

## BRICS Meets Trump's Tariffs: A Collision of Power and Pride



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BRICS was never meant to be an economic fortress. When Brazil, Russia, India, and China came together in 2009—South Africa joining in 2011—it wasn't about creating a rival to NATO or the EU. It was about influence. A platform for rising powers to say: we want a seat at the table too.

Fast-forward to 2025 and that table has grown crowded. Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are now at the table. Eleven nations in total, stretching from the deserts of the Middle East to the jungles of Southeast Asia. Together they represent nearly half the world's population and around 40% of global GDP (measured in purchasing power parity, or PPP). Add to that their dominance in oil, natural gas, and rare earth minerals—the raw ingredients for everything from smartphones to fighter jets—and you have a bloc that matters. Trade too: BRICS countries account for nearly a quarter of global exports.

And yet, despite its scale, BRICS has remained what diplomats politely call a "soft" alliance, fractured by politics, culture, and economic rivalry. Until now.

Enter Donald Trump's second term.

With one stroke of the pen, Trump has turned tariffs into a battering ram aimed squarely at BRICS nations. His logic is as blunt as his rhetoric: punish

countries that he believes undermine the U.S. interests, reward those that fall in line. The result has not been the splintering of BRICS, but perhaps, ironically, its consolidation. By trying to bend them, Trump may be binding them closer together.

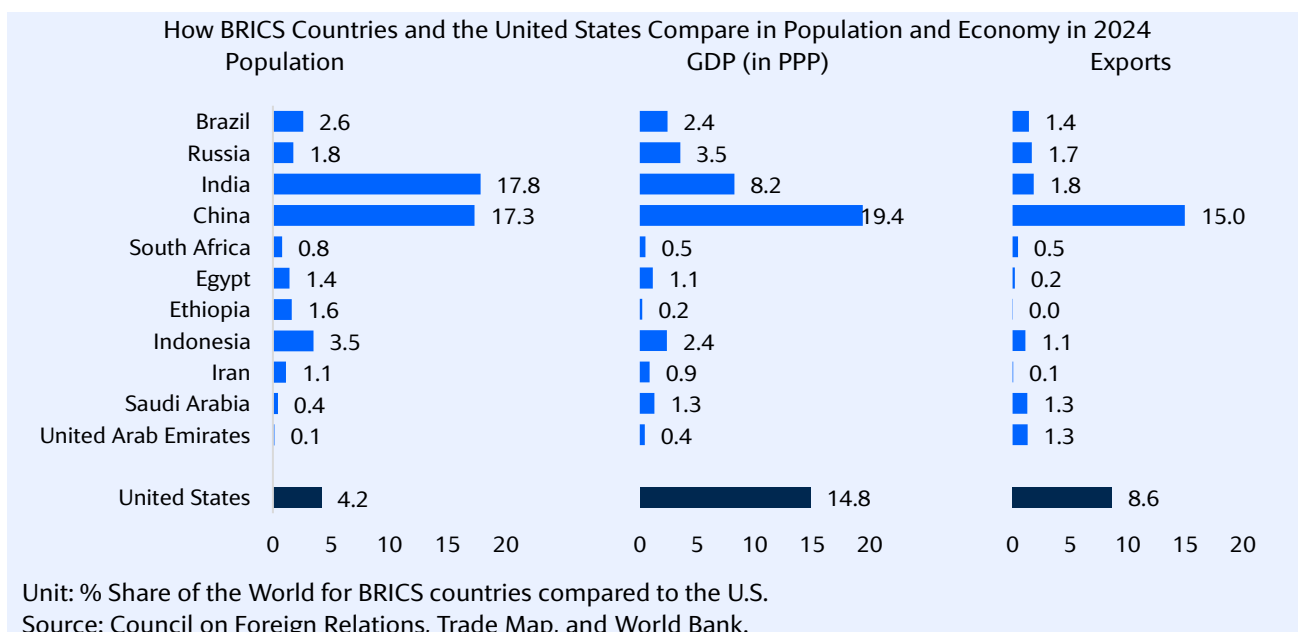
### India Pushes Back

New Delhi's response has been unusually sharp. The Ministry of External Affairs blasted Washington's 25% tariff hike as "unfair, unjustified, and unreasonable." For India, this isn't abstract economics. It's about energy.

"We have already made clear our position on these issues, including the fact that our imports are based on market factors and done with the overall objective of ensuring the energy security of 1.4 billion people of India," the ministry declared. That framing strikes at the heart of Washington's argument, casting Trump's penalties not only as heavy-handed but as an intrusion into a sovereign decision to keep the world's most populous nation supplied at affordable prices.

### Brazil Goes Legal

On the other side of the hemisphere, Brazil is taking a different path, fighting Trump not in the court of public opinion, but in the court of law. Despite running a trade deficit with the U.S., Brazil has been slapped with a 50% tariff. The move,



insiders say, has less to do with soybeans or steel, and more to do with politics. At the center of the storm: the prosecution of Jair Bolsonaro, Trump's ideological ally, which the U.S. president has railed against as a "witch hunt."

Brasília's reply? Geneva. The Brazilian government has filed a formal case at the World Trade Organization (WTO), arguing that Trump's tariff surge shreds the very rules the global system was built on. Whether the WTO has the muscle to stand up to Washington is doubtful. But by turning to multilateral law, Brazil is positioning itself not just as a victim, but as a defender of global norms.

### China: Used to the Pain

For China, Trump's tariffs are nothing new. Since 2018, Chinese goods have been hammered with duties worth hundreds of billions of dollars. They never really went away. Beijing has adapted—shifting supply chains, leaning harder on domestic demand, and redirecting exports toward ASEAN markets like Thailand.

Now, Trump has signed an order extending the current tariff regime for another 90 days, pushing the deadline to November 10, 2025. It halts a planned escalation, keeping tariffs capped at 30% on Chinese imports and 10% on the U.S. goods—mainly for the U.S. retailers to prepare for the critical end-of-year holiday season.

For Washington, it's a tactical pause. For Beijing, it's business as usual. Another round may hurt, but it won't shock. China's long slog through Trump's

first trade war has made it battle-tested, while newer BRICS members are just starting to feel the sting.

### The Tariff Sword Still Hangs

The drama doesn't stop there. Trump has already warned that "Any Country aligning themselves with the Anti-American policies of BRICS will be charged an ADDITIONAL 10% Tariff. There will be no exceptions to this policy."

So far, it's just words. But anyone who has followed Trump knows those words could become law with a single announcement or a single post.

For BRICS, the challenge is as much psychological as economic. Do they fracture under pressure, each calculating its own survival? Or do they, for the first time, begin to act as the unified force they aspire to be?

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