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## The Evolution of Russian Strategy Towards BRICS

Dmitry Novikov and Andrei Skriba

**Abstract:** This article examines the evolution of Russia's policy towards BRICS from the time of its formation as a group of four countries in 2006 to the present. The authors analyse the main political objectives that guided Moscow in initiating the creation of this format and in developing it in subsequent years. The article argues that, with Russia as a participant, the character of the organization has undergone major changes, due both to the changing international situation and fundamental changes that the foreign policy of Russia itself has undergone since 2014.

The BRICS group was and still is an important phenomenon in world politics and one of the key formats of international cooperation in which Russia participates. For Moscow, the more than ten annual summits of the member countries have played the role of a unique gathering of leading non-Western powers united by the desire to revise the unipolar international order, the consistent criticism of which has become a fundamental part of Russian foreign policy strategy.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the declarations that heads of state issue at the conclusion of the summits indicate that the participating countries have a desire to coordinate efforts in this area—although that intention does not always find expression in concrete political or institutional measures. For Russia, that largely initiated this format and hosted its first summit in 2006 in St. Petersburg, BRICS and other non-Western dialogue formats are valuable because they make global governance more manageable at a time when Western institutions are losing their effectiveness and legitimacy. As the Russian Foreign Policy Concept states, 'Russia has been expanding its ties with its partners within the Group of Twenty, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and the Republic of South Africa), the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), RIC (Russia, India and China) alongside other organizations and dialogue platforms.'<sup>2</sup>

The significant economic growth by BRICS countries in the last decade, along with their increasingly active foreign policy agenda makes it possible to speak of these countries as the new centres of power in the modern multipolar world, as states are exerting a growing influence on the international system. This clearly indicates the importance of studying the role BRICS plays in the system of global governance, regardless of how the expert community has variously assessed the activities of the organization. At the same time, of course, BRICS—as a force aimed at opposing US hegemony in the international arena—it still far from reaching its full potential. This

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makes it necessary to study relations between its member states in search of promising areas of cooperation and a common foundation for achieving a full-fledged reform of global governance.

Although first BRIC and later, BRICS has been, and still is, the subject of criticism and scepticism regarding its effectiveness as a long-term element of global governance,<sup>3</sup> as well as Russia's membership in the group<sup>4</sup>, in recent years the format has managed to earn itself an important place among various multilateral formats in global politics. In addition, despite the significant geographic distance separating the member countries, an expansive infrastructure of international ties and institutions at various levels has evolved around BRICS over the years. The BRICS New Development Bank was established, a wide variety of formats for cooperation in scientific, technical, economic, and humanitarian pursuits were put in place, and platforms for developing dialogue between the civil societies of member countries arose. Although BRICS has now become one of the key global platforms for dialogue—alongside such formats as the G-7 and G-20—it has still not reached its full potential, both in terms of the development of the format itself and in terms of answering Russia's interests.

BRICS is now looking for ways to develop further and at the same time, is seeking to define its new role in the changing geopolitical environment—dramatic changes in which pose the main challenge to each of the member countries, and perhaps most of all to Russia that has remained locked in confrontation with the West since 2014. The change in the foreign policy course of the US in recent years has marked the beginning of the rapid transformation of the international order and the system of global governance—criticism of which has united the BRICS states for more than a decade. As well-known political scientist Richard Haass wrote, paraphrasing Voltaire, in his recent article, 'The fading liberal world order is neither liberal nor worldwide nor orderly.'<sup>5</sup> The new condition of the world requires a new role for BRICS. In the near future, the organization will probably have to move from criticizing the existing structure of global institutions to promoting actively and collectively its own global agenda in the fields of economics, finance, security, and so on.

This makes it important that Russia rethink its policy towards BRICS. We suggest that external factors largely determined Moscow's approach to this multilateral format. From the beginning, Russia has striven to transform global order peacefully and to align the system of global governance with its own needs. The Russian agenda in this area did not differ in any fundamental way from the approaches of the other rapidly developing economies, and economic issues and the desire to increase participation in the regulation of the world economy prevailed in the dialogue with other centres of power. After 2014, however, Russia had specific demands and interests (the issue of sanctions and sharper criticism of the US and the West as a whole) on the one hand, while changes in the international situation accentuated the differences and even conflicts with several other countries on the other. In this connection, Moscow's policy towards BRICS and the role of the format itself changed for Russia. BRICS became, on the one hand, a tool for overcoming the country's international isolation, and on the other, a platform not so much for increasing the solidarity between member countries regarding specific demands for reforming global governance as it was for strengthening bilateral relations with

leading non-Western powers and for overcoming various conflicts between them. At the same time, Russia's key foreign policy objective remains unchanged: the peaceful transformation of the international order through the gradual weakening of the hegemon's predominant role in international institutions.

