



## THE POSITION OF BRICS TOWARDS THE SYRIAN CRISIS

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By the beginning of this century, an international economic grouping called BRICS has emerged, consisting of five countries from the rising powers: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. There are some attempts and developments within the BRICS grouping aiming to increase the coordination of their stances and foreign policies towards some crises in various regions, especially the crises in the Middle East. Accordingly, this article aims to identify the roles of BRICS as a whole towards the Syrian crisis as one of the most prominent regional crises, and to review and investigate the constants of the positions of BRICS, and to monitor the behaviour and approach of BRICS towards this crisis that represents one of the existing challenges, and to assess the effectiveness of BRICS as some claim that the features of the BRICS grouping as a whole have begun to become clear politically toward the Syrian crisis in particular.

**Keywords:** Middle East; MENA; Arab spring revolutions; Syria; Bashar al-Assad; international security; regional crises; United Nations; Security Council; UNSC Resolution 2254.

## ПОЗИЦИЯ БРИКС ПО СИРИЙСКОМУ КРИЗИСУ

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В начале нынешнего века сформировалось международное экономическое объединение БРИКС, в состав которого входят пять стран: Бразилия, Россия, Индия, Китай и ЮАР. Внутри БРИКС предпринимаются попытки и действия, направленные на улучшение координации позиций объединения и внешней политики в отношении некоторых кризисов в различных регионах, особенно на Ближнем Востоке. Целью данной статьи является определение позиции БРИКС по вопросу сирийского кризиса как одного из наиболее заметных региональных кризисов, а также обзор и исследование основополагающих позиций объединения, отслеживание деятельности и подходов БРИКС по рассматриваемому кризису, представляющему собой одну из актуальных проблем. Важна также оценка эффективности работы БРИКС с учетом существующих мнений о политической позиции объединения в целом и в отношении сирийского кризиса в частности.

**Ключевые слова:** Ближний Восток; Ближний Восток и Северная Африка (БВСА); революции «арабской весны»; Сирия; Башар аль-Асад; международная безопасность; региональные кризисы; ООН; Совет Безопасности; Резолюция Совета Безопасности ООН 2254.

### Introduction

The first to coin the term *BRICS* was Jim O'Neill, an economist at *Goldman Sachs*, in 2001 in his report on the growth prospects for the economies of Brazil, Russia,

India and China [1, p. 13], and then they officially formed their own economic bloc in 2009, by holding the first summit of BRIC, which turned into the BRICS after the

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state of South Africa officially joined it in 2011, crowning its political endeavours to join this promising new born grouping that aims to reach a multipolar system [2, p. 4].

This grouping has an important economic role in the existing international system, which raises questions about the possibility of the evolution of its economic role as a major economic power into a political and strategic influence to confront the current economic,

political and security challenges in the international system, and the possibility that BRICS gathering becomes a major economic and political player in the future in light of an international environment full of many security threats with the emergence of a number of international variables such as cross-border terrorism and the exacerbation of international crises, like the Arab spring revolutions.

### BRICS position towards the Libyan crisis

It is important to know the constants of the BRICS positions towards some regional crises, mainly the Arab spring revolutions since 2011. Since the beginning of the Arab spring, BRICS countries have formed a united front at the United Nations against Western countries; in order to prevent a vote on resolutions likely to infringe the sovereignty of their allies strikingly, as BRICS questioned Western motives for intervention [3, p. 626], and the BRICS abstention from voting can initially be understood as a form of claiming the restoration of state sovereignty on the basis of invoking the concept of *responsibility to protect* (R2P) at the United Nations, which was previously adopted since the mid-2000s, at the United Nations World summit, and later formalised by UN Security Council Resolution 1674 of 2006 as a normative framework for the Security Council to take a decision on the use of force under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter [4, p. 112], the BRICS also identified some common principles, on top of these principles, is the common respect for the principle of avoiding the use of force, and stresses respect for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of each country [5, p. 457].

