

Enjoying Global Status

Global expectations are more dire than globalization itself. At regional level some emerging economies would like to tell the world that they have the capacity to assert globally better than present projection. Previously it was BRIC as the term was first coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neil in 2001 to designate four fast-growing economies—Brazil, Russia, India and China. The recent entry of South Africa makes it BRICS—the self-congratulated group of five, albeit Uncle Sam is yet to recognise the importance of this global grouping without any global status.

On April 14, 2011, leaders of five BRICS countries released a joint communique—or what they call 'Sanya Declaration'—after a much publicised conclave in South China's resort city Sanya, hopefully to focus on their global clout and their future role in shaping major international events. Russia being relegated to an emerging third world power is trying to regain what it has lost—superpower recognition. Whether they could get it through the BRICS route is open to question. While China is enjoying the moment as it officially became the world's second largest economy, displacing Japan last year, the international community in all fairness didn't fail to notice it as a sign of China's rise to 'superpower' status whatever it means in the real world of strategic power equation.

But this grouping—G5—is in no way challenging the economic and military might of lone superpower—America. Their deliberations mainly centred on reforms of the international currency system, commodity fluctuations, climate change and sustainable development. These oft-repeated themes are being discussed at dozens of international gatherings round the year without any tangible results. They discuss all these for the sake of discussion.

No doubt the international situation is undergoing complex changes, and Arab world is serving as a key element driving these changes. Right now America under the banner of NATO, with the approval of UN Security Council, is devastating Libya. But they—BRICS—were conspicuously evasive about what is happening in Libya as they would express their wish at the summit, to continue their cooperation in the UN Security Council on Libya. In other words they won't oppose American aggression while limiting their 'global' role in extending support to the efforts of the African Union High Level Panel Initiative on Libya.

Whether their regional grouping with extra-regional aim, can really have any meaningful impact on global issues is anybody's guess. True, at present, the five BRICS countries account for nearly 30 percent of the world's land area, 42 percent of the global population, make up 18 percent of world GDP and 15 percent of the world total trade volume. All this doesn't mean they are going to acquire superpower status anytime soon.

There is nothing new in the unified resolve to fight terrorism. It is being reiterated at all international meetings, almost as an axiom. As for nuclear energy their stand looks similar. All of them are in favour of nuclear energy with a rider of increased security and safety. They are committed to international cooperation in the development of safe nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under conditions of strict observance of relevant safety standards and requirements concerning design, construction and operation of nuclear power plants. Strangely enough, they didn't utter a word about 'Fukushima'.

Of the five BRICS countries, China, not Russia, is more enthusiastic than anyone else to promote this regional platform, possibly as a counter-weight to major economies. In truth

China's rapid growth has exceeded world expectations. That China would surpass Japan in GDP in 2010 never figured in the international community's most balanced prediction. That China could do it, possibly by 2015, was their calculation. In essence the BRICS initiative was China-oriented.

It appears from the unnecessarily lengthy proceedings of the third BRICS leaders' meeting on the theme of 'Broad Vision and Shared Prosperity' that all are interested in talking economics, not politics. Initial euphoria generated around European Union seems to have vanished. Europeans never think to defy the dominance of dollar despite the resilience of Euro. It's NATO that decides military strategy under the absolute authority of Washington while European countries just follow and BRICS remain passive, possibly to project their global status.

Maybe, the Sanya Summit is not the end of the journey, but rather it is the beginning of a new one without a definite goal to reach. □□□