Thus, an analysis of the evolution of Russian policy holds interest for two reasons. On the one hand, it is an example of a towering world power pursuing a peaceful strategy for the transformation of the international order. Subjected to pressure by the West and the hegemon that leads the international order, Russia continues to pursue such a strategy—one that also finds expression in its activities within BRICS. On the other hand, an analysis of the evolution of Russian policy towards BRICS is important for understanding the current condition and prospects of that format as well as Russia's role and interests in it.

### **The creation of BRICS and the Russian agenda for reforming global governance**

US economist and financial analyst Jim O'Neill coined the acronym BRIC in 2001 to denote the four major economies with the most potential for economic growth and consequently, the greatest attractiveness for investment. Although the term was originally confined to the realm of economic theory, it proved attractive to Russian diplomats who had been searching since the late 1990s for various bilateral and multilateral formats for developing relations with non-Western centres of power. In 1997, for example, Russia and China signed a Joint Statement Regarding the International Order of the 21st Century in 1997<sup>6</sup> in which they expressed their interest in forming and strengthening a multipolar world due to doubts that long-term economic and social development would be impossible in a world dominated by the US and its Western allies. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Russian diplomacy actively promoted the idea of establishing and developing trilateral cooperation in the format of Russia-India-China, a group consisting of the three key non-Western centres of power with the largest economies and greatest nuclear potential.<sup>7</sup> The idea of creating a four-sided format that would also include Brazil, the largest South American country, thus found fertile soil and soon became the focus of a Russian initiative.

The first practical steps towards cooperation within the BRICS framework took place at the initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin 'on the sidelines' of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2006, with a meeting of the foreign ministers of the respective countries. That meeting laid the foundation for further cooperation, although the overall agenda of such a dialogue format and its specific objectives were yet unclear. The representatives of all four of those states, however, were critical of several aspects of global governance institutions, primarily those concerning economics. This largely became the unifying idea for the further development of BRIC—especially considering that the acronym had originally been based on economic considerations.

The second meeting of BRIC country foreign ministers again took place 'on the sidelines' of a UN General Assembly meeting in New York, this time on September 24, 2007. The decision was made at that meeting to hold full-fledged annual meetings between the foreign ministers in each country in turn, to establish

a mechanism for consultations between deputy foreign ministers, and to put in place regular contacts between embassies and permanent missions in locations of key importance to multilateral diplomacy, and primarily in New York. A dialogue between their finance ministers was also established in 2008, with their first important meeting held in San Paulo on the eve of the gathering of G-20 finance ministers. The talking points of that first meeting reflected the main concern of the BRIC member countries and the development of the organization's main agenda in the early years—namely, the struggle over the world financial crisis of 2007–2009. That meeting in San Paulo resulted in a joint communiqué by the finance ministers detailing in plain language their common understanding of the nature of that crisis and the measures needed to overcome it. It was generally accepted that problems with the US economy and the imbalance of the US-led global financial architecture had brought on that crisis<sup>8</sup>—a view in keeping with Russia's understanding of the situation.

The high point of that four-party dialogue was the first BRIC Summit, that was held on June 16, 2009 in Yekaterinburg.<sup>9</sup> Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Brazilian President Luiz Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chinese President Hu Jintao, attended. The Russian President defined the key goal of that format, saying, 'Despite the fact that we often meet and communicate within other forums, it is very likely that this kind of coordination would help clarify each other's positions and help us develop new innovative ways to address international financial problems and reform international financial relations.'<sup>10</sup> After the Summit, President Medvedev noted that 'The BRIC summit aims to create the conditions for building a fairer world order and to create a favourable environment for resolving global problems.'<sup>11</sup> Thus, from the very beginning, Russia considered BRIC to be a platform for discussing a wide range of issues concerning the transformation of the global order. The first summits, however, focused on problems connected with the world financial crisis.

