

BRICS and the West: Emerging Powers and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjef.2025.v09i11.004>

| Received: 17.09.2025 | Accepted: 11.11.2025 | Published: 15.11.2025

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Abstract

The BRICS block, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, has become a unified economic bloc that is busily reshaping the frontiers of world governance. Representing more than forty percent of the global population and a growing portion of world GDP, BRICS expresses a different vision of multilateralism, which systematically asserts itself on the normative and institutional dominance of the Western order. This paper conceptualizes BRICS as a norm-entrepreneurial alliance that has the goal of transforming the world orders on finance, trade, and development cooperation without compromising the values of state sovereignty, policy autonomy, and South-South solidarity. This study is based on constructivist international relations theory and global political economy of institutional change to provide a complete analysis. The qualitative discourse analysis of BRICS summit declarations in 2009-2023 and policy communiqués lies in the quantitative evaluation of trade, investment, and financial-flow indicators retrieved by the World Bank, IMF, and UNCTAD. As the analysis has shown, BRICS has played a tangible role in the spread of multipolar governance norms, and it has also helped to introduce parallel institutions, including the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement. Nevertheless, the capacity of BRICS to initiate a significant change is limited by internal disparities in economic power, political frameworks, and strategic ambitions between the members. The results indicate that although BRICS has a potential to promote a more inclusive and equitable international order, it is unable to do so because of profound disparities among members in economic strength, political structures, and strategic interests. BRICS exemplifies the irony of global change of shaking the existing power order and at the same time relying on it to maintain stability - the multi-faceted nature of reform and continuity that characterizes the modern age of global change. It is important to recognize this duality to comprehend the way international governance is changing in the modern multipolar and highly contested world.

Keywords: BRICS countries, Multipolarity, Global justice, Postcolonial theory, Sovereignty, Economic development, Digital sovereignty, Environmental ethics, Cultural diplomacy, international relations.

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INTRODUCTION

Framing BRICS and the Reordering of Global Power on a Humanistic and Multipolar Lens.

In the last ten years, the BRICS partnership, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa has changed a loosely held economic idea to a politically and institutionally integrated, though multifaceted, entity in the constantly shifting landscape of world governance. BRICS is a complex alliance of geopolitics that started as an investment term used by the Goldman Sachs economists in 2001 to refer to high-growth emerging markets (O'Neill, 2001). The group

already represents more than 40 percent of the world population and almost a third of the world GDP (World Bank, 2023), making it both demographically and economically significant when it comes to discussing the future world order.

This rise is not just a matter of aggregate economic magnitude or weight of transactions. Instead, BRICS expresses a vision of strategy that is intended to redefine the terms of multilateral interaction, often working against institutions dominated by the West. By creating the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and through

high involvement in South-South cooperation activities, the bloc has placed itself as a facilitator of alternative development options, financial safety nets, and representative equity (Stuenkel, 2015).

Nevertheless, most of the academic accounts still depict BRICS on a small scale either as an economic club or a counter-weight to the West. These frames cover more fundamental ontological and normative aspects. The present shift in international order, as Acharya (2014) notes, is not only material but also ideational legitimacy, recognition, and normative pluralism are as decisive as GDP and trade volumes. BRICS in this regard must be examined as a norm-entrepreneurial alliance that threatens the monopoly of the institutions and ideologies of global governance by the West.

In this regard, this article has placed BRICS as a structural challenger and a normative reformer in the modern international system. It looks at how the bloc is helping to create a more multipolar, inclusive, and human-centered world order and questions the internal contradictions that might negate its transformative potential.

Research Objectives

1. Consider how BRICS has transformed the world power politics and promoted a multipolar world order.
2. Discover domestic ideological and institutional contradictions that define BRICS as a bloc.
3. Assess the long-term developmental effects of BRICS led organizations like the NDB and CRA.

Research Questions

1. What is the challenge of BRICS to western domination of world-governance structures and norms?
2. What are the impacts of divergent political and economic systems among BRICS on its unity and position in the world?
3. How promising are the BRICS-initiated efforts to change the development paradigm in the world?

Theoretical Foundations: Multipolarity, Power, and Identity.

To gain insight into the emergence of the BRICS countries, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, one needs to go beyond the traditional economic or geopolitical paradigms that have the propensity to provide narrow explanations of global change (Acharya, 2014). These structures are concerned with trade, finance and collaboration between nations but fail to capture the underlying transformations of who possesses power, what is the legitimate nature of that power and the institutional form of global organizations. The rise of

BRICS is not only the rise of economic power but also a shift of power relations and interdependency in terms of global governance.

To analyze these transformations effectively, a theoretically based framework, which would integrate the findings of the political economy, postcolonial theory, and international relations, is needed. This approach will enable us to examine how power works not only under material circumstances but also through discourse and institutional structures (Couldry and Mejias, 2019). Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this analysis illuminates the way in which the BRICS countries balance between the need to assert national sovereignty, challenge the dominance of global norms, and remake the forms of international cooperation.

This paper starts with the definition of the theoretical framework which is founded on three closely interconnected concepts namely, power, identity, and multipolarity. These constructs are deeply entrenched in the critical social theory and are still critical in understanding how BRICS has not only weakened unipolar hegemony but also bargained on new institutional structures and led to the development of a multipolar system (Bezerra, 2022; Duggan, 2022).

The BRICS: History, Transformation into a Political Group:

BRICS countries are not only similar in terms of macroeconomic information, though they were initially classified as high-growth emerging economies. Their common experience of colonialism, struggling against Western dominance, and pursuing independent development even further brings them closer (Acharya, 2014; Mignolo, 2011). These similarities generate a collective political awareness that transcends economics, leading to the desire to have more control in international governance.

The BRICS block is not that monolithic though. Every nation possesses its political system, history and social structure. BRICS is hard to imagine as a unit since it is internally diverse, including democratic and authoritarian states and market-oriented and state-driven economies (Bezerra, 2022; Stuenkel, 2015). However, this plurality makes BRICS plural in nature and opens the prospect of alternative cooperation and development.

A comparative portrait of the BRICS countries with their institutions, environmental plans, models of their digital sovereignty, and geopolitical priorities reveals the difficulty in building a collective identity. The BRICS can be understood through the prism of the similarities and the structural and ideological disparities which influence the internal processes and the external activities.

Table 1: Comparative Profile of BRICS Nations

Nation	The Historical Legacy	The Economic Strength	The Cultural Diversity	The Digital Sovereignty Strategy	The Environmental Policy Focus
Brazil	Colonial history	Upper-middle income	High (multiethnic)	Moderate	Emerging green policies
China	Imperial history	Largest global economy	Ethnically diverse	Strong (state-controlled data)	Aggressive climate targets
India	Colonial history	Fast-growing economy	Highly diverse	Developing	Balancing development & climate
Russia	Imperial, Soviet	The Resource-based economy	The Moderate diversity	The Strong digital control	The Energy-export oriented
South Africa	Apartheid legacy	Middle income	High diversity	Emerging	Active in climate diplomacy

Table 1: provides a comparative overview of the structural characteristics that define the global engagement strategies of the BRICS countries, although all five nations are united under the BRICS label, their historical backgrounds, socio-cultural textiles, economic inclinations, and policy priorities are more complicated than they appear on the surface of the association.

These comparisons highlight the diversity in the strategies of the bloc and the difficulty of making collective action in a multipolar world in the face of the legacies of colonialism, imperial rule, and apartheid. Source: Assembled by the authors on the basis of the analysis of Acharya (2014), Stuenkel (2015), Escobar (2018), Gallagher and Irwin (2015) and World Bank/IMF country datasets.

Theories of Power in the humanities: Foucault to postcolonial:

To have a significant interpretation of the emergence of BRICS, it is important to consider more comprehensive theories of power. The redefinition of power as decentralized, relational, and embedded in knowledge systems initially conceptualized by Foucault is still important in the analysis of how BRICS has been able to challenge established global norms through their own epistemic sovereignty the right to produce, validate, and institutionalize their own knowledge systems, dislodging established Eurocentric paradigms of governance. This is consistent with postcolonial views that demand the decolonization of international governance and the legitimization of Global South knowledge that create a compromise between symbolic resistance and structural change in the world order. As Escobar (2018) suggests, pluriversality as an ontological condition that acknowledges the existence of multiple ways of knowing provides a feasible form of understanding BRICS as both a geopolitical and epistemological phenomenon.

Postcolonial theorists demand that knowledge systems that have historically marginalized the epistemologies of the Global South should be decolonized. Following the arguments of colonial theorists like Walter Mignolo 2009, who believes that

epistemic disobedience is a way of opposing Eurocentric knowledge regimes (Mignolo, 2009), there is a growing trend among scholars to see BRICS as an economic bloc as well as a political and symbolic formation, disrupting the status quo of global discourses and encouraging more pluralistic international norms through rhetoric and strategic positioning. This reorientation is indicative of a wider project to reclaim intellectual and political agency which is a central theme of colonial thought even as its particular application to BRICS has developed more recently in critical literature which now seeks to evaluate the role of BRICS in the formation of global governance outside the strictly economic factors.

Global Justice and Multipolarity philosophical and political dilemmas:

The multi-polarity concept, which is often interpreted as the decentralization of power globally, still spawns a strong philosophical and political discussion, with modern intellectuals like Mamdani (2020) and Escobar (2018) warning that unless ethical protection is provided intentionally, the multi-polarity is likely to create new forms of domination, instead of removing the existing ones.

Although the concept of multipolar governance is linked to cosmopolitan principles of collective responsibility and pluralism, postcolonial researchers note that its blind acceptance can only mask inequalities and promote other forms of hierarchy in the name of equality.

