

Expanding **BRICS** and the New Alignments



Report of the Roundtable
on
Expanding BRICS and the New Alignments

NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS)

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- Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan, Director General, NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS).

Moderator

- Mr. Amir Yaqub, Director, Operations & Collaboration, NIPS.

Discussants

- His Excellency Alfredo Leoni, Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan.
- His Excellency Danila V. Ganich, Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan.
- His Excellency Mthuthuzeli Madikiza, High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan.
- His Excellency Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan.
- Lieutenant General (Retd) Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), Former Caretaker Defence Minister of Pakistan & Former Defence Secretary of Pakistan.
- Major General (Retd) Syed Khaild Amir Jaffery HI(M), President, Centre for South Asian and International Studies (CSAIS).
- Major General (Retd) Faiz Banghash HI(M), Senior Security Analyst.
- Dr. Shoaib Suddle, Former Inspector General, Sindh and Balochistan.
- Ambassador (Retd) Fauzia Nasreen, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Poland, Italy and Nepal.
- Ambassador (Retd) Masood Khalid, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China.
- Dr. Amir Azam Khan, Principal, School of Chemical and Materials Engineering (SCME).

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About the Speakers

Dr. Asad Majeed Khan

Dr. Khan is a career Pakistan Foreign Service officer. He had been nominated as the 31st foreign secretary of Pakistan. During his diplomatic career spanning over 34 years, Ambassador Khan has held several key diplomatic assignments. He served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Pakistan's Ambassador to Japan; Additional Foreign Secretary (Americas); Director General (Americas); Director General (West Asia); Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington DC; Additional Secretary (Foreign Affairs) at the President's Secretariat; Director General (United Nations); and Minister-Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations. Dr. Khan holds a doctorate in International Economic and Business Law from Kyushu University, Japan and has been a resource person at several academic institutions.



Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan

Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan is the Director General, NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS). He has been the Special Secretary Finance/Director General, Debt Office and Economic Adviser, Ministry of Finance, Islamabad, and the Spokesperson of the Government of Pakistan on Economic Issues (1998-2009). Dr. Khan holds a



Ph.D. degree in Economics from The Johns Hopkins University, USA. He has published 9 books and more than 170 articles in national and

international journals of economic science. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the field of economics and public policy, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has conferred the award of Sitar-i-Imtiaz to Dr. Khan in 2005. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has conferred on him the ECO Excellence Award 2010 for his outstanding contribution in the field of economics. The Chairman of the International Finance Forum (IFF) – Beijing, a former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, has appointed Dr. Khan as Member of the Academic Committee of the IFF. Dr. Khan has been appointed as Member, Advisory Council of the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), the first Pakistani ever to be nominated to the prestigious body.

1. Executive Summary

The NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) organized the high-level roundtable on “Expanding BRICS and the New Alignments” on Wednesday, October 4, 2023. Moderated by Mr. Amir Yaqub, Director, NIPS, the roundtable saw multinational participation consisting of senior diplomats, academics, veteran state officials, think tank experts, scholars, and students.

Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, Pakistan’s former foreign secretary, delivered the keynote address on the impact of the expansion of BRICS on prevailing global geopolitics. He highlighted that BRICS represents 41 percent of the world population, 24 percent of the world GDP, and more than 16 percent share of the world trade. He stated that BRICS is both undergoing the process of institutionalization and strategically extending its relations outward, thereby solidifying its position as a prominent global player. He pointed out that the aggressive weaponization of the financial system by the dominant powers, coupled with the deleterious effects of bloc mentality, has accelerated the growth of BRICS as a plurilateral platform.

The former foreign secretary remarked that BRICS expansion represents an alternative to unipolarity with a strong preference for inclusive multilateralism. He underscored that while the case for Pakistan’s closer engagement with BRICS is indeed strong, the country could expect unique challenges in terms of the question of the membership of the global group.

In the roundtable’s second keynote on the expansion of BRICS and the new alignments, Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Khan, DG NIPS, proposed the concept of “New Geoeconomics” to understand the transformative impact of global groups like BRICS on the world system together with other types of contemporary counterhegemonic alignments. Dr. Khan

argued that the new geoeconomics can be viewed as a global response to the geopolitical upheavals of the last two decades. This response, he said, is based on the efforts of emerging states to resist traditional power politics by means of the new forms of connectivity cooperation, trade partnerships, and financial integration.

The maturing of BRICS, Dr. Khan opined, has coincided with the relative decline of the traditional great-power blocs like G7. He also pointed out that several G20 member states are also desirous of BRICS membership. In his view, the journey of this particular form of multilateralism from BRIC to BRICS to BRICs Plus will be a fascinating saga of a robust vehicle of new geoeconomics from the perspective of the global South.

An extensive discussion session followed the keynotes in which various foreign dignitaries expressed their thoughts.

The Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan, H.E. Alfredo Leoni, highlighted the dynamic nature of the world today, emphasizing the emergence of new alignments in the global landscape. He stated that while the future remains uncertain, a new global paradigm is certain to emerge.

The Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan, H.E. Danila V. Ganich, emphasized that BRICS nations prefer cooperation over conflict. He welcomed any potential participation in BRICS, emphasizing the significance of collaboration in the contemporary international community. He commended Pakistan for its robust diplomatic presence on the global stage. Ambassador Ganich mentioned that BRICS remains focused on cooperative solutions to global challenges, striving to create a more inclusive and interconnected world.

The High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan, H.E. Mthuthuzeli Madikiza, stressed that the quest for freedom for a nation goes beyond politics and encompasses economic independence. In this context, he highlighted the potential of BRICS expansion to serve as a catalyst for

achieving economic independence and prosperity among its constituent members.

The Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, emphasized the need for balance in international relations based on national interests and advocated for inclusivity, equality, and representation within the global system. He said that BRICS, with its commitment to cooperation and inclusivity, is well-positioned to champion these ideals.

Prominent among notable attendees of the roundtable were Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd), Dr. Shoaib Suddle, Ambassador Masood Khalid (Retd), Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen (Retd), and Dr. Zamaraeva Natalia.



