
BRICS CONNECT.

Anniversary
Edition Issue

MAGAZINE



**THE YEAR
IN PHOTOS**

**COULD BOLLYWOOD
BE NEXT?**

**WILL TRUMP FORCE BRICS TO RETHINK
THEIR DE-DOLLARISATION PLANS?**

December 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	EDITOR'S LETTER	17	THIRTEEN PARTNER COUNTRIES JOIN THE BRICS FAMILY
05	THE YEAR IN PHOTOS	19	WILL TRUMP FORCE BRICS TO RETHINK THEIR DE-DOLLARISATION PLANS?
12	COULD BOLLYWOOD BE NEXT?	21	SPOTLIGHT: SPECIAL REPORTS
13	SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHES BID TO STOP ISRAEL'S GAZA ONSLAUGHT	23	BRICS PAY TAKES CENTRE STAGE
15	CHINA'S WANG YI CALLS FOR PEACE TO AVOID 'NEW COLD WAR'	25	A NEW LENS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

BRICS CONNECT.



BRICS Connect is a leading digital media platform dedicated to providing comprehensive coverage and analysis of the BRICS nations.

Established in 2023, the company has quickly become a trusted source for in-depth insights, diverse perspectives, and commentary on the geopolitical, economic, and cultural dynamics of BRICS.

At the heart of BRICS Connect is a dedicated team of writers and journalists, each boasting a rich tapestry of industry experience spanning over 15 years, committed to unravelling the multifaceted narratives of the BRICS nations.

WWW.BRICSCONNECT.CO



GERSHWIN WANNEBURG

AS SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISTS, OUR GOAL WITH BRICS CONNECT WAS TO PROVIDE NEWS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE INSIDE; TO GIVE SPACE TO LEADERS AND OPINION MAKERS WHO ARE RARELY GIVEN ANY ROOM ON WESTERN MEDIA PLATFORMS, WITHOUT ABANDONING THE PRINCIPLES OF CREDIBLE AND FAIR REPORTING.

EDITOR'S LETTER: FROM GREECE WITH LOVE

Just over a year ago, on a bright afternoon in Greece, my colleague Lamese Waterfield gave birth to the idea that would ultimately become this publication.

It started with the buzz surrounding the BRICS summit to be held in South Africa in August last year. As a former journalist, Lamese instantly knew this was going to be a big story. Sitting on the other end of a Zoom call in another hemisphere, I was immediately infected by her enthusiasm.

It had been a while since the alliance had attracted so much international attention.

The source of the drama was the attendance of Russian president Vladimir Putin, who has been accused of crimes related to the war in Ukraine. South Africa, as a signatory to the statutes of the International Criminal Court, would have been obligated to arrest Putin on his arrival in the country.

For weeks, South Africa refused to bow to pressure to bar Putin from attending the BRICS summit. In the end, Putin sent his foreign minister Sergei Lavrov instead. Since then, the intensity of interest in BRICS has only increased. After taking on ten new members in 2023, dozens of countries have applied for membership.

Among world leaders and pundits, the response has been equally telling. Their analysis of BRICS seems to range from outright dismissal to fervent enthusiasm.

President-elect Donald Trump took a swipe at BRICS during a campaign rally in Wisconsin in September.

“Many countries are leaving the dollar. They’re not going to leave the dollar with me. I’ll say, you leave the dollar, you’re not doing business with the United States because we’re going to put a 100% tariff on your goods.”

He repeated the threat this weekend on Truth Social saying: “The idea that the BRICS Countries are trying to move away from the Dollar while we stand by and watch is OVER. We require a commitment from these Countries that they will neither create a new BRICS Currency, nor back any other Currency to replace the mighty U.S. Dollar or, they will face 100% Tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful U.S. Economy.”

It seems like a disproportionate response from the incoming leader of the world’s most powerful nation, especially given the overwhelming dominance of the dollar and the apparent consensus among experts that a BRICS currency is a long way off and, even if it were to launch, would hardly pose a threat to the dollar. Others have gone even further in their scepticism.