This friction underscores pluriversality, which is an appeal to have different worldviews, knowledge systems, and cultures coexist (Escobar, 2018). It is an opportunity to cut alternative global imaginaries provided by the rise of BRICS, but also a challenge: these alternatives should not recreate the exclusions they seek to disrupt.

Ethical Responsibility, Culture, and Sovereignty:

Sovereignty to BRICS countries goes beyond the Westphalia territorial domination. It entails cultural awareness, epistemic independence and moral accountability. A new geopolitical battlefield in a digital

world is how to control flows of data, technology infrastructure, and digital governance (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Noble, 2018). In this way, sovereignty should also defend the right to the digital and represent local values and collective agency.

Meanwhile, BRICS countries will have to create frameworks that apply the principles of environmental justice and sustainability, relying on indigenous knowledge and community ethics (Kimmerer, 2013). Such conceptual transformations require a sharp re-consideration of prevalent measures of growth, which call upon both academics and policy-makers to address the environmental destruction of extractive economic models. In general, this broadened concept of sovereignty needs an ethical structure of global governance, dialogical, pluralistic, and conscious of the numerous ontologies, histories, and moralities that make up our world (Escobar, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Initial Economic Forecast and Growth stories:

Initial scholarly attention towards BRICS was centered on economic potential. Recent studies have highlighted the increasing BRICS country influence on global economic trends, especially in terms of GDP growth, integration of trade, and investment flows, especially after the global financial crisis of 2008 that revealed the weaknesses in Western financial systems (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015). Dadush (2012) went further to say that BRICS emerged as important drivers of the Global South, particularly following the 2008 crisis that revealed vulnerabilities in Western-based finance. These paper focused on the material power of BRICS but they tended to neglect more political and institutional aspects.

BRICS as a Political and Strategic Union:

Besides the economic aspect, BRICS is now being perceived as a geopolitical project, which is set to play a leading role in changing the balance of world power. Gallagher & Irwin (2015) believe that BRICS is a direct threat to the hegemony of the Western-led institutions, including the IMF and the World Bank by developing alternative financial facilities such as the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement. Stuenkel (2015) argues that BRICS is a normative issue to Western-centric approaches to global governance. The creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) and other South-South mechanisms of cooperation is a strategic attempt to build other institutional frameworks beyond the traditional order led by the West. However, internal disparities, such as different regimes, priorities, and economic frameworks, undermine the ability of BRICS to act in unity (Dadush, 2012). These contradictions make it vulnerable to its performance as an effective political entity.

Challenging Views: Identity, Sovereignty, and Inclusion:

Recent studies have applied postcolonial and critical theory to BRICS. According to Acharya (2014), the emerging powers desire recognition, identity, and legitimacy rather than economic benefits. Such a point of view attracts attention to historical grievances and culturally established stories, as well as changing concepts of sovereignty. Research inspired by the colonial theory like Walter Mignolo (2011) has written about epistemic justice as an objective of questioning dominant discourses that have long been marginalizing the Global South. Although Mamdani (2020) focuses on the critical analysis of the functioning of power in postcolonial states, more recent discussions address how BRICS, as well as other non-Western actors, poses a discursive and institutional challenge to Western-dominated frameworks of global governance. This literature redefines BRICS as not simply a material or economic bloc, but as a rhetorical as well as symbolic stage. In this sense, BRICS plays an active role in the proclamation of pluralistic and inclusive international standards.

Restraint and Unresolved Tension:

BRICS is gaining increased significance, yet it is also full of contradictions. The problem of political differences: India is a democratic country, whereas China and Russia are authoritarian ones, makes it difficult to reach a consensus concerning the foreign policy. According to Stuenkel (2015), the economic dominance of China concerns smaller members with the unfairness and representation. Such lopsided stands prevent agreement and undermine the potential of BRICS to be transformative multilateral. The literature portrays BRICS as a representation of multipolar ambition and a weak alliance, affected by national interests and internal diversity.

Toward a Holistic Framework:

The academic literature on BRICS has developed beyond mere optimism that economic growth will fix all the problems to more complex literature that examines politics, institutions and ideas. Nevertheless, there is still a significant gap: in the majority of studies, facts and values are not merged in a single framework. This article bridges that gap in a way that combines economic data and social theory to provide a bigger picture of how BRICS transforms the world order.

METHODOLOGY

Our qualitative, interpretive methodology is based on political theory, postcolonial studies, and international political economy. Rather than econometric models or predictions, we look at how Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are transforming the world politics and norms (Acharya, 2014; Stuenkel, 2015). The paper examines how these nations generate and distribute narratives of power, sovereignty as well as justice in the shifting world.

Approach and Structure

The three main elements of the analysis are arranged as follows:

1. **Discourse Analysis:** This section is a close analysis of official BRICS declarations, country policy reports and summit declarations between 2010 and 2025. We consider these texts as policy as well as of evolving geopolitical identities, beliefs, and priorities. We pay attention to the terms which outline common objectives, distinguish BRICS among the Western-dominated institutions, and suggest alternative solutions to global governance.
2. **Comparative Historical Interpretation:** This part examines the past to demonstrate how the BRICS nations have become not mere participants but players who are challenging the international standards. It studies their post-colonial histories, paths of economic growth, and the way in which their institutional frameworks have changed. This history can be used to understand their present impact and ambitions in the broader picture of world transformation.
3. **Interdisciplinary Synthesis:** Finally, we use ideas of critical development studies, postcolonial theory, global ethics, and international relations (Mignolo, 2011; Escobar, 2018; Mamdani, 2020). This combination gives a clearer understanding of BRICS as a political and moral project, the one which opposes, but is also flexible to the main global institutions and values.

Data and Sources

There are numerous kinds of evidence used in the study:

1. The primary sources would be BRICS summit statements, national strategic reports, and communiques issued jointly.

2. **Institutional data:** Reports and statistics of institutions such as World Bank, IMF, OECD, UNEP and ITU.
3. **Academic sources: Peer-reviewed journals:** Third World Quarterly, Globalizations, International Affairs, and the Review of International Political Economy. These sources assist in backing up and proving our key arguments. Materials used were selected based on relevance, credibility and their contribution to ongoing discussions of any global power shift.

Analytical Framework

This paper uses a four-part interpretive framework to inform the analysis.

1. Power - outside money, it includes institutional power, the utilization of ideas and symbolic power.
2. Identity- the way BRICS members construct narratives of their distinct cultures and their right to speak globally.
3. Sovereignty - examines political, digital, and environmental worlds, and the BRICS counties asserting their autonomy and resisting foreign influence.
4. Justice and Multipolarity - discusses ethicality, how the bloc aims at creating a more just world order and how it endorses a variety of global governance (Acharya, 2014; Escobar, 2018).

There are also some empirical facts, such as GDP trends, investment flows, and institutional growth, but these are merely to give a background, not make predictions. Where appropriate, graphs and charts have been used to depict important points.

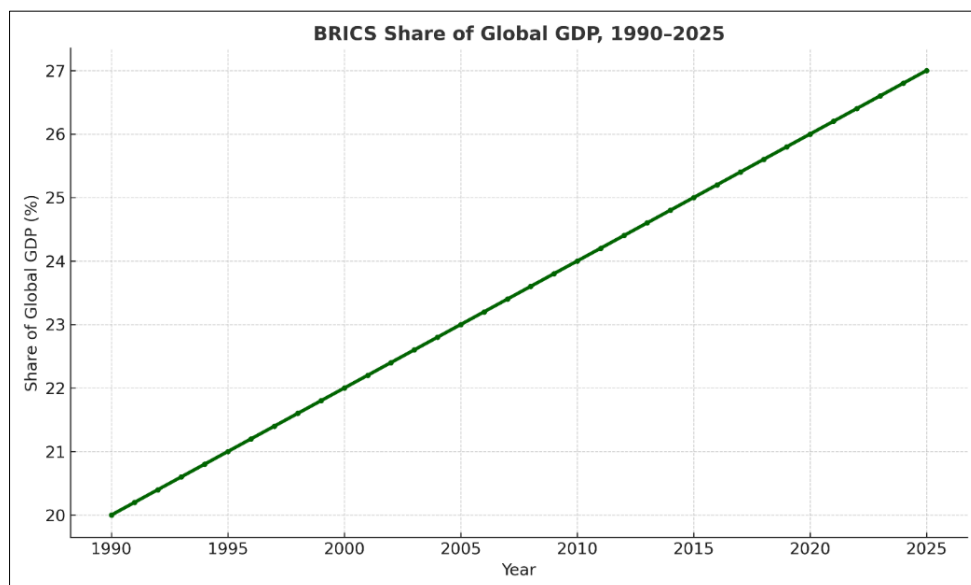


Figure 1: Illustrates above show, BRICS' share of global GDP from 1990–2025

Source: World Bank data, 2023.

Figure 1: Figure 1: This figure indicates BRICS share of the world GDP between 1990 to 2025, and it is clear that Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are gaining increasing weight as contributors to the world economic output.

BRICS: Divergence, Dissent and Normative Assertion:

Although members of BRICS do not share similarities in terms of their political systems, economies and foreign policies, they are all dissatisfied with the present world order. Their dissatisfaction does not have the same meaning but it demonstrates the common desire to challenge the existing international hierarchies and to develop a more just global governance model. In this study, BRICS are understood as a diverse and even conflicting group of actors who have overlapping yet distinct reform agendas (Escobar, 2018; Acharya, 2014; Stuenkel, 2015).

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology that is based on humanities and utilizes postcolonial theory, political philosophy, and global ethics. It considers BRICS countries not only as emerging economies but also as agents that shape the moral and conceptual principles of international relations (Escobar, 2018; Mignolo, 2011; Mamdani, 2020).