2. Ambassador (Retd) Dr. Asad Majeed Khan

Impact of BRICS' Expansion on the Prevalent Geopolitics



Dr. Asad Majeed Khan's keynote delved into the historical background and formation of BRICS, emphasizing its economic and developmental roots. The objectives of BRICS were elucidated, with a focus on promoting economic growth, fostering social inclusivity, and expanding its sphere of influence. The speaker also discussed the economic significance of BRICS, its recent expansion, its institutional mechanisms, and the question of Pakistan as a potential future member.

Historical Background

The term "BRIC", coined by a Goldman Sachs economist in 2001,¹ referred to the fast-growing economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and

¹ Clea D. Bourne, "Thought Leadership as a Trust Strategy in Global Markets: Goldman Sachs' Promotion of the 'BRICs' in the Marketplace of Ideas," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 27, no. 4 (2015): 323.

China around the turn of the millennium. The aforementioned concept garnered attention and recognition across diverse spheres like economics, finance, academia, and media, ultimately resulting in its integration into the foreign policy priorities of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.² The four nations held their first meeting in 2006 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.³ As a result, the group was officially established in September 2006 during the inaugural BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York. The first formal summit of BRIC was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia in June 2009.⁴ The group became "BRICS" when South Africa joined the club in late 2010. Since its inception, BRICS continues to evoke the immense promise of growth and development of the non-Western world. Its twin sagas of resurgence and emergence have also gained tremendous global traction in the years since.

BRICS' Objectives and Goals

BRICS aims to foster communication and collaboration among its members, advance the shared interests of emerging market economies and developing nations, and create a harmonious global community characterized by enduring peace and shared prosperity. Major goals of BRICS encompass all-round high-quality economic growth, poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and employment generation, innovation, technological development, human capital formation, connectivity

² Jyrki Kakonen, "Global change: BRICS and the pluralist world order," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 5, no.6 (2019): 416.

³ Mihika Chatterjee and Ikuno Naka, "Twenty years of BRICS: political and economic transformations through the lens of land," *Oxford Development Studies*, 50, no.1 (2022): 5.

⁴ Chris Buckley, "much-trumped BRIC summit ends quietly," *Reuters*, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bric-summit-idUSTRE55G20B20090617>.

Accessed October 10,2023.

promotion, multilateral coordination, the promotion of settlements in national currencies, and others.⁵

Economic Significance of BRICS

BRICS possesses sizeable global economic heft. From 2003 to 2007, the economic expansion of the four pioneer BRICS countries constituted around 65 percent of the overall rise in global GDP.⁶ Currently, BRICS accounts for around 41 percent of the global population, about 24 percent of the world's GDP, and about 20 percent of world exports with China alone making up 15 percent, positioning the group as a global economic powerhouse.^{7, 8} In terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), the GDP of the BRICS nations collectively has already surpassed that of the United States.⁹ The GDP (PPP) of BRICS comprises 32.1 percent of the global GDP, while that of G7 nations comprises 29.9 percent.¹⁰ Even in 2010, the total nominal GDP of the five member nations was

⁵ "What is BRICS, which countries want to join and why," *Reuters*, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/what-is-brics-who-are-its-members-2023-08-21/>. Accessed October 10,2023.

⁶ Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira, "BRICS working together to reinvigorate globalization," *China daily*, 2022, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202207/06/WS62c4e288a310fd2b29e6a9fa.html>. Accessed October 10,2023.

⁷ Aly Verjay et al., "what BRICS expansion means for the bloc's founding members," *United States institute of peace*, 2023, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/what-brics-expansion-means-blocs-founding-members>. Accessed October 10,2023.

⁸ Adrian du Toit, "BRICS' Expansion: A Journey of a Thousand Miles," *Alliance Bernstein*, (September 1, 2023), <https://www.alliancebernstein.com/corporate/en/insights/investment-insights/brics-expansion-a-journey-of-a-thousand-miles.html#:~:text=BRICS'%20Trading%20Power,with%20China%20accounting%20for%2015%25>. Accessed November 1, 2023.

⁹ "The Real Message From The BRICS Summit," *Geo-political Intelligence Services*, 2023, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/brics-summit/>. Accessed October 10,2023.

¹⁰ Felix Richter, "the rise of the BRICS," *Statista*, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/chart/30638/brics-and-g7-share-of-global-gdp/>. Accessed October 10,2023.

US\$ 11 trillion, representing at that time 18 percent of the global GDP.¹¹ While BRICS is gathering steam, the global economic influence of G7 is on the decline.¹²

Enhanced Coverage and Confidence

Initially pertaining to problems related to global economy and finance, BRICS has gradually broadened its purview to embrace a diverse range of themes. Its scope has significantly expanded over the years to include energy, climate change, development, trade and investment, manufacturing, minerals processing, agricultural cooperation, science and technology (S&T), financial cooperation, connectivity, ICT cooperation, outer space exploration, migration, health, and other related topics. This thematic diversity underscores BRICS' acknowledgment of the interconnected nature of global issues.¹³ BRICS has also demonstrated a growing involvement in global affairs including informed and balanced position on different conflicts, crises, as well as international norms and conventions.

The character of BRICS' summit declarations and statements has also undergone a clear change. Originally marked by appeals and calls to development nations to contemplate specific actions, its summit declarations have become more self-assured. BRICS' official statements now articulate the formal views and positions of the group from the vantage point of influence and strength.

¹¹"Learn about BRICS," Institute for applied economic research, 2014, <https://www.ipea.gov.br/forumbrics/en/learn-about-brics.html>. Accessed October 10,2023.

¹² "BRICS and G7 countries' share of the world's total gross domestic product (GDP) in purchasing power parity (PPP) from 2000 to 2023," Statista, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1412425/gdp-ppp-share-world-gdp-g7-brics/>. Accessed October 10,2023.

¹³ BRICS investment report," United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2023, https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diae2023d1_en.pdf. Accessed October 11,2023.

Reshaping Global Governance

BRICS and Multilateralism

The admission of six new members (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) during the fifteenth BRICS summit held on August 2023 represents a noteworthy development that exhibited a strong commitment of the founding members toward the modernization and revitalization of the group.¹⁴ BRICS' expansion strengthens the trend of multilateralism in the contemporary interstate system. The promotion of open regionalism by BRICS demonstrates its correct assessment of the dominant mood in global politics consisting of the preference of nations for multisided alignment, plurilateral coordination, and multisided cooperation in global politics.

