BRICS, THE WEST AND THE ARAB SPRING

[**Issue Number 79 - January 2012**](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/79-d)

**BRICs, the West and the Arab Spring**
Prepared By: Professor Michel NEHME
Researcher

Representing 40 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of global GDP, the BRICs countries hold $3.93 trillion of foreign reserves, more than one-third of the global total[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1%22%20%5Co%20%22). Virtually unharmed from the recent worldwide financial crisis, these countries are poised for long-term growth. By 2015, the BRICs’ percent of world GDP is expected to grow from 14 percent to 21.6 percent and the BRICs’ percent of global exports is also expected to grow from 12.4 percent to 20.1 percent. While during this period, the U.S. portion of the world economy is expected to decrease from 25 to 22 percent[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2%22%20%5Co%20%22).

At a time where most American socioeconomic and political analysts regard the 10 years after 9/11 as the U.S.A. “foreign policy disoriented decade”, there is a new era arising in international relations, that is the rise of the BRICs countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) who are changing power dynamics in world affairs. While the U.S. maintains its superpower status, it is increasingly being challenged in the world sphere by the BRICs countries. The BRICs countries are warming up their power and are demanding a larger role in the world political decision-making processes.

American anxieties over the country's decline are tangible. The Americans have reasons to worry. Analyses of most scholars gave an impression that post 9/11 domestic and foreign events were somehow a consequence of the attacks and the response to them. In fact, major events such as the rise of the BRICs and the Arab Spring had little to do with 9/11, but instead resulted from the collapse of the Cold War order. Stating this should not mean that the 9/11 did not has its major negative impacts worldwide[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3%22%20%5Co%20%22).

During America's disoriented decade, the BRICs economies enjoyed 10 golden years. Descriptions of their power gained domestic and international recognition over and over in time, and cooperation among them has become well sourced. The five BRICs countries began to grow closer in terms of strategy and stance, so much so that they have now become a political group of considerable weight. All five countries have in fact seized the strategic opportunities for development that emerged after the end of the Cold War, when globalization and market development accelerated, and a multi-polar vs. unipolar economic world was taking shape[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The last 10 years as mentioned above offered BRICs countries a strategic opening. Some analysts say that the 9/11 dragged the United States into two wars and diverted its strategic attention, thereby allowing BRICs to pave their path to their own prosperity. This reading is misguided. The turning point was not 9/11 or America's two wars, but the crumbling of the Cold War order, which brought many more countries into the global trade system set up after the Second World War. This created economic opportunities for China and other developing economies, and their entry into global trade in turn expanded the scope for growth[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn5%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The emergent world market in the last decade has become increasingly multi-polar in nature, represented in the form of BRICs. Additionally the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) signifies the interests of Central Asian states, and is thought of as the BRICs security arm. India, Pakistan and Iran maintain an observer status on the SCO and are keen to become its full member. It is obviously important to study the connection between BRICs and the SCO, and their reaction to events in countries impacted by the Arab Spring and their position on the world’s new developments. However, this article is indicating the significance but does not spell out the details[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn6%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Understanding the positions of the emerging powers has become paramount, as they play an increasingly important role in determining the fate of existing and future conflicts. BRICs is an international political organization of leading emerging market countries. Political dialogue between the BRIC countries began in New York in September 2006, with a meeting of the BRIC foreign ministers. Four high-level meetings followed, including a full-scale meeting in Yekaterinburg, Russia, on May 16, 2008[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn7%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The BRIC countries met for their first official summit on 16 June 2009, in Yekaterinburg, Russia[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn8%22%20%5Co%20%22), with the respective leaders of Brazil, Russia, India and China, all attending[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn9%22%20%5Co%20%22). The core focus of the summit was related to improving the current global economic situation and discussing how the four countries can better work together in the future, as well as a more general push to reform financial institutions. There was also discussion surrounding how emerging markets, such as those members of BRIC, could be better involved in global affairs in the future.  In the aftermath of the summit the BRIC nations suggested that there was a need for a new global reserve currency that is 'diversified, stable and predictable'[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn10%22%20%5Co%20%22). The statement that was released stopped short of making a direct attack on the perceived dominance of the U.S.A. Dollar, something which the Russians have been critical of; however, it still led to a fall in the value of the dollar against other major currencies[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn11%22%20%5Co%20%22).