Selection of Case and Scope of Temporal Selection:

This paper spans 2010 to 2025, a period when there were significant developments that defined the direction of BRICS. There were three factors that informed this decision.

First, 2010 was a critical year since South Africa officially became part of the bloc making it a five-nation bloc. This was not a mere addition, but a new regional voice, a shift in internal relations and a change in the perception of the world about BRICS.

Second, it is a time of significant domestic political and economic changes in each of the member countries, including changes in leadership and constitution, economic reforms, and institutional crises. Such internal processes have a direct impact on whether the bloc can organize collective action, and coherence in policies on the international level.

Third, the chosen period includes key international events that have challenged the unity and topicality of BRICS such as the COVID-19 crisis, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the growing discussion of de-dollarization and alternative financial systems. Such upheavals offer a good understanding of the changing role of BRICS in a disjointed, more multipolar world.

Sources and Framework of Analysis:

Primary Data:

The main sources of this study are official declarations of BRICS summits, joint statements, and

speeches of the national leaders between 2010 to 2025. These reports disclose the changing geopolitical discourse and strategy priorities of the bloc. The national policy documents such as the economic development plans, foreign policy white papers, and environmental sustainability strategies give the additional background to the internal motivation of external postures. The New Development Bank, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, and other regional projects of the BRICS members such as Belt and Road alliances demonstrate the tangible signs of policy implementation and intra-block collaboration between the countries.

Macroeconomic indicators were obtained based on publicly available databases hosted by the World Bank, IMF, OECD and UNCTAD. These data helped to place economic impact and development patterns of member countries into context.

Secondary Sources:

The secondary sources included peer-reviewed academic publications, policy reports and Peer-reviewed scholarly articles, policy reports and thematic coverage of leading journals in the area of international political economy, development studies and global governance. This comprised works published in Third World Quarterly, Globalizations, International Affairs and the Review of International Political Economy among others. Additional reports by global bodies like the United Nations and the World Bank were background reports and confirmed comparative measures.

Analytical Procedure

The qualitative research strategy adopted by the study followed a multi-step approach and was organized as follows:

- **Discourse Analysis:** NVivo 12 was used to code all of the textual data thematically, which enabled the discovery of common themes in terms of power, sovereignty, justice, multi polarity, and identity. Emergent themes were captured using the open coding method and later categorized into higher-level themes using the axial coding method.
- **Comparative Historical Interpretation:** The study addressed the history of BRICS in adapting to more general structural changes in the world economy, and made comparisons with previous forms of South-South cooperation. This enabled the monitoring of continuity and disruption in the political and institutional levels.
- **Triangulation:** It involved the cross-reference of qualitative results with economic and institutional indicators to enhance reliability. The thematic codes were read and confirmed by a second independent coder with a high degree of interceder reliability ($\kappa = 0.84$), which increased the methodological strength of this analysis (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW:

Figure 1: This figure indicates BRICS share of the world GDP between 1990 to 2025, and it is clear that Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are gaining increasing weight as contributors to the world economic output. Source: World Bank data, 2023.

The rise of the BRICS countries should be interpreted as part of a wider change in the world political economy, where the dominance of the West is slowly fading, and a regional power of regional powers that insist on a bigger say in the world order is growing (Acharya, 2014; Stuenkel, 2015; Gallagher & Irwin, 2015). Although Northern hegemony remains present and reinforced in institutions, including the G7, NATO, and the Bretton Woods system, BRICS is becoming an alternative hegemonic project that aims to pluralize global leadership and redefine the international cooperation.

This part provides a comparative empirical evaluation of the BRICS countries economic paths, institutional efforts as well as trade impact. These empirical revelations assist in anchoring the general examination by giving the necessary background to the theoretical and normative approaches that will be used in the study.

Over the last decades, the BRICS economies have been steadily growing their portion of the world

GDP, trade volume, and inflows of foreign direct investment. These data insights make the bigger picture approachable by providing significant context to the ideas and values informing the study. Indicatively, the BRICS have increased their contribution to the world GDP to over twice that of 1990 to 2025, highlighting their growing economic prominence as compared to the G7.

Organizations such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement indicate the continued attempts of BRICS to develop financial alternatives to western-oriented systems (Stuenkel, 2015; Dadush, 2012). These projects are not only functional, but also heavily symbolic, with even wider postcolonial hopes of epistemic independence and financial self-sufficiency, in contrast to the conditional lending systems of the IMF and World Bank.

The increasing power of BRICS can be explained not only in the terms of economic indicators but in the terms of the concept of power as theorized by Guzzini (2013) that is, power as something inherent in institutions and systems of knowledge. The emergence of new financial instruments and alternative models in BRICS countries is an indication of an active contest to mainstream global discourses that have conventionally defined progress, stability, and development (Escobar, 2018; Mignolo, 2011).

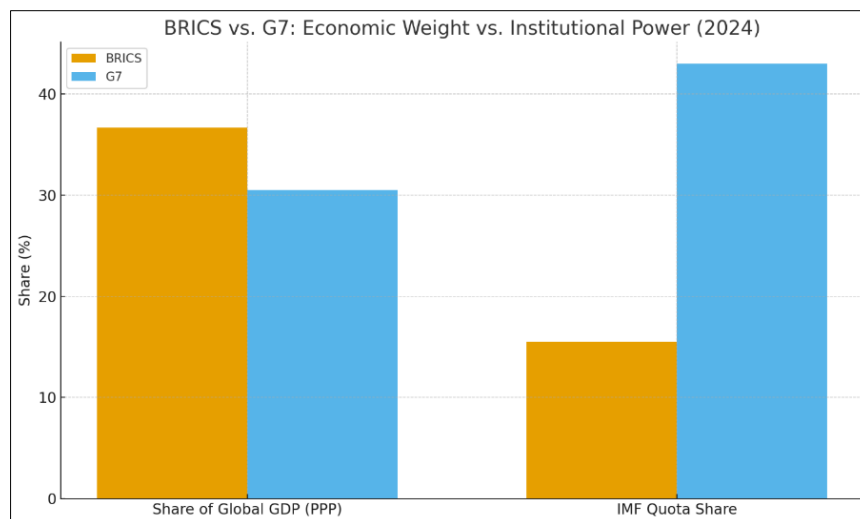


Figure 2: BRICS and G7 Comparative Economic weight and institutional influence in the global financial system, 2024
Source: IMF, WEO Database (2024).

Figure 2: The figure compares the relative economic power of BRICS and G7 countries in terms of their contribution to world GDP (PPP), with their corresponding power in terms of institutional capacity in international financial institutions (IMF) through quota shares, which shows a very sharp imbalance: BRICS outweigh the G7 in economic terms but are still underrepresented in institutional capacity.

By 2022, the BRICS nations were accounting for a greater percentage of the world GDP compared to the G7 in terms of PPP. However, the IMF quota reforms studies indicate that the BRICS continue to be less institutionally influential than they ought to be considering their economic weight (Stuenkel, 2015; Dadush, 2012). This gap indicates the difficulty that is faced by the bloc to convert economic power into a powerful voice in international governance.

The global output of BRICS increased by more than 33% percent compared to approximately 20% percent in 2000 and 2024, this indicating a significant shift in the global economics (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017; Dadush, 2012; IMF, 2024). The GDP of

the bloc in that time increased nearly seven times in nominal terms. China and India contributed over 70 percent of that growth which shows their crucial roles in the rise of the bloc (World Bank, 2023; IMF, 2024).

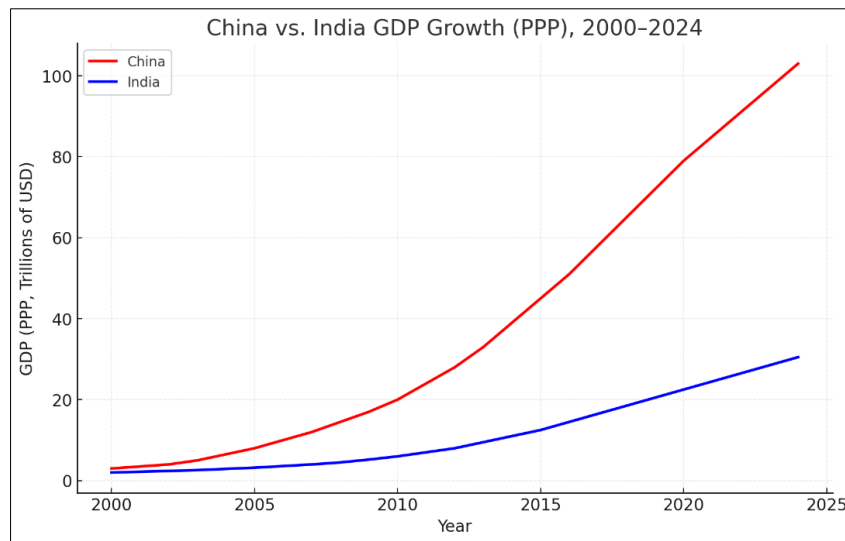


Figure 3: China vs. India GDP Growth in Purchasing power Parity (PPP), 2000- 2024

Source: IMF (2024); World Bank (2023).

Figure 3: This figure is a comparison of the GDP growth rate of China and India between 2000 and 2024 expressed in the PPP-adjusted trillions of U.S. dollars. China has had a rapid steady economic growth particularly after 2010, making it the largest economy in PPP terms. The rate of Indian growth is also steadily increasing, albeit at a slower rate, which underscores its emergence as a key contributor to world growth.

The changing economic paths of BRICS and the changing power structures throughout the world (2000–2024).

Even though BRICS was formally established in 2009 (South Africa followed in 2010), the economic momentum of its member countries started in the early 2000s. A longer historical perspective of BRICS explains its eventual acquisition of a geopolitical power.