It may be too soon to predict right now whether an enlarged BRICS would succeed in forging consensus and a unitary approach like G7 on key global issues, considering the diverse viewpoints of BRICS member nations on a range of important global economic and political problems. However, the first signs of a credible multilateral alternative to the current global economic order may have become visible with the expansion of the group.

The diversity of BRICS membership in fact is one of the most positive aspects of the group because it must be stressed that multilateralism alone is not an end in itself. It is rather a potent means to stability and peace. In this regard, what is important is the goal of any given multilateral approach, institution, or group. It should be remembered that during the bipolar days of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, both the U.S. and the Soviet blocs were formally

¹⁴ Julian Borger, "BRICS to more than double with admissions of six new countries," *The guardian*, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/aug/24/five-brics-nations-announce-admission-of-six-new-countries-to-bloc>. Accessed October 10,2023.

multilateral but were guided more or less exclusively by the threat perceptions of the most powerful nation in each bloc. Substantive multilateralism can thrive when nations on either side of any political, economic, or ideological divide can sit together and talk through difficult questions and accommodate the positions of other countries. It flourishes when powerful nations are sensitive not only to their own concerns and challenges but also to those of small and medium-sized nations. Therefore, forums like BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and ASEAN represent the promise of substantive multilateralism in the contemporary interstate system.

Nonetheless, the expansion of the group may create challenges related to the difficulty of parlaying different national positions on an any given geopolitical and economic issue into a consensus-based group position. The possibility that this may not happen on certain issues like that of great-power competition should be kept in mind. In such cases, member nations would be more inclined to act in accordance with their threat perceptions external to the group and become part of coalitions and groupings the orientation of which may run counter to BRICS. Such a situation would pose significant challenge for group cohesion and effectiveness.

The Changing Landscape of Global Coalition-Building

In addition to increasing the diversity of positions within the group itself, the expansion of BRICS would create increased opportunities for coordination and cooperation with different global economic and political groups. From a systemic perspective, the expansion of BRICS is as momentous as perhaps the establishment of the G20 in September 1999 in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis.

Just as the G20 provided the platform for facilitating broader discussions and consultations on global economic and financial

policies among key advanced and emerging economies of the world,¹⁵ so the expansion of BRICS bids fair to promote international cooperation for global economic growth and global financial stability as well as enhance the participation of emerging economies, newly industrialized nations, and medium-sized states in global governance.¹⁶

It should be mentioned that the inaugural meeting of BRICS duly recognized the significance of the G20 and called for the full implementation of its agreements.

It is noteworthy that the five original members of BRICS are also members of the G20. This overlap should ideally produce greater coordination and consultation between G20 and BRICS in future.

What remains to be seen is if this potential for inter-organizational coordination in the global governance system expressed in the form of common goals and shared objectives would be meaningfully realized in the form of involving major multilateral and regional organizations in ensuring global and regional peace, stability, and development.

The evolution of BRICS has emphasized the importance of deepening institution-building in the context of providing greater space for emerging nations to play a constructive and leading part in global governance and globalization through initiating dialogue with regional countries on a diverse range of topics on the sidelines of BRICS summits wherever and whenever they are held.¹⁷

¹⁵ "What is the G20 and that was achieved at the Delhi summit," *BBC*, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-48776664>. Accessed October 10, 2023.

¹⁶ "What does the G7 do?" Council on Foreign Affairs, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-does-g7-do>. Accessed October 10, 2023.

¹⁷ Wang Youming, "the BRICS mechanism: growing in maturity," *China institute of international studies*, 2018, https://www.ciis.org.cn/english/ESEARCHPROJECTS/Articles/202007/t20200715_3608.html. Accessed October 11, 2023.

Focus on Institution-Building

BRICS has established a series of institutional mechanisms for enhanced internal and external coordination, collaboration, and cooperation. The most notable has been New Development Bank (NDB) whose establishment in 2015 around the same time as the founding of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a significant milestone in the progression of BRICS.¹⁸ NDB was established with an initial authorized capital of US\$100 billion and the initial subscribed capital of US\$50 billion.¹⁹ The latter was subscribed equally by the five founding members. It is worth noting that the membership of the NDB has grown to encompass Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Uruguay.²⁰

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the NDB is accessible to all countries that are members of the United Nations. It is noteworthy that NDB is aligned with the visions of new global development like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This exemplifies the shared aspiration of BRICS and other developing nations to promote alternative avenues for development to countries that have traditionally depended on major international financial institutions.

The establishment of NDB was driven by the objective of mobilizing financial resources to support infrastructure and sustainable development initiatives in both BRICS nations and other emerging and

¹⁸ Hongying Wang, "The New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: China's Ambiguous Approach to Global Financial Governance," *Development and Change* 50, no.1 (2019): 221.

¹⁹ Stephany Griffith-Jones, "Financing global development: the BRICS new development bank," German institute of development and sustainability, 2015, https://www.idos-research.de/uploads/media/BP_13.2015.pdf. Accessed October 11, 2023.

²⁰ "BRICS development bank admits UAE, Bangladesh, Uruguay as new members," *Reuters*, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/brics-development-bank-admits-uae-bangladesh-uruguay-new-members-2021-09-02/>. Accessed October 11, 2023.

developing economies, The enthusiasm with which the emergence of these alternate arrangements has been met in the developing world might be attributed to the perceptions of developing nations that the realities of major global financial institutions have become decreasingly aligned with the demands of new development and growth in the 21st century.²¹

Other institutional mechanisms include the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism, BRICS Business Council, BRICS Business Forum, and BRICS Think Tanks Council.²² The primary objective of these institutions is to cultivate constructive discourse, facilitate economic cooperation, and advance policy harmonization among the member nations of BRICS as well as build bridges to other countries together with regional and global organizations.