South Africa sought membership during 2010 and the process for formal admission began as early as August 2010[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn12%22%20%5Co%20%22). South Africa was officially admitted as a member nation on December 24, 2010 after being formally invited by China and the other BRIC countries to join the group. The group was renamed BRICs to reflect the now-five-nation membership[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn13%22%20%5Co%20%22), with an “S” for South Africa appended to the acronym. President Jacob Zuma attended the 2011 BRICs summit in Sanya, Hainan province, China in April 2011 as a full member[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn14%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The mainstream view in America today is that it has exaggerated the problem, overreacted to 9/11 and overestimated its historical significance. An article in Foreign Policy magazine indicated that 10 major global events that have taken place in the decade since 9/11, and America's response to 9/11 was last on the list. Number one, was “the rise of China and other BRICs,” number nine was the Arab Spring and number ten was 9/11. September 11 did not stop globalization, nor speed it up, when the Berlin Wall collapsed, it was more of a turning point in modern history than 9/11, when the World Trade Center towers collapsed. The fall of the Berlin Wall heralded the fall of a barrier that impeded globalization of the market and democratic development. And its collapse made possible a “third wave” of democratization as labeled by political scientists one of whom is Samuel Huntington.

**Fourth Wave Democracy**

Even the “fourth wave” of democratization, as some journalists have called the Arab Spring, had its origins in the end of the Cold War. The 9/11 attacks and subsequent war on terrorism helped awaken Arab people from an illusion of being dormant. Buffeted by the post-Cold War trend of more democratic government and a freer flow of information based on the IT revolution, the Arab world would have had its spring awakening sooner or later, with or without 9/11.

Support for democracy is the province of ideologists and propagandists. In the real world, elite, in all countries even in the United States, dislike of democracy is the norm. The evidence is overwhelming that democracy is supported insofar as it contributes to social and economic objectives and that is why that support was delayed in the Arab World, a conclusion reluctantly conceded by the more serious scholarship.

Elite contempt for democracy was revealed dramatically in the reaction to the Wikileaks exposures. Those that received most attention, with joyful commentary, were cables reporting that Arabs support the United States stand on Iran. The reference was to the ruling dictators. The attitudes of the public were unmentioned. The guiding principle was articulated clearly by Carnegie Endowment Middle East: “There is nothing wrong, everything is under control”. In short, if the Middle East dictators support the U.S.A in its endeavor in the Arab World, what else could matter? This sarcastic question is confounding the Foreign policy of the United States.

To mention just one case that is highly relevant today, in internal discussion in 1958, President Eisenhower expressed concern about “the campaign of hatred” against the United Sates in the Arab world, not by governments, but by the people. The National Security Council (NSC) explained that there is a perception in the Arab world that the U.S.A. supports dictatorships and blocks democracy and development so as to ensure control over the resources of the region. Furthermore, the perception has been and until recently very well taken. Pentagon studies conducted after 9/11 confirmed that the same was holding until the wave-rise of the Arab Spring for recently the picture is distorted and is now vague.

**India, Arab Spring and the U.S.A.**

Hillary Clinton America’s Secretary of State declared that, “the relationship between India and the United States will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century”. She then wonders, “What does this global leadership mean in practical terms? And what does it mean for the relationship between the two of us? Well, for starters, it means that we can work more productively together on today’s most complex global challenges. For example, to advance democratic values, the world’s oldest democracy and its largest can both support the democratic transitions taking place in the Middle East and North Africa”[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn15%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Clinton did not then raise the issues of the Arab revolutions again, spending most of her time wandering through Afghanistan and China on “a new Silk Road”. This was no passing reference though. Like the similarly absent Kashmir, Clinton keeps moving away from the very help she’s requesting for a reason: India, “the world’s largest democracy,” has flagrantly opposed the Middle East’s pro-democracy movement claims.

