

Emerging markets

Cyril Ramaphosa seeks to avoid global powers 'contest' over Brics expansion

Tensions emerge over growth of emerging-market bloc as South Africa prepares to welcome Brazil, Russia, India and China



Cyril Ramaphosa: 'An expanded Brics will represent a diverse group of nations with different political systems that share a common desire to have a more balanced global order' © GCIS/Reuters

Joseph Cotterill in Johannesburg 5 HOURS AGO

President Cyril Ramaphosa said South Africa would “not be drawn into a contest between global powers”, ahead of this week’s Brics summit in Johannesburg that will consider the biggest expansion of the emerging-market bloc in more than a decade.

Africa’s most industrialised nation supports the expansion as a non-aligned country that wants to avoid a world that is “increasingly polarised into competing camps”, Ramaphosa said in a televised address as [South Africa](#) prepared to welcome the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India and China, as well as those from other developing-world nations.

China is pushing for the Brics to become a stronger political rival to the G7 bloc of advanced economies [through an expanded membership](#) that could include Argentina, Iran, Indonesia and 20 other governments that have formally applied, according to people briefed on Beijing’s position.

But in the run-up to the summit that begins on Tuesday, India and Brazil have been more sceptical about adding new members, representing tensions over whether the Brics should mostly stay as an economic forum for diverse [developing nations](#).

India is currently the only strongly performing Brics economy as China confronts a

slowdown and the three other members have had lacklustre growth in the past decade.

South Africa, which was the first country to be added to the original Brics grouping in 2010, has signalled that it does not see further expansion in anti-western terms.

“An expanded Brics will represent a diverse group of nations with different political systems that share a common desire to have a more balanced global order,” said Ramaphosa, who hosts Xi Jinping for a state visit ahead of the summit, only the Chinese leader’s second trip abroad this year.

India’s Narendra Modi and Brazil’s Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva are also set to travel to the gathering in Johannesburg, but Russia’s Vladimir Putin will stay behind. The Russian leader will not attend after South Africa faced an obligation to arrest him over his indictment by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in the invasion of Ukraine.

South Africa has been trying to balance closer ties with Russia and China with mollifying the US and preserving threatened trade links over what has been seen in Washington DC as its equivocation in condemning the war.

“While some of our detractors prefer overt support for their political and ideological choices, we will not be drawn into a contest between global powers,” Ramaphosa said. “Multilateralism is being replaced by the actions of different power blocs, all of which we trade with, invest with, and whose technology we use.”

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