Jim O’Neill, the man who coined the term BRICS, has been one of its harshest critics. In an interview with the Financial Times ahead of the 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg, O’Neill told the Financial Times that proposals to create a BRICS currency that could challenge the dominance of the dollar were ridiculous. He was equally savage in an interview with This Day. He told the Nigerian publication that, of the BRICS members, only India and China had made any progress over the past two decades.

Our journalistic instincts tell us that these strong reactions signal a growing relevance of this lesser- known alliance.

We hope that this evolution is captured by the highlights we have accumulated in this publication, which we bring to you as part of our one-year anniversary celebrations.

The past year has been a deeply satisfying learning journey for us as we explored the canyons and seas that make up the BRICS universe.

As a start-up, we are still in our infancy. Much like BRICS, we are navigating unfamiliar terrain.

The coming together of nations as geographically and culturally diverse as Russia and Ethiopia, under the BRICS flag, is just a glimpse of the times in which we live; a world filled with contradictions, where rivals such as India and China both swear allegiance to BRICS.

As South African journalists, our goal with BRICS Connect was to provide news and analysis from the inside; to give space to leaders and opinion makers who are rarely given any room on Western media platforms, without abandoning the principles of credible and fair reporting. Therefore, you will find a wide variety of views on BRICSConnect.co, even from the curmudgeonly Mr BRICS, aka Jim O’Neill.

At the very least, we hope that the snapshot that we have prepared for you in these pages serves as a reminder of the year that was. As for our most ambitious goal: we hope you accompany us on this epic journey, however it unfolds.

Gershwin Wanneburg





CREDIT: MAKSIM BOGODVID, BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU

THE YEAR IN PHOTOS





CREDIT: ALEXEY FILIPPOV,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: KIRILL ZYKOV,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU

**16TH ANNUAL
BRICS
SUMMIT, KAZAN**



CREDIT: ALEXEY FILIPPOV,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: MAKSIM BLINOV,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: SERGEY BOBYLEV, BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: ALEXEY NIKOLSKIY, BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: SERGEY BOBYLEV, BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: ALEXEY FILIPPOV, BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: STANISLAV KRASILNIKOV,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



CREDIT: VLADIMIR ASTAPKOVICH,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU

**16TH ANNUAL
BRICS
SUMMIT, KAZAN**



CREDIT: VLADIMIR ASTAPKOVICH,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU

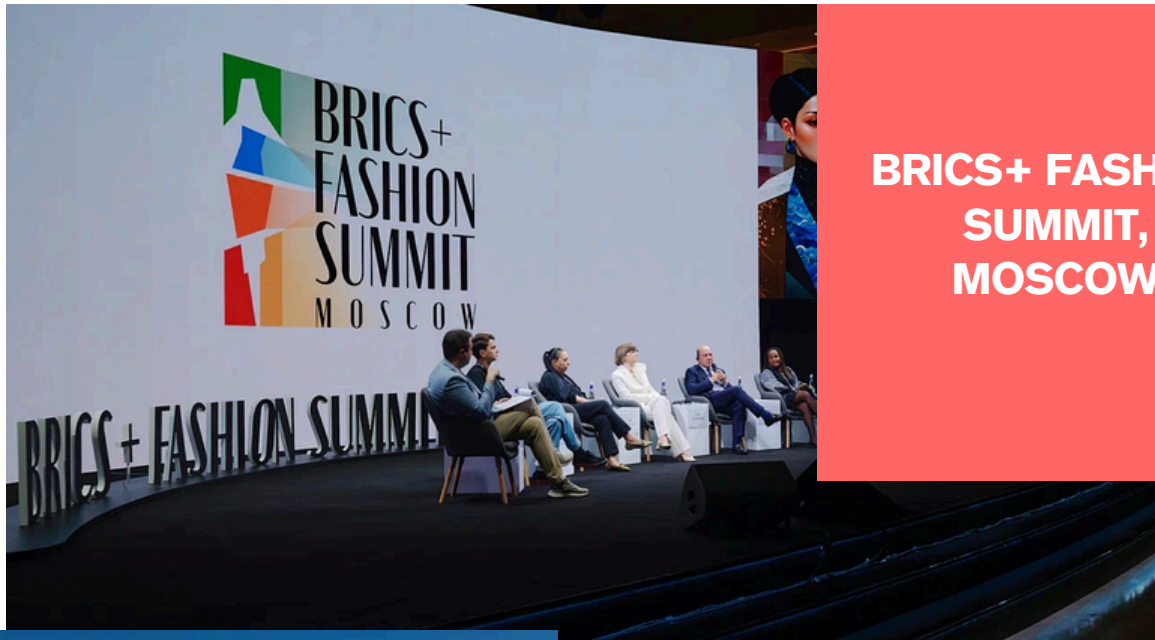


CREDIT: KIRILL ZYKOV,
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU

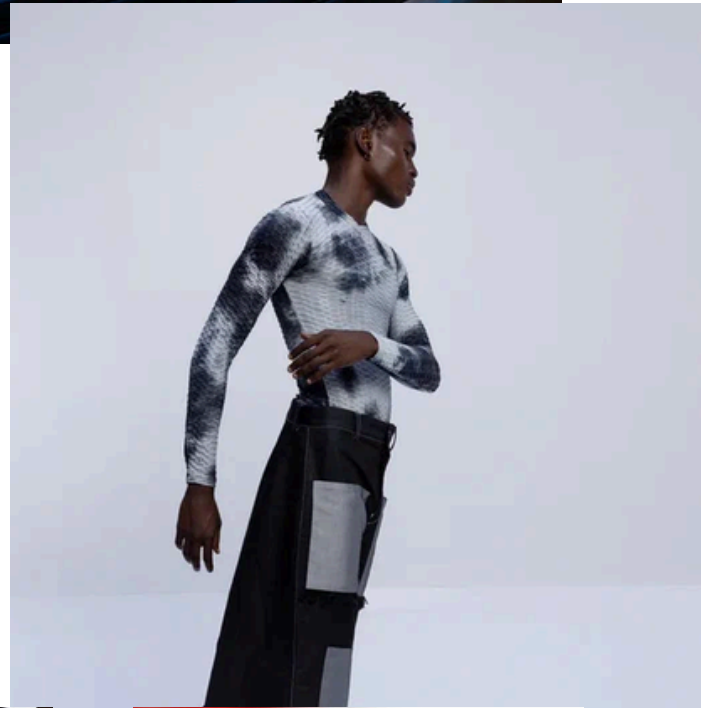


**BRICS WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
FORUM, MOSCOW**





**BRICS+ FASHION
SUMMIT,
MOSCOW**



**BRICS
GAMES, KAZAN**



Several representatives of the film industry from Russia, India, UAE, Egypt, Iran, South Africa and other countries discussed the prospects of joint film production and the development of national film distribution at a festival in Russia's Khanty-Mansiysk.

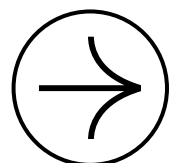
Masoud Ahmadvand, head of the cultural representation at the Iranian Embassy in Russia, said BRICS had the potential to build effective interaction between the countries. "The alliance states have common moral values and the same view on many issues. All these are conducive to making films together," Ahmadvand remarked.

Indian producer Sarfaraz Alam Safu, who has signed an agreement with the Russian film company, said that both Indian and Russian actors will participate in the projects. The shooting will take place in both countries.



[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE](#)

COULD BOLLYWOOD BE NEXT? FILM FESTIVAL EXPLORES THE SPECIAL LANGUAGE OF CINEMA IN BRICS COUNTRIES



SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHES BID TO STOP ISRAEL'S GAZA ONSLAUGHT



South Africa has called on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to demand that Israel stop its assault on Rafah, Al Jazeera reports.

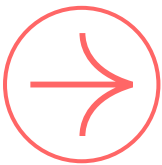
South Africa, which initiated its case in January regarding Israel's war on Gaza, is seeking additional emergency measures to address Israel's offensive on Rafah. This city in the southern Gaza Strip has become a refuge for over a million displaced Palestinians fleeing attacks in other parts of the enclave. South Africa told the court in The Hague that the Palestinian people are facing "ongoing annihilation" and described the assault on Rafah as "part of the endgame in which Gaza is utterly destroyed."