Few days after the visit of Clinton, Abdel Aati Al Obeidi landed in New Delhi to brief the government on the state of Libya’s war. Muammar Gaddafi’s Foreign Minister met with E. Ahamed, India’s Minister of State for External Affairs, who promptly reiterated a position that calls for, “the immediate cessation of all hostilities in Libya and supports peaceful resolution of the Libyan crisis through dialogue, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Libya”. With Libya in a full-blown war, the majority opposition doesn’t feel that dialogue alone will remove Gaddafi from power. Those advocating a “dialogue only” course of action, meaning Gaddafi's allies in Africa, Russia and China, wished to see that the regime retain its influence, however India and the BRICs members were disappointed and failed to project a good assessment of the newly international balance of power.

India and members of BRICs have been able through the process of Arab Spring rising to outstrip the United Nations Security Council’s ongoing deliberation as the U.S.A. and E.U seek a firmer resolution on Syria’s violent concentrations effort. India’s inclination to vote on the Chinese-Russian side of Libya and Syria demonstrates that Clinton wasn’t urging New Delhi to assist, so much as to politely reprove its obstruction of U.S.A. policy in these spheres. The Secretary insists, “As India takes on a larger role throughout the Asia Pacific, it does have increasing responsibilities, including the duty to speak out against violations of universal human rights”.

However Clinton’s rhetoric functioned as a time-bomb. While New Delhi finds itself on the wrong side of these revolutions and U.S.A. policy, it has landed on Washington’s good side in Yemen by opposing democratic upheaval. Interior Minister Mutahar al-Masri met with Indian ambassador Ausaf Sayeed to discuss an array of “security cooperation agreements,” supposedly dealing with piracy and terrorism. But Saba state media[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn16%22%20%5Co%20%22) passed on information that, “Al-Masri and Sayeed also reviewed several security issues, particularly in counterterrorism areas”.

What these agreements entail remains unknown; intelligence sharing, equipment and training of local security forces offer several possibilities. Regardless, Al-Masri “hailed the Indian stances supporting Yemen in all international events,” meaning that New Delhi supports Ali Abdullah Saleh’s regime and its attempts to remain in power through the Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) settlement initiative. Sayeed “praised the security efforts the ministry exerted to maintain security and stability in the country,” lumping its actions against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) with its military pressure against protesters and anti-government tribesmen in the south.

Clinton was presumably referencing Libya and Syria when she implored India to “support democratic transitions taking place in the Middle East and North Africa”. Given the close proximity between her visit and Sayeed’s maneuvering in Sana’a, perhaps New Delhi believed, to the astonishment of all strategists in the Middle East, that it was finally supporting U.S.A. policy in the Arab Spring and that is really strange stance.

**China, Arab Spring and the U.S.A.**

The portrayal of Beijing as a non-ideological pragmatist in international affairs does not correspond well with its policy and behavior toward some of the world’s internationally rejected regimes. For example, China maintained its support for Slobodan Milosevic’s regime almost until the very end of his rule. In Africa, China stuck by Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, inviting him to visit Beijing even when he was an international exile not favored by any significant state. Of Latin American leaders, the bureaucrats in Beijing seem to have taken a particular liking to Hugo Chavez of Venezuela for his negative attitude towards American foreign policy.

China’s pro-existing regimes complex was on full display during the Arab Spring. Around the fall of Hosni Mubarak’s regime in February, the official Chinese media consistently cast Egypt’s anti-Mubarak forces as mobs that would do nothing but cause chaos. The Chinese handling of the recent collapse of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime was a reflection of perplexed foreign policy. Beijing not only received a high-level representative of the doomed Gaddafi regime in June, its arms manufacturers were trying to sell $200 million worth of weapons to Gaddafi’s forces in July, in violation of a UN Security Council resolution forbidding arms sales to Libya[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn17%22%20%5Co%20%22).