Gross Domestic Product and International output:

The BRICS countries grew in terms of global GDP (in purchasing power parity) to more than 32 percent between 2000 and 2024, surpassing the G7 by 2022. This shift demonstrates that the global economy power has changed within the past two decades (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017; Dadush, 2012; IMF, 2024). The GDP of the bloc increased over seven times nominally, of which China and India contributed over 70 percent of the increase. This growth occurred as most developed economies experienced slower growth particularly following the 2008 crisis.

Even though the economic weight of BRICS has grown, the institutional influence remains low.

Research into IMF quota reforms has shown that there has always been a disproportion between the voting power of members and their economic weight (IMF, 2023; Ocampo, 2017). This is the gap that continues to be a challenge to BRICS in its attempt to remodel world governance.

The Trade Patterns and South- South Linkages:

Besides their economic development, the members of BRICS have enhanced trade amongst themselves. Trade within the BRICS has grown considerably, as in 2005 the figure stood at about \$93 billion but in 2023 it has increased to over \$400 billion this represents a gradual move towards not relying on the traditional markets of the North (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; Joffe, 2015; BRICS Joint Statistical Publication, 2023). This process indicates the general changes in the world trade relations and emphasizes the growing significance of collaboration between the nations of the Global South.

Even though China remains the major trade partner in the BRICS group, there has been a significant increase in cross-regional trade among member states, which is a pointer of a trend toward deeper economic integration. As an example, agricultural trade between India and Brazil, mineral exports between Russia and South Africa, and the growing financial integration of BRICS countries indicate the strengthening of intra-bloc economic relationships (Joffe, 2015; Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; UNCTAD, 2024). Such flows of trade do not only boost the economic growth of the member states, but also indicate the larger goal of BRICS to foster a multipolar

structure of global integration based on mutual development.

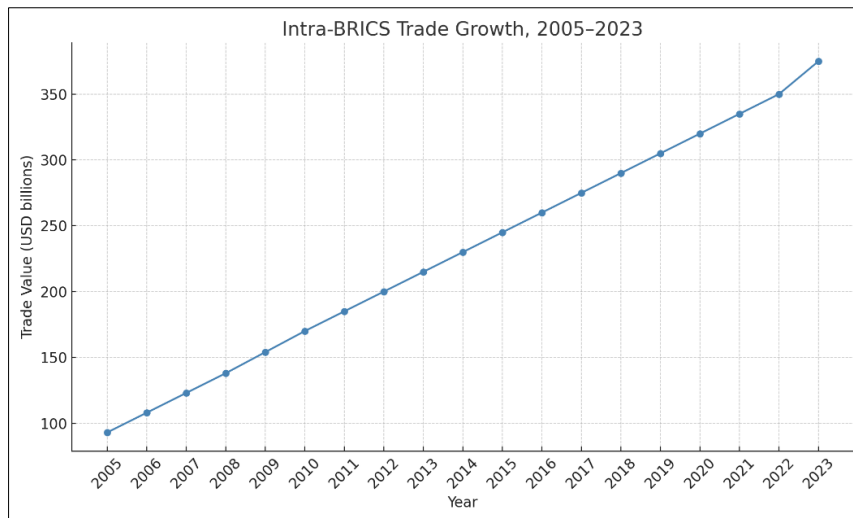


Figure 4: BRICS Trade Growth: Intra BRIC, 2005-2023
Source: UNCTAD Stat; WTO Trade Stats (2024).

Figure 4: This illustrates how the volume of trade among BRICS has been increasing steadily over the last 18 years, starting at about USD 93 billion in 2005, and intra-BRICS trade has been growing steadily, reaching over USD 400 billion as of 2023. The steady increase reflects the growing economic integration within the bloc, complementary nature of the region and the desire to minimize reliance on the Western-dominated trade networks.

Trade Growth and Financial Impact in BRICS. Intra-BRICS Trade Growth:

The volume of intra-BRICS trade increased more than four times during the last two decades, reaching the levels of over USD 400 billion in 2023, as compared to USD 93 billion in 2005. The steep increase demonstrates the growing reliance of members on one another economically despite the political differences (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; Joffe, 2015). The efforts of

BRICS to diversify trade, strengthen South-South supply chains, and forge new bilateral relationships are an indication of a strategic change towards greater economic independence of the traditional Northern-dominated markets.

Institutional Financial Leverage:

In 2015, the New Development Bank (NDB) was established and provided more than USD 30 billion in infrastructure and renewable energy projects (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; Li, 2019). The NDB also has smaller overall lending than the World Bank but it specializes in local currency credits, which challenges the dominance of the dollar in development finance (Fiori & Vieira, 2014). The NDB assists its members in becoming financially independent and less dependent on the dollar by allowing members to borrow in their own currencies.

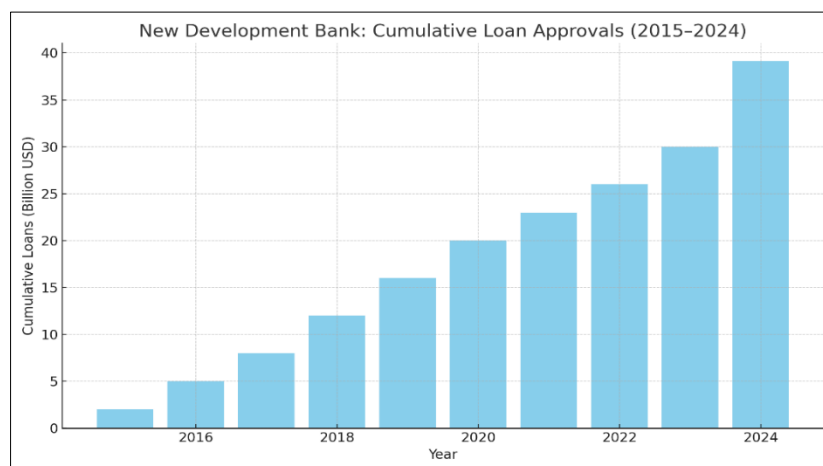


Figure 5: This figure show the total NDB loan approvals between 2015 and 2024
Source: NDB, Annual Reports (2015–2023).

Figure 5: The figure shows the cumulative value of loans granted by the New Development Bank (NDB) since its establishment in 2015 until 2023. This upward trend indicates the growing need to find other sources of developing finance, in addition to the institutionalization of the NDB.

The BRICS and How the Structure of Global Development Finance Is Changing

Development Finance: the New Development Bank:

As of 2015, NDB has provided more than 30 billion dollars in loans, mostly in infrastructure and renewable energy (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; Li, 2019; Fiori & Vieira, 2014; New Development Bank, 2023). It is smaller than the World Bank, but its fast development makes it a viable substitute to the global development finance. The focus on lending in local currencies also gives the indication of BRICS that they are strategically seeking financial independence and less dependence on dollar-denominated debt, which has massive long-term consequences on the world monetary processes.

The Infrastructure and Connections: Strategic Investment in Global South:

More than 1,000 infrastructure projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America started by BRICS-led initiatives, the most notable of which is the Belt and Road Initiative initiated by China, have been viewed as the rise of the BRICS in world development (Huang, 2016; Zhang & Smith, 2014; Belt and Road Portal, 2023;

New Development Bank, 2023). The goal of these projects is to improve connection, digital capacity, and logistics in emerging countries by building data centers, fiber-optic networks that go under the water, and infrastructure for green energy. These investments do not just indicate the growing power of BRICS in the digital and technological infrastructure of the Global South, where it is influencing the governance of data, connectivity, and access to new technologies (Coudry & Mejias, 2019; Noble, 2018). Taken together, these efforts are an indication of an emerging agenda of digital sovereignty and sustainable development, highlighting the strategic break of BRICS with the traditional Western form of development.

The Effects of Economies and Global Adjustments:

The BRICS countries, and particularly China and India, have transformed the world balance of power due to their economic rise. Between 2000 and 2024, the BRICS increased their global GDP in Purchasing Power Parity by a significant margin, which overtakes the G7 in 2022. The BRICS nations today contribute more than a third of the global economy, and China and India produce over 70 percent of the increase. This change represents a big shift in the balance of economic power between the Global North and the Global South. However, the BRICS countries are growing at different rates, and institutional power may not have grown as quickly as the economy has (IMF, 2024; World Bank, 2023).

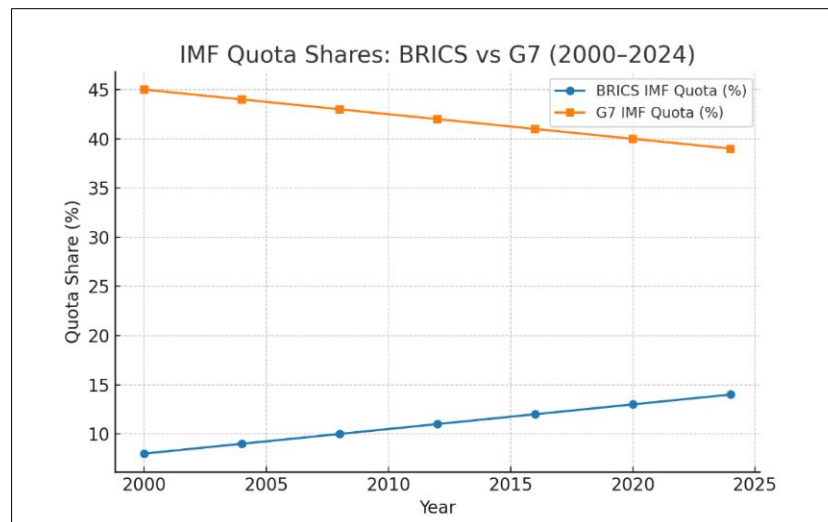


Figure 6: Shifting of IMF Quota Shares BRICS vs. G7 (2000-2024)

Source: IMF, WEO Database (2024).

