

BRICS to formulate new global rules

The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi focuses on conflict resolution through dialogue and an emphasis on shared interests

by Stephan Ossenkopp*



Stephan Ossenkopp.
(Picture ma)

At the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised unity, consensus and a forward-looking approach. In doing so, he successfully defended the core principles of the emerging multipolar

world order – namely, conflict resolution through dialogue and the emphasis on shared interests.

The scathing criticism from Western commentators, who claimed that the BRICS nations were too divided and had irreconcilable, conflicting interests, has thus largely fallen flat. The war against BRICS member Iran, instigated by the US and Israel, would have caused a rift with US allies the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and made any agreement impossible. Such was the prevailing criticism. Yet the heads of state of all three countries took part in every session without – as is often the practice in the West – walking out of the hall or refusing to pose for the group photograph.

In the end, all participants signed the New Delhi Declaration. This does not, of course, mean that everything was plain sailing or that differences were ignored. However, the BRICS countries are clearly committed to their historical responsibility as a platform for shared interests – from trade to technology – and do not wish to see their model disparaged as a rehash of the Western colonial order. The integration of sover-



Group photograph with the presidents of the BRICS states at the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 12 September 2026.

(Picture Prime Minister's Office/Wikipedia)

eign states at different stages of development under the umbrella of shared, tangible development and collective progress is an ever-advancing process. An important stress test has now been passed in New Delhi.

A new order for the global majority

Following an initial reception and numerous bilateral meetings on Friday, host Modi opened the summit of heads of state and government on Saturday with a landmark speech. He emphasised that the aim was not only to strengthen the BRICS but also to set a course towards reforming the global order. He described the structure of current global decision-making as resembling a pyramid, with decision-making power concentrated at its apex. Modi was clearly taking aim at the US and other Western elites.

"The Global South is at the forefront of crises today, but at the back when it comes to decision-making," he said, adding: "We must transform the pyramid of privilege into a platform of partnership, where every country has a voice and every

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member has a stake, and where the progress of humanity is at the heart of every endeavour.”

So, anyone who previously believed that only the BRICS states – China and Russia – sought to reshape the order dominated by the US and other Western elites, whilst India would operate within the existing framework, should reconsider their view. Modi then proposed the drafting of ten recommendations for the reform of global governance, which are to be incorporated into a BRICS reform roadmap. India thus aims to rapidly elevate the BRICS to the role of rule-makers for a new international order of equal partner nations.

It is the global majority

The eleven BRICS member states now represent just under 50 per cent of the world’s population and 40 per cent of global gross domestic product.

Alongside the full members – Brazil, Russia, India, South Africa and China – as well as Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, high-ranking representatives from partner countries also attended, some accompanied by their heads of state. These included Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Nigeria, Burundi, Cuba, Uganda, Uruguay, Bahrain and Kazakhstan. The heads of the UN, the WTO, the WHO, the *BRICS Development Bank* (NDB) and the *African Union* also took part. When one considers the numerous countries of the Global South that were not present but have expressed an interest in closer cooperation with the BRICS, there is much to suggest that the political majority of humanity is indeed beginning to coalesce here.

During the event, Modi also had the opportunity to hold a total of 15 official bilateral meetings with heads of state and government, as well as numerous informal discussions with leading politicians and heads of international institutions. In the Indian press, Modi’s ability to bring together such a large number of political leaders was hailed as a diplomatic triumph. On several television channels, commentators were quick to remark that India had assumed a leading role in championing the interests of the Global South. This had, of course, been meticulously prepared. Under the Indian BRICS presidency, over 350 conferences and meetings were organised in almost 30 Indian cities – ranging from trade congresses and financial forums to humanitarian and cultural gatherings.



*Russian President Vladimir Putin, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 18th BRICS Summit in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, 12 September 2026.
(Picture Prime Minister’s Office/Wikipedia)*

India and China

Naturally, certain relationships between individual BRICS countries carry particular weight, especially the relationship between the two by far most populous and economically significant members, China and India. That is why the eyes of the summit participants were fixed on the specially arranged meeting between India’s Prime Minister Modi and China’s President Xi Jinping. The two had only recently met at the summit of the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

However, the Chinese President had not set foot on Indian soil since 2019 – just a few months before a bloody border conflict broke out between the two countries, which placed a massive strain on relations between New Delhi and Beijing. It was not until the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, that India and China were able to take the first steps towards normalising relations. Today, both sides brought large delegations, including leading figures from the fields of foreign and security policy to the negotiating table.

Xi told Modi that China and India, as key representatives of the Global South, bore a special responsibility. Even though they have different national sensitivities, Xi said, “there is still enormous scope for us to learn from each other’s strengths, offer mutual support, achieve success together and strive for development”.

This set a decidedly positive tone for the talks. Modi emphasised that peace and tranquillity in the border region were one of the cornerstones

for the further development of bilateral relations. Both sides emphasised the term “partner” rather than “rival”. Modi said that India wished to work with China to strive for a multipolar world, stability and progress despite the turbulence. Their meeting at the current BRICS summit at least offers hope that a cool head can be kept on these deadlocked issues and that cooperation will be expanded.

The West is being replaced

In his keynote speech, Chinese President Xi stated that the BRICS are “the most influential cooperation platform for emerging and developing economies”.

This is evident, on the one hand, in the ever-increasing interdependence in the areas of trade, investment and finance.

Particularly in the field of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, the BRICS must now take the initiative with determination. To this end, China has just founded the *World AI Cooperation Organisation* (WAICO) and established cooperation centres in numerous BRICS countries. In doing so, China aims to clearly establish the BRICS as the world’s leading platform for research and development in open-source AI applications.

Russia, too, wishes to provide innovative infrastructure. On the first day of the conference, President *Vladimir Putin* stated at the BRICS *Business Forum* that his country had undertaken a radical reorientation of its foreign trade relations over the past four years. This is because,

globally, those countries that were still leading in the second half of the 20th century are being replaced by new drivers of growth.

He did not name names, but one can guess whom he means when he states that Europe’s leading economies are losing their industrial base. With the North-South transport corridor and the expansion of the Arctic trade route, Russia can now offer the BRICS countries new, secure supply routes for energy and food security. Even if this still sounds like a distant prospect, the course is being set here too for developments of global significance.

One possible conclusion from the 18th BRICS Summit is therefore that India has demonstrated sound leadership, bridged divides, brought conflicting parties to the table and adopted a comprehensive final declaration.

India is now passing the baton to China, which will host the BRICS Summit in 2027. The West finds itself in a self-inflicted economic decline, showing no discernible willingness to change course. Consequently, steps have been taken to ensure that the global majority can increasingly participate in shaping a fair, multipolar order of sovereign states on an equal footing, and is no longer subject to the rules of the strongest.

The majority of humanity pins its hopes on this. The extent to which the Western elite supports or opposes this will largely determine the immediate future.

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