What does this perplexed foreign policy tell us about Chinese role in the international system? The most obvious answer is that, instead of being non-ideological, Chinese foreign policy actually is quite ideological. As can be seen from recent events, even in situations where supporting dictatorships hurts Chinese interests, Beijing has chosen to side with these internationally opposed political figures. This ideological bias stems from the nature of China’s domestic political regime – a one-party state. The ruling Chinese Communist Party believes that its greatest ideological threat is posed by the liberal democracies in the West. Even as China benefits from the West-led international economic system, the Communist Party has never shown toleration of democratic principles forecasted by the capitalistic West[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn18%22%20%5Co%20%22).

As for China, officials have always asserted that the West should not ask what Beijing could do to Europe; but to ask what Europe has done to Beijing. The answer is not much. The bombing by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of Libya to drag the latter into democracy translated into massive losses for China, including the lightning repatriation of over 36,000 Chinese workers, and cancellation of dozens of contracts. Not to mention that NATO's war was fundamentally opposed by the BRICs, and the revolutionary trends in Libya have already threatened to sideline Brazilian, Chinese and Russian companies from the fresh Libyan resources. What Beijing really wants can be gleaned from what top adviser to China's central bank Li Daokui said at the recent World Economic Forum in Dalian, “The incremental parts of our foreign reserve holdings should be invested in physical assets”. China’s status in international politics is still regarded as being similar to that of developing countries, despite the great economic achievements it has made.

China does not have yet what it takes to assume an international leadership role or to replace any developed nation[[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn19%22%20%5Co%20%22).

In fact, only by absorbing more developing nations into the BRICs through the improving of coordination among developing countries can the organization be politically truly valuable. Beijing aims to promote cooperation among BRICs and other developing nations and intensify South-South bonds, which will definitely help stabilize the world economy and lead the way to more political power balance worldwide.

An increasing number of facts indicate that China is trying to promote mutual understanding among the emerging nations and that is why it is reluctant to express its stance clearly with regard the Arab Spring. China believes the Arab World is indispensable for the development of the new global order. A recent report by the Asian Development Bank demonstrates the characteristics of the new global economy. The report, titled “South-South Economic Links”, highlighted the great significance of intensifying economic cooperation between developing nations and that the Arab Spring has posted an obstacle in that direction[[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn20%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The report also showed that trade and investment among the developing nations in the global South, including Asia, Africa, Latin America and until recently the Middle East, has increased considerably. The GDP of these nations made up 45 percent of the global total last year, 20 percent more than in 1980. Asian nations contributed two-thirds of the huge increase. Obviously, owing to the springing up of organizations like BRICs to represent the emerging nations, the domestic economies within these nations are more vital, the links between the developed nations are closer and the economic trades among the BRICs are strengthening. What remains is a collaborated foreign policy that all BRICs members could draw from[[21]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn21%22%20%5Co%20%22).

China's economy has greatly influenced the development of the Middle East nations, especially in market oriented societies. When it comes to economic acceleration, all Middle East countries take China into consideration, even though they are also somewhat nervous about its prospective rise of political power internationally.

**Russia, Arab Spring and the West**

Permanent council members Russia and China, backed by abstentions from Brazil, India and South Africa members of BRICs, used their veto power to block a European-drafted resolution that called for an end to Syria's six-month crackdown on pro-democracy protests, hinting at sanctions if it continued. The Russian and Chinese “double veto” of a U.N. resolution condemning Syria highlights the power of BRICs which is still considered a small club of emerging-market nations.

But for a U.N. body that has been more often divided and incapable of acting during its six-decade history, some diplomats say the Syria vote is business and an attempt to lay down a land mark in the U.N. against western hegemony of U.N. decisions. Furthermore it is as usual an effort by Russia, China and their allies on the council to try to curb the United States and European endeavor of changing the geopolitical map of balance of power in the Middle East.