Moreover, BRICS has undertaken an examination of the feasibility of using domestic currencies for cross-border transactions among member nations. This development signifies a shift toward enhanced financial self-reliance and reduced dependence on current major reserve currencies. In general, BRICS' framework demonstrates its dedication to establishing a wide range of choices for nations in search of alternate means for financing and promoting growth, thereby fostering a more diverse and inclusive global economic and financial environment.

²¹ "Global economic prospects: slow growth policy challenges," world bank group flagship report, 2020, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/4aa0b654ecdbaf8302d5901aaada3fbf-0350012021/related/Global-Economic-Prospect-2020.pdf>. Accessed October 11, 2023.

²² "Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs / International Relations," International relations and cooperation, 2021, <https://www.dirco.gov.za/meeting-of-the-brics-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-international-relations/>. Accessed October 11, 2023.

Pakistan's Membership*

Based on the significance of its position in the international system, the country's contributions to regional and global peace and stability, and its active participation in the regional and global organizations of which it is a part, the case for Pakistan's membership of BRICS is indeed strong. The country's leadership and policymakers would have to consider a host of aspects related to any future decision to apply for the group's membership. The country will have to fulfill the due process in light of the group's membership requirements. However, Pakistan would need to deftly navigate the diversity of interests represented in the group. However, this is something that the time-tested diplomacy of the country will be able to manage with aplomb.



* The news regarding Pakistan's application for the BRICS' membership had not surfaced at the time of the organization of this roundtable or the writing of this report.

3. Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan

Expanding BRICS and the New Alignments



Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan's keynote address explored the concept of geoeconomics, emphasizing its two forms: defensive and offensive. He discussed China's rise, the 'New Geoeconomics' paradigm, and the shift of the focus from geopolitical to geoeconomic competition in the world system. Dr. Khan also highlighted the role of regional blocs, the expansion of BRICS, impacting global governance reforms, the trend of using local currencies in bilateral trade agreements and the ongoing shift in global trade.

Geoeconomics: Interstate Politics by Other Means

The concept of geoeconomics, introduced by the prominent American military strategist, Edward Luttwak, in 1990,²³ highlights the complex relationship between politics and economics in the realm of

²³ Marianne Schneider-Petsinger "geo-economics explained," Chatham House, 2016. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2016/12/geo-economics-explained>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

international relations, emphasizing that the major realm of global geopolitical struggle in the post-Cold War era has shifted to the arena of economic competition among countries.

Geoeconomics utilizes a wide range of instruments and tools to attain key political goals. These versatile tools encompass the utilization of economic and financial sanctions, the formation of regional trading blocs, the deployment of international financial institutions, the manipulation of monetary and financial policies, control over energy and commodity prices, and the deliberate promotion of big infrastructure projects. Each of these components assumes a crucial role in defining the dynamic geopolitical landscape by exploiting economic power as a potent catalyst for political influence and strategic maneuvering.

The present juncture in the contemporary international system is characterized by the shift away from conventional geopolitical rivalry toward a growing focus on geoeconomics as an arena of struggle among nations. This shift is embodied typically in the U.S.-China trade war and the ongoing economic competition between them as the dominant form of their great-power struggle.

Types of Geoeconomics

Geoeconomics can be classified into two distinct categories i.e., defensive geoeconomics and offensive geoeconomics.

Defensive geoeconomics is a strategic approach that prioritizes the protection of a nation's economic interests, the management of external economic rivalry, and the promotion of the welfare of its population aimed at mitigating economic hazards. Offensive geoeconomics refers to the strategic utilization of economic strength by states with the objective of acquiring additional resources, expanding market influence, and undermining the economic stability of rivals. The

concept of offensive geoeconomics involves the deliberate expansion of economic influence and economic competition with rivals.

Geoeconomics: Redefining Conflict

In the context of geoeconomic paradigm, economic instruments have assumed a prominent role, significantly transforming the character of contemporary conflicts. The use of economic pressure and sanctions as strategic tools is increasingly surpassing conventional military tactics to attain political objectives. The emergence of rival economic blocs is altering the geopolitical terrain. Similarly, as the Saudi-Russian oil price war demonstrates, the prevalence of currency and trade conflicts is overshadowing geographical issues.

Global institutions such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are evolving to become coercive tools of geoeconomic warfare. This pattern is indicative of a broader shift in which geoeconomics is increasingly taking the lead over traditional geopolitics in international affairs.

Regional Economic Integration and Its Dividends

In addition, the establishment of regional economic cooperation among states serves a twofold objective i.e., promoting trade among member nations and safeguarding against global competition through the implementation of both tariff and non-tariff barriers. The organization of cooperation usually takes place through the formation of regional blocs such as ASEAN, the European Union, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), NAFTA, MERCOSUR, and SAARC.

These blocs have emerged as prominent actors and are considered to be the forums for states to collaborate and consult on economic and financial matters along with politics and security, exerting a substantial impact on regional dynamics.

Regional economic integration is not a new phenomenon and has achieved advancements particularly after the approval of the Uruguay Round (1986-1994) of General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) negotiations,²⁴ resulting in the creation not only of the World Trade Organization (WTO) but also that of various regional economic integration initiatives in different parts of the world.

In the arena of geoeconomic competition, the regional blocs hold the capacity to shield member nations from the adverse impacts of global economic downturns through the facilitation of enhanced intra-regional trade.

New Geoeconomics: China's Economic Ascent and the U.S. Reaction

The onset of the 21st century witnessed a notable shift in global geopolitics, characterized by the acknowledgment by the United States of China's rise to become a global economic powerhouse. By the fiscal year 2010-2011, China surpassed Japan to become the second-largest economy in the world.²⁵ During the period (2001-2011) during which the United States was involved in various military engagements in the 'Greater Middle East', China increased economic cooperation with Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific.

The rise of China has laid the foundation for the emergence of what can be characterized as the new geoeconomics paradigm, which has significantly transformed international environment. The following

²⁴ "United Nations. Economic and Social Council; United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa (1994-10). The Uruguay round agreement and its possible impact on regional economic integration in Africa in the light of the Abuja treaty: a preliminary assessment (agriculture)," UN economic commission for Africa, 1994. <https://hdl.handle.net/10855/6699>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

²⁵ Justin McCurry and Julia Kollewe, "China overtakes Japan as world's second-largest economy," *The Guardian*, 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/feb/14/china-second-largest-economy>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

events and developments can be considered the key milestones in the evolution of the new geoeconomics.

