

By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA



As Goa Prepares to host BRICS...

When any State summit takes place, and that too of an international dimension, it is important for the host location to be familiar with what is going to be deliberated on their soil. However there is no such visible effort by the State to acquaint or involve host Goa in the BRICS Summit deliberations, except for sprucing up roads.

So what is BRICS? BRIC was basically a formation of Brazil, Russia, India and China that has roots in 2006 with the meeting of its leaders while they were attending the UN General Assembly and noted the inequities of the economic system where some countries stood privileged over others in determining the shape of things all over the world to their advantage. South Africa was admitted to the BRIC formation in 2010 and then it became BRICS.

All the countries in BRICS had at one stage or the other challenged the charting out of a development that leaves out the voices of these countries. These were also, (and they continue to be), rising powers from the developing world that have been confronted by US superpower. The peoples of BRICS countries have experienced the consequences of a global politics that bypasses the voices of developing and underdeveloped countries in forging a world order. Consequently, the economies of these countries get tied to the apron strings of international financial institutions who set conditionalities for the loans that are advanced to the developing countries, while plunging the countries into deep debt, akin to today's banking system, where an individual loanee gets swallowed, with the nature of the system including the interest structure and the pattern of investment by these banks.

The conditionalities, euphemistically called structural adjustment programmes, have included calling upon loanee countries to reversing fought-for robust processes of democratic governance. These conditionalities included adjusting the labour law machinery in a way that snatched away the rights it potentially guaranteed to the working class. These conditionalities also included setting up dispute resolution processes in international trade deals which tone down the obligations of the multinational companies while placing the poorer countries at risk of the acts of the companies, be it the consequences of pollution or of

the irresponsible and extractive appropriation of profits, emanating from these deals.



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Given the control that the US as a superpower had in world politics, it meant clipping and challenging this power, to pave way for rehauling the conditionalities and the determination or writing off of debt, by restructuring the global financial institutions. So BRICS was precisely the formation well poised to counter US control in world politics and bring to the table the framework of equality, solidarity, mutual development and cooperation, in realising a new world vision of development.

For this, it was and is necessary to look at development from the lens of the peoples of these countries who had the experience of development propagated by the superpowers which, for instance, marginalised their agricultural and industrial sector to bolster the multinational company-led agricultural and industrial sector. It was necessary after hearing out the voices of the excluded to envision a new architecture for the international financial institutions, that is appropriate to the needs, realities and aspirations of its people, repeat, its people, not its leadership and its elites.

Initially these countries did try to forge synergies in the areas of environmental and disaster management, in pharmaceuticals, metallurgy, biotechnology and tourism. But as these synergies were being forged, these countries were also rising as powers themselves, who were replicating the same styles of power that they set out to counter with the grouping as BRICS. However these are countries with a robust civil society. Will people push their countries to stick to the initial agenda of BRICS for a new equitable world order?

Pertinent questions are being asked such as: who will interconnectness assist?, how can we harness our existing legislation to address illegalities or criminality without imposing draconian legislation to stifle political dissent and create hype against the countries' neighbours in the name of counter-terrorism? How can these countries cooperate in dealing with trafficking? How will the New Development Bank proposed by BRICS countries be different from the International Monetary Fund or World Bank, in a way that their loans can reach those countries and people who most need them and not breed big time bank defrauding violators who squeeze finances as they enjoy a flamboyant lifestyle and flee the

country? How will energy be harnessed or industrialisation be effected so as to be inclusive?
How will gender bias, casteism and differences on the basis of class or ethnic origin not be reinforced in the new vision? Will they break bread with Palestine again, and be the staunch opponents of illegal occupation of Palestine that they once were?

So that they set up an ethic where peace is not forged by illegal occupation? So that cooperation, rather than destructive competition and war, are the planks of development that ensures basic needs of food clothing and shelter and affordable and accessible health services and education to the entire citizenry of the world in the new world order? So they do not do unto other underdeveloped or developing countries what they did not like developed countries doing to themselves, so that they do not do to the people on the margins within their own countries what they did not like the developed countries doing to them?

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