

# ROUND 5

## So You Think You Can Fly?

Icarus flew too close to the Sun and met a watery grave. Your pride and overconfidence will do the same.

Only one will emerge as the winner in this final Round for Diplomat Wars 2023. This Round will test your ability to edge out the rest, defend your stance and make your case amidst adversities and setbacks.

Do you have what it takes to be the **Best Diplomat**?

*Given below is the set storyline which is purely fictional and has no intention of promoting conflict as a means of settling disputes. It is simply meant to be a fictitious scenario where a fruitful objective is asked of you, as a participant.*



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## Background

*Diplomats! Welcome to the BRICS*

**BRICS** is an acronym that stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. It is a grouping of five major emerging economies that have come together to promote cooperation and collaboration in various areas such as trade, investment, and development.

The **BRICS** countries are large and rapidly developing economies having significant regional or global influence. They represent more than 40% of the world population and are home to some of the fastest-growing economies. **BRICS** countries also have a significant impact on global trade, finance, and investment.



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The group was first formed in 2009, and since then, the **BRICS** countries have held summits and meetings on a regular basis to discuss common interests and concerns. They have also established various initiatives and institutions, like the New Development Bank (NDB), a multilateral development bank that provides funding for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other developing countries.

**BRICS** operates as a forum for discussion and cooperation among its members. The group has sought to promote a more multipolar world order and to give a greater representation to developing countries in global governance institutions.



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The **BRICS** countries have also worked together on various initiatives, such as efforts to reform the global financial system, combat climate change, and address other global challenges such as but not limited to:

- Combating the rise of Non-State Actors (NSAs)
- Addressing Drug Trafficking in the Member States.
- Clandestine transfers of Small and Light Weapons (SALWs).



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The year is 2023.





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## So You Think You Can Fly?

In a move to further strengthen their economic and political influence on the world stage, the **BRICS** countries have decided to seek out one more country to join their alliance. This decision came after several rounds of discussions among the member nations, where they identified the need to expand the group to include other countries that share their vision for a more multipolar world order.

The **BRICS** countries are looking for a country having a robust and growing economy, a large population, and a significant geopolitical influence in their respective regions. The potential new member should also share the **BRICS** countries' values and principles of multilateralism, cooperation and mutual benefit.



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Several countries have expressed interest in joining the **BRICS** alliance, and the member nations have begun to review these proposals. However, the decision to expand the group was not taken lightly, and the member countries are carefully considering all the factors involved.

If a suitable candidate is identified and invited to join the alliance, it would mark a significant step forward in the **BRICS** countries' efforts at building a more inclusive and representative global governance system. The new member would also benefit from the BRICS platform, providing opportunities for greater cooperation and collaboration in various areas such as trade, investment and development.



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Diplomats, the question now is, can you prove your mettle and convince the **BRICS** that you have what it takes to be a part of them, and grab the final parachute to save yourself?

Or will you cling hopelessly to the wreckage as it hurtles uncontrollably toward Earth? The clock is ticking, and the stakes couldn't be higher. The **BRICS** is your last hope for salvation. Will you seize this opportunity that will allow you to establish and improve your country's stance and stature, or will you let it slip through your fingers?





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## Portfolio:

### **Argentina:**

Argentina is the second-largest country in South America after Brazil. It has had a turbulent political history marked by periods of authoritarianism, military rule and democratic governance. Given its size and economic importance in the region, it has played a predominant role in South American geopolitics. It has a robust agricultural sector mainly focused on soybeans, wheat and beef. It also has a manufacturing industry focused on automobiles and industrial goods. Despite housing copious natural resources, the country has faced several economic hardships. In recent years, the country has seen high inflation, currency fluctuation and public debt, which the government is trying to address by implementing austerity measures and negotiating with creditors to restructure its debt.