The importance of the Libyan crisis lies in the fact that it has been the first major international crisis to be discussed within the BRICS, which coincided with the presence of all BRICS countries as members of the UN Security Council in 2011 and 2012. That gave the grouping potential influence on the diplomatic arena [6, p. 61], and all BRICS countries voted in favour of Resolution 1970, which imposed sanctions on Libya, and was passed unanimously [7, p. 8], but after several weeks, the four BRIC (with the exception of South Africa) with Germany abstained from the decisive voting on the Security Council Resolution 1973 [3, p. 626], which imposed a no-fly zone on Libya, and paved the way for NATO's military intervention in Libya in 2011 [5, p. 455].

The 2011 Sanya summit represented the first attempt of BRICS to coordinate their positions on a particular conflict, namely the conflict in Libya [8, p. 80]. South Africa modified its position by including it at the BRICS summit in Sanya in the same year [9, p. 97], and the heads of the five BRICS countries jointly ex-

pressed their desire to continue the cooperation in the UN Security Council on Libya<sup>1</sup>, and after the 2011 BRICS Sanya summit, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev commended South African president Jacob Zuma for his efforts as head of the African Union mission in the conflict [9, p. 97].

It could be said that their vision is summed up in their opposition to the use of force in Libya and their conviction that all warring parties must reach a solution to their differences through peaceful means. They called for a peaceful solution to the conflict based on dialogue, through the mediation of the United Nations and regional organisations and mechanisms, in which they should play their assigned role, and expressed their support in particular for the initiative of the African Union High-Level Panel (HLP) on Libya emphasising the urgent need to protect the country's sovereignty and its territorial integrity, and the need to overcome differences between Libyan political forces and reach agreement on the formation of a government of national unity as soon as possible, and in this context, they expressed their support for the efforts made to promote the inter-Libyan dialogue by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his special representative for Libya Bernardino Leon and by the neighbouring countries and the African Union<sup>2</sup>.

The BRICS countries have clearly criticised the Western military intervention in Libya in 2011, explicitly stating that it led to the collapse of the integrated state institutions, the active army and law enforcement agencies, which in turn contributed to the rise of the activities of terrorist and extremist groups, in the context of highlighting the negative consequences of the escalation of the conflict. The armed forces in Libya invaded the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel region after only four years since that intervention<sup>3</sup>.

In seeking to resolve the Libyan crisis, BRICS leaders at the Brazil summit in November 2019 commended the efforts of the African Union and subregional organisations in addressing regional issues and managing conflicts in the interest of peace and security on the continent, reiterating the importance of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the

<sup>1</sup>Sanya declaration. Art 10 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/110414-leaders.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>2</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration. Art. 44 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



African Union, and urging all parties to immediate cessation of all military action in Libya and engagement with the United Nations, the African Union High-Level Panel on Libya and relevant stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable solution through a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process<sup>4</sup>. The BRICS countries continue to oppose any resolution that might resemble the UN Security Council Resolution 1973. They also refuse to vote in favour of any resolution similar to Resolution 1970 in the Syrian case because of the fear of falling into a loop as in Libya [7, p. 9].

Chinese president Hu Jintao described the BRICS countries as defenders of the interests of developing countries and as a force for defence and maintaining international peace and security [10, p. 21]. The BRICS countries have pursued a policy of opposing the American hegemony projects, by using the veto power by Russia and China in order to prevent the passing of any resolution in international forums, especially in the UN Security Council and the United Nations General As-

sembly that contradicts the interests of the BRICS. One evident example is the Russian-Chinese veto for many times regarding the Syrian crisis since its inception in 2011. This is one of the most important indicators and factors that indicate the BRICS countries' dissatisfaction with the existing international system, and their quest to influence and change it and share interests among the BRICS countries, as evidence of the beginning of a change in the structure of the international system, and an attempt to move to a new international system. On several occasions, the five BRICS countries agreed on a unified position on major international issues. For example, the BRICS countries emphasised the need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations and the UN Security Council in order to better represent the voices and interests of emerging economies. So, if these countries, especially Russia and China, had not been united in one international organisation BRICS, they would not have been able to influence world politics [5, p. 455].

### Constants of BRICS towards the Syrian crisis

Since March 2011, Syria has constituted a regional conflict zone and an international crisis, which has escalated from being an internal armed conflict, where many internal, regional and international parties have overlapped in a complex manner. The Syrian crisis is a very complex and thorny issue at the same time due to the geographical, political, economic and international position that Syria represents, and the ethnic and cultural diversity it holds and an important geographical location [11, p. 167].

