

Unique BRICS-Plus Summit Points to Steps Forward from Gaza ‘Pause’

by Paul Gallagher

Nov. 25—While the welcome four-day truce and prisoner exchanges in the horrific Gaza war came from strong pressure on Israel’s government by the United States, Egypt, and particularly by Israel’s angry population, extraordinary actions were taken by the “BRICS-Plus” and Southwest Asian nations as the agreement was negotiated, to create a path beyond truce, immediately to ceasefire. This may have begun in the meeting of China’s President Xi Jinping with U.S. President Joe Biden back on Nov. 15—the same day on which Resolution 2712 for a humanitarian pause in the war passed the UN Security Council without a U.S. veto—but the diplomatic activity of the Global South has greatly expanded since then.

The key step was the Nov. 21 online summit meeting of all 11 of the BRICS-Plus nations—their first such summit—which featured China’s proposal to organize an international peace conference on the Southwest Asia conflict. At the same time, beginning Nov. 21, the foreign ministers of a group of Islamic nations were visiting the “Permanent 5” members of the UN Security Council, starting with Beijing and ending with Washington on Nov. 25.

This “contact group” came out of the recent joint meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Arab League on the war crisis. It



Government of Oman

At an extraordinary summit, Arab and Muslim leaders demanded an immediate end to military operations in Gaza. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Nov. 11, 2023.

included foreign ministers of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Türkiye, Palestine, Indonesia and Nigeria, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, and a representative of Qatar. Its emergency diplomatic tour recognized that reaching peace requires bringing the United States to enter a peace conference with China and other BRICS nations which include important Islamic nations of Southwest Asia and North Africa. Israel’s mass killing in Gaza and the West Bank has shattered the Biden Administration’s previous strategy of diplomatic recognition agreements of more Arab nations with Israel, ignoring the Palestinians. Numerous U.S. officials have acknowledged off the record that Israel’s government has no strategy worthy of the name for the war, and little domestic support.

This is the opportunity that Schiller Institute founder Helga



White House

U.S. President Biden welcomes China’s President Xi for a summit in San Francisco, Nov. 15, 2023.

Zepp-LaRouche seized when on Nov. 22 she called on all the active leaders and organizers in the International Peace Coalition to demand that an international peace conference come out of the Gaza truce or “humanitarian pause” and discuss development of the Mideast region along with a ceasefire.

The need for this is desperate, because if the Netanyahu government of Israel resumes its revenge pogrom against Palestinians and keeps trying to provoke war in Lebanon with Hezbollah, the fuse is short to war with Iran and incalculable consequences.

BRICS Is Expanding Its Role

Leaders of the five BRICS member nations, and of the six nations invited to become members effective Jan. 1, met on Nov. 21 on line for an emergency video summit on the Palestine-Israel crisis, chaired by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. The 11 participating nations were Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina, with the participation of nine of their heads of state, UN Secretary General António Guterres, and a representative of Qatar. Ramaphosa issued a [Chair’s Summary](#) afterward, saying that there was not time for the group to formulate and issue a joint declaration. But many national leaders spoke out strongly following Xi’s international peace conference proposal.

Clearly the expanding BRICS group, which through some cooperative *economic actions* has already moved the world economy toward a new paradigm, was taking its first step to *political* coordination, on the most critical possible international crisis. President Xi said,

China calls for early convening of an international peace conference that is more authoritative to build international consensus for peace and work toward an early solution to the question of Palestine that is comprehensive, just, and sustainable.

He stated three principles: An immediate ceasefire; open and secure humanitarian corridors for assistance

to Palestinians in Gaza and an end to “collective punishment” of Gazans by denial of water, electricity and fuel, or by forced expulsion; and practical measures by the community of nations to stop the conflict from spreading across the region.

The “Chair’s Summary” by President Ramaphosa said the nations

condemned any kind of individual or mass forcible transfer and deportation of Palestinians from their own land ... [which] constitute grave breaches of the Geneva conventions and war crimes and violations under International Humanitarian Law.



UN/Evan Schneider

UN Secretary General António Guterres (center) makes a development funding proposal to a Nov. 20, 2023 Security Council seminar on “The Nexus of Peace with Development.”

On these points, the BRICS-Plus Chair’s Summary overlaps U.S. warnings to Israel about its war conduct, including public statements by President Biden. The Summary also states:

We reaffirmed that a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only be achieved by peaceful means. The Chair joined calls for the international community to support direct negotiations based on international law including relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, towards a two-state solution, leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine.

Brazil's President Lula da Silva stated to the Summit that the BRICS have to "mobilize political and diplomatic forces" and that Brazil is "ready to support all initiatives that lead to a political solution to this conflict." India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, representing Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said, "Our endeavor should be to make a difference on the ground immediately"—he reported on the aid India is sending to Gaza—"while also creating conditions for lasting solutions."