Western diplomats who supported the Syria resolution expressed frustration at the five “BRICs” emerging nations, which they say are increasingly obstructive. One envoy said that by abstaining from the Syria vote, Brazil, India and South Africa “have nailed their colors firmly to the fence”. It has become clear that the three powerful developing nations had provided Russia and China the cover they needed to veto the resolution without much fallout. The cost of the veto would have been higher if those three BRICs members hadn't abstained[[22]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn22%22%20%5Co%20%22).

BRICs diplomats repeatedly refer to the NATO military intervention in Libya that led to the ouster of leader Muammar Gaddafi, an operation that Russia and the other BRICs nations have harshly criticized as overstepping the Security Council mandate to protect civilians in the North African oil-producing state. BRICs is opposing sanctions and has worries that passing the European resolution against Syria could open the door to a Libya-style military intervention there.

Russia and China have consistently opposed intervention in North Korea, Sudan, Myanmar and Iran, states that have close ties to Russia or China or both and are often the target of Western governments and human rights groups. Opposition to foreign intervention and the idea that countries have a responsibility to protect civilians around the world has become a slogan for the BRICs.

The United Nations activities of 2011 did not begin that way. Early in the year, the Security Council approved several resolutions that granted unusually sweeping authorizations for the use of “all necessary measures” which inclusively meant diplomatic code for force in Libya and Ivory Coast. In both cases a long-serving leader was ousted. Although they did not actively oppose intervention in Libya and Ivory Coast, the BRICs criticized the military actions in both countries. They began blocking attempts to ease sanctions on Libya to help the anti-Gaddafi rebels and resisted a Western push to condemn the governments of Syria and Yemen[[23]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn23%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Russian and Chinese double vetoes are not common. The last time Russia and China jointly vetoed a council resolution was in 2008, when they teamed up with South Africa and voted down a resolution that would have imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe. Analysts say Russia was and still is the strongest opponent of the Syria resolution, sent a warning that Moscow will not be pushed around when it sees its interests threatened by the United States and Europe.

Russia has strong business and defense ties to Syria, which it would be reluctant to abandon. That is one of the main reasons Moscow opposes the idea of a Gaddafi-style ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Some Western diplomats played down the Syrian vote, suggesting the council divisions were essentially business as usual for a U.N. body that spent most of its 66-year history in deep paralysis because of the Cold War and the difficulties the United States and Soviet Union had placed all along[[24]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn24%22%20%5Co%20%22).

**Spill-over of Arab Spring**

The democracy uprising in the Arab world is sometimes compared to Eastern Europe in 1989, but on dubious grounds. In 1989, the democracy uprising was tolerated by the Russians, and supported by western power in accord with standard doctrine: it plainly conformed to economic and strategic objectives, and was therefore a recognized achievement, suitably placed, unlike the struggles at the same time “to defend the people's fundamental human rights” in Central America.

The democracy uprising in the Arab world has been characterized as a defeat to the barriers of fear and a display of courage, dedication, and commitment by popular forces - coinciding, unexpectedly, with a remarkable uprising of tens of thousands in support of working people and democracy in Madison, Wisconsin, and other US cities. If the course of revolt in Cairo and Madison intersected, however, they were headed in opposite directions: in Cairo toward gaining elementary rights denied by the ruling elite, in Madison towards defending rights that had been won in long and hard struggles and are now under severe attack.

Each is a case of its own building new tendencies in global society, following varied courses. There are sure to be far-reaching consequences of what is taking place both in the decaying industrial heartland of the richest and most powerful country in human history, and in what President Dwight Eisenhower called “the most strategically important area in the world” - “a remarkable source of strategic power” and “probably the richest economic prize in the world in the field of foreign investment,” in the words of the State Department in the 1940s, a prize that the United States intended to keep for itself and its allies in the unfolding New World Order of that day[[25]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn25%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Despite all the changes since, there is every reason to suppose that today's policy-makers basically adhere to the judgment of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's influential advisor A.A. Berle that control of the incomparable energy reserves of the Middle East would yield “substantial control of the world”. And correspondingly, that loss of control would threaten the project of global dominance that was clearly articulated during World War II, and that has been sustained in the face of major changes in world order since that day[[26]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn26%22%20%5Co%20%22).

