



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on September 2, 2023

EU Ready for 10 New Members; Serbia Considers Joining BRICS

On August 31, after a gathering of EU foreign ministers in Toledo, Spain, European Commission Vice-President Josep Borrell declared that the European Union has to prepare for a future expansion that may entail up to 10 new members.

Borrell said that Ukraine and the Western Balkan nations were the main candidates for EU accession, elaborating that the present conflict between Ukraine and Russia did not pose an obstacle to EU enlargement.

“I think that the war in Ukraine has had a collateral effect, which is to speed up the enlargement process,” Borrell asserted, in an interview with journalists after the meeting. Also, the EU chief stated that while the process of joining the EU would still largely hinge upon candidate countries meeting all the required conditions, “it is good to have a political target — a horizon ... to give a political impetus to the process.”

“Yes, we too have to be prepared for an enlargement that could add ten more members to the European Union,” Borrell said, without singling out any of the potential candidates save for Ukraine. Having a “time target” would aid the EU to “mobilize our energies and the energies of the candidate countries,” Borrell alleged.

Previously this week, a report in the Financial Times (FT) revealed that Brussels was preparing for a possible expansion before 2030. European Council President Charles Michel allegedly intended to welcome new member states in the near future, the FT claimed. The paper also said that Michel reportedly highlighted the significance of timelines.

The EU leaders are poised to conduct their next round of talks on the topic of enlargement in early October at a summit in the Spanish city of Granada. Although Brussels has officially accepted Ukraine, Moldova, and Albania as candidate countries, talks are underway on whether to allow as many as eight other nations to enter the EU in the near future as well.

Last Monday (August 28) also witnessed Michel proclaiming in Slovenia that the EU hopes to welcome new countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, and the rest of former Yugoslavia by 2030, if they fulfill certain requirements set by Brussels. Some of the aspiring members, such as Albania, have expressed unhappiness that Ukraine’s membership bid seems to be prioritized over theirs.

Following the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, Kyiv was granted candidate status in 2022 amid its conflict with Moscow. Ukrainian officials have since insisted on starting accession talks as soon as



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possible, hopefully before the end of 2023. However, some EU members, including France, have hitherto stated that Ukraine should not demand accelerated membership.

In February, Brussels said that Ukraine was only at an “early stage of preparation” for the enforcement of EU policies in many major areas.

Meanwhile, a group of Serbian lawmakers from the Movement of Socialists suggested on August 28 that their country should join the BRICS group of nations, contending that Belgrade’s aspirations of EU membership have lost steam and that BRICS would provide better economic opportunities.

These MPs submitted a resolution on the aforementioned issue to the Serbian parliament, calling for a public discussion regarding “the indisputable fact that Serbia’s so-called European path has a clear alternative embodied in ... BRICS.” These MPs stated that the world “has become multipolar again,” elaborating that “the political hegemony of the collective West” was evidently declining.

Led by Aleksandar Vulin, the head of Serbia’s main intelligence agency, the Movement of Socialists also decried “the imposition of EU integration as a ready-made solution and the only way,” together with “the hypocrisy of the Brussels administration.”

Additionally, the movement also accused the EU of participating in “political blackmail” by coercing Serbia to relinquish part of its territory, alluding to the EU demands that Belgrade acknowledge the legitimacy of Kosovo. Besides, the lawmakers alleged that almost two-thirds of Serbians viewed BRICS membership as “a better and more acceptable integration option” that provided better economic prospects in the long run. The joint statement also indicated that BRICS’ recent expansion was proof of such better prospects, as compared with the EU.

BRICS — which presently comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — has authorized Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to join the group in January 2024.

In June, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić indicated that his country might have to select between the EU and BRICS. Although he maintained that Belgrade would “stick to the European path,” Vučić conceded Serbia’s EU membership was not going to materialize in the near future.

“[The choice between BRICS and the EU] will be a matter for the new Serbian population in some ten or 20 years,” the president said, alleging that many countries hope to “get out of the West’s dominance.”

Likewise, Milorad Dodik, president of Republika Srpska, the Serb half of Bosnia-Herzegovina, will suggest to the central government to seek BRICS membership, following the upcoming BRICS expansion.

“The EU has an alternative,” Dodik stated in a post on X (formerly Twitter). “Since Brussels keeps making new and vague demands, I think Bosnia-Herzegovina should apply to BRICS. I believe it would be admitted faster.”

Thus, Republika Srpska will table a formal proposal for applying to BRICS in the coming days, Dodik stated.

The 64-year-old is presently serving his third term as president of Srpska, having sat on Bosnia’s three-member presidency between 2018 and 2022. Although Dodik has been vocal about his warm relations with Russia, Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) and Croat representatives recently visited Ukraine to support the current Kyiv regime under Volodymyr Zelensky.



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Under the U.S.-brokered Dayton Accords in 1995, Bosnia-Herzegovina was partitioned between Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation, thus ending the former Yugoslav Republic's civil war. Although there have been no more military clashes since, tensions among the three communities have persisted.

The United States and the EU have justified their repeated interventions in Bosnian domestic affairs by saying that amendments to the constitution and the power-sharing arrangement signed in Dayton are vital for the country's membership in the EU and NATO. While the Serbs remain ambivalent about the former, they vehemently object to the latter.



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