world's population. However, following its enlargement in 2024, the attractiveness of the grouping has grown substantially. Statistics indicate that the combined GDP of BRICS now exceeds USD60 trillion, encompassing 37.4% of global GDP – significantly higher than the corresponding figure for the G7 (29.3%) [2]. The population of BRICS member states has increased to 45% of the world's total. Such figures render the association a powerful center of gravity for states seeking alternative formats of international engagement. It is therefore not surprising that around 30 countries have already expressed interest in joining the bloc or establishing closer ties with its members.

These developments, which coincided with the 2024 Kazan Summit, underscore the urgency of analyzing the political dimension of BRICS activities. The enlargement of the association raises critical questions regarding how its internal structure and decision-making mechanisms may evolve, the extent to which the new format of cooperation will prove effective, and how these changes may reshape the global balance of power.

Materials and Methods

The Political Dimension of BRICS: Challenges and Prospects

The political dimension of BRICS, which represents one of the key growth areas of the association, encompasses two directions: internal politics, related to the organizational structure and mechanisms of interaction within the group, and external politics, aimed at shaping a common position on major international issues. These two dimensions are not only interconnected but also define the success of the association under conditions of global instability.

One of the main challenges for BRICS remains the absence of clearly defined institutional foundations. The “soft” nature of the association, which distinguishes it from other international platforms, has thus far attracted new participants due to its flexibility and the absence of strict membership criteria. However, the 2024 Kazan Summit marked a new stage in the formation of BRICS' political identity. At the summit in Kazan, Russian President Vladimir Putin outlined the fundamental principles uniting the member states:

- All BRICS member states advocate equality, good-neighborly relations, and mutual respect.
- The participants of the association demonstrate a responsible attitude toward the destiny of world civilization and contribute positively to the creation of a stable and secure global environment.
- BRICS countries make a significant contribution to addressing pressing regional challenges.

These principles serve as an ideological foundation for future waves of enlargement and the consolidation of the political platform. At the same time, the lack of institutionalization leads to challenges in coordination and governance within the group. BRICS member states differ not only geographically but also in terms of their historical and cultural experience, which complicates the achievement of consensus on key issues. For instance, the stance of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who obstructed the development of cross-border settlements within

BRICS, illustrates the dependence of certain members on external factors, such as their integration into Western-centered systems like SWIFT. Such disagreements hinder the implementation of initiatives, yet they also preserve the flexibility of the association, preventing its participants from being constrained by rigid frameworks, as is the case in the European Union with its Copenhagen criteria [3].

Nevertheless, further enlargement necessitates a more centralized model of governance. The creation of a BRICS Council, envisioned as a representative structure including all member states, could become a key element of institutionalization. Such a body could oversee specialized agencies responsible for economic cooperation, the integration of new members, and joint projects within the framework of the New Development Bank (NDB). These agencies could remain narrowly specialized and functionally flexible so as not to overburden the association with bureaucratic mechanisms.

In July 2024, during the 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum, the President of Russia also noted that BRICS could in the future acquire a parliamentary structure, which undoubtedly represents one of the prospects for the association's institutional development.

Another important aspect is the need to adapt to the diverse expectations of new members. For many states, accession to BRICS is associated with access to the resources of the New Development Bank (NDB), support for infrastructure projects, and the strengthening of economic ties with regional leaders. The document adopted in Kazan, "Modalities for the BRICS Partner Country Category," establishes a formalized mechanism of expansion, enabling countries to engage with BRICS on flexible terms without becoming full members. This approach reduces the risks of overburdening the association while simultaneously reinforcing its influence in the international arena.

Thus, BRICS faces the task of striking a balance between preserving its flexibility and advancing institutional reforms. In this context, an important step could be the creation of a governing structure that would facilitate the effective integration of new members, consolidate positions, and enhance BRICS' role as both a political and economic center of the Global South.

The Trade and Economic Dimension of BRICS: From Trade to Economic Integration

From the very outset, BRICS was positioned as an economic association, and its current transformation confirms that the bloc's key role remains largely centered on trade and economic cooperation. Today, BRICS functions not only as a political platform but also as a stable trading partner that develops internal supply chains, thereby reducing dependence on volatile international markets and the pressures of traditional economic centers. The 2024 enlargement has further strengthened these positions, introducing both new opportunities and challenges.