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By being an active member of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), it aims to promote economic and political integration among member countries. Argentina has sought to deepen its ties with China, Russia, and other emerging powers to diversify its foreign relations. Argentina is not currently part of the BRICS group, but the country has expressed interest in joining on multiple occasions in the past.

The country's economic instability is the main reason for its non-integration into the BRICS. While factors like the GDP and economic growth have played a massive role in its involvement, access to new markets and investment opportunities that come with the membership can considerably benefit its economy and development.



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Exposure to the world's emerging economies can aid the country's involvement in resolving issues like global economic governance, poverty reduction and climate change.

Argentina's foreign relations, historical ties with the United States and Europe, and strained relations with some members of the BRICS group, like China and Russia, have complicated efforts to deepen relations with the BRICS group. Aligning its political and strategic interests to be in line with the BRICS nations can also be a source of tension and conflict. Despite these reasons, the membership gives the country greater leverage in diplomatic relations and international forums. The BRICS membership will also allow the government to strengthen its position in the global economy and reduce its vulnerability to external shocks and fluctuations.



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### **Algeria:**

Algeria is Africa's largest natural gas exporter and the fifth largest in the world. The State-owned oil company Sonatrach is already the largest company on the continent. Italy's gas supply was diminished by the sanctions on Russian supplies to Europe and the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines. Now Algeria is set to become the biggest gas supplier to the country.

Algeria is already a member of OPEC, the Arab Trade Zone and the African Continental Free Trade Area. These economic and trade groupings offer Algeria free trade, prestige and favourable relations with many countries. Algeria, a power in the Maghreb due to its vast energy resources, would make a quantitative leap in the BRICS.



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Algeria's economic fabric remains dependent on exporting oil and natural gas, which currently account for more than a third of GDP. By joining the BRICS, Algeria could reap significant benefits in several sectors. The group has built a series of multilateral institutions that would allow it to distance itself from international organizations, such as the New Development Bank, based in Shanghai. BRICS maintains that Algerian gas demand could benefit from the diversification implemented by the European Union to the detriment of Russian supplies.

Discrimination in the enforcement of restrictions governing worship has violated the rights of several religious minorities in Algeria, particularly Evangelical Protestants and Ahmadiyya Muslims.





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The government has reportedly refused to acknowledge receipt of the Evangelical Protestant Association's (EPA) application for registration. It has also forced at least 16 EPA churches to close due to their unregistered status.

The Algerian government has rejected the registration application from the Ahmadiyya Muslim community three times since 2012, asserting that Ahmadis are not Muslims and should register as a non-Muslim religious group.

In October 2020, a court in Constantine handed down two-year prison sentences to Ahmadiyya Muslims found guilty of assembling without authority after the community sought to worship together. The majority of the estimated hundreds of court cases that remained pending against Ahmadiyya Muslims in Algeria at the end of 2020 pertained to accusations of unauthorized gatherings for worship.



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### Iran:

Iran, officially known as the Islamic Republic of Iran, is arguably one of the stalwarts of power in the Middle East. The only Shia Muslim majority country in the world, it is home to more than 82 million people and is the 18th largest country in the world in terms of land area. Although Iran is regarded as a middle power in global politics, it has no dearth of perceived enemies. This must be taken into account when looking at its economy which has historically been heavily affected by international sanctions.

The Iranian GDP is mostly dependent on the export of oil and gas. Although Iran has also taken care to diversify its economy with industries such as petrochemicals, automotive manufacturing and agriculture due to its unpredictable nature created as a result of the aforementioned global sanctions.



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Political instability has also been rife since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which marked the rise of the Ayatollah to power and the simultaneous imposition of international sanctions. Iran's goal to develop and advance its homegrown nuclear program has only resulted in the mounting of additional sanctions and international isolation.

Sky-high inflation due to a combination of crippling sanctions and gross mismanagement of the economy has also harmed the nation in the recent past. It has further led to internal strife with citizens being unhappy with the extremely high cost of living for the meagre, or sometimes the complete lack of services provided by the Iranian regime. This has resulted in frequent and sporadic protests across the country for most parts of the year, adding to the woes of the Iranian government.