During that summit, the heads of state of the BRIC countries adopted both a joint declaration and a separate document concerning global food security.<sup>12</sup> In their final declaration, the leaders expressed their interest in continued cooperation on forming a multipolar world, their support for ideas and initiatives for a new system of sustainable growth, and for strengthening and more closely coordinating cooperation in the field of energy, with the participation of producers, consumers, and energy transit countries. These issues primarily reflected Russia's economic interests.

Thus, Russia initially considered BRICS as a semi-formal alliance of a group of major powers, for each of whom the format was an element of the implementation of their own strategy for the peaceful transformation of the post-Cold War international order. Due to the world financial crisis and the needs of the BRIC member countries, however—and after South Africa joined and Russia also shifted its emphasis—BRICS began to focus on economic issues. Although many scholars now classify Russia as a weakening economic power,<sup>13</sup> it was a rising economic power at the time when BRICS came into existence. Russia enjoyed an economic growth rate of 8 per cent during the 2000s, making it one of the fastest growing major economies<sup>14</sup> and contributing to Moscow's interest in discussing economic development issues and reforms to the system of international regulation in accordance with the interests of developing countries.

The economic problems that Russia has been experiencing in recent years, as well as the international developments could not but affect Russia's position with regard to BRICS, an organization that focuses mainly on issues of international economic regulation. These are discussed below.

#### **Russia's policy towards BRICS until 2014**

Russia's further participation in BRIC (that had practically transformed into BRICS as early as 2010) retained an emphasis on economic issues. The second summit of the leaders of BRICS member countries took place on April 15–16, 2010 in Brasilia. In the lead-up to the summit, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev published a policy paper on Russia's goals and priorities vis-a-vis BRIC. In particular, that paper noted: 'Overcoming the impact of the global crisis, our country at the same time follows the path of comprehensive renovation. Our key task is to achieve sustainable economic growth and an increase in the income of citizens based on diversified economy, technological modernization and innovative development. We increasingly invest in further space exploration, energy efficiency, development of nuclear and alternative energy, information, telecommunications and new medical technologies, and development of drugs. We attach great importance to processing of mineral resources our country is rich in, as well as to agricultural production growth. I am convinced that our BRIC partners will find these Russia's achievements useful.'<sup>15</sup>

Thus, during the world economic crisis, the Russian leadership looked at the BRIC group primarily in terms of economic development priorities, reform of the global financial and economic architecture, and development of bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation with other member countries—also emerging economies.<sup>16</sup> At the summit, leaders discussed ways to overcome the effects of the crisis and the creation of a new financial order, and particularly their right to wield greater influence in such international organizations as the World Bank and IMF.

In addition, as early as the third BRICS Summit—at which South Africa acceded officially to BRICS—Russia strove to include questions on the agenda of a political nature that did not directly touch on the direct interests of the other member countries. That meeting, now with five presidents participating, touched on various questions of mutual cooperation. As the result of Russia's efforts to advance its economic agenda, the BRICS countries once again spoke in favour of Russia acceding to the WTO as soon as possible. As the effects of the world economic crisis were overcome, however, and as the destabilizing trends in the international order began to deepen, important political issues were included in the BRICS agenda, largely at Russia's urging. Thus, in their final declaration, the participating countries advocated comprehensive reform of the United Nations as well as—through the initiative from the Russian side—the peaceful settlement of the Libyan issue.<sup>17</sup>

The meeting in 2012 in New Delhi was devoted mainly to the global economy and measures for overcoming the crisis, but it also addressed the resolution of the situation connected with Syria and Iran. During that Summit, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated, 'We believe it is important to avoid outside intervention in Syria's affairs; we must give the government and the opposition an opportunity to finally engage in dialogue, without undermining it by saying that such dialogue is doomed to failure and only a military intervention can restore order. That is

a dangerous and shortsighted approach.<sup>18</sup> The Russian head of state also put forward an initiative for the BRICS countries to provide humanitarian aid for Syria. That initiative was reflected in the final declaration and demonstrated Russia's desire to include pressing political issues in the BRICS agenda, and to use the format not only for discussion, but also for measures that would ensure greater political stability and security for particular regions. The Russian leader also expressed his vision for 'the gradual transformation' of BRICS 'into a strong and influential organization'<sup>19</sup> that would interact on major world economic and political issues. Thus, Russia's original geopolitical focus on BRICS as a platform for the discussion of urgent economic issues has increasingly shifted towards viewing it as one of the formats for forming a new multipolar world order.