U.S. Pivot to Asia (2011)

There has been a notable transformation in the U.S. foreign policy distinguished by the deliberate reorientation aimed at the containment of China. The initiation of this transformative phase commenced in 2011, when the United States introduced its Pivot Asia Policy, which served as the fundamental element of its foreign policy strategy to counter China's rise.²⁶

Belt and Road Initiative (2013)

Subsequently, in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)²⁷ as the major global infrastructure development program that garnered support from 152 countries and 32 international organizations. BRI presented a compelling growth and development alternative for nations globally, made more attractive by China's traditional non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. BRI made the traditional great powers more insecure, considering the zero-sum worldview of these powers.

Double Containment Policy (2014)

In 2014, the geopolitical environment underwent another dramatic shift as Russia annexed Crimea, resulting in the imposition on Russia of massive economic sanctions by the Western nations.²⁸ The

²⁶ Naofumi Hashimoto, "The US "Pivot" to the Asia-Pacific and US Middle East Policy: Towards an integrated Approach," *Middle East Institute*, 2013. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/us-pivot-asia-pacific-and-us-middle-east-policy-towards-integrated-approach>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

²⁷ James McBride, Noah Berman, and Andrew Chatzky, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," *Council on foreign relations*, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

²⁸ Steven Lee Myers and Ellen Barry, "Putin Reclaims Crimea for Russia and Bitterly Denounces the West.," *The New York Times*, 2014.

imposition of these sanctions was a component of the U.S. strategy of double containment, which sought to limit the influence of both China and Russia in order to preserve its global preeminence.

Trade and Technology War (2016)

In 2016, the United States embarked on trade and technology war, adopting a combination of defensive and offensive geoeconomic tactics against China. The ongoing technology restrictions on China are a potent geoeconomic tool to undermine China's technological development, so critical for its overall growth and development. As the trade and technology war progressed, the development of the BRI faced mounting opposition from the traditional great powers.

Counter-BRI Western Initiatives

BRI continued to progress despite Western opposition. This opposition, among other things, has materialized in the rival plans of the G7 like the 2019 Blue Dot Network, 2021 Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative and the 2022 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII). B3W claims to answer to the US\$ 40 trillion infrastructure needs of the developing world by 2035 and purports to promote quality infrastructure development.²⁹ Covid pandemic further heightened the distrust between the United States and China and contributed to the trend of economic decoupling.

Russia's Special Military Operation (2022)

On February 24, 2022, Russia commenced the Special Military Operation in Ukraine, leading to the imposition of substantial economic and financial sanctions by NATO, the European Union, and

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/19/world/europe/ukraine.html>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

²⁹ Conor M. Savoy and Shannon McKeown, "Opportunities for Increased Multilateral Engagement with B3W," *Center for strategic and international studies*, 2022. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/opportunities-increased-multilateral-engagement-b3w>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

the United States.³⁰ These sanctions have not only caused significant disruption in numerous countries across the globe but have also expedited the de-dollarization process.³¹ The conflict is anticipated to have enduring implications for global economic and financial arrangements.

Toolkit of New Geoeconomics

In the rapidly changing global environment, regional blocs and organizations are increasingly acting as instruments of new geoeconomics. The growing rivalry between the United States and China, coupled with the U.S. double containment strategy against both China and Russia have led to the deployment of various economic and political tools. On the one hand, these instruments consist of the G-7, G-20, and the European Union (EU) and on the other hand, they encompass the BRI, BRICS and its expansion, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Furthermore, the recently concluded G-20 Summit has announced an additional strategic measure aimed at countering the BRI, which is referred to as the India-Middle East-Europe Trade Corridor (IMEC).³² The modern world is observing a complex competition for power and strategic advantage in which geoeconomic tools are used to accumulate geopolitical influence.

³⁰ Girish Luthra, "The Russia-Ukraine conflict and sanctions: an assessment of the economic and political impacts," *Observer Research Foundation*, 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-russia-ukraine-conflict-and-sanctions/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

³¹ Naomi Rovnick and Libby George, "The end of King Dollar? The forces at play in de-dollarisation," *Reuters*, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/currencies/end-king-dollar-forces-play-de-dollarisation-2023-05-25/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

³² Rashi Mehmood, "The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): Courting the BRI," *Pakistan Today*, 2023. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/10/15/the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor-imec-courting-the-bri/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

BRICS: Beginning and Evolution

The evolution of BRICS, starting with its original composition of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and then the inclusion later of South Africa, presents a compelling case for South-South cooperation using the power of geoeconomics to promote new forms of inter-regional connectivity and integration. The word "BRIC" was originally introduced by Jim O'Neill, an economist affiliated with Goldman Sachs, in the year 2001. O'Neill made a confident assertion regarding the future dominance of the original four member nations of BRICS in the global economy by the year 2050.³³

In the year 2010, South Africa became a member of the group, hence leading to its transformation into BRICS. It started, and remained, as an informal group. By 2015, it seemed that BRICS may not be an attractive destination for investment due to the slowdown in the economies of the member nations. However, greater efforts were made to forge greater integration and institution-building in the years following the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea.

As of now, BRICS' nations rank among the world's fastest-growing economies. There is also a strong desire among the member nations to promote reform in the institutions of global governance. This will bring BRICS into some form of opposition at a future date against the West which is committed to the preservation of the global status-quo. There is a growing belief among BRICS' members that economic power will bring political influence. This belief is arguably motivating the ongoing development of the group and drives the priority given by the leaders of BRICS to work together and protect their perceived economic and financial interests.

³³ Raul Gouvea and Margarida Gutierrez, "BRICS Plus": A New Global Economic Paradigm in the Making?" *Modern Economy* 14, no. 5 (2023): 539.