Despite “explicit warnings” of potential “genocidal” consequences, Israel continues its attacks in Rafah, South African lawyer Tembeka Ngcukaitobi stated.

Just before the court hearings began, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announced that the controversial operation in Rafah “will continue as additional forces will enter” the area. Rafah, an overcrowded city where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have taken shelter in tents, is suffering from a rapid spread of diseases and severe shortages of food and clean water. The only hospital in the area has shut down, leaving a small facility overwhelmed by the demand.

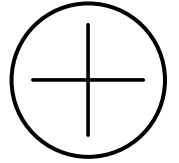
Previously, ICJ judges have issued provisional measures, ordering Israel to mitigate humanitarian suffering in Gaza. These measures included ensuring the prompt delivery of basic food supplies to Palestinians in Gaza, who are experiencing severe hunger and even famine due to Israel’s total siege.

Earlier this month, the Israeli army seized and closed the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, a crucial entry point for humanitarian aid. Aid agencies have warned that this closure has significantly impeded their operations.



More coverage: Iran wants BRICS to intervene in Gaza crisis BRICS nations call for ceasefire in Gaza



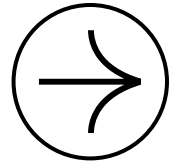


CHINA'S WANG YI CALLS FOR PEACE TO AVOID 'NEW COLD WAR'

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi participated in the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, where he called for respect for international law, People's Daily Onlinereports.



“With our expanded membership, we have ushered in a new era of collective self-reliance for the Global South.”



“With our expanded membership, we have ushered in a new era of collective self-reliance for the Global South. The influence and appeal of BRICS have continually increased, and we have stood at the forefront, succeeding through mutual support and unity, even in challenging times.

The BRICS brand is shining brighter, and our voice is more powerful,” he noted.

He said the politicisation and excessive securitisation of economic issues was rampant, with unilateral sanctions and technological barriers on the rise. He called for upholding multilateralism, leading efforts to maintain the UN-centered international system, and firmly opposing actions that undermine international order and violate international rules.

On security issues, Wang emphasised that dialogue and consultation must not be abandoned, no matter how complex the situation.

Regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict, Wang called for an immediate, comprehensive, and sustainable ceasefire in Gaza, alleviation of the humanitarian crisis, and prevention of the conflict from spreading. He also supported Palestine’s full UN membership and the restart of the “two-state solution” to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East.

Regarding the ongoing Ukraine crisis, China supports the timely convening of peace talks acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine, with equal participation and fair discussion of all peace proposals, Wang noted.

BRICS should maintain independence and objectivity, promote the international community’s consensus on peace, and oppose the instigation of a “new Cold War” under any pretext, he said.

Wang also suggested fully leveraging the resources and market advantages of the “Big BRICS,” strengthening financial and trade cooperation, ensuring energy and food security, driving innovation co-operation, and acting as a bridge for cultural exchanges.



THIRTEEN PARTNER COUNTRIES JOIN THE BRICS FAMILY

vol. 1

BRICS welcomed 13 new “partner nations” at its summit in Kazan in October.

The countries are: Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Geopoliticaconomy.com reports that the expansion adds to the alliance’s economic clout.

The nine fully fledged BRICS countries account for over a third of global GDP (based on purchasing power parity), represent more than 40% of the world’s population, and contribute approximately 30% of global oil production.

Over 30 countries participated in the Kazan summit from October 22-24, marking the first meeting to include BRICS’ four new members. In addition to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, leaders attending the summit included Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

During the 2023 Johannesburg summit, six countries were invited to join BRICS, but two, Argentina and Saudi Arabia, did not accept the invitation. Argentina, under the leadership of center-left President Alberto Fernández and Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, had agreed to join in August 2023. However, after right-wing President Javier Milei took office in December 2023, he immediately canceled Argentina’s plans to join, stating that the country’s geopolitical alignment was with the United States and Israel, not with BRICS.