The criteria for selecting new members demonstrate a resource-oriented approach, which is currently viewed as one of the promising avenues for the organization's expansion. The inclusion of countries with unique natural, demographic, or geopolitical resources enables BRICS to consolidate its position in global markets, diversify its economic base, and enhance its resilience to external shocks. The accession of states such as the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Saudi Arabia is justified by their status as major oil exporters, which allows the bloc to secure strong positions in the global energy market. Egypt, controlling the Suez Canal, plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade between Asia and Europe. Even the accession

of Ethiopia, which at first glance does not fully align with this approach, reflects a long-term strategy: its demographic potential and lack of a colonial legacy make the country attractive for international investment and for strengthening the bloc's presence in Africa.

The new members not only broaden the overall market but also intensify cooperation across various sectors, including agriculture, mineral extraction, technology, and logistics. According to forecasts, trade volume between current members and partners could increase by 30–40% within the next five years. Such growth is expected to stimulate the creation of new value chains, the exchange of technologies, and investments in key sectors of the economy.

Another prospect for inviting new members to BRICS lies in the potential to create new global institutions capable of competing with existing structures such as the WTO and OPEC. For example, within the bloc a counterpart to the WTO could be established to ensure fair trade conditions for member states, or a new system for managing carbon credits could be developed.

Particular attention is devoted to the creation of a unified system of cross-border settlements, an exchange-based currency infrastructure, and the use of digital financial assets. The transition to settlements in national currencies or digital assets not only reduces dependence on the U.S. dollar but also fosters the emergence of a parallel financial ecosystem capable of sustaining annual trade growth at the level of 5–7% [4]. At the same time, efforts are being intensified to ensure information security and safeguard the financial sector, which has become a crucial prerequisite for implementing the bloc's ambitious economic projects.

Thus, the enlargement of BRICS also opens up opportunities for integrating new regions. While the first wave focused on the Middle East and North Africa, the next steps may involve the accession of Southeast Asian states, as already demonstrated by the list of countries invited to join BRICS in a partner capacity. Such diversification of participants and sectors enhances the economic resilience of the association, transforming it into a powerful center of global economic activity.

Moreover, the joint efforts of BRICS member states to coordinate the supply of oil, gas, and industrial metals ensure both price stability and the necessary volume of resources for external markets. Internal trade routes not only reduce costs but also strengthen the energy security of the bloc's members. For instance, India and China – the largest consumers of oil – can establish stable supply channels within the alliance, thereby minimizing their dependence on external providers.

Thus, the trade and economic dimension of BRICS is becoming the cornerstone of its long-term strategy. From a framework of simple trade partnership, the bloc is moving toward the creation of a comprehensive economic system capable of competing with traditional centers of power on the global stage.

Results and Discussion

The Role of the 2024 Kazan Summit

The 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan marked a historic milestone in the development of the association, signifying not only quantitative growth but also a qualitative deepening of cooperation among its member states. A key outcome of the summit was the granting of partner-country status to 13 states, including Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand,

Uganda, and Vietnam. This step significantly expands the geographic and economic boundaries of the bloc, transforming it into one of the largest international platforms oriented toward the development of the Global South.

The admission of new partners raises questions about the accession mechanism and its implications for the future limits of the bloc's expansion. As an entity that combines the features of an integration alliance and a discussion platform, BRICS now faces the necessity of transitioning from general principles to concrete, institutionally anchored measures. The more structured the decision-making processes become, the more effectively the association will be able to operate under new global conditions.

To ensure sustainable enlargement, it will be essential to develop a clear mechanism for integrating partner countries, including the coordination of economic, political, and trade strategies. The Kazan Summit confirmed the necessity of such transformations, outlining steps toward the creation of more formalized institutions capable of regulating both internal and external interactions. For instance, the institutionalization of free trade agreements among BRICS states could reduce tariff barriers, facilitate mutual trade, and strengthen economic ties.

Among the key outcomes of the Kazan Summit were plans for large-scale investments in transport and logistics infrastructure, which is regarded as the foundation for economic integration. The total volume of investments in this sector could exceed USD 1.5 trillion by 2035, opening opportunities for the creation of new trade corridors and strengthening connectivity among member states.

The New Development Bank (NDB) reaffirmed its role as the bloc's key financial instrument by financing projects that contribute to infrastructure development and social integration. During the summit, measures were discussed to increase the NDB's contribution to supporting projects in partner countries, which will enhance their engagement and consolidate the economic position of BRICS.

Thus, the Kazan Summit confirmed that BRICS is moving from a discussion platform toward a fully-fledged integration association, capable of shaping the global economic and political agenda.

Conclusions: Challenges and Obstacles

Economic Challenges:

- One of the key challenges of BRICS enlargement lies in the significant economic disparities among its member states. Such imbalances may complicate the balanced development of trade and cooperation. Less developed economies face limited access to resources and technologies, which necessitates the establishment of redistribution and support mechanisms. Instruments such as subsidies, technical assistance programs, and targeted investments could help mitigate this gap.
- The problem of national currency volatility also poses risks to the stability of trade relations. The introduction of settlements in national currencies and the development of risk-hedging mechanisms may reduce dependence on fluctuations in currency markets. Preventive financial instruments, such as the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, represent an important avenue for ensuring financial stability within the bloc.