In Tunisia and Egypt, the recent popular uprisings have won impressive victories. However the uprising in the Libyan occurrence witnessed a different bloody course of success, but as some scholars reported, while names have changed, the regimes remain: “A change in ruling elites and system of governance is still a distant goal”. Scholars observe internal barriers to democracy, but ignore the external ones, which as always are significant.

The U.S.A. and its Western allies are sure to do whatever they can to prevent anti-Western attitude in the Arab world. To understand why, it is only necessary to look at the studies of Arab opinion conducted by American polling agencies. Though scarcely reported, they are certainly known to planners. They reveal that by overwhelming majorities, Arabs regard the United States and Israel as the major obstacles to stability in the region. The United States is so regarded by 90 per cent of Egyptians, and in other regional states generally by over 75 per cent. If public opinion were to influence policy, the United States and because of its shallow foreign policy in the Arab region not only would not control the region, but would be expelled from it, along with its allies[[27]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn27%22%20%5Co%20%22). However, so far power is prevailing.

**BRICs and Realignment of Political Power**

Scholars of American universities point out that as an organization, the BRICs is a product of the great recession. It is noticed because of the recessionary debate about rebalancing the world economy and the international political system. As that debate evolves so will the prospectus about the BRICs, because the debate selects certain factors and attributes to place plausibility and possibilities of continuity. One of the arguments state that the BRICs cannot claim legal, historical or geographical coherence, in the way the European Union can. They are not facing a common security threat, as NATO originally did.

Shifting global consumption towards BRICs as emerging economies is being accompanied by a realignment of political power. The recent debate is about the cohesiveness of the BRICs countries as a new political/economic bloc engendering multilateralism. Those that deny international power of BRICs claim that it does not have a permanent secretariat or formal international organization and thus it is not administratively cohesive. There is disagreement amongst experts about the cohesiveness of the group ties. The BRICs countries and specially China as previously mentioned project that their partnership is about strengthening South-South ties, increasing understanding among emerging nations, and boosting regional economic development.  At the most recent summit, China agreed to import more value-added products from the other four countries, establish hi-tech projects in Russia, and extend market access and high tech projects in Brazil as well.

Out of fear this could underscore the leading role of China amongst the BRICs. A Times of India article states that BRICs…“is becoming a China-dominated forum in which Beijing can push its evolving global agenda without the overbearing presence of the United States”[[28]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn28%22%20%5Co%20%22). China’s clear dominance as the world’s second largest economy is part of the challenge. The strain amongst the BRICs countries is revealed in the various bilateral relations within the group. China and India compete against each other for global markets, while Russia and Brazil face similar problems in the global energy market. China and Brazil have a competitive trade relationship, especially for the export of manufactured goods to third markets such as the U.S.A. and Latin America. The two countries are also competing for foreign direct investment, with China attracting much more, despite Brazil’s strong institutions, democracy and market-friendly policies.

There exist strains between China and Russia. The two countries have not reached an agreement for the pricing of Russian natural gas. There is limited reciprocal investment and policy coordination between the two. Russia and China also pursue different policies towards Asian neighbors North and South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and to other regions, such as the Middle East[[29]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn29%22%20%5Co%20%22). In addition to the strained bilateral relations, there is little investment within the BRICs. South Africa, Brazil, India and Russia only invest about three percent of their resource to trade with each other. The BRICs have not allocated much funding to multilateral initiatives and for most BRICs countries, their most important trading partner is a non-BRICs countries. It is hard for the BRICs to collaborate on energy policy, as Russia and Brazil are leading suppliers, while China and India are amongst the leading consumers.