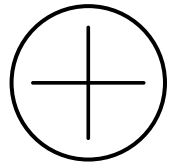
In contrast, Saudi Arabia's position has been more ambiguous. While Riyadh has not formally accepted the invitation, it has not rejected it either. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), the kingdom's de facto leader, did not attend the Kazan summit; instead, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan represented the country.

Western critics of BRICS have seized upon Argentina's rejection and Saudi Arabia's indecision to portray the group as fragmented. To prevent such conflicts in the future, BRICS introduced a 'partner' status at the Kazan summit. Under this new system, countries wishing to join must first be accepted as partners for a period before full membership. This process is similar to the one used by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes China, Russia, India, and Iran.

While Russia announced 13 new partner nations at the summit, they were not publicly disclosed at the event. Instead, journalists from BRICS member countries released the list, citing diplomatic sources.

The nine fully fledged BRICS countries account for over a third of global GDP (based on purchasing power parity), represent more than 40% of the world's population, and contribute approximately 30% of global oil production.





WILL TRUMP FORCE BRICS TO RETHINK THEIR DE- DOLLARISATI ON PLANS?

Donald Trump seems to have declared economic war on the BRICS nations, according to economist Sharad Kohli.

A month before he returns to the most powerful seat in the world, Trump threatened that he would impose 100% tariffs on BRICS countries if they proceed with plans to turn away from the US dollar in favour of local currencies and a single BRICS unit.

“In other words, this will almost put an embargo on imports being done from these countries. If we look at it from the other side, the BRICS countries will find it impossible to export their products to the US because 100% tariffs would make exports unviable for the Americans to buy,” Times of India quoted Kohli as saying.

It’s a stunning attack on a group that has repeatedly stressed that its mission is pro-BRICS, rather than anti-Western.

Trump’s remarks should also worry African countries who rely on the United States for duty-free access to the US market through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

To gauge the fairness of Trump’s threat, let’s take a look at what BRICS leaders themselves have said about a possible single unit.

South Africa’s Ambassador to China, Siyabonga Cwele, said in April that BRICS was making progressing on establishing a common currency and encouraged the use of member states’ local currencies to mitigate the risks of relying solely on the US dollar.

“With this threat coming in, BRICS countries may have to rethink. And I think this is also a declaration of an economic war on the developing countries by America.”

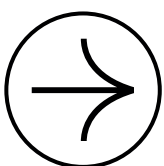
In the same month, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov clarified that the proposal for a unified currency within the BRICS group remains active, though it hinges on specific conditions, SABA reports.

Ryabkov emphasised the necessity of establishing a central bank for currency issuance and assessing interest rates among member states’ banks. While acknowledging the complexity of implementation, he said that the idea hasn’t been shelved but rather requires further groundwork.

A taskforce of finance ministers from BRICS nations were to meet in May to discuss the common currency and enhancing the stability of international monetary systems.

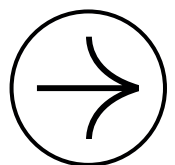
The BRICS nations are increasingly de-emphasising the role of the US dollar in their economic transactions, Vice Chairman of BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sameep Shastri, told Tass in August.

The currency didn’t make it to the final [Kazan Declaration](#) following the BRICS summit this October, though there was talk of [reducing the dominance of the dollar](#).

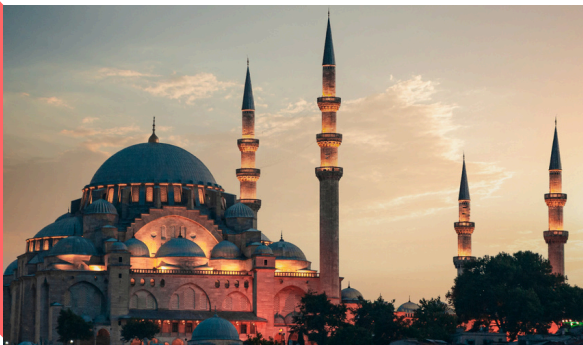




WE'VE COVERED EVERYTHING FROM SPORTS TO THE PALESTINIAN CRISIS THIS YEAR ON BRICS CONNECT. TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF OUR SPECIAL REPORTS:



THE NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK: TEN YEARS LATER



EXPLORING THE ECONOMIC SYNERGIES BETWEEN TURKEY AND BRICS

THE 2024 BRICS GAMES: SPECIAL COVERAGE

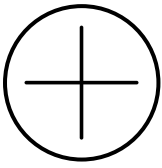


THE BRICS TOURISM BOOM



SAUDI ARABIA: A SPECIAL REPORT





BRICS PAY TAKES CENTRE STAGE

THE 16TH BRICS SUMMIT, HELD IN KAZAN, RUSSIA, MARKED A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN THE EVOLUTION OF BRICS PAY, A BLOCKCHAIN-BASED PAYMENT SYSTEM DESIGNED TO FACILITATE CROSS-BORDER TRANSACTIONS USING LOCAL CURRENCIES.



As part of BRICS' ongoing efforts to reduce reliance on Western-dominated financial systems like SWIFT, BRICS Pay represents a key component in the group's strategy to enhance financial sovereignty and foster economic collaboration among its members.

Designed to address the complexities of global trade, BRICS Pay offers a secure, cost-effective alternative for cross-border payments, empowering individuals and businesses to bypass traditional currency conversion barriers. According to Financial News, this platform is integral to BRICS' broader de-dollarisation agenda, enabling smoother financial interactions among its member nations.

At the summit, BRICS leaders emphasised the importance of BRICS Pay as a practical solution to long-standing issues in international financial systems. According to the Financial Times, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the initiative as "a significant step towards strengthening our financial sovereignty and reducing dependence on external financial systems".

The practical application of BRICS Pay was showcased during the BRICS Business Forum, where over 4,000 participants used the system for real-time transactions. Leveraging QR code technology, BRICS Pay allows users to pay via smartphones by scanning codes at point-of-sale terminals or on receipts.

Notably, the platform also functions offline, enabling transactions even in areas with limited internet connectivity, a feature that, according to the BRICS Pay, offers unique advantages for users in international roaming zones.

Currently operational in Russia, BRICS Pay is set to expand to other BRICS+ nations by 2025, including popular tourist destinations such as Turkey, Egypt, and the Maldives. This rollout will enable residents of BRICS countries to make seamless payments abroad without worrying about currency exchange, further integrating the system into global commerce.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking at the summit, stated, "The creation of the BRICS Pay system is a significant step towards strengthening our financial sovereignty and reducing dependence on external financial systems."

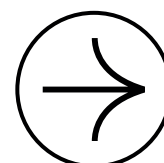
Western scepticism of BRICS Pay could highlight discomfort with shifting global financial dynamics. Critics point to challenges like integrating diverse systems, governance concerns, and the entrenched dominance of the US dollar.

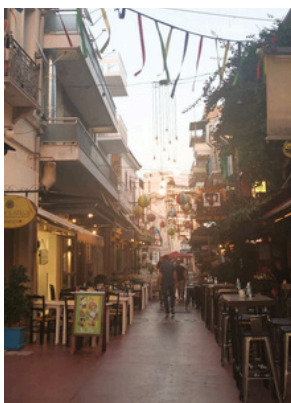
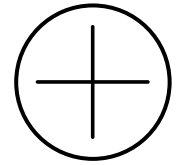
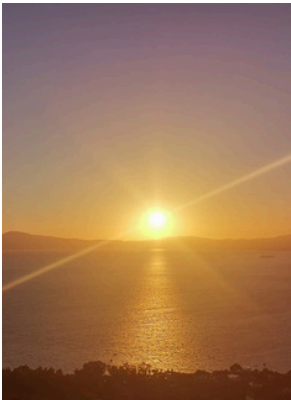
While these are valid, they often overlook BRICS' progress in fostering cooperation and financial sovereignty. Claims of potential fragmentation could reflect the West's unease with a multipolar financial system rather than flaws.

From a BRICS lens, these critiques highlight the West's reluctance to adapt to a more multipolar financial world rather than genuine insurmountable flaws in the BRICS Pay initiative.

Ultimately, a successful BRICS Pay would signify not just a technological achievement but also a geopolitical shift, giving emerging economies greater financial independence and challenging the Western-dominated status quo.