While referring to conflicts at BRICS summits are often succinct and symbolic to some extent, the BRICS countries pay more detailed attention in the case of the Syrian crisis [6, p. 14], as the sections on Syria were particularly prominent and detailed in the final statements of their summits.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad sent a letter to the Durban summit in March 2012 urging the leaders of the BRICS countries to work for an immediate cessation of violence that would ensure the success of a political solution in Syria [12], and the BRICS countries have expressed their deep concern about the deteriorating security situation and the humanitarian situation in Sy-

ria since the beginning of the BRICS addressing to the crisis in the Delhi declaration of 29 March 2012<sup>5</sup>, as well as the growing threat of international terrorism and extremism in the region by all parties to the conflict<sup>6</sup>, and the BRICS strongly condemned the increasing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; as a result of the continuing violence<sup>7</sup>.

It can be said that there are a set of constants of the BRICS grouping towards the Syrian crisis.

**Peaceful solutions to the crisis.** In the 2013 summit, the BRICS countries declared their opposition to the militarisation of the Syrian conflict<sup>8</sup>, rejecting external military intervention and considering it unacceptable, and stressing the need to stop it through peaceful solutions [13, p. 83], as the BRICS call for an immediate end to all acts of violence and human rights violations, and to encourage broad national dialogues that meet the legitimate aspirations of all segments of the Syrian people, based on the firm commitment of the BRICS to the importance of respecting the rights of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic and protecting its independence, unity and territorial integrity<sup>9</sup>, and calling on the Syrian government and all segments

<sup>4</sup>Brasilia declaration of 14 November 2019. Art. 48 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilia.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>5</sup>4<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit: Delhi declaration of 29 March 2012. Art. 21 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>6</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 1, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>7</sup>BRICS and Africa: partnership for development, integration and industrialisation. eThekweni declaration of 27 March 2013. Art. 26 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Brasilia declaration of 14 November 2019. Art. 42 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilia.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).





of Syrian society to demonstrate the political will to embark on such a process, which alone can create a new environment for peace<sup>10</sup>.

The main point of the BRICS approach to Syria is launching a comprehensive and peaceful political settlement process for all political forces, which must be led by the Syrians themselves and subordinate to Syria<sup>11</sup>, leading to a transitional phase<sup>12</sup>, and calling on all parties to stop violence, not just president Bashar al-Assad, and the BRICS also support the mediating role played by the United Nations, and emphasise that foreign interference will not be allowed; this is partly due to the common position of the BRICS countries that Vladimir Putin's initiative regarding the disposal of chemical weapons in Syria under international supervision was successful and helped to prevent foreign interference in the country [9, p. 97].

BRICS supports international efforts aiming at promoting a political and diplomatic settlement of the crisis in Syria through a comprehensive national dialogue between all concerned Syrian parties that reflects the aspirations of all sectors of Syrian society, and guarantees the rights of all Syrians regardless of their ethnic affiliation or confession<sup>13</sup>, on the basis of the Geneva final communiqué issued on 30 June 2012 without pre-conditions or external interference, and work towards the full implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, especially Resolution 2254 of 2015 and Resolution 2268 of 2016<sup>14</sup>, as UN Security Council Resolution 2254 that was issued on 18 December 2015 stated its support for a Syrian-led political process facilitated by the United Nations [14, p. 143], and the need for all parties in Syria to take confidence-building measures in order to contribute to the chances of a political process and a permanent ceasefire, and calls on all states to use its influence with the Syrian government and the Syrian opposition to advance the peace process, confidence-building measures, and steps towards a ceasefire [14, p. 145].

BRICS supports Russia's steps aimed at promoting a political settlement in Syria, in particular the organisation of two rounds of consultations between the Syrian parties in Moscow in January and April 2015<sup>15</sup>, and welcomes the joint efforts of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to this end, and the appointment of Kofi Annan as joint special envoy for the Syrian crisis, and supports him in continuing to play a constructive role in reaching a political solution to the crisis<sup>16</sup>, and also supports the joint statement of the Geneva working group, providing the basis for resolving the Syrian crisis<sup>17</sup>, and it also supports the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and his special envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura and other international and regional efforts aimed at a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict<sup>18</sup>.

