**BRICS Expansion**

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BRICS is in expansion mode. Countries are queuing in to join the group. South Africa being the host of the 15th Summit received 40 applications from different continents. Countries are showing strong intent to join the group. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa announced that BRICS have decided to expand and have invited six countries to join the group. The question is, why so many developing countries are enthusiastic to join the group? What is special about the group? The analysis of groups indicates that there are four major factors, which make BRICS attractive for developing countries.

First, BRICS is emerging as the strong voice of the Global South at the global level. It is an open secret that the Southern voices were missing from global governance. A few Western countries have captured the whole global governance system. If you name any global institute; you will find that it is dominated by Western countries. The dominance is so widespread that even South-related global institutions are stuffed with Western elite. It is irritating the Global South, and that’s why Southern countries were urging for reforms in the global system. Unfortunately, West was not giving any head. BRICS has started to break the monopoly, which encourages developing countries to be part of the group. They consider it will compel Western countries to listen to their concerns and bring the required reforms.

Second, BRICS is the hub of present and future economic growth. IMF recently estimated that more than 55 per cent of growth will come from the BRICS countries. The segregation of data shows that China will be leading the global with a 34.9 per cent contribution. China will be followed by India with a 15.2 contribution. China is also the second biggest economy and major trade partner of the world. China has also acquired a prominent place in the field of technology, rather China is now a leading player in many technologies including 5-G, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, space, etc.

Besides, BRICS is also one of the biggest consumer markets with a total population of 3.21 billion. It is also a very diverse market, which presents multiple opportunities to the world. The recent expansion and inclusion of Argentina, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates will further strengthen the credentials of the group. Moreover, now BRICS is home to 6 leading oil producers of the world. It will help to enhance energy security among the members of the group.

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Third, it is a counterweight to Western hegemony. Developing countries are tired and fed up with the hegemonic attitude of the West. They feel they have been degraded to second-grade citizens of the global community by Western countries. They want to get out of this situation, and they think BRICS will be an effective group that can protect the developing countries from Western hegemony. Thus, they want to join the group.

Fourth, there is a debate going on about the importance of a new global currency and financial system. Developing countries have been in search of new currency for a long time. They have realized over the time that USA and the West have weaponized the US dollar and Western financial system. The USA and West are using the existing financial system and currency to punish countries and mint maximum benefit for themselves. The USA and the West also used the system to extract political and security interests. It is quite disturbing for the developing countries. Thus, they were working to come up with a new currency. Against this backdrop, BRICS’s aspiration to look for alternative currency and financial systems attracts developing countries. Global South considers it a required step and shield the developing countries from the negative impacts of the Western system.

These factors are also attractive for Pakistan. That’s why Pakistan wants to join BRICS. China also supports the inclusion of Pakistan. China generally supports expansion, rather than advocating for the expansion of BRICS. China deems it necessary to strengthen the voice of the Global South. It is also required to ensure inclusivity and equal representation. The expansion will help BRICS to become a true representative of the Global South. In the case of Pakistan, China considers that Pakistan is one of the most important countries of the Global South, thus Pakistan must be part of BRICS. China is also pursuing other countries to support the inclusion of Pakistan, along with other countries. Pakistan has shown interest and wanted to join previous meetings as an outsider.

Unfortunately, India is opposing the expansion of BRICS. Although, at Johannesburg, India agreed to invite six countries to join the group, India is still putting resistance. India feels that the exclusivity of BRICS will boost the status of India and will put India in a better place to negotiate a better deal with the West. It seems to be the continuity of Indian policy to keep the West happy and intact its presence in Southern bodies. It is not a good omen for the BRICS.

In the case of Pakistan, India is the staunch opponent. India does not want Pakistan to be a member of the group. Many people believe that the insecurity of India drives India to resist the inclusion of Pakistan. Moreover, India is not ready to forgo its rivalry with Pakistan. That’s why India does not want Pakistan to be on the table. Besides, it is also part of Indian policy to isolate Pakistan at the global stage. Although, the policy is not working but still India sticking with the policy.

Howbeit, India should try to comprehend that with this attitude India cannot become a global player, let alone a global power. For a global role, India needs to be more open, friendly, and cooperative and build cooperation.

In conclusion, expansion is an irreversible process. It is expected it will continue, which will further strengthen the status of BRICS as a Southern voice. The expansion will also create new economic opportunities, which will help Southern countries move on the path of sustainable development and achieve the goal of prosperity. However, it is advised that BRICS should not act as G-7 or Western countries. It should not coerce other countries and should not act as an anti-multilateral group. It should act as a more open, fair, and inclusive group. It should promote fair and open multilateralism.

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