During the Johannesburg Summit in August 2023, the BRICS nations successfully reached a significant milestone.³⁴ Six new members (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) came aboard, leading some to refer to the expanded group as BRICS-11.³⁵ While the BRICS-5 accounted for 42 percent of the world's population (3.24 billion), over 27 percent of the World GDP (US\$ 28 trillion), and combined reserves of US\$ 5.1 trillion, BRICS-11 accounts for 46 percent share of the worldwide population (3.631 billion) and 30 percent share of the global GDP (US\$ 31.103 trillion).³⁶

During the preliminary stage, a total of 23 nations submitted their applications for membership in BRICS. Out of these, six countries have received invitations to join, while additional potential candidates are currently awaiting evaluation during the second phase, which is taking place under the leadership of Brazil's Presidency.³⁷ It is worth noting that a significant proportion of the G-20, specifically 7 out of the 20 nations, are currently members of BRICS. This membership distribution highlights the existence of two distinct geoeconomic factions inside the G-20.

With its expansion, BRICS has surpassed the G7 in GDP terms. The group is all set to experience further expansion, as the Foreign Minister of South Africa has observed that more than 40 nations have

³⁴ Russia in Global Affairs, "The BRICS Summit 2023: Seeking an Alternate World Order?" 2023. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/brics-summit-2023/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

³⁵ Peter C. Earle, "The Rise of BRICS-11," *American institute for economic research*, 2023. <https://www.aier.org/article/the-rise-of-brics-11/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

³⁶ Business Standard, "Brics+6 to control 30% of global GDP, 46% population: Research paper," 2023. https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/brics-6-to-control-30-of-global-gdp-46-population-research-paper-123082901065_1.html. Accessed October 14, 2023.

³⁷ Sumayya Ismail, "Saudi Arabia, Iran among six nations invited to join BRICS," *Aljazeera*, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/8/24/saudi-arabia-iran-to-join-brics-as-grouping-admits-six-new-members>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

demonstrated interest in becoming members of BRICS.³⁸ BRICS has, therefore, established itself as a formidable geoeconomic instrument of geoeconomics, representing the global South led by China.

As the BRICS alliance undergoes further development, the prospect of extending invitations to more nations in subsequent phases becomes progressively more feasible. Possible contenders for the subsequent stage of BRICS enlargement encompass Indonesia, Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal, Morocco, Vietnam, Belarus, Bangladesh, and Venezuela.

BRICS: Changing Economic and Financial Governance

The BRICS countries have expressed support for reforms in global governance institutions such as IMF, World Bank, and WTO. However, the implementation of these reforms has faced constraints due to the influence exerted by the G7 nations. In response, BRICS established the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2015 as a multilateral development bank with the primary objective of mobilizing resources to support infrastructure and sustainable development initiatives in BRICS member countries as well as for emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs) along with the establishment of an emergency financial institution known as the Contingent Reserve Agreement (CRA).³⁹ The bank's initial authorized capital is established at a value of \$100 billion, and its headquarters are situated in the city of Shanghai.⁴⁰

³⁸ Tim Cocks, "More than 40 nations interested in joining BRICS, South Africa says," *Reuters*, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/more-than-40-nations-interested-joining-brics-south-africa-2023-07-20/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

³⁹ Sergio Gusmao Suchodolski and Julien Marcel Demeulemeester, "The BRICS Coming of Age and the New Development Bank," *Global Policy* 9, no. 4 (2018): 578. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/indias-g20-is-a-first-test-for-the-new-brics-142872>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

⁴⁰ Kanaya Raja, "BRICS announce NDB and CRA for \$100 billion each," *Third World Network Berhad*, 2014. <https://www.twn.my/title2/twe/2014/574/6.htm>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

Unlike various conditions imposed by other international financial institutions, NDB does not impose any condition. The bank also promotes the use of the currencies of the members to reduce the dependence on the U.S. dollar. NDB has issued bonds in South African Rand and will be issuing bonds in the Indian Rupee. This is part of promoting the use of local currency in lending. However, 70 percent loan will continue to be disbursed in U.S. dollar.

NDB's sister institution, the Contingent Reserve Agreement (CRA), works like the IMF but without the latter's conditionalities, lending money to members and other EMDCs. This institution-building indicates the gradual shift of economic and political power toward emerging markets and developing countries. BRICS' members are also trying to move away from the U.S. dollar for their trade settlements coupled with reduced investment in U.S. Treasury bonds. In 2023 alone, BRICS offloaded US\$ 123 billion in US Treasury bonds,⁴¹ of which China alone offloaded US\$ 117.4 billion worth of U.S. government debt.⁴²

Russia and China are increasingly engaged in commerce using their own domestic currencies. In July 2023, an agreement was established between India and the UAE to facilitate trade payments in domestic currencies, with India's top refiner making payment in rupee for the purchase of one million barrels of oil from the UAE. It is also noteworthy that the bilateral trade between India and the UAE has reached US\$ 84.5 billion during the fiscal year 2022.⁴³

⁴¹ Vinod Dsouza, "BRICS Countries Dump \$123 Billion in U.S. Treasuries in 2023," *Watcher Guru*, 2023. <https://watcher.guru/news/brics-countries-dump-123-billion-in-u-s-treasuries-in-2023>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

⁴² Jamie McGeever, "China slips away from Treasuries but sticks with dollar bonds," *Reuters*, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/china-slips-away-treasuries-sticks-with-dollar-bonds-2023-02-22/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

⁴³ Arpan Chaturvedi, "India ties up with UAE to settle trade in rupees," *Reuters*, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/india-ties-up-with-uae-settle-trade-rupees-2023-07-15/>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

Moreover, India has also engaged in similar agreements with 18 countries, facilitating the exchange of goods and services using the Indian rupee as the designated currency. Some of these countries are Sri Lanka, Singapore, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and some African countries. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's Finance Minister indicated during the Davos summit in January 2023 that they are open to trading oil in currencies other than the US dollar.⁴⁴ BRICS' members are also working toward a new reserve currency. However, this is something that may transpire in the medium to long run.

Pakistan in New Geoeconomics

In the present scenario, Pakistan will have to find its place in this new geoeconomic paradigm as well as the changing geostrategic environment. This calls for rapid and massive improvements in its political economy.