BRICS strongly supported the peace talks in Geneva and the Astana process and welcomed the establishment of de-escalation zones in Syria, which contributed to reducing violence levels and generating positive conditions and momentum for making tangible progress in peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations<sup>19</sup>, taking into account the outcomes of the Syrian national dialogue conference in Sochi and also reiterated its support for the Geneva process and the mediation provided by the United Nations, as well as the Astana process, which showed signs of positive developments on the ground, stressing on the complementarity between the two initiatives, and opposed measures that contradict the Charter of the United Nations and the authority of the Security Council that does not contribute to advancing the political process<sup>20</sup>.

It also expressed its support for the establishment of the Constitutional Committee, thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, the guarantors of Astana and all countries involved in efforts to address the conflict by political means, and the need for the full implementation of a sustainable ceasefire in the Idlib region, which does not include terrorist groups and entities that have

<sup>10</sup>4<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit: Delhi declaration of 29 March 2012. Art. 21 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>11</sup>BRICS leaders Xiamen declaration of 4 September 2017. Art. 41 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/170904-xiamen.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>12</sup>BRICS and Africa: partnership for development, integration and industrialisation. eThekweni declaration of 27 March 2013. Art. 26 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>13</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 1, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>14</sup>8<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit: Goa declaration of 16 October 2016. Art. 14 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/161016-go.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>15</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 5, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>16</sup>4<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit: Delhi declaration of 29 March 2012. Art. 21 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>17</sup>BRICS and Africa: partnership for development, integration and industrialisation. eThekweni declaration of 27 March 2013 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>18</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 5, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>19</sup>BRICS leaders Xiamen declaration of 4 September 2017. Art. 41 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/170904-xiamen.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>20</sup>BRICS in Africa: collaboration for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. 10<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit Johannesburg declaration of 26 July 2018. Art. 46 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180726-johannesburg.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).



been designated as such by the UN Security Council, and welcomed efforts to alleviate the crisis in Northeastern Syria, in particular the memorandum of understanding signed between Russia and Turkey on 22 October 2019<sup>21</sup>, and also welcomed the signing of the additional protocol to the Memorandum of stabilisation of the situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone<sup>22</sup>.

During the 12<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit that was held on 17 November 2020, BRICS' leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to support a Syrian-led, owned, and facilitated political process, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, aimed at constitutional reform and free and fair elections. They also emphasised the importance of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, which was launched with the decisive participation of the guarantor states of the Astana process and all the countries participating in the efforts made to address the conflict by peaceful means, and welcomed the efforts of the special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to Syria to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the committee. We are convinced that in order to reach an international agreement, members of the Constitutional Committee must be guided by the obligation to reach compromises and to cooperate constructively without outside interference<sup>23</sup>.

**The necessity of confronting terrorism.** The BRICS pointed out the role of terrorism in the Syrian conflict, and the growing threat of international terrorism and extremism in the region, as the Ufa declaration of the 7<sup>th</sup> summit in Russia on 8–9 July 2015 included a focus on relevant United Nations resolutions, calling for the strict implementation by the international community of all provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2170, Resolution 2178 and Resolution 2199, especially those dealing with cutting off funding and other forms of support for terrorists, and for compliance with the universally recognised rules of international law with regard to combating terrorism and extremism, including the principles of respect for the sovereignty

of states [4, p. 122], and also referred to the indirect effects of instability in Iraq and Syria, which led to an increase in terrorist activities in the region, and urged all parties to address terrorist threats, especially Resolution 2170 of 2014, which condemns the massive and widespread violations of human rights by extremist groups in Iraq and Syria, and the need to include the issue of terrorism in the discussions and initiatives of the United Nations [4, p. 123].

The BRICS also condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and called for the support of the Syrian society in the face of this serious threat<sup>24</sup>, and for the continuing the vigorous pursuit of terrorist groups identified by the UN Security Council, including ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, the BRICS expressed their deep concern about the dangers of terrorist dispersal<sup>26</sup>, and stressed the importance of unity in the fight against terrorist organisations in Syria, taking into account the relevant Security Council resolutions<sup>27</sup>.

BRICS' leaders also reaffirm international obligations to combat terrorism in all its forms and highlight the importance of unity in combating terrorist organisations in Syria, as defined by the UN Security Council<sup>28</sup>.