South Africa was a member of BRICS by the time the 2013 summit was held, indicating that the organization had included development of the African continent in its discussion agenda. At that summit, BRICS leaders met with African heads of state. Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that the BRICS countries jointly uphold the rights and interests of Africa and other countries with economies in transition and advocate enhancing their role and influence in the system of global governance, and particularly in international financial and economic organizations.<sup>20</sup>

At that summit, Russia also put forward an initiative to develop a Long-Term Economic Cooperation Strategy that would take into account national development plans and help strengthen the growth of all five countries' economies. This reflected Russia's economic agenda that was aimed at restarting economic growth in Russia itself, but largely also based on concerns about the prospects for the sustainability of global economic growth. At the same time, discussion of the highly unstable African continent and the alarming state of affairs in the Middle East could not but contribute to the inclusion of traditional security issues on the BRICS agenda. This was reflected in the eThekweni Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the conclusion of the summit. It called for the peaceful settlement of the situation in the Middle East and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in settling international conflicts—that was in full accord with the Russian position concerning that issue. The final declaration of that summit included a separate point concerning the situation in Syria that fully reflected the Russian position. It states: 'We express our deep concern with the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Syria and condemn the increasing violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law as a result of continued violence. We believe that the Joint Communiqué of the Geneva Action Group provides a basis for resolution of the Syrian crisis and reaffirm our opposition to any further militarization of the conflict.'<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Russia's participation in BRICS since 2009, when it became a full-fledged forum of heads of state, has largely focused on coordinating efforts to overcome the world economic crisis and discussions on developing new rules of economic life that are more advantageous for developing countries. However, Russia also strove to include urgent political issues in the summit agendas and final declarations, thereby engaging the BRICS member countries in discussions on the broad issues of transforming the global political order.

The crisis in Russia's relations with the West that began because of events in Ukraine in 2014 only strengthened Moscow's resolve to use the BRICS platform to discuss political issues that—although not directly related to the interests of other

member states—held importance for the international order in general. Thus, while Russia's BRICS policy is largely a strategy for the peaceful transformation of the post-Cold War system of international relations, it focused initially on transforming the economic order and later—in response to external circumstances—came to focus on transforming the entire global political order.

### **The Russian approach to BRICS after 2014**

The confrontation between Russia and the West that began in 2014 had a profound influence on Moscow's foreign policy as a whole, including its relations with new centres of power and other major powers. It also affected the Russian approach to BRICS, which has long served as the key platform for interaction between major non-Western powers and economies.

Russian policy towards BRICS has changed in two ways. First, Moscow has taken a more decisive position with regard to reforming the institutions of global governance created by the West and has stepped up efforts to develop economic ties with non-Western economies—primarily with major economies such as the BRICS countries. Second, Russia has continued to expand the agenda for the discussion of both global and regional political issues, striving to raise the importance of BRICS as a platform for transforming the international political order, or for adjusting various aspects of it.

Western pressure in the form of sanctions has been the greatest cause of Russia's dissatisfaction with the liberal economic order. In a speech to the Valdai International Discussion Club in 2014, President Vladimir Putin said, 'Sanctions are already undermining the foundations of world trade, the WTO rules and the principle of inviolability of private property. They are dealing a blow to the liberal model of globalization based on markets, freedom and competition, which, let me note, is a model that has primarily benefitted precisely the Western countries.'<sup>22</sup> President Putin also criticized other institutions of global governance and the economic policies of the United States and the West as a whole, including their practice of imposing economic sanctions.

Within the framework of BRICS, this position is reflected in the fact that Russia has put forward or actively supported a number of initiatives aimed at weakening Western institutions and enhancing the role of BRICS and its member countries. Thus, the leaders assembled at the BRICS Summit in 2014 signed an Agreement on the New Development Bank (NDB)<sup>23</sup> and an agreement creating the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).<sup>24</sup> In particular, they set the maximum volume of authorized capital of the NDB at \$100 billion, with the BRICS countries to provide half of this sum.

