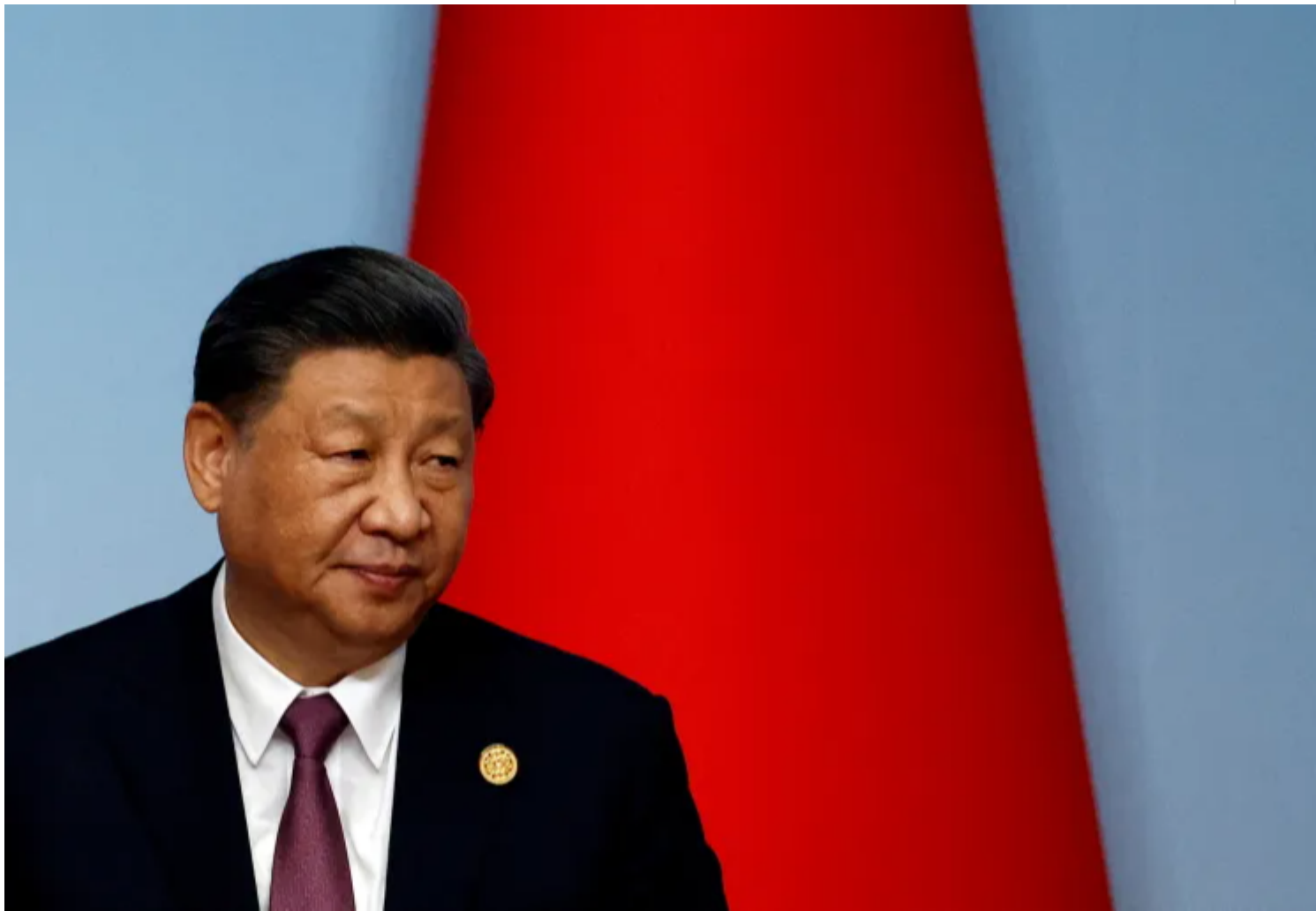


Xi Jinping to make state visit to South Africa and attend BRICS summit



Beijing, August 18 (RHC)-- China's President Xi Jinping will attend the summit of BRICS leaders in South Africa as he makes a state visit to the country next week. "At the invitation of President of the Republic of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa, President Xi Jinping will attend the 15th BRICS Summit to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, and pay a state visit to South Africa from August 21 to 24," foreign ministry

spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in an online statement.

The visit will be Xi's second international trip of 2023, after he travelled to Russia in March. The Chinese president previously visited South Africa in 2018 as he sought to enhance his country's diplomatic and economic ties in Africa.

The five BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will meet in Johannesburg next week to discuss how to turn a loose club of nations accounting for a quarter of the global economy into a geopolitical force that can challenge the developed world's dominance.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who faces an international arrest warrant over alleged war crimes in Ukraine, will take part by video rather than attending in person.

A total of 69 countries have been invited to the summit in South Africa, including all African states, and expansion is expected to be high on the agenda. Countries including Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Ethiopia have shown interest in joining the group either formally or informally.

China, seeking to expand its geopolitical influence amid its ongoing rivalry with the United States, has said it "welcomes more like-minded partners to join the 'BRICS family' at an early date."

Russia also supports expansion, while Brazil has resisted, fearing it could undermine the group's stature. India is on the fence.

The term BRIC was first coined by a Goldman Sachs economist to describe the rise of Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2001. Those countries had their first summit in 2009 in Russia, and when South Africa joined the following year, the group became known as BRICS.

BRICS countries account for more than 40 percent of the world's population and about 26 percent of the global economy.

Besides attending the BRICS meeting, Xi will also cochair the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue with his South African counterpart, Cyril Ramaphosa, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

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