**Condemning the use of chemical weapons.** The BRICS grouping took a firm stand against the use of chemical weapons in the conflict [6, p. 14], as it expressly opposed their use in Syria by any party for any purpose and under any circumstance<sup>29</sup>, and commended the imposition of international control on the Syrian arsenals of chemical weapons or the transfer of toxic materials from the Syrian territory in accordance with the Security Council Resolution 2118 under the Chemical weapons convention, stressing that the success of these efforts is the result of the constructive cooperation of the Syrian authorities with the special mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to the United Nations and the UN Security Council<sup>30</sup>, and called for comprehensive, objective and independent investigations into all alleged incidents<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>21</sup>Brasilia declaration of 14 November 2019. Art. 42 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilia.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>22</sup>XII BRICS summit Moscow declaration of 17 November 2020. Art. 23 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 2, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>25</sup>8<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit: Goa declaration of 16 October 2016. Art. 14 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/161016-go.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>26</sup>Brasilia declaration of 14 November 2019. Art. 42 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilia.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>27</sup>BRICS in Africa: collaboration for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. 10<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit Johannesburg declaration of 26 July 2018. Art. 46 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180726-johannesburg.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>28</sup>XII BRICS summit Moscow declaration of 17 November 2020. Art. 23 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>29</sup>BRICS leaders Xiamen declaration of 4 September 2017. Art. 41 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/170904-xiamen.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>30</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 3, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>31</sup>BRICS in Africa: collaboration for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. 10<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit Johannesburg declaration of 26 July 2018. Art. 46 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180726-johannesburg.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).



The Syrian crisis has represented an arena for indirect conflict between the United States of America and its allies from the European countries on one hand and the BRICS countries, led by Russia and China on the other hand, with evidence that these countries have become an obstacle to taking any international decision to intervene in Syria [11, p. 178], as Russia's growing assertiveness in the Syrian conflict, centred around the stability of the country on the basis of defending the Assad government, contradicts the US policy and the policy of its allies aimed at overthrowing the Assad regime [15], and the BRICS countries have condemned unilateral military interventions, citing some statements and behaviours of US president Donald Trump [15], and the position of the BRICS was based on rejecting the external military intervention in the Syrian conflict, their lack of support for granting Syria's seat in the Arab League to the Syrian opposition, and their refusal to send weapons to the opposition, and the most important manifestation of coordination in the Syrian crisis was when the Russian Federation used its veto in the UN Security Council many times to stand up against the military intervention in the Syrian crisis in a way that prompted political analysts to talk about a new cold war between the Russian Federation and the United States of America [16, p. 86].

The Syrian crisis, with its regional and international repercussions, has provided an opportunity for Russia and China to enhance their political standing in international forums and confirm the compatibility between the Russian and Chinese positions towards the Syrian crisis and continue to provide support and assistance to the Syrian state in international forums [11, p. 180], and the Indian position converges with them, which opposes the external military intervention in the conflict by Western powers, and believes that resolving the conflict through force is not possible but must be resolved through dialogue, and since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the official position of the Indian government has been closer to supporting president Bashar al-Assad than to standing on the neutral side at least, and Brazil also agrees with its counterparts, the heads of state of the BRICS grouping, that the solution in Syria can only be through dialogue and rejects any external military intervention in Syria, and considers that the Geneva communiqué constitutes one of the most important principles involved in resolving the crisis in Syria, and it rejects categorically to arm the terrorist organisations that take the Syrian crisis as a single path to impose their agenda and the agenda of their financiers [11, p. 180–181].

For its part, South Africa supported the steadfastness of the Syrian people in their continued fight against

takfiri terrorism and its brutal crimes, and stressed the need to resolve the crisis peacefully, and that the only option to end this war is peace and negotiations, as Syria belongs to the Syrians and it is up to them alone to solve the problems under the supervision of Syria as an independent and sovereign state, and South Africa had previously experienced a great experience of incompatibility and differences between its segments, and this was resolved politically in 1994, and it became a unified, civil, democratic state where there is no discrimination or racism [11, p. 182].