**More coverage:
[Well, hello BRICS Pay!](#)**





A NEW LENS FOR A CHANGING WORLD



I found myself in the coastal town of Kalamata, Greece, renowned for its rich history and famed olives, arriving almost by chance and knowing little about it beforehand. Nestled on the southern coast of the Peloponnese, its charm was undeniable, but it was what happened during my stay that left the most lasting impression.

From this small town in Greece, I connected with my colleague Gershwin, nearly 8,000 kilometers away in Cape Town. Despite the distance, our conversation resonated deeply. We spoke about the portrayal of BRICS nations in Western media and how even something as simple as referring to them as the "BRICS bloc" felt reductive. It stripped these diverse countries of their individuality and collective complexity, reducing a transformative initiative to outdated, oppositional framing reminiscent of Cold War-era language.



LAMESEWATERFIELD

As storytellers, we knew the power of narrative and the importance of shifting the lens. BRICS Connect was born from this moment - not just as a news platform, but as a mission to amplify voices, tell authentic stories, and offer a perspective unfiltered by Western bias.

What has been fascinating, is watching how ordinary people are engaging with BRICS news. From social media to casual conversations, something is building. People are dissecting the implications of new nations joining, debating the potential of a shared currency, and of course, discussing the potential move away from the US dollar. This is no longer a conversation reserved for policymakers or financial analysts; it's become a tool of empowerment for everyday people.

For many, BRICS represents something far greater than shifting economic power. It's a reimagining of what global influence can look like. It's about reclaiming agency, breaking free from models that have long defined success and progress according to Western ideals. To me, it's as much of a shift in self-perception as it is about geopolitics. People derive pride and confidence from belonging to a collective and when this projects strength, growth, and innovation, it becomes even more powerful. BRICS is doing just that.

The birth of initiatives like the New Development Bank (NDB) and the increasing focus on education, employment, and infrastructure within BRICS countries only reinforce this narrative. These stories aren't just about policies or loans - they're about transforming lives.

When the NDB funds rural infrastructure in India or renewable energy in Brazil, it creates jobs, improves living standards, and fosters innovation. When BRICS nations launch a Network University, they're not just providing education; they're building a generation of thinkers and doers who can thrive in a world shaped by their own values.

Of course, challenges remain. We have highlighted many of these on our website. But the growing online discourse reveals a collective hunger for change - a desire for a development model that aligns with diverse needs and aspirations.

This is where we believe BRICS Connect finds its purpose: to capture these stories, celebrate this momentum, and provide a platform where ordinary people's experiences and aspirations take centre stage. This is more than a shift in power, it's a shift in narrative ownership. For once, the global stage isn't just a reflection of someone else's values. It's a platform where BRICS nations, and their people, are asserting their place and reshaping the way the world sees itself.

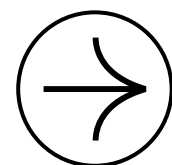
Yes, the journey will be bumpy. There will be setbacks. But what matters most is that people across BRICS nations are daring to imagine a brighter, fairer future. At BRICS Connect, we're here to amplify those voices and tell those stories. And it's about time.

It was never really de-dollarisation or the excitement and critique in posts strewn across social media. Rather, it's a rallying cry that says, "I matter, and somehow, my future appears a bit brighter than it did yesterday."

Yes, the journey to BRICS Connect was born from a moment of inspiration, but it's impossible to ignore the backdrop of where it all began. However picturesque Kalamata is, with its tasty, juicy, and meaty olives, it wasn't an easy ride. Between being eaten alive by mosquitoes, running from pharmacy to pharmacy in search of steroid cream, the experience wasn't always idyllic.

But amidst all the discomfort and unpredictability, there was something about that moment that made BRICS Connect feel possible. Sometimes all we need is just the spark of possibility - the same kind of possibility that BRICS represents. It's not about perfection, nor is it about having all the answers. It's about daring to imagine something better, something bigger, and having the courage to take the first step.

Efharistó, Greece!



BRICS Connect.

WWW.BRICSCONNECT.CO