According to the documents signed at that summit, the CRA should function much like the IMF, providing financial assistance to BRICS countries experiencing problems with their balance of payments. As determined during subsequent summits, the capital of the CRA was set at \$100 billion. The size of each country's contribution corresponds to the size of its economy, while their respective central banks hold their share in gold and foreign exchange reserves and the allocation of financial assistance to members in need is linked to the relevant IMF programme.

These efforts were further developed at the BRICS Summit in Ufa. The Ufa Declaration<sup>25</sup> set down a course towards conducting trade within BRICS in national



currencies. Leaders also spoke in favour of speeding up the reform of the UN and the IMF. At Russia's initiative, leaders at that Summit also adopted a Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership that laid out the basic areas for developing economic interaction between BRICS member countries. Some of those provisions were carried out during subsequent summits. In particular, at the BRICS Summit in Goa in 2016 the BRICS Strategic Framework for Customs Cooperation was adopted, a platform for joint agricultural research was established, and other measures were taken.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, from the point of view of the Russian leadership, despite the fact that the economies of the BRICS member countries differed widely by 2014–2015, they all continued to share a fundamental need to continue economic cooperation with each other and to form a more just and less risk-prone international economic order. As President Putin explained at the press conference following the BRICS Summit in Goa in 2016, 'The mutual interest of BRICS countries ... is underpinned by the similarity of their economies and the objectives that they face ... It is this objective interest in maintaining contacts and promoting cooperation in various areas that lies at the core of our association ...'.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of political interaction, Russia has advocated, on the one hand, that the BRICS countries use the format more actively for coordinating their efforts in other platforms, and on the other, has consistently striven to include urgent political questions in the agenda and even to use the BRICS format for discussing the settlement of international conflicts.

In his policy paper 'BRICS: Towards New Horizons of Strategic Partnerships,' the Russian leader wrote: 'Russia stands for closer coordination of the BRICS countries' foreign policies, primarily at the UN and G20, as well as other international organizations.'<sup>28</sup> This approach was reflected in the fact that BRICS summits were traditionally held not long before G-20 summits. At the same time, the BRICS countries actively coordinated their efforts in other multilateral institutions as well. In fact, the history of the group began in 2006 with informal meetings of these countries' representatives at the UN.

In this article, President Putin also points out the need to involve BRICS in the resolution of major international problems. In particular, he wrote: 'It is clear that only the combined efforts of all countries can help bring about global stability and find solutions to many acute conflicts, including those in the Middle East. I would like to say that it was largely thanks to the efforts of Russia and other concerned countries that conditions have been created to improve the situation in Syria. We have delivered a powerful blow to the terrorists and laid the groundwork for launching the movement towards a political settlement and the return of the Syrian people to peace.'<sup>29</sup>

It is largely due to this approach of Russia that an important part of each summit since 2014 has been the discussion of a political settlement in Syria and the situation in the Middle East as a whole, as well as other international crises, including the situation in eastern Ukraine. The BRICS countries have also made greater efforts to deepen cooperation in such areas as information security, discussions on the functioning of UN mechanisms, and so on. Several BRICS peacekeeping initiatives could become important concrete contributions that the organization makes to global security. For example, at the BRICS Summit in Xiamen, the leaders of the five countries underscored the important role that UN peacekeeping operations play in maintaining international peace and security, as well as the corresponding

contribution in this area by the BRICS countries. They recognize the need for the member countries to continue deepening their cooperation regarding peacekeeping activities in the UN and in this context, highlight the South African initiative to establish a BRICS peacekeeping working group.

Thus, Russia has made a significant contribution to the development of the BRICS agenda, in many respects realizing its original intentions and vision of the organization as a platform for dialogue that would go beyond issues solely connected with global governance and a rigid focus on economic concerns. The crisis in Russian-Western relations that began in 2014 has led Russia to step up efforts to include questions concerning acute political problems and reform of the international political order as a whole on the agenda of the BRICS summits. This is generally consistent with the interests of both Russia and the other BRICS member countries that would like to enhance their status and influence in international affairs. It also addresses the fact that the current international order stands in need of reform and implicitly calls on the leading non-Western powers to assume greater political responsibility for maintaining the new order.