Civil society has been systematically involved in BRICS security issues, as in October 2016, 19 BRICS scholars, diplomats and politicians wrote an open letter to BRICS leaders at the Goa summit urging an end to the Syrian conflict [8, p. 84], and we find the position of BRICS countries is broadly aligned or compatible towards the Syrian crisis, based on the assertion that the only permanent solution to the crisis lies in dialogue based on the independence of the Syrian state and the protection of its territorial integrity and sovereignty; in line with United Nations resolutions, and that there is no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the conflict<sup>32</sup>, and its conviction that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict<sup>33</sup>. While it is clear that the position of the BRICS countries deviates significantly from those of the United States and its supporters, the declarations of the summits do not explicitly attack the Western alliance but instead choose language that relates to generally accepted international law and the UN Charter [6, p. 14].

At the last 13<sup>th</sup> summit in September 2021, BRICS leaders talked about the situation of the Syrian crisis in the context of expressing their concern at the continuing conflicts and violence in different parts of the world and reaffirming their commitment to the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of states and reiterate that all conflicts must be resolved by peaceful means and through political and diplomatic efforts in line with international law, in particular the UN Charter. We underscore the inadmissibility of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and endorsing the position taken by BRICS' foreign ministers at their last meeting on the situation in different regions and countries, among them the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>34</sup>.

The ministers stressed the constants of their countries towards the crisis during the past decade, as they reaffirmed their strong commitment to a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, UN-facilitated political process in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

<sup>32</sup>VII BRICS summit: 2015 Ufa declaration of 9 July 2015. Para 1, art. 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html) (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>33</sup>Brasilia declaration of 14 November 2019. Art. 42 [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilia.html> (date of access: 15.09.2021).

<sup>34</sup>XIII BRICS summit New Delhi declaration of 9 September 2021. Art. 22 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-09/10/c\\_1310178656.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-09/10/c_1310178656.htm) (date of access: 15.09.2021).





They noted in this context the importance of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, launched with the decisive participation of the countries-guarantors of the Astana process and all states engaged in efforts to address the conflict through political means, and welcomed the efforts of Geir Pedersen, who is special envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Syria, in order to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the Constitutional Committee that should be guided by the commitment to compromise and cooperate con-

structively without foreign interference. They also emphasised the fundamental importance of allowing unhindered humanitarian aid in accordance with the UN humanitarian principles and the post-conflict reconstruction of Syria that would create conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of permanent residence thus contributing to achieving long-term stability and security in Syria and the region in general<sup>35</sup>.

## Conclusion

BRICS always affirms its commitment to calling for action for a peaceful and comprehensive political solution to the conflict in Syria. In one way or another, all BRICS countries have expressed the view that NATO has exceeded the powers conferred upon it by Security Council Resolution 1973 in Libya, as well as they also expressed their fear of repeating this pattern in Syria, and at the same time, they did not offer a single alternative solution, but rather they decided only the strong opposition to vote on any resolution that might undermine Syrian sovereignty.

It was noted that the BRICS summit in 2019 avoided mentioning the Venezuelan crisis in their joint declarations, in light of the support of some countries Russia, China, India and South Africa for Nicolas Maduro, while Brazil stands in solidarity with opposition leader Juan Guaido, as the BRICS failed to crystallise a unified position towards the Venezuelan crisis, and dealing with it with a kind of negative neutrality. On the other hand, the Syrian crisis has received great attention from the BRICS and occupied a large part of its leaders' discussions and meetings at the level of summits. The Syrian crisis has turned into an arena for geostrategic interac-

tions and the future ambitions of international powers and has also contributed to bringing about a change in the roles of actors on the international scene, and in the absence of the United States, Russia has been the most effective and influential international player in the crisis; which intervened militarily in the Syrian civil war in order to face the western intervention there, and despite the BRICS opposition at first to militarise the Syrian conflict, they have understood later the importance of the Russian intervention to avoid a repetition of the Libyan scenario, then they have supported this step. For example, we found the use of the Russian-Chinese veto.

There are a number of regional and international factors that the BRICS grouping takes into account, as it monitors as much as possible the various developments that have affected various regions of the world. For example, the BRICS grouping supports the settlement of the situation in Syria and calls for the use of political and diplomatic means and a complete and immediate ceasefire, but BRICS has been unable to provide initiatives through which to put an end to the crises in Libya or Syria.

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