**The BRICS debate**

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The coming 2023 BRICS summit in South Africa is witnessing contrasting dynamics unfold. On the one hand, aspiring candidates are displaying an unprecedented level of eagerness to join the prestigious bloc. But, on the other hand, the Western media is actively amplifying purported divergences among the existing members, stirring speculation about potential ramifications for the organization’s unity and future progress, and speculating how these discordances might erode the organization’s unity and future development.

These insinuations have not gone uncontested, and the concerned member countries have swiftly rejected such propaganda. The summit’s imminent convening has placed BRICS in the spotlight. Western countries are increasingly seeing the grouping as an economic and geopolitical challenge, leading them to exacerbate perceived rifts between the BRICS states. But the BRICS bloc stands firm against such external attempts to sow seeds of disunity, reaffirming its commitment to collective progress and cooperation.

Diverse viewpoints are natural in any multilateral organization committed to democratizing international relations. Yet, the attempts by certain Western elites to hyperbolize dissent within BRICS and undermine its significance reveal their envy and apprehension. These hawkish elements are driven by a desire to maintain US hegemony and a unipolar world order, threatened by cooperation and growth among non-Western nations and emerging economies. The rising influence of BRICS poses a formidable challenge to the West’s dominance, leaving them uneasy and eager to tarnish the cooperative spirit flourishing beyond their realm.

As the 2023 BRICS summit draws near, certain Western media outlets have posted articles to fuel a narrative of disunity within the bloc. Proliferating reports that emphasize so-called ‘problems’ and purported dissent among BRICS members are becoming increasingly common. One such recent article speculates about how Brazil and India are resisting the inclusion of new member countries for their own reasons, stirring anticipation for a potential debate over admission criteria during the forthcoming summit.

But both Brazil and India have promptly rebutted this “assumption” without wasting any time. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da expressed great anticipation for the event and stressed the vital significance of including countries like Saudi Arabia, Argentina, and other major developing nations in the bloc. He further said that such a move would not only strengthen BRICS but also challenge the West’s narrative and its efforts to undermine the alliance.

Similarly, the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted reports claiming India’s resistance to BRICS expansion. Shri Arindam Bagchi, India’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, dismissed ‘baseless’ media speculation on India’s opposition to BRICS expansion as untrue. He said in his briefing to the media, “We have seen some baseless speculations...that India has reservations against [BRICS] expansion. This is simply not true.”

BRICS, increasingly seen as a counterbalance to Western-dominated multilateral institutions, unnerves the US due to its distinct economic and political framework. This fear, however, exposes the US’s underlying vulnerability. BRICS was never intended to challenge the West; instead, it offers a diverse array of options for all nations and seeks to enhance the global economic order. Western attempts to suppress BRICS signal its lack of confidence in competing arenas.

Embracing multipolarity and accommodating emerging economies can lead to a more equitable and cooperative world order, but the US must overcome its fixation on preserving economic hegemony to truly embrace this vision. The soaring momentum behind BRICS is fueled by a shared mission to forge a more equitable global economic order.

The essence of BRICS lies in unity, and while India may harbour concerns about China’s economic clout, the addition of new members can allay any apprehensions. China’s economy outdoes that of all other BRICS members combined, yet it firmly rejects any notions of dominance. On the contrary, China passionately champions the expansion of BRICS to embrace more developing countries, amplifying their representation on the world stage. This stance speaks to China’s commitment to fostering a fair and inclusive international landscape.

China has consistently asserted that specific frictions, like the border dispute, should not impede overall bilateral ties or hinder cooperation within BRICS. India’s varying stances on certain matters do not have any impact on the cohesion of BRICS. While India may hold distinct perspectives on certain matters, they are outweighed by the strong BRICS partnership. The ongoing Sino-Indian frictions are unlikely to exert substantial sway over the trajectory of BRICS cooperation. Their vigilance against Western attempts to sow discord among them further solidifies the bloc’s inherent unity. Embracing cooperation and shared goals, the BRICS countries have consistently demonstrated a steadfast commitment to rising above individual dissensions for the greater good of the alliance. This collective resilience showcases the strength of the bloc and affirms its determination to chart its own course on the global stage, independent of external influences.

The essence of BRICS lies not in antagonism toward the US or the West, but in fostering diverse global options and enhancing the world economic framework. Rather than wielding dominance to protect its economic supremacy, the US should recognize that its critiques of BRICS reveal a lack of assurance in its own endeavours. The collective aims of BRICS revolve around constructive cooperation, not confrontation. For BRICS, notably China and India, a pragmatic approach is imperative in managing disparities, sidestepping bilateral contentions within the multilateral framework.

It is crucial to thwart any endeavours at sowing divisions amidst vigilance. Simultaneously, other BRICS members must rally behind the cooperative spirit, championing both the unity of BRICS and the empowerment of developing countries. Promoting common interests should be prioritized over bilateral disagreement. Currently, as a substantial group of nations are actively seeking BRICS membership, underscoring the value of this alliance, the Western media’s efforts to undermine this coalition are expected to be ineffective.

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