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The human rights situation in Iran has also taken a nose dive under the Ayatollah Khomeini regime with regular instances of arbitrary captures, tortures, killings in prison, execution without trial etc. Women have especially faced the brunt of these violations and have been subjected to assault, kidnappings and torture, many times at the hand of the so-called "morality police" - an extension of the government, due to not wearing a hijab properly in public, speaking out against the government and demanding basic equality and rights.

In the recent anti-hijab protests, teenagers as young as sixteen and fifteen have lost their lives, allegedly due to extreme torture at the hands of individuals associated with the regime. Due to the widespread restrictions on the freedom of the press, the situation in Iran is made worse as there is a lack of knowledge of ground-level events.





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### **Saudi Arabia:**

Saudi Arabia is a founding member and one of the largest petroleum producers of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries(OPEC) and one of the leading oil exporters in the world. Saudi Arabia has reserves that represent one-fourth of the world total. Saudi Arabia holds 17 percent of global oil reserves.

Saudi Arabia has shown interest in joining BRICS as the country is locked in a diplomatic spat with the US over oil production.

Earlier in October, the Saudi-led OPEC+ announced that it will cut oil production by 2 million barrels per day, which will mean higher gasoline prices this autumn and winter, just weeks before the US midterm elections.





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The Biden administration, which has invested massive political resources to halt the move that could threaten the Democrats' dim hopes in the election, later slammed the decision and called it "shortsighted".

Joining BRICS will also protect Saudi Arabia's energy interests in a substantive way, rather than being a card to be used by others. If Saudi Arabia joins BRICS, it would be a promotion to the Middle East countries to strengthen their ties with BRICS countries and weaken the intervention and influence of the US in the area. Saudi Arabia, which has a large sovereign-wealth fund in the US, would no doubt speed up the decline of the petrodollar if it joins BRICS in the future.



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As BRICS represents approximately 40 percent of the global population and nearly a quarter of the world GDP, with the group set to have bolstered global influence if it expands, Saudi Arabia is interested in gaining further independence by joining BRICS. Joining BRICS also means closer relations with China, something that Saudi Arabia is now pursuing.

In 2018, Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist was ambushed and strangled to death in Saudi Arabia. A report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions in June 2019 concluded that Khashoggi's murder was premeditated and called for a criminal investigation by the UN and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation since he was a resident of the United States.



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The state also beheaded 81 men in the year 2022. 41 were Muslims from the Shiite minority who had taken part in anti-government protests in 2011-12, calling for greater political participation. Another 7 were Yemenis and one was a Syrian national.

Some of those prosecuted were sentenced to death following trials that failed to meet fair trial and due process guarantees, and for crimes that did not appear to meet the most serious crimes threshold, as required under international law.

The High Commissioner of the UN has expressed concern that some of the executions appeared to be related to the ongoing armed conflict in Yemen. The conflict is between the Houthi rebels and a Saudi-led coalition backing the internationally recognised government forces since 2015.



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The kingdom also said some of those executed were members of al-Qaida, the Islamic State group and supporters of Yemen's Houthi rebels.

### Turkey:

Turkey is a rapidly growing economy with immense potential and a strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, making it an essential player in global trade and politics. Historically, Turkey has been very influential in the region's politics, punching well above its weight, in terms of influence.

As the seat of power of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey views itself and tries to project itself as the leader of the Islamic World.



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The consequences of Turkey joining BRICS are a matter of great complexity. Turkey would stand to gain access to the large markets of the BRICS countries, which would lead to increased trade and investments from the BRICS nations, especially China. Considering the recent economic turmoil and currency crisis plaguing the nation, developmental financing from the BRICS member nations could help Turkey troubleshoot their economy.