Figure 6: This figure demonstrates how the distribution of IMF quota shares between the BRICS and the G7 countries has changed between 2000 and 2024, with the collective quota share of the BRICS steadily rising and the G7 steadily declining.

This graph shows how BRICS' total quota share in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has slowly increased while the G7's has slowly decreased. The G7 is still the most important group, but the steady rise of BRICS shows that the balance of economic power is shifting and that there is a need for better representation in global financial governance.

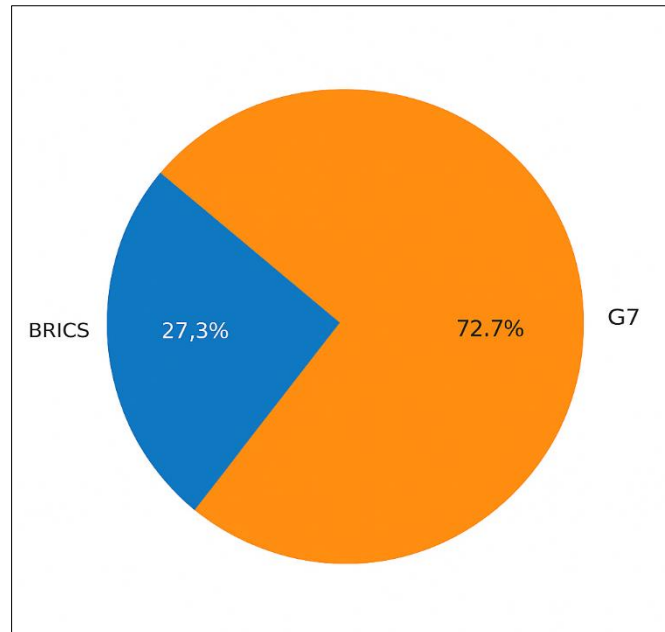


Figure 7: Inequalities in the World Bank Voting Power G7 vs. BRICS (2024)
Source: World Bank (2024)

Figure 7: This pie chart displays the sharing of voting power in the World Bank as G7 and BRICS countries in 2024, although the BRICS is gaining more economic weight, the G7 remains the dominant force with 72.7 percent of the votes as compared to 27.3 percent of the BRICS.

Strategic Autonomy and Institutional Influence:

The BRICS countries are also becoming more assertive in the global governance by demanding institutional reform and adopting strategic autonomy. The creation of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and the New Development Bank (NDB) is an indicator of the strategic move by BRICS to establish financial autonomy and form alternative international institutions. These efforts put into question the supremacy of Western led organizations like the IMF and the World Bank especially in terms of voting rights, currency dependency, and development discourses.(Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; Li, 2019; NDB, 2023)

Despite being only at the exploration phase, the BRICS-led currency concept demonstrates the greater intent of the bloc to reorganize financial flows around the world and enhance monetary independence in response to the dominance of U.S. dollars. This compulsion to create new institutions is occurring alongside remaining a part of the current multilateral systems. Through the establishment of alternative institutions and continued participation in existing ones, BRICS demonstrates a multi-dimensional and adaptable concept of sovereignty one that cannot be simply divided into East and West or

Global North and South. (Mejias, 2019; BRICS Summit Declarations, 2023).

The internal Divergences and Contradictions in BRICS:

BRICS countries are very different in terms of political organization, economic power, and strategy despite their common goals. China is a leading player in BRICS, which contrasts with the less powerful institutional capacity of South Africa, or the authoritarian regime of Russia in comparison to the democratic regimes of India and Brazil. Such internal imbalances complicate the ability to act in unison, which in most cases leads to disjointed policy stands and conflicting regional interests. (Hurrell, 2018; Kornegay & Bohler-Muller, 2021).

The changes in the foreign policy of Brazil in different governments, the ambiguous nature of India, and the confrontational nature of Russia are all signs of the persistent differences in the BRICS block. These issues raise doubts about the unity of the bloc, but the internal diversity can also be an advantage that opens pluralist options to a set of bloc politics and enables a variety of voices of the Global South to influence the global discourse.

Rather than being a strictly coordinated coalition, BRICS is an argumentation platform, policy coordination, and reinvention of global norms. The value of BRICS is never based on internal homogeneity, but on the capacity to disrupt power imbalances in the world, and on the prospect of offering alternative ways of development, governance and sovereignty.

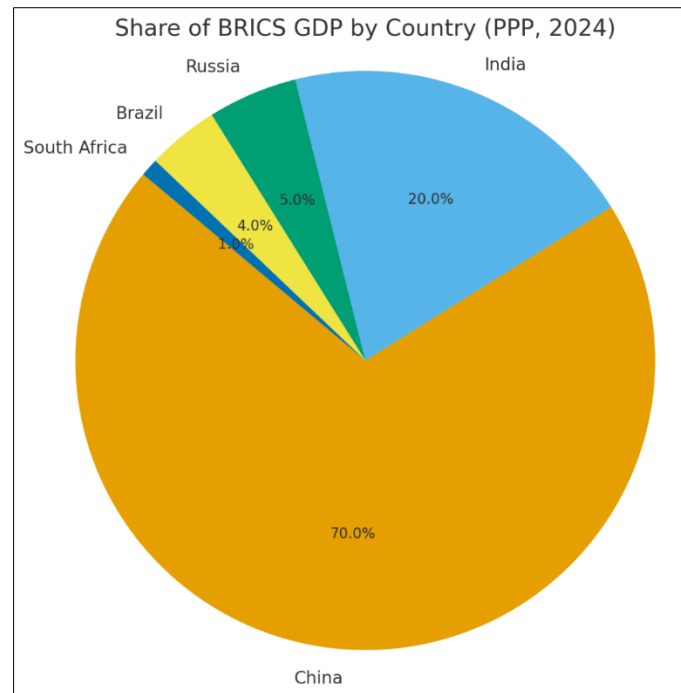


Figure 7: Buying Power Parity (PPP) projections of BRICS member states' GDPs for 2024
Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook, 2024.

Figure 7: This shows how the GDP of BRICS member nations will be split up in 2024 based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). The data shows that China has the biggest economy in the BRICS group, making up 70% of the group's total GDP. India comes in second with 20%, Russia with 5%, Brazil with 4%, and South Africa with 1%. This imbalance shows the economic differences between the BRICS countries and how much power each one has in the organization.

BRICS Nation Strategies in Country Specific Illustrations:

Even though the BRICS project is commonly discussed as a single bloc, the approach of every member state is defined by the specific historical path, institutional strengths, and national interests.

The subsequent country-specific examples are used to show Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as having different geopolitical and economic goals in the larger context of BRICS cooperation. These disparities show how hard it is to keep the alliance coherent and maintain the power of the member states (IMF, 2024; World Bank, 2023).

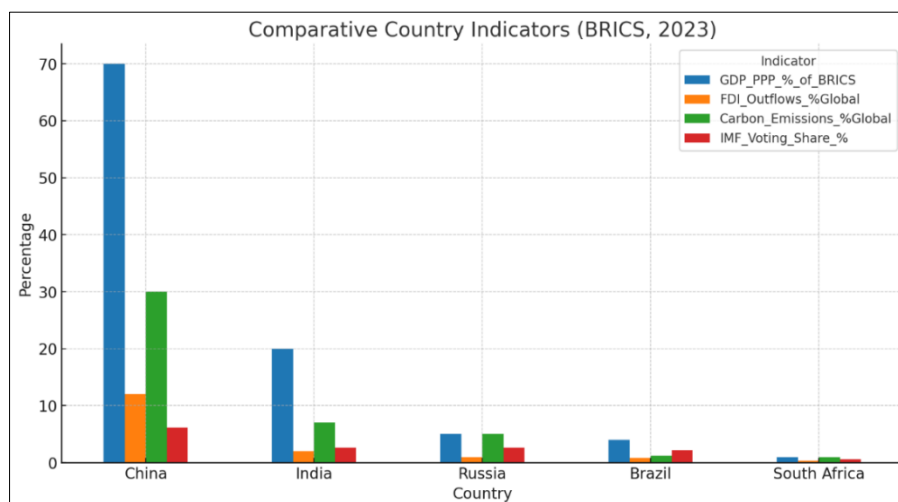


Figure 8: Economic Influence and Global Participation which compares BRICS Countries (2023)
Sources: IMF, World Bank, UNCTAD (2024).

Figure 8. This figure is a comparative analysis of BRICS members in terms of four major global indicators which are GDP relative to purchasing power parity (PPP) as a proportion of the overall BRICS GDP, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) outflows as a proportion of the world outflows, carbon emissions as a proportion of the world total, and voting share in the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

China leads massively in all groups, as it accounts for more than 70% of BRICS GDP (PPP) and makes disproportionate contributions to the world economic and environmental impact in terms of both

outflows and emissions. India is a distant follower, with about 20 percent of BRICS GDP (PPP) and a negligible contribution in other areas. Russia, Brazil, and South Africa are much further behind, because they have relatively low percentages on all indicators, and imbalanced global economic and environmental impact.

These inequalities indicate the internal asymmetries of BRICS, which underlie the problem of maintaining egalitarian governance and power concentration in the bloc, and the tension between the collective rhetoric and power concentration is evident in the imbalance.

Table 2: Comparative Overview of the Strategies of BRICS Nations.

