Meanwhile, BRICS is Alive and Well

There's been no shortage of interest towards the recently concluded ninth BRICS summit in Brazil. This association brings together a total of five countries, with its name being an acronym coined to represent the combined economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This block represents 23% of the world's economic output and some 18% of world trade, with a combined GDP of a mind-boggling 15.435 trillion dollars. However, what is even more important, some may argue, is that it represents 42% of the world's population.

This year's summit was held under the motto “Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future.” This motto pretty much pre-determined heated discussions on the most urgent challenges the international community faces – instability, regional insecurity, the state of the world economy, the state of affairs in trade and finance.

In addition to opening speeches by the leaders of each member state, there was more than a hundred various meetings and events of various caliber, during which a discussion of innovative developments and increasing competitiveness took place, together with views being presented on cooperative efforts between the member states in such fields as trade, healthcare and security. There were voices promoting the need to modernize the BRICS partnership strategy and take a more proactive unified position during UN events. In addition to highlighting the need to intensify trade and investment, the leaders voiced calls for reforming the global system of governance, thus putting an end to the political and economic chaos that reigns in certain regions of the world.

On the eve of the summit a number of MSM sources would launch a smear campaign aimed at discrediting the rapprochement of the most powerful developing economies by releasing statements that the strategy of association chosen by BRICS was no longer modern or relevant. It is noteworthy that back in 2015, Forbes would run an article titled: “The Death Of BRICS” and in the same year, the US business magazine Barron’s released an autopsy under the heading “Why the BRICS Died”. Experts of the flagship of British business news, The Financial Times, would echo these clichés a year later. Even the US rating agency S&P Global said it assumed that the BRICS alliance was “meaningless.”
Yet, no signs of the imminent death of BRICS could be observed during the recent summit. Even the attempts of the Trump administration to drag Brazil away from the rest of the member states by denoting it as the closest ally of Washington outside NATO produced no lasting effect on the atmosphere of this massive event.

Yet, such grim predictions coupled with assurances of selfless friendship that the West has been making in respect of individual BRICS members had to affect the summit somehow, and they did. The Bolsonaro government tried to demonstrate its support for the US position on certain matters, urging other member states to delete from the final declaration provisions that contradict US interests in the Middle East, including the statement about the need for protection of UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East). Under the influence of Washington, Brasilia abandoned the special and differentiated regime in the World Trade Organization (WTO), as the US wants to scrap this mechanism so China and India can't get an "unfair advantage in trade negotiations."

Nevertheless, in the final declaration of the BRICS summit, the heads of Russia, Brazil, China, India and South Africa expressed a position that contradicts the policy of US President Donald Trump on a number of very important issues, Frankfurter Allgemeine reports. In particular, they advocated climate protection measures and free trade. It has also been underlined there that it’s of paramount importance that all WTO members avoid unilateral and protectionist measures that contradict both the spirit and rules of the organization. The summit participants emphasized that protectionist measures threaten global trade and investment, can lead to a global economic downturn, and therefore all BRICS member countries have pledged their commitment to promote mutual trade. The Brasilia Declaration adopted on the basis of the results of the discussions reflected the issues of security, the economy and trade, technology and climate, world governance, the fight against corruption and the settlement of regional conflicts that are relevant for BRICS. The BRICS member countries expressed their commitment to the provisions of the Paris Climate Agreement, and also advocated the reform of international organizations such as the UN, WTO and IMF for them to be able to address modern challenges.

The Brazilian summit demonstrated to the world that the BRICS cooperation format has become an instrument of multipolar world order and financial institutions that work in parallel with the fundamental financial institutions of the "West-centric" world system, such as the IMF or the World Bank.

The fake forecasts of certain Western “experts” failed to materialize as well, including those that stated that the Brazilian summit would provide groundwork for the sitting Brazilian president to undermine the policies of individual BRICS member states. In this regard, a number of examples were given when during his election campaign, president Bolsonaru would voice rather harsh criticism of Beijing. However, for this summit, the Brazilian leader chose a balanced approach. Under pressure from the Brazilian authorities, representatives of the so-called “Venezuelan opposition” liberated the Venezuelan Embassy in Brazil, which they had been occupying until the day the summit began. The Brazilian president himself said that “China is becoming more and more part of Brazil’s future,” and overall the summit looks like an ideal platform to focus on mutually beneficial cooperation instead of emphasizing geopolitical contradictions.

The recent BRICS summit has clearly showed that such interaction between countries is reversing the long-standing principles of international relations promoted by the United States and the European Union, as now-a-days countries are looking for common ground and cooperation in areas of common interests instead of concentrating on individual negative aspects. BRICS leaders have shown that their countries reject dictatorship and political pressure, the tactics of blackmail and threats, the use of military force without UN Security Council sanction, the introduction of unilateral economic sanctions, the ongoing abuse of the status of the American dollar together with the substitution of international law with the so-called “rules based order” recently invented by Washington.

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