Political and Regulatory Barriers:

- The political diversity of BRICS countries complicates the alignment of foreign policy priorities and the coordination of joint actions. For instance,

differences in trade and customs regulations hinder the free movement of goods and increase business costs. Overcoming these barriers requires the harmonization of trade and customs rules, the development of unified standards, and the simplification of bureaucratic procedures.

- The creation of a unified regulatory space, including multilateral free trade agreements, would help reduce tariff barriers. This would open new opportunities for businesses and accelerate integration processes. An illustrative example is the initiative to establish a BRICS analogue of the WTO, aimed at protecting the interests of member states within the global trading system.

Infrastructure Constraints:

- Underdeveloped transport and logistics infrastructure remains one of the main obstacles to effective integration. The development of roads, ports, and railway networks — particularly in less developed member states — constitutes a priority task. Investments in infrastructure would not only facilitate logistics but also stimulate economic growth in various regions, representing an important step toward the creation of an integrated economic space.
- At the same time, attention must be paid to digital integration. The varying levels of technological development among member states complicate cooperation in areas such as financial technologies, e-commerce, and data protection. Joint investments in digital infrastructure and workforce training could help bridge this gap.

Prospects for Development:

- Creation of a unified economic space: The long-term goal of BRICS is the formation of an integrated market with the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor. The gradual reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers within the bloc could lower average tariffs from 5–10% to 0–3%, thereby strengthening intra-bloc trade.
- Settlements in national currencies and new financial instruments: The expansion of national currency use in settlements will reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar, thereby enhancing financial stability. An important step will be the development of an alternative to SWIFT and other global payment systems, as well as the consolidation of the New Development Bank as a key instrument for financing joint projects.
- Investments in strategic projects: Plans to invest more than USD 1.5 trillion in infrastructure by 2035 provide a solid foundation for transport and logistics corridors. This will enhance connectivity among member states and increase the volume of mutual trade. Such projects are of strategic importance for economic integration and for strengthening BRICS' position in the global economy.
- Formation of global alternatives: BRICS aspires to create alternatives to dominant Western institutions such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank. New multilateral structures focused on the interests of developing countries would allow BRICS states to reinforce their global influence.
- Partnership and coordination in resource sectors: The establishment of a coordination platform for managing solid minerals (coal, shale, peat, metal ores, and non-metallic minerals) is a promising direction. BRICS' control over substantial shares of global reserves of oil, gas, coal, and rare earth elements enables the bloc to shape a new model of resource governance, taking into account shifts in the technological paradigm and the transition toward green energy.
- Joint development of fintech and macroeconomic coordination: Cooperation among central banks, including the development of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement and the organization of cyber exercises, contributes to strengthening financial stability. Innovative approaches, such as a multi-currency

basket and fintech solutions, demonstrate the bloc's commitment to risk diversification and adaptation to emerging challenges.

- Development of BRICS Grain Exchange initiatives: This project is intended to contribute to the formation of fair and predictable price indicators for food products and raw materials.
- Expansion of cooperation in subsoil use: Russia has proposed broadening collaboration in the field of mineral resources, with the establishment of a BRICS platform on precious metals as a practical step in this direction.

BRICS remains a unique international association distinguished by the absence of a hegemon in its structure and governance. Unlike many traditional alliances, BRICS operates on the principles of equality and mutual respect, granting all participants equal rights and opportunities. This characteristic allows the bloc to attract the attention of an increasing number of states seeking to avoid domination by major powers and to find new formats for advancing their economic and political interests. The 2024 Kazan Summit vividly demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach, emphasizing the expansion of membership and reaffirming the commitment to the principles of multipolarity.

The political outcome of the Kazan Summit lies in the complete failure of the isolation policy toward Russia pursued by Western states. The participation of representatives from 35 countries, including 24 delegations headed by national leaders, showed that the notion of Russia's global isolation is more of a Western myth than a reality. In this context, BRICS has proven its capacity to serve as a platform for shaping an alternative agenda, enabling the Global South and other developing states to engage on equal terms in discussing and resolving global issues.

The summit also demonstrated that a multipolar world has ceased to be a mere concept and has become a reality. The expansion of BRICS to include 13 partner countries, along with interest in membership from dozens of other states, indicates that the association is becoming a center of attraction for countries that share the ideals of equality and sovereignty. This growth illustrates that the economic and political platform of BRICS is successfully adapting to new challenges and can offer a competitive alternative to Western formats, which increasingly extract a kind of geopolitical rent from their control over the system.