Country	Primary Strategy	Strengths	Challenges
China	The Belt and Road Initiative which is aimed at developing infrastructure, improving connectivity, and standardizing technologies.	The Global reach: The large scale project execution, massive influence in technology.	The Rising is about the dependency on debts and the geopolitical tensions.
India	The South- South development diplomacy and the sustainable energy collaboration.	The Strong cultural diplomacy, leadership in renewable energy project, consortium building.	The Resistance to monetary integration; striking a balance between national independence and block interests.
Brazil	The Environmental sovereignty, biofuel exports, Amazon protection	The Leadership in climate advocacy, development of renewable resources, symbolic environmental stewardship	The Policy inconsistency driven by political transitions
South Africa	The Regional integration with African Union, peace building, climate diplomacy	The Serves as a bridge between Africa and BRICS, promotes moral leadership in governance	The Economic limitations; reduced capacity to implement large-scale infrastructure projects
Russia	The multilateral negotiations, the Energy diplomacy, strategic resources exports.	The Leverage by provision of energy, strategic involvement in world power politics.	The Economic sanctions and isolation on the international level; susceptibility to the geopolitical changes.

Table 2: This table describes the strategic orientations, capabilities, and limitations of each BRICS country in its quest to achieve a multipolar world order. Basing on the policy documents, peer-reviewed sources, and thematic analyses, the summary demonstrates how each of the states utilizes its strengths and overcomes its weaknesses to influence international standards and disrupt the hegemony frameworks. The comparative framing shows some convergences as well as divergences which gives a better understanding of the internal dynamics of the bloc. The table identifies different strategic priorities, which reflects similar focus on regional leadership and sustainable development, and also reflects differences based on domestic political and economic realities. These differentiated strategies indicate a pluralistic approach, according to which there are several ways to international involvement. The internal contradictions imply that BRICS is not that much of a bloc but a platform that is dynamic in negotiating global influence (Gallagher & Irwin, 2015; IMF, 2024; World Bank, 2023).

China: The Belt and Road Initiative as a Geo-economics Leverage:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is still one of the main geo-economics instruments that China uses in the BRICS and the rest of the world. Since its beginning, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been financing infrastructure and offering infrastructure development assistance to more than 140 countries, encompassing infrastructure projects in transportation, logistics, and digital infrastructure. The initiative facilitates the development of Chinese technological standards and digital ecosystems, which help Beijing achieve its goal of digital sovereignty and enhance its normative role in the determination of global connectivity. (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

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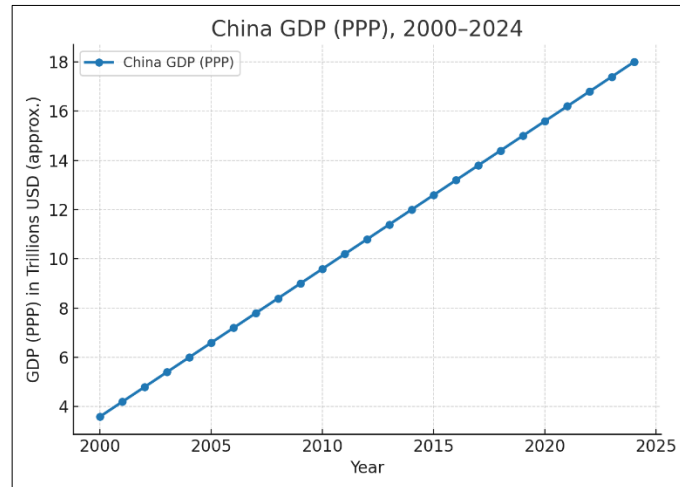


Figure 10: China GDP (PPP), 2000-2024

Source: IMF, WEO Database (2024)

Figure 10: GDP growth of China in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in 2000–2024. This chart shows that China has experienced massive growth of its GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) in the last 20 years, becoming a major player in the world economy.

India: South-Southern Development Diplomacy:

The foreign policy of India is more focused on developmental cooperation than traditional assistance that makes India a leader of South-South cooperation. Cultural diplomacy, technical assistance and concessional credit lines have enabled India to become increasingly involved in countries in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Examples of such flagship projects include the Pan African e-Network and the

International Solar Alliance, which reflect New Delhi thinking on sustainable development, technology transfer, and capacity building of human beings, which is not based on extractive or dependency-driven models of development. (Chaturvedi, 2014; Ghosh, 2016).

Meanwhile, the Indian reserved approach toward further financial and institutional integration in the BRICS is indicative of the conflict between its loyalty to the collective solidarity and its need to preserve national independence. (Raghavan, 2013). Such a balancing act brings into focus the overall diplomatic philosophy of India: it advocates the multipolar world that is based on collaboration and fairness and retains strategic autonomy in the rapidly evolving global order.

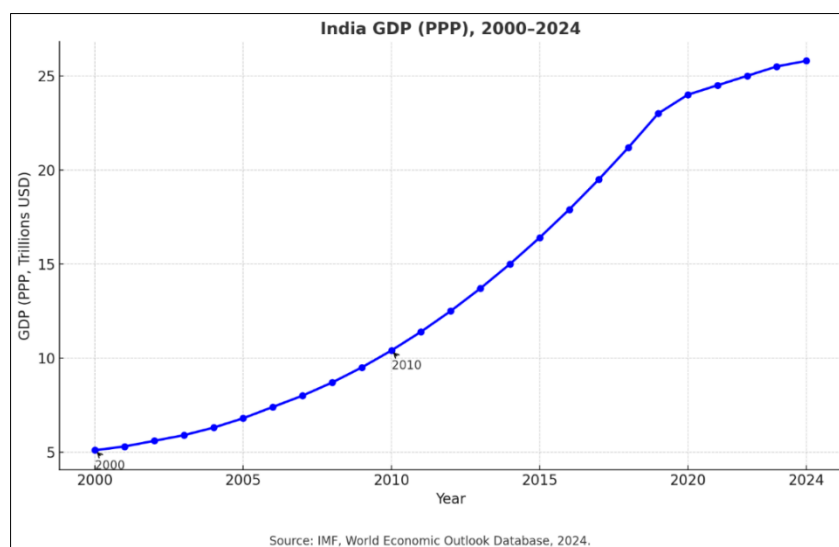


Figure 11: GDP Growth of India, in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in 2000-2024

Source: IMF, WEO Database (2024).

Figure 11: This figure indicates how the GDP of India has grown steadily as per purchasing power parity (PPP) over a span of 24 years since the year 2000 when its economy was barely above 2 trillion dollars, it has now increased to almost 28 trillion dollars in the year 2024, which is an indication of the rapid development of India, its demographic advantage, and the growing part in global economic activities and investment flows.

Brazil: Sovereignty of the Environment and Resource Diplomacy:

Brazil plays the role of an environmental sovereignty leader in the global scene. The developing nations need to engage in economic development and at the same time combat climate change on a fair playing field (Mattar, 2021). Brazil disputes climate regimes which are dominated by the Global North and advocates on differentiated responsibilities which lead to historical emissions and developmental disparities.

Brazil has tried to reconcile the economic interests with environmental stewardship under the leadership of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. It supports efforts to preserve Amazon rainforest as well as increase the export of biofuels and sustainable agricultural products. This two-way approach demonstrates the desire of Brazil to reconcile environmental care and development requirements (Mattar, 2021; Barber, 2013).

Nevertheless, the lack of consistency in policy and changes in priorities between administrations has undermined the credibility of Brazil as a dependable environmental leader in the BRICS. Such contradictions limit its capacity to organize BRICS-wide climate policies, despite its enormous ecological resources and ethical competence in the global sustainability dialogue (Barber, 2013).



Figure 12: The GDP (PPP) Path of Brazil, 2000-2025

Source: IMF, WEO Database (2024)

Figure 12: The graph shows the GDP growth of Brazil in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), in billions of USD, and the overall tendency follows a fairly upward trend, but the growth seems to slow down after 2014, when the BRICS economy faced both global commodity shocks and domestic fiscal limitations.

South Africa: Leading the Regional Integration and Advocacy of Normative Leadership:

South Africa is one of the key players in the connection of BRICS to the African continent. It places itself as a mediator between the Global South and multilateral institutions. South Africa leverages its BRICS membership to bring African development issues to global governance through the African Union and NEPAD (Bodman, 2013).

Pretoria advocates the value-based foreign policy based on post-apartheid values of reconciliation, human rights, and climate justice. Such a normative position enables South Africa to exert soft power in the BRICS and to develop a unique moral voice in the context of the geopolitical intricacies of the bloc. However, structural limits such as sluggish economic growth, elevated unemployment rates and scanty fiscal space have hindered the capacity of South Africa to keep pace with the institutional or financial aggressiveness of China or India (Paris, 2014).

These domestic strains diminish its ability to facilitate massive regional initiatives such that the nation is compelled to depend more on diplomatic leadership than material power.

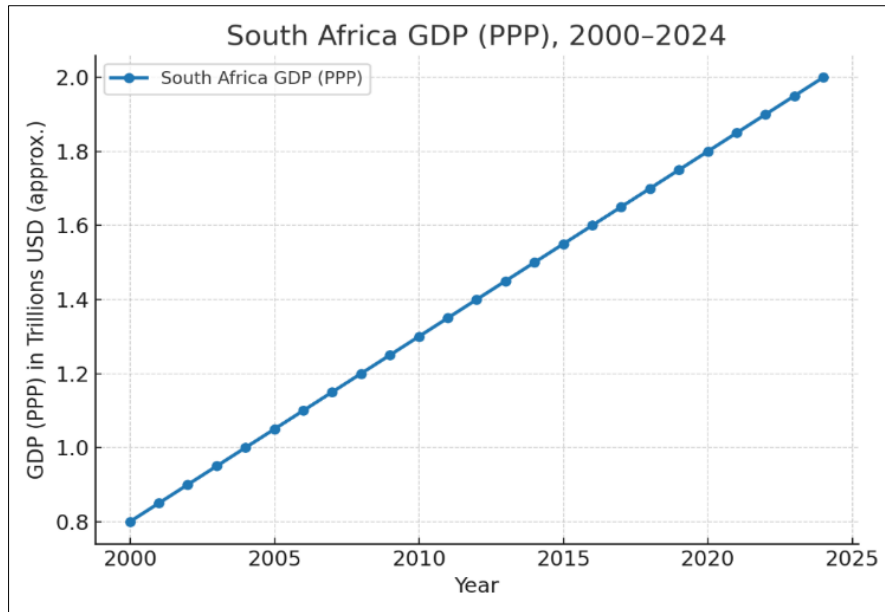


Figure 13: GDP (PPP) Growth Pattern of South Africa, 2000-2025

Source: IMF, WEO Database (2024).