## **Conclusion**

The evolution of Russian policy towards BRICS has been an important factor in the development of that format. Beginning in 2006, when the Russian leadership was one of the main initiators of the creation of this dialogue platform—first as a meeting of foreign ministers, and later, as the first full-fledged summit of heads of state in 2009 in Russia—Moscow has viewed first BRIC and then BRICS as one of the key non-Western multilateral institutions within which it is possible to coordinate and develop an agenda for the reform of the international order. In subsequent years, the Russian leadership has constantly emphasized the importance of this work and has striven to expand the BRICS agenda and to transform this dialogue format from a club of leading non-Western powers into a significant and effective institution of global governance on par with such platforms as the G-20 and G-7. After 2014, along with the evolution of Russian policy as a whole, Russia's approach to BRICS also began to change somewhat and came to include new issues for the group to discuss. This initiative by Russia resulted in such issues as the fight against terrorism, security, the political situation in the Middle East, the situation in eastern Ukraine, and others becoming a fixture in the agendas of the summits in Goa, Xianmen, Ufa, and Johannesburg. BRICS has gone beyond addressing only the reform of global economic regulation to become an important platform for discussing political issues of a global nature, working towards a consensus position among the leading non-Western powers, coordinating their efforts within other international institutions—including the UN—and developing bilateral interaction among member countries.

Of course, this transformation benefits both the BRICS format itself and the international order as a whole. Does it meet Russia's interests? For Russia and the other BRICS countries, the crisis of the current international order—including its institutions of global governance—presents both an opportunity and a challenge. The Trump administration criticizes many international institutions and norms that the foremost developing powers find unsatisfactory as well. It has criticized the World Bank and IMF as ineffective, the WTO as unfair, and the system of US alliances,

including NATO, as too cumbersome and too involved in the affairs of other states. With regard to security, the Trump administration consistently questions the viability of its key pillars: the UN, NATO, and the entire system of US alliances. This poses a serious challenge to both regional and global security. The US, which has essentially stood at the centre of the liberal international order for the last 25 years, is now initiating the collapse of that order without offering in return clear formats for stable international cooperation in such areas as trade, security, the environment and climate change, etc.

As the main global institutions become increasingly unstable, BRICS becomes increasingly important as a coordinating platform for the non-Western centres of power. Since it puts forward its own point of view regarding current global processes, BRICS holds geopolitical importance for both Russia and the world. One of its major areas of focus is reform to the world economic system. The BRICS states persistently propose increasing the representation of non-Western states in international financial institutions but they encounter fierce resistance from the traditional arbiters of world finance.

Moreover, the current US government's economically nationalistic slogans coincide, in part, with the agenda of the BRICS countries, which also strive towards nationally-oriented economic development and the transformation of the world economic order in accordance with their national interests. However, although the US and Russia, along with other BRICS countries, agree on the need for reform or even a profound transformation of the existing international order, their views of the substance of that reform are fundamentally contradictory. The US views the BRICS format itself, as well as some of its member countries, as competitors to its global leadership. Russia and China—that is, two of the five BRICS member countries—are already the targets of US sanctions, and Washington has considered imposing sanctions on a third member of that group: India. And, because the sanctions against Russia are the most severe, this stimulates Moscow to promote an agenda for a more just and non-discriminatory political and economic international order even more actively than do the other member countries.

The other BRICS countries agree with Russia that international institutions such as BRICS should have a constructive influence on the work of existing structural and institutional pillars of the current world order and system of global governance without creating 'mirror' structures of global governance. And, if such structures are created (as they have been under the auspices of BRICS) those new institutional actors should be incorporated harmoniously into the existing world order, thereby contributing to the solution of mankind's global problems.

At the same time, the BRICS countries are purposefully constructing economic and social policies that provide an alternative to the currently dominant concepts (neo-liberal capitalism, etc.). They emphasize other principles of world order such as the fair redistribution of authoritative power in global governance based on the reorganization of the existing world economic order and the strengthening of the role and influence of the developing world in global issues, etc.

Russian policy towards BRICS is a strategy for the peaceful transformation of the international order. Mainly under the influence of external structural circumstances, this agenda is gradually expanding to include new political issues. The overall paradigm and ultimate goal, however, remain the same—namely, the peaceful reform

of the post-Cold War world order so that key political and economic decisions are made under more democratic conditions that reflect today's multipolar world. And, although BRICS consists of countries with very different economic indicators and at times, conflicting political interests, all member countries share this goal.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Notes

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