⁴⁴ Abeer Abu Omar and Manus Cranny, "Saudi Arabia Says Open to Settling Trade in Other Currencies," *Bloomberg*, 2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-17/saudi-arabia-open-to-talks-on-trade-in-currencies-besides-dollar#xj4y7vzkg>. Accessed October 14, 2023.

4. H.E. Alfredo Leoni The Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan



The Brazilian Ambassador discussed the shift in the dynamics of the international system and emphasized the need for adaptability in an ever-changing world.

Excellency Alfredo Leoni, the Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan, reflected on the current international environment and the emerging multipolar world. He suggested that perhaps there was a new emergent reality — one that was characterized by a different kind of global alignment. He also referred to dominant trends of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization constituted the dominant trend of global growth and development in the aftermath of World War 2.

The Brazilian envoy noted that new global growth and development had to be deeply responsive to the deepest aspiration of the global publics and citizenry and equitably distribute the fruits of

development to all regions of the world. The Ambassador noted that perhaps the world really was on the cusp of transformational change. He opined that no one knew for certain what the new paradigm would be like but everyone could perceive that the old way of doing things was hardly sustainable in a world of new expectations and greater global awareness. He remarked that only time would tell whether multipolarity would be more conducive to the resolution of humanity's challenges.

His concern appeared to be whether, in this time of change, states should adhere to traditional models and ways or seek to learn from history. The Ambassador specially stressed adaptiveness to be a critical skill for people and states in a time of big change.

5. H.E. Danila V. Ganich

The Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan



The Russian Ambassador emphasized BRICS' dedication to cooperation and highlighted the need for inclusive multilateralism in global politics.

Excellency Danila Ganich, the Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan, highlighting the non-confrontational character of BRICS, emphasizing that BRICS prioritizes cooperation over conflict or even competition. He remarked that Pakistan's participation in BRICS would be welcomed by the group. He took the opportunity to praise the excellence of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts for regional and global peace and progress.

The Ambassador proceeded to evaluate BRICS' expansion in the context of emerging trends in world politics. He noted the growing trend of the preference of countries for greater autonomy, independence, and multi-directional alignment in global politics. He observed that many developing countries were tired of traditional bloc

politics that had characterized global politics in the past, where countries were often pressured to choose between different camps. He stated that countries now desire being part of coalitions that helped them deal successfully with long-standing challenges of growth, development, and peace.

He made a crucial distinction asserting that the desire of BRICS was not inherently anti-Western but driven by legitimate aspirations for equality and equity. He frankly explained that principles advocated by BRICS that included free trade were not dissimilar from those espoused by the West, but what mattered was their practical implementation and the seriousness of any regional or global alliance, group, or coalition for peace and stability.

The Russian Ambassador stressed that BRICS was not an exclusive bloc. Rather, it was based on the concept of inclusive multilateralism, which, he believed, would resonate with developing countries.

6. H.E. Mthuthuzeli Madikiza

The High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan



The South African High Commissioner reflected on the predominantly political nature of current developments, drawing lessons from anti-colonial struggles and underlining the importance of equality and independence of the states in BRICS' expansion.

Excellency Mthuthuzeli Madikiza, the High Commissioner of South Africa, acknowledging the comments made by the Brazilian Ambassador, pondered whether the current developments were primarily economic or political in nature and emphasized the need to draw lessons from anti-colonial struggles.

Drawing from historical experiences, particularly those of African leaders in the context of the African Union, High Commissioner asserted that freedom movements tend to evolve more rapidly and coherently on the political front than on the economic one. He emphasized that strategies and tactics were shaped around this

concept, noting that the world's consciousness and global political dynamics often outpace economic developments.

The High Commissioner framed BRICS' expansion as a natural progression, driven by the evolving aspirations for growth, prosperity, and development of many countries, particularly China. He likened it to the effects of the quest for national independence in terms of the growth of political participation, regional integration, and modernization drive in the developing world in the wake of the post-World War 2 global wave of decolonization.

The High Commissioner emphasized that BRICS' expansion was not antagonistic but represented a desire for equal treatment of countries on the international stage. He characterized it as a positive movement that could help states realize their national interests peacefully without friction and conflict in the interstate system.

7. H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula

The Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan



The Ambassador of Ethiopia highlighted the role of education in addressing global challenges and encouraged countries to embrace inclusivity and cooperation as a means to adapt to the evolving international order.

Excellency, Jemal Beker Abdula, the Ambassador of Ethiopia acknowledged the significance of educational institutions, universities, and think tank in generating ideas that impact the world and commended NIPS for bringing together members of various BRICS countries together with the policy research and think tank community in Islamabad.

The Ambassador emphasized that the world was undergoing constant change and globalization, and it was essential for states to adapt to this evolving international order. He saw the expansion of BRICS as part of the latest round of globalization. He noted that BRICS had become innovative and had aptly responded to global shifts by concentrating

its efforts in the geoeconomic domain together with prioritizing equality and inclusivity in international politics.

The Ambassador stressed the need to move away from zero-sum mindset so that cooperation and complementarity could be embraced openly. He expressed his belief that every country, regardless of its size, could have a significant impact in the global arena. He said properly leveraging the potential of every country to contribute positively should be the focus of international politics so that collaborative solutions for big global challenges like poverty and climate change could be concretely crafted.

The Ambassador stressed the willing cooperation among cultures, societies, and nations as the only durable guarantee of a free, fair, peaceful, and inclusive world.

8. Discussion



The roundtable was followed by an extensive discussion session allowing the attendees to deal openly and frankly with various aspects of the expansion of BRICS and its impact on regional and global geopolitics and geoeconomics.

The session began with consideration of the founding of the BRICS, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among significant countries in a world characterized by globalization. On the discussion, it was argued that BRICS were a repudiation of unipolarity and bloc politics in favor of promoting representation and inclusivity.

In addition to this, the dominance of the dollar in international trade was discussed by another participant as a significant aspect of the post-Cold War era. The participant inquired whether BRICS could establish a robust infrastructure for a global currency of exchange. The participant further inquired if the existing financial platforms were sufficient or suitable for implementing policies and measures that were

different from the policy prescriptions of the dominant international financial institutions.