In the long term, BRICS will continue not only to expand its membership but also to deepen cooperation within the association, including the development of cross-border trade, investment mechanisms, and institutional structures. This will enable the bloc not only to strengthen its position in the global economy but also to play a pivotal role in shaping a new architecture of international relations based on the principles of multipolarity, mutual respect, and equality. The Kazan Summit has become a symbol of this transformation and has set the strategic course for the association's future development.

References

- [1] Audi, M., Ahmad, K., Poulin, M., & Ali, A. (2025). From globalization to innovation: Investigating the impact of R&D, internet penetration, and economic factors on digitalization in BRICS. *Research in Globalization*, 11, 100314. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2025.100314>
- [2] Tabash, M.I., Farooq, U., Al-Faryan, M.A.S., & Wong, W.-K. (2024). Effect of geopolitical risk on energy consumption policy: new empirical evidence from BRICS. *Heliyon*, 10(19), e38049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e38049>
- [3] Caldara, D., & Iacoviello, M. (2022). Measuring geopolitical risk. *American Economic Review*, 112(4), 1194–1225. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20191823>
- [4] Roscongress Foundation. (2024, November 11). *BRICS Expansion: New Format of Partnership Changes the Rules of the Global Game*. <https://roscongress.org/materials/rasshirenie-briks-novy-format-partnerstva-menyayet-pravila-globalnoy-igry/>

Расширение БРИКС: новые возможности и риски для формирования полицентричного мира

О.Г. Карпович  ✉, А.В. Чеснокова 

Финансирование. Настоящее исследование не получало внешнего финансирования.

Заявление об информированном согласии: не применимо.

Вклад авторов. Все авторы внесли равный вклад в подготовку публикации. Все авторы прочли и одобрили окончательную версию рукописи.

Конфликт интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи: поступила в редакцию 1 июля 2025 г.; отрецензирована 22 июля 2025 г.; принята к публикации 18 августа 2025 г.

Сведения об авторах:

Карпович Олег Геннадьевич, доктор юридических наук, доктор политических наук, профессор, заведующий кафедрой государственного управления, Институт актуальных международных проблем, Дипломатическая академия Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации, Российская Федерация, 119021, Москва, ул. Остоженка, д. 53/2, стр. 1.
ORCID: 0000-0001-9516-3678
E-mail: ogk@dipacademy.ru

Чеснокова Алина Витальевна, младший научный сотрудник, Институт актуальных международных проблем, Дипломатическая академия Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации, Российская Федерация, 119021, Москва, ул. Остоженка, д. 53/2, стр. 1.
ORCID: 0009-0000-7490-5134
E-mail: a.chesno@mail.ru

Дипломатическая академия МИД России, Москва, Российская Федерация
✉ ogk@dipacademy.ru

Аннотация. Расширение БРИКС, которое в 2024 г. охватило такие страны, как Египет, Иран, ОАЭ и Эфиопию, ознаменовало новый этап развития объединения, укрепив его роль в глобальной политической и экономической системе. В условиях растущей международной напряженности и фрагментации мировой экономики БРИКС демонстрирует способность формировать альтернативные механизмы взаимодействия, основанные на принципах равенства и взаимного уважения. Казанский саммит стал исторической вехой в развитии блока, подтвердив его способность адаптироваться к вызовам времени и привлекать новых партнеров. Присоединение 13 стран-партнеров не только расширило географические и экономические границы, но и обозначило необходимость институциональных реформ для более эффективного управления и координации.

Основными вызовами для дальнейшего расширения остаются некоторые экономические и политические ограничения в отношениях между странами-участницами, недостаток институционализации и ограниченная инфраструктура. Однако перспективы развития блока включают создание интегрированного экономического пространства, развитие расчетов в национальных валютах, укрепление роли Нового банка развития и формирование новых международных институтов, которые могли бы конкурировать с западными структурами, такими как ВТО и МВФ. Благодаря этим шагам БРИКС имеет потенциал стать не только экономическим, но и геополитическим центром Глобального Юга, играя ключевую роль в формировании многополярного мирового порядка.

Ключевые слова: БРИКС, экономика, политика, инфраструктура, ВТО, МВФ, Глобальный Юг, Новый банк развития

Для цитирования: *Karpovich O.G., Chesnokova A.V.* BRICS Expansion: New Opportunities and Risks for the Formation of a Polycentric World // БРИКС+: актуальная повестка. Т. 1. № 1. С. 34–41. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2025-1-1-12-17> EDN: ETNSME