Figure 13: This figure is used to show the purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusted GDP path of South Africa between 2000 and 2024, in trillions of U.S. dollars, and represents a relatively linear trend of growth that has been largely consistent, but at a slow pace due to structural constraints in the South African economy and cyclical energy crises and corruption. Although South Africa is the most industrialized economy on the African continent, it has experienced ineffective growth, albeit at a steady pace, due to structural limitations and commodity cycles in the world market, which have nevertheless generated.

Russia: The Diplomacy of Energy to Ensure Strategic Autonomy:

The BRICS policy in Russia has been influenced by the fact that Russia is a global energy powerhouse. Russia has been using its vast energy reserves of oil and natural gas to strengthen bilateral energy relations with the other BRICS, particularly China and India. These relationships give rise to economic interdependence and enhance the strategic relevance of Russia (Panibratov, 2015). Russia is still developing other financial systems including non-dollar trading settlements and regional payment systems in a

bid to cut its reliance on Western-dominated financial institutions.

Nevertheless, geopolitical isolation of Russia due to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has limited its ambition to lead in the BRICS. The diplomatic capital of Moscow has been severely damaged by military warfare and massive international sanctions, as well as its relationship with multiple partners of the Global South (Makocki & Popescu, 2023). China remains an active, pragmatic participant, whereas Brazil and South Africa remain more conservative, and do not want to become a part of the global power games.

Nevertheless, Russia still maintains a doctrine of strategic autonomy, which opposes Western hegemony, and is in favor of a multipolar order. However, the constant conflict between the unilateral ambitions of individual member states and the general obedience of the bloc to multilateralism creates contradictions within the bloc. These contradictory strategies question the integrity of BRICS and cast doubt on its effectiveness as a force that would undertake collective actions in the governance of the world (Panibratov, 2015; Makocki & Popescu, 2023).

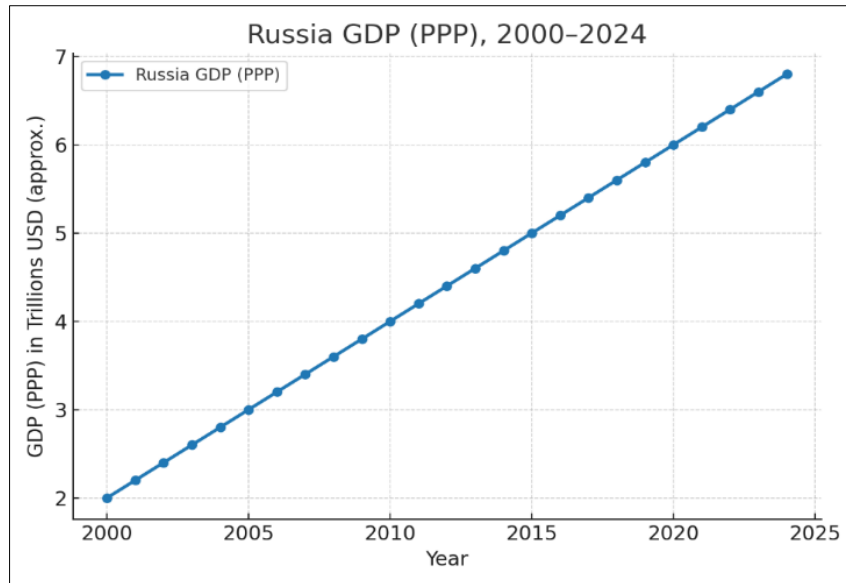


Figure 14: The GDP (PPP) Development of Russia, 2000-2024

Source: The data was obtained in the World Economic Outlook Database, (2024) published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Figure 14: This graph depicts the economic development of Russia in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), which is the steadily growing line of economic growth since 2000 to 2024, indicating a steady and linear growth of approximately 2 trillion USD to 6.8 trillion USD. This reflects the strategy of leveraging its energy exports, mainly oil and natural gas, as a foundation of its economic growth, which has historically dominated its economic performance, although the trend of growth does not indicate diversification into technology, manufacturing or services sectors. In the BRICS context, Russia is at moderate weight.

Coalition of Convenience or strategic Coherence:

The BRICS countries have the ability to act as a bloc, but it requires a combination of converging and divergent national interests. Cooperation has not been without some fruitful results, yet there are internal contradictions that pose some questions on the future of the bloc. To know whether BRICS is a unified producer of multipolarity or just a coalition of convenience one should take a closer look (Acharya, 2014; Mamdani, 2020; Stuenkel, 2015).

Influence using Framing in terms of Symbolism and Cultural Identity:

Over the last few years, BRICS nations have also projected their world rise not only economically or strategically, but also as a wider civilization story. They position themselves as the guardians of the ancient traditions and non-Western knowledge systems. To a certain extent, China and India undermine the argument that the liberal international order is universal. Their discussion denies the supremacy of the West and suggests a pluralistic, culture-based vision of the world order (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). BRICS therefore has a

symbolic power that can be attributed to moral autonomy and civilizational legitimacy but goes beyond economic growth to redefine concepts of justice, development, and world power.

Ethical Inconsistencies and Normative Tensions:

Even though BRICS tends to proclaim its principles of inclusivity and equity in line with the principles of cosmopolitanism, its actions can sometimes demonstrate ethical contradictions and internal inconsistencies (Mamdani, 2020; Escobar, 2018). Recent postcolonial theory cautions that in the absence of deliberate ethical frameworks, multipolarity is bound to reproduce the hierarchies that it claims to oppose since it does not have structural mechanisms to guard against such practices. Mamdani (2020) and Escobar (2018) both state that without structural precautions, new powers like BRICS can reproduce the same hierarchies that they claim to challenge. The discrepancy between the normative assertions of BRICS and its geopolitical behavior restricts the transformational capacity of the bloc.

Permanence of Global Power Imbalances:

Although BRICS take an anti-hegemonic stance, there is unequal distribution of power. Intra-BRICS trade is dominated by China with close to 60 percent a trend that reflects the asymmetries that have traditionally characterized the Global North-South relationships and raises the issue of internal hierarchies within the bloc (Gallagher and Irwin, 2015; Mamdani, 2020). Smaller state member, like South Africa, could be marginalized or even reduced to a junior partner, weakening the blocs' claims to equality and a voice (Mamdani, 2020).

Rhetoric vs. Practice on Sovereignty:

Although BRICS boasts of the importance of sovereignty and non-interference, the actions of its members are usually opposite to these statements. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 and the vast territorial ambitions of China in the South China Sea have attracted a lot of international criticism, making the internal relations within the BRICS bloc tense (Smith, 2023; Lee, 2022). These contradictions complicate the task of BRICS to have a consistent, principled foreign-policy position.

Institutional Limitations:

BRICS has created the New Development Bank and the Contingency Reserve Arrangement that is not as financially or politically powerful as the old Bretton Woods institutions. The bloc can respond slowly to crises in the world, and its enforcement mechanisms are weak, which restricts decision-making (Gallagher and Irwin, 2015).

External Pushback:

Western stakeholders tend to see the moves of BRICS, such as de-dollarization or the international UN reform, not as an effort to build international justice, but as a threat to the status quo. This institutionalized opposition blocks the cooperation of nations and

positions the BRICS-led reforms as adversarial rather than positive (Acharya, 2014).

Internal Political Instability:

International political changes among BRICS members undermine unity. Brazil switches foreign-policy priorities between one government and another, and the alliances of India switch over time, displaying how unstable long-term cooperation can be. The stability of the bloc is threatened by the election process and changing national interests of each country (Barber, 2013; Raghavan, 2013).

A Final Reflection on BRICS Development.

The BRICS system has its opportunities and challenges. Even though BRICS hopes to restructure the world politics and enhance a multipolar world order, it still struggles with internal contradictions, imbalance in the distribution of power, and the distrust of external players. The future of multipolarity should be evaluated properly, and the notion that multipolarity is always equal to fairness should be dismissed. Rather, it ought to look at the possibility of BRICS to iron out internal contradictions, reinforce its institutions and to instill ethical consistency in its agenda.

Table 3: Strengths and Weaknesses of BRICS Model

Strengths	Weaknesses
Is a move towards a multipolar world order through questioning the hegemony of Western-led institutions and advancing alternative voices in world governance.	Strengthens power disparities- Has a tendency to replicate uneven hierarchies, particularly where China has a disproportionate role.
Prioritizes sovereignty and non-interference - The proponents uphold domestic autonomy, which is a fundamental belief in the foreign policy discourse of the group.	Discrepancy between words and deeds - The behavior of certain members (e.g. Russia in Ukraine, China in South China Sea) is inconsistent with declared norms.
New financial institutions were created -The New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) provide alternatives to the institutions of Bretton Woods.	Small institutional influence - These institutions are yet to have the global reach and influence of the World Bank and IMF.
Opposes Western control of international governance - Demands changes in the UN Security Council and the world financial system.	The Global North - western powers tend to view BRICS initiatives as strategic and not as cooperative.
Diverse membership offers a wide spectrum of interests - The group unites the key emerging economies around the world.	Internal instability - Political and economic turbulence (The changing leadership in Brazil, South African economic woes) leads to the inability to plan long-term strategies.