No 'Sole Superpower' in Southwest Asia

Simultaneous with the BRICS-Plus online summit Nov. 21, the "contact group" of Islamic nations cited above, on the second leg of their visits to the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council, was in Moscow meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Russian President Vladimir Putin's statements at the BRICS-Plus Summit were clearly related to this. Putin stressed that the only lasting way to settle the crisis is an overall solution to the Palestinian issue with international supervision (e.g., what was previously called the Middle East Quartet, consisting of the UN, the United States, the European Union, and Russia), based on decades of binding UN resolutions. Putin briefly described some of the horrors occurring in Gaza and then stated:

And all of that is, in fact, happening as a consequence of the United States' aspiration to monopolize the mediation role in the Palestinian-Israeli settlement process, and block the activities of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators. This is history's way of demonstrating that attempts to single-handedly cut the "Palestinian knot" are unviable and counterproductive....

Russia's stance is consistent and independent of momentary conditions. We urge the international community to join efforts aimed at de-escalating the situation, negotiating a ceasefire and achieving a political solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The BRICS states and the countries in the region could play a key role in this work.

Putin concluded by announcing that the BRICS, under Russia's presidency in 2024, will continue discussing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as well as "other urgent global and regional issues." In other words, the BRICS is going to be playing a major role



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Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, participates via videoconference in the Nov. 21, 2023 BRICS-Plus Summit on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: "We urge the international community to join efforts aimed at de-escalating the situation, negotiating a ceasefire, and achieving a political solution."

on the world stage.

After the Arab League and Islamic nations' leaders' meeting with Lavrov, the Moscow newspaper *Vedomosti* ran a Nov. 22 article titled, "Russia Proposes New Game Plan for the Mideast." *Vedomosti* picked up from TASS news agency that Andrey Kortunov, Director-General of the Russian International Affairs Council, had spoken of efforts to create a new security architecture for the Middle East. He pointed out that Arab and Muslim countries want to enlist Russia and China's help in order to counterbalance the dominant role of the United States.

The Arab countries, Kortunov said, are unwilling simply to rely on America as the mediator in the Middle East. They are rightly concerned that the United States will try to go back to the Abraham Accords of the Trump Presidency; that is, Israel's separate agreements with several Arab and Islamic nations. Meanwhile, the Americans will ignore the pro-Palestinian masses in Arab countries, putting pressure on Arab and Muslim elites to accept Israel's demands, Kortunov noted. The countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Arab League—

would like to introduce new players into this equation, who would be able to offset U.S. influence.... The list of such players is quite short; it includes Russia, China, and Türkiye, as well as some countries of the Global South.

Egyptian President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi was part of the Nov. 21 BRICS-Plus Summit and his Foreign Minister Sami Shukri was in the Arab League-OIC delegation visiting China, Russia, France, the UK, and the United States. On Nov. 24 President El-Sisi was able to hold a press conference in Egypt with two prime ministers of European nations, Alexander De Croo of Belgium and Pedro Sánchez of Spain, to call for the recognition by the United Nations of an independent State of Palestine. The two had also met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Chaim Herzog.

The “two-state solution” which implies such recognition of Palestine is, again, an overlap with the stated policy of U.S. President Biden’s administration; but it has been a dead letter in U.S.-Israeli relations for years given Israel’s Likud governments’ opposition, and remains so—up to now.

‘Peace and Development Fund’?

In all of this activity for peace, including the calls for a two-state solution with Palestinian sovereignty, the International Peace Coalition initiated in July 2023 by Helga Zepp-LaRouche is unique in proposing that the key to peace is economic development in the form of an “Oasis Plan” to bring water, power, and agricultural modernization to the entire region. The outline of this plan was first proposed by her husband, the late economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche, as long ago as 1975.

Although it is implied in the success of any Southwest Asia “new strategic architecture” for which the BRICS-Plus are organizing now, those nations have not yet linked such physical-economic development plans to that architecture.

On Nov. 20, however, the United Nations Security Council held a seminar, “The Nexus of Peace with Development,” open to all UN nations, at which 35 countries’ representatives gave very brief statements after listening to presentations by three “briefers”: well-known economist Prof. Jeffrey Sachs; UN Secretary General António Guterres; and Dilma Rousseff, former



UN/Eskinder Debebe

Jeffrey Sachs, President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, tells the Nov. 20, 2023 Security Council seminar, “The Security Council should establish a Peace and Development Fund.”

President of Brazil and current President of the New Development Bank founded by the BRICS nations. Both Guterres and Sachs called for the UN Security Council to create development funds.

Guterres proposed a “Sustainable Development Goals Stimulus of \$500 billion/year ... [to] release resources for long-term, affordable financing from multilateral and private sources,” as reported by UN News.

Sachs said,

All four wars [Ukraine, Palestine, Syria, African Sahel region—ed.] could be ended quickly by agreement in the UN Security Council ... by addressing the underlying economic and political factors.... The Security Council should establish a Peace and Development Fund.

When speaking specifically about the long-running Sahel conflicts, Sachs said that “external funding”—meaning multilateral development bank or other public funds—is needed for electrification, road and rail infrastructure, and education.

Into the window of time for action defined by the initial four-day “pause” in the Gaza horrors and the unprecedented steps taken by the BRICS and Global South nations, Helga Zepp-LaRouche made her call for the International Peace Coalition forces to demand an immediate international peace conference to solve the Southwest Asia conflict with development.