One of the experts emphasized that efforts were underway by BRICS to consider a new reserve currency for trade and investment among member nations. China's efforts to engage with over 35 countries in local currencies were also cited as evidence of a major shift in terms of trade and investment among nations. Moreover, the speaker cited the first-ever yuan-settled purchase of LNG from UAE as evidence of the growing importance of China's currency for international payments. The speaker mentioned that approximately 65,000 tonnes of LNG were imported from the UAE to China.

Moreover, the speaker remarked that Gulf states, specifically Saudi Arabia, may be amenable to a new reserve currency as well considering their massive hydrocarbon exports to China. The expert stressed that whether it was trade settled in local currencies or currency swap agreements, BRICS seemed poised to playing a significant role in encouraging positive and much-needed change in the international financial architecture.

Another participant stressed the significance of international cooperation that transcended bloc politics. The participants highlighted the need for major powers to respect the interests of smaller nations. Further, it was pointed out that different unresolved national economic, political, and social crises had the potential to spill over into the region, considering the tight interconnections that existed in the exceptionally networked contemporary world. The participant opined that equity in intrastate and interstate relations, though difficult but not impossible, could preserve domestic, regional, and global stability.

One of the speakers highlighted the membership diversity of BRICS as a good example of countries working together to realize common objectives despite facing different geopolitical compulsions. The

speaker further highlighted that the hubristic raising of walls and digging of silos would only prove counterproductive in today's world and jeopardize global peace.

Another participant stressed the importance for Pakistan to undertake exceptionally dynamic economic, commercial, and trade diplomacy for utilizing the immense trade potential of BRICS.

One of the participants highlighted the importance of BRICS Plus, which now includes countries in the Middle East. They highlighted the importance of these states, referring to them as global energy hubs. The participant said that the inclusion of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE will prove momentous for the global system in the next ten years.

The discussion session provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics surrounding Pakistan's possible involvement with BRICS and its implications for the evolving global order. It touched upon economic, geo-political, and social dimensions, underscoring the multifaceted nature of this crucial decision for Pakistan. Further deliberations and analyses were expected by the discussants as Pakistan navigated its role in the changing world order.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ At the time of roundtable, news that Pakistan had applied for the membership of BRICS had not surfaced.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the roundtable deliberations:

1. Global Perspective:

- *Peaceful Coexistence of Multiple Poles:* In the form of various regional and global alliances, the international community needs to recognize and adjust to the coexistence of the emerging multipolar world. Dialogue and cooperation among these emerging states and energy centers are crucial for the future of global stability.
- *Global Governance Reforms:* There is an urgent need for global governance reforms. Urgent action is of the essence in this regard. The UN System, IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization are in need of expeditious reform, if they are to stay relevant in the second and third quarters of the 21st century. The objective should be to enhance the representation and responsiveness of these institutions toward the concerns and demands of emerging economies and countries in the global south.
- *Conflict Escalation Avoidance:* To prevent the escalation of traditional rivalries and emergence of new rivalries, it is crucial that countries place dialogue, diplomacy, and conflict prevention at the forefront of their participation in the contemporary international system. Weaponized geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence should be avoided by all states in all situations as this could lead to major conflict in future.

2. Regional and Global Perspective

- *Enhanced Regional Economic Cooperation:* It is important that regional blocs reinvigorate their efforts to foster economic and trade collaboration among their member states. This can foster a more resilient regional economy and protect member states from global economic downturns. Intraregional and interregional cooperation should be twin trends in a world characterized by peace and stability. Open regionalism should be promoted across the board.
- *Institutional Reforms:* In order to effectively tackle the multifaceted challenges of politics, security, and economics that exist within their respective regions, regional organizations must prioritize institutional reforms based on inclusiveness and equity so that regional institutional reforms could set the right precedent for global governance reforms. Having structures and mandates that are adaptable can assist them in responding more effectively to shifting geopolitical dynamics.

3. Pakistan's Perspective:

- *Economic Self-Reliance:* Pakistan should seek economic self-reliance as soon as possible. This includes urgent structural reforms, the implementation of sound macroeconomic policies, focus on quality human capital formation, investment attraction, and increase in exports.
- *Regional Engagement:* It is imperative for Pakistan to contribute tangibly to regional cooperation in terms of smart investments in regional countries.
- *Partnership Expansion:* The main challenge for Pakistan lies in the maintenance of a balanced foreign policy through the

diversification of global partnerships. Pakistan needs to pay more attention to cooperation with medium-sized states and small states. There is a need to refocus attention on CPEC and strive for its maximal development.

- *Encouraging Multilateralism:* Pakistan should support multilateralism and engage within international forums to address global concerns. This approach can assist Pakistan in maintaining its position in the changing global order.

10. Conclusion



In conclusion, the vibrant and insightful discussions during the roundtable, coupled with the compelling viewpoints expressed by distinguished ambassadors, shed light on the evolving dynamics of global diplomacy, trade, and cooperation among BRICS countries. The ambassadors provided invaluable insights into their respective countries' perspectives on international relations and highlighted the significance of evolving global trends.

Throughout the discussions, it became evident that the world is experiencing a profound transformation, characterized by a shift towards greater inclusivity, adaptability, and the pursuit of equitable international relations. The emergence of platforms like BRICS reflects this transformation, emphasizing the importance of cooperative diplomacy and equal representation of states in the international world.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the importance of multilateralism as a means to address complex global challenges was a recurring theme. The discussions stressed that in a rapidly changing world, countries must come together to foster cooperation and find collective solutions to shared problems. Diplomatic flexibility and adaptability were underscored as crucial qualities for states to navigate this ever-evolving landscape effectively.

Consequently, the ambassadors' reflections highlighted the fact that global diplomacy has become a complex and multifaceted endeavor. States are increasingly seeking alliances and partnerships that align with their interests and values, challenging traditional power structures and alliances.

In this context, the role of academia was emphasized as essential in furthering our understanding of these evolving dynamics. Academics were urged to conduct in-depth research into various aspects of international relations. Additionally, the need for cultural and social inclusivity in diplomatic efforts was stressed, recognizing the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping international relations.



Expanding BRICS and the New Alignments

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