

The split in BRICS is confirmed as real

Riaan Eksteen says gathering could not produce a joint communiqué at the end of the conference due to internal discord over the conflict in Iran



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Pursuant to my article "The escalating tensions within BRICS" (Politicsweb, 13 May 2026), the split in BRICS is now in the public domain and has been formalised. It took place at the BRICS meeting of foreign ministers and high-level officials held in New Delhi on 14 and 15 May 2026.

The gathering could not produce a joint communiqué at the end of the conference due to internal discord over the conflict in Iran, resulting in India, as chair, issuing only a unilateral "chair's statement". A definitive indication that the schisms about the Iran conflict are intensifying.[1] As anticipated, Iran's foreign minister called for member nations to denounce breaches of international law by the United States and Israel. Later, at a news conference, the Iranian indicated that a BRICS member had obstructed portions of the final statement, without explicitly identifying the UAE. Following the start

of the conflict on 28 February 2026, Iran consistently targeted its Gulf neighbour by attacking the UAE more than any other nation.

The meeting also discussed Israel's operations in Gaza. Nonetheless, the meeting's communiqué indicated that one unnamed member had articulated misgivings over certain elements of the Gaza segment. In the end, the concluding statement emphasised the typical areas of agreement among BRICS members, including calls for reforms to global governance organisations such as the United Nations and its Security Council. The Group reaffirmed its enduring desire for greater participation by Global South nations in international institutions, underscoring its broader advocacy for a multipolar world order.

The internal conflict among members over critical issues is apparent, underscoring BRICS's inability to present a unified position when necessary. It is now the second BRICS meeting in a row that collapsed without a joint position because of disagreements over the US-Israeli war on Iran.[2] The setback in New Delhi highlights that BRICS is a disjointed, interest-driven alliance rather than a unified geopolitical Bloc. Its diplomatic influence has waned. An article asserts that the cohesion among BRICS is deteriorating. India Today also highlights that the gathering has shown significant fractures within the BRICS coalition, leading with the assertion: "BRICS at risk of imploding." [3]

This meeting has diminished BRICS's credibility as a political actor concerning security matters. The BRICS coalition's failure to provide a unified stance on the situation in Iran exemplifies a recurring trend observed in previous crises, in which it has struggled to transcend vague rhetoric over disputes involving major countries or significant allies of its members. Anticipations in Tehran and some regions of the Global South that BRICS may serve as a counterbalance to Western alliances in this conflict are likely to be unmet, undermining its assertion as a significant security entity in a multipolar framework.

The evident conflict between Iran and the UAE inside the same forum reveals that BRICS has become a platform for the importation of regional rivalries rather than their containment. This increases the transactional expenses for future diplomatic cooperation and complicates India's function as chair, particularly with a leaders' summit still planned for later in 2026. The revelation of intra-BRICS rivalry will undoubtedly be presented during the annual summit.

BRICS has consistently advocated for reform of global governance, safeguarding sovereignty, and enhancing the representation of the “Global South” within the UN and international financial institutions. The inability to reach consensus on fundamental issues such as the use of force, maritime blockades, or civilian protection in a war that impacts the security and economy of several members undermines its capacity to establish cohesive standards. BRICS has effectively been paralysed.[4] Its performance in Delhi suggests that it functions more as a forum for discussion than as an effective crisis-management system. The result of the meeting will bolster views of indecision and insignificance in security matters.

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[1] “BRICS talks end without joint statement, exposing divisions over war in Iran.” Channel News Asia, 15 May 2026. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/brics-talks-end-without-joint-statement-exposing-divisions-over-war-in-iran-6123646>

[2] “Why the Iran conflict is becoming a problem for BRICS.” Aljazeera. 15 May 2026. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/15/why-the-iran-conflict-is-becoming-a-problem-for-brics>

[3] “BRICS at risk of imploding, reveals Delhi meet.” India Today, 15 May 2026. <https://www.indiatoday.in/amp/india/story/brics-mena-meeting-april-24-new-delhi-joint-statement-faliure-us-israel-iran-war-uae-india-soften-criticism-of-israel-gaza-lebanon-2903445-2026-04-30>

[4] “Iran War Tests BRICS – And Reveals its Limits.” The Diplomat. 14 May 2026. <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/iran-war-tests-brics-and-reveals-its-limits/>