BRICs spokesmen, many as they are, always stress commitment to Multilateralism. While the BRICs have different priorities and are often competing for investment and access to market, they share a commitment to state sovereignty and to a multi-polar world in which no singular country dominates. This was and is still being manifested in the way they deal with Arab Spring and recently in Syria. Fyodor Lukyanov, chief editor of the magazine “Russia in Global Affairs,” writes that the whole process of global decision-making needs to be revised. Lukyanov notes that Russia, along with the other BRICs, believe that the West should not dominate world affairs[[30]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn30%22%20%5Co%20%22).

**Conclusion**

Encouraging the rise of new centers of power is a hope by most developing nations, but the process must be seen as part of a complete revision of how global decisions are made rather than the rise of one group at the expense of another. The West’s response to every single BRICs summit scarcely varies and in the same token the response of BRICs to Western calls for actions whether in the United Nations Security council or on bilateral actions is very much alike. The Arab Spring issues have magnified this controversial standing among the West and BRICs. The West’s first reaction is to dismiss BRICs as an artificial organization with no future, because its member countries have practically nothing in common. The second reaction is anxiety, because the policies of its members are in opposition to those of the United States. These two reactions contradict each other, because if BRICs is a ghost organization, what does the West fear?[[31]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn31%22%20%5Co%20%22).

What has particularly raised concern among Western observers in the wake of the world financial crisis is Russia’s presence in the BRICs. What can a commodity-oriented state with uncertain prospects for modernization contribute to a group of future economic and political leaders? Experts on Russian politics say that it is a dry out country. Its rate of growth is far below that of China and India. More importantly, Russia faces problems that are totally different from those in other BRICs countries. In spite of their impressive growth rates, they remain developing countries; Russia is a developed country that has lived through an unprecedented period of decline and degradation and is now trying to bounce back. The challenges the BRICs members face are therefore similar in some ways and different in others.

Any arguments against Russia would be more legitimate if the discussion was exclusively about economics. But obviously the member countries see the BRICs structure above all in political terms. This reflects the objective need for a more diverse and less Western-oriented world order. The institutions that have been functioning since the Cold War are unable to provide answers to the multiplying problems of the 21st century. New arrangements have not taken shape, and the countries that are unhappy about the situation are not trying so much to find a replacement for them as to find ways around them.

A multi-polar world needs formats other than those that catered to a bipolar world. It is not an accident that BRICs declarations occasionally question the legitimacy of the existing system. However, it is less likely that any reform will be implemented in the UN Security Council, because the current permanent members are not going to share their privileges with anyone, and this applies to Russia and China, which are BRICs members. All five BRICs countries feel that the West has virtually monopolized global discourse. That is not only at odds with the economic and even political alignment of forces, but prevents new decisions from being made. All five members are aware that their attempts to increase their international weight and influence exclusively within the existing structures are doomed. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are seeking to bolster their negotiating position during the time when a future world system is being created. Special attention and for the sake of clarification attention is given to the Arab World where the economy of all Arab Spring countries is going through a critical period as these countries transitions to proclaimed democracy. While the shift from authoritarianism is certainly welcome by the West, it has inevitably incited instability unknown to Egypt and others for the past thirty five years. The implementation of economic reform amid this uncertainty is particularly challenging as political demands take precedence. The state attempted several times to revive the Egyptian economy since the Infitah, or “open door,” policy initiated by President Anwar Sadat in the mid-1970s. Successive, though unsuccessful, reform programs during the 1990s contributed to the pervasive poverty that served as a central driver of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and persists today. Other nonoil exporting Arab countries fit the same category. Past experiences can provide useful lessons for what to avoid in the future, even if they are unable to impart what exactly should be done. BRICs in part have had a small share in the economic welfare of the Middle East. It has an ambitious interest in seeing that this share is to increase and that is why BRICs is standing against all attempts by the West to exploit the Arab Spring to its own advantage. The fact that BRICs represent parts of the world that are becoming more and more significant lends more weight to their aspirations[[32]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn32%22%20%5Co%20%22).