Given Turkey's proximity to the failed state of Syria, being a member of BRICS would bring additional capabilities to combat VNSAs at the border.

While it seems like a rosy picture so far, this doesn't factor in the Western angle.





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Turkey is a member of NATO and is in the progress to become a member of the EU. Getting closer to China and Russia through BRICS could create tensions between the West and Turkey. Furthermore, talks about creating a BRICS currency to threaten the dollar hegemony would be problematic for Turkey to throw its weight behind.

### **Egypt:**

The Arab Republic of Egypt (its official name) covers an area of 1 million km<sup>2</sup>, about twice the size of France, or more than twice the size of the US State of California. A large part of the country is the sparsely populated desert of the Eastern Sahara. The large fraction of the population is concentrated on the alluvial plains of the Nile Valley, the Nile Delta, the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and the northern coastal areas of the Red Sea.



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Only an estimated 6 to 7% of the territory of Egypt is inhabited. With 102.2 million inhabitants (2021), Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world. The capital and largest city is Cairo. The spoken language is Modern Standard Arabic; the colloquial language is the Egyptian-Arabic dialect (Masri).

Egypt has the largest Muslim population in the Arab world; an estimated 85-90% of the population is Sunni Muslim, and 10-15% are Coptic Christians. Islam is the state religion and controls many aspects of social life.

In 2021, authorities escalated the use of the oppressive Emergency State Security Courts to prosecute peaceful activists and critics who eventually joined thousands of dissidents already in Egypt's congested prisons.



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Courts issued death sentences in mass trials, adding to the sharply escalating numbers of executions. The government in January issued regulations for the 2019 NGO law that codified draconian restrictions on independent organisations. The authorities failed to appropriately investigate a high-profile gang rape, and key witnesses remain under extrajudicial travel bans after being jailed for months in apparent retaliation for coming forward.

The army continued to impose severe restrictions on movement and demolish hundreds of buildings in North Sinai. They justified this by citing their intention to fight *Wilayat Sinai*, a local affiliate of the Islamic State (ISIS). It is likely that these restrictions amount to war crimes.



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Egypt's prolonged human rights crisis under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government was subject to rare international criticism at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

### Indonesia:

Indonesia has a population of over 270 million people, placing it as the fourth most populous country in the world. As an emerging economic powerhouse, the Southeast Asian nation appears to be a favourable candidate for BRICS membership.

Indonesia comprises over 17,000 islands and is home to a variety of cultures, religions and languages.



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It is a member of several international and regional organisations such as the G20, OIC and ASEAN, with the latter serving as the cornerstone for any major foreign policy decisions.

Indonesia is the largest growing economy in Southeast Asia, with an annual average growth rate of 5% over the last decade.

The country is touted as one of the future Asian Tigers. Its economy is primarily driven by the exporting of natural resources. Manufacturing, agriculture and tourism also play a major role in boosting their GDP.

As a developing country, however, Indonesia has its fair share of troubles. Despite the rapid economic growth, inequality plagues the nation.





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Many Indonesians live in abject poverty and lack access to basic services like healthcare and education.

Corruption in business and government is rampant in the country along with a heavily restricted press has dealt a major blow to the trust citizens have for their government which has consequently hindered the country's development leading to political instability and increasing tensions among the various ethnoreligious groups.

This has increased the risk of sectarian violence among the populace. There have also been concerns regarding the declining democratic freedoms of the nation.



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Some political commentators regard the country as an extremely flawed democracy because of the regular occurrences of unlawful extrajudicial killings. This reached new heights under the Sukarno administration along with regular harassment and murder of queer individuals via public stoning.

On the environmental front, the rapid development of the country has adversely affected the many diverse bio ecosystems, with widespread deforestation and pollution threatening these locales. Since tourism plays a major role in the country's economy, this is an issue that many Indonesians feel the government has not addressed adequately in recent times.



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May the Best  
Diplomat Win!