For Russia, which has been searching for a foreign policy identity since 1991, the BRICs idea has come in very handy. It would be hard to find another format that would encourage a non-Western orientation in foreign policy, remind the world of Russia’s global ambitions, and stress the country’s similarity to states that are world leaders in terms of economic growth. An additional benefit is the group’s principle of non-confrontation; all the BRICs members strongly deny that their organization is directed against anyone.

But whatever the talk and even the thinking in the BRICs capitals, it stands to reason that increasing the influence of one group of countries can only happen at the expense of diminishing Western influence. Certainly that is not necessarily bad if it happens in an evolutionary way. The objective reality is that the world needs a new international balance of power, and this calls for encouraging the rise of new centers. If one group seeks to retain its privileges and other groups quietly work to erode them, the world will definitely experience a new upheaval. The world order that would emerge from it would depend on the outcome of that upheaval. What is certain in this process is that the developing nations are always paying the price.

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**مجموعة "بريكس" أو "البرازيل وروسيا والهند والصين وجنوب أفريقيا" والربيع العربي**

إنها "الموجة الرابعة" من التحول نحو الديمقراطية، هذه هي التسمية التي أطلقها بعض الصحافيين على "الربيع العربي" ومردّ الأمر يعود إلى نهاية "الحرب الباردة". ساعدت هجمات 11 أيلول/سبتمبر والحرب على الإرهاب التي أعقبتها على إيقاظ الشعوب العربية من وهم كونها في طور السبات. وبفضل الميل الذي أعقب فترة الحرب الباردة إلى التحول نحو حكومات أكثر ديمقراطية وتدفق أكثر حرية للمعلومات بناءً على ثورة تكنولوجيا المعلومات كان ربيع العالم العربي سيزهر عاجلاً أم آجلاً سواء حصلت هجمات 11 أيلول/سبتمبر أم لم تحصل.
في العالم الحقيقي يشكل النفور من الديمقراطية قاعدة السلوك بين صفوف النخب في العالم وحتى في داخل الولايات المتحدة الأميركية. والدليل على ذلك غامر ويتجلى في التأييد الكامل للديمقراطية بقدر ما أنها تساهم في تحقيق الأهداف الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، ولهذا السبب فقد تأجّل هذا التأييد في العالم العربي. وكان هذا هو الاستنتاج الذي اعترفت به على مضض مؤسسات الدراسات الأكثر جدية.
يترافق انتقال الثقل الاستهلاكي العالمي نحو مجموعة "بريكس" أو الاقتصادات الناشئة مع إعادة رسم اصطفافات القوى السياسية. ويتمحور النقاش الحالي حول مدى تماسك بلدان مجموعة "بريكس" ككتلة سسياسية-إقتصادية جديدة تعد بالتعددية.
ويزعم من ينكرون القوة العالمية لـ"بريكس" بأنه ليس لديها أية أمانة عامة دائمة أو منظمة دولية رسمية وبالتالي فهي ليست متماسكة إدارياً.
ويشير عدد متزايد من الوقائع بأن "بريكس" تحاول تعزيز التفاهم المتبادل بين الدول الناشئة ولهذا السبب فهي تتردد في التعبير عن موقفها بوضوح في ما يتعلق بالربيع العربي. وترى مجموعة "بريكس" بأن العالم العربي لا غنى عنه في تطوير النظام العالمي الجديد. ويظهر تقرير حديث للبنك الآسيوي للتنمية خصائص الاقتصاد العالمي الجديد. التقرير الذي صدر بعنوان "العلاقات الاقتصادية بين الجنوب والجنوب" سلّط الضوء على الأهمية الكبرى لتعزيز التعاون الاقتصادي بين الدول الناشئة وأشار بأن الربيع العربي قد وضع عقبة أمام هذا الهدف.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/brics-west-and-arab-spring#sthash.nhr0DZSX.dpuf