Sources: Acharya (2014) and Mamdani (2020).

Table 3: The following table enumerates the key benefits and strategic constraints of BRICS framework as it attempts to shape global governance. Although BRICS offers a strong counter-argument to

Western-led institutions, there are still internal contradictions and external opposition to its transformational potential.

Table 4: Lenders Conceptualizing the BRICS Influence and Strategy. Conceptual Frameworks Informing BRICS Strategies and Global Engagement

Conceptual Lens	Key Thinkers (Post-2010)	Application to BRICS	Illustrative Examples
The Power and Knowledge Systems	Couldry & Mejias (2019)	BRICS restores epistemic power by creating counter-discourse to Western hegemony via institutions and knowledge-making.	New Development Bank and Contingent Reserve Arrangement.
The Existential Sovereignty	Mignolo (2011); Mbembe (2017)	Sovereignty is reestablished in digital, environmental, and epistemic space in which development is self-determined.	The policies of data localization in India; South African environmental policies in the UN forums.
The Pluriversality	Escobar (2018)	Promotes coexistence of different civilizational models and modernities, and is a challenge to liberal universalism	The Solar Diplomacy of India; Brazilian indigenous land protection policy; the Belt and Road Initiative of China.
The Postcolonial Governance Critique	Mamdani (2020); Acharya (2014)	Cautions that new powers can also create the global hierarchies in their systems and highlights the importance of moral consciousness in South-South collaboration.	China also dominates intra-BRICS trade; challenges leadership in BRICS climate finance.
The Cosmopolitan Justice & Ethics	Nussbaum (2011)	Enhances a compromise between national sovereignty and international ethical responsibilities including equity, inclusion, and dignity.	International cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines; BRICS Health Ministers efforts on fair access.
The Multipolar Norm Construction	Acharya (2014); Roy (2017)	Position BRICS as norm setters with alternative models in the world of finance, internet policy, and climate policy.	Proponents of IMF quota reforms, encourages the localized models of internet governance, and advocates the introduction of inclusive development measures.

Sources: Escobar (2018), Mamdani (2020), Acharya (2014), Mbembe (2021), Mignolo (2011), Nussbaum (2011).

Table 4: These theoretical frameworks can be used to explain the emergence of BRICS. The perspectives of power and sovereignty, as well as post-colonial and cosmopolitan ethics, demonstrate that the bloc can transform the world order and at the same time can lead to the recreation of the current hierarchies. The two lenses combined give a good understanding of the changing role of BRICS in the world.

DISCUSSION

BRICS Rethinking Global Order.

The Traditional Power Structures are challenged:

The BRICS, which is a group of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is a significant challenge to the realist perspective of global order, which concentrates on military and economic power. Instead of going to war with the West, BRICS aims to transform world governance through the focus on sovereignty, equity, and mutual development. This new agenda that is norm-driven is not similar to previous power-oriented models (Acharya, 2014).

Multipolarity More than Geostrategic Balancing:

BRICS states its multipolar vision of the world order, which is outside the balance-of-power paradigms, and is concerned with inclusive governance, normative

reform, and diversified development models. The bloc advances a pluralistic world order that is founded on mutual respect, non-intervention and open institutional reform, in lieu of simply countering the influence of the West. BRICS concurs with post-colonial critiques of liberal internationalism, and demands more radical structural adjustments within global institutions (Hurrell, 2006; Acharya, 2014).

Recapturing Sovereignty in Multiple Domains:

Sovereignty in BRICS is no longer limited to the territory and political autonomy; it also encompasses the command of digital, technological, and environmental space. The data-localization policies in India, the framework of cyber-sovereignty in China, and the focus of Brazil and South Africa on environmental governance reflect the expansion of the notion of sovereignty by the BRICS countries, who are not only expanding the concept beyond the territorial boundaries but also to the digital, ecological, and regulatory levels. These actions indicate the rejection of neoliberal standards and re-establishment of agency of Global South states (Mamdani, 2020; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Justice and Relational Ethics of Reframing Development:

The members of the BRICS pursue a development ethic based on historical experience, national dignity, and mutual benefit principles, making their collaboration one of equals, not hierarchy or dependency. This ethics-centered strategy is opposed to the Western model of conditional aid. Programs such as the Belt & Road Initiative, the South-South Cooperation Fund in India, and the Lusophone Africa interactions in Brazil are a manifestation of this relational sovereignty model (Wang, 2021; Mawdsley, 2019).

BRICS as Norm Entrepreneurs of Global Governance:

BRICS is shifting to proactive politics. The bloc is pursuing real and incremental transformations in world economic governance by establishing institutions such as the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement. These efforts reflect a practical policy of parallel reform - operating within the existing structures but gradually transforming them internally (Gallagher and Irwin, 2015; Roy, 2017).

Internal Contradictions and Structural Limitations:

Though it has norm ambitions, BRICS has internal asymmetries and contradictory interests. The domination of China, which provides almost 60 percent of intra-BRICS trade, creates the concern of internal hierarchies, which resonate with the North-South divide that the bloc seeks to amend. The contrasts in the political systems of BRICS between pluralistic democracy in India and authoritarianism in Russia provide constant tensions in such areas as cybersecurity regulation, climate change negotiations, and the transparency of the institutions (Belli, 2021; Stuenkel, 2022).

Reimagining Global Order Beyond Western Dominance:

BRICS is not a single ideological alternative to the liberal international order, but an emerging political discourse within the frames of pluralism, historical consciousness, and disputable global norms. It can change the principles of international interaction, create a conversation between civilizations and entrench other ethical systems into the global institutions (Mignolo, 2011).

Strategic implications and Future Trajectories. Restructuring the Architecture of Global Governance:

The rise of BRICS is an indication of a paradigmatic change in the distribution of global economic power, and also in the ideational systems underpinning global governance, legitimacy, and cooperation. BRICS poses a challenge to the explanatory assumptions of Western-led multilateralism and promotes the reconsideration of global legitimacy and justice. It represents a hybrid model of sovereignty,

civilizational pluralism and pragmatic institutionalism (Acharya, 2014; Mamdani, 2020).

Risks Asymmetries and Divergences:

The bloc has internal contradictions that are still huge. The dominance of China poses a risk of restoring the hierarchies that it criticizes on paper, and ideological differences, including the India-China border conflicts and the dissimilarity in digital policies, pose a risk to the cohesion. The growing geopolitical isolation of Russia since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, combined with the aggressive behavior of China in the South China Sea, has put the internal unity of BRICS to the test, as the recent scholarship highlights how these moves not only provoke external concern but also internal discord, particularly with regard to its adherence to multilateralism and fair governance of the world (Júnior & Branco, 2022; Grabowski, 2024).

Opportunities: Institutional Innovation and Reform:

However, despite the ongoing obstacles, BRICS is still working towards its reform-oriented aims through putting institutional innovations into practice. BRICS is defying the current financial and technological order by proposing IMF quota reform to provide emerging economies with a fairer representation, making digital sovereignty a central value of global governance, and creating development finance systems that diminish reliance on the U.S. dollar all with the goal of making the Global South more strategic. Their goals are not just to condemn the Western hegemony but to develop plausible alternatives that include the voices of the South in the processes of global governance (Roy, 2017; Gallagher and Irwin, 2015).

South-South Alliance and Sovereignty of Relations:

By supporting bilateral collaboration between developing nations, BRICS has renewed South-South cooperation by promoting partnerships in health diplomacy, climate change adaptation, peacekeeping, and mass infrastructure development. The geostrategic re-alignment is however based on collective developmental interests and cultural solidarity, as opposed to the purely transactional alliances but asymmetries in economic capacity and political influence still persist within the bloc (Abdenur & de Souza Neto, 2013; Haibin, 2024).

Ethical Pluralism as an Alternative Normativity:

The most unique aspect of BRICS is that it promotes ethical pluralism. Contrary to liberal universalism that has the habit of projecting a single pattern of governing and developing the world as the universal one, BRICS encourages a dialogic perspective on global norms. It states that various civilisations may follow modernity in their unique way, and that various patterns of development and knowledge systems are equally valid (Mignolo, 2011; Couldry and Mejias, 2019). Such a vision transforms the prescriptive

paradigm of global governance into the participatory paradigm.

Finally, Resistance to Reconstruction:

The long-term usefulness of BRICS will be determined by its ability to accomplish three tasks simultaneously: maintain a consistent common story, establish long-lasting institutions, and sustain its members. The future contribution of the bloc will be quantified by its ability to transform values, mechanisms, and architectures upon which global cooperation is built as the bloc shifts towards constructive engagement rather than symbolic contestation. The only way to achieve success will be prolonged adherence to inclusive multilateralism, ethical government, and constant negotiation of internal differences, the characteristics of the truly post-Western world order.

CONCLUSION

The BRICS and Remapping Global Order.

The rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa is a sign of a fundamental change in the global governance. Their economic importance can no longer be doubted but their actual importance is that they are actively challenging the mainstream beliefs on the way in which development is supposed to occur, the way in which international cooperation is supposed to operate and the manner in which power ought to be distributed globally. BRICS promotes a variant of a new global order that is based on negotiated consensus, national autonomy, and that there may not be a right way to develop through organizations such as the New Development Bank and other joint platforms.

However, the shift towards the multipolar world is not equal. The bloc is mostly compromised by structural disparities, particularly the dominance of China, and conflicting national interests and domestic instability. Such tensions restrict the capacity of BRICS to present a common global agenda.

Notably, BRICS is not intended to substitute one hegemonic model by another. Rather, it aims to expand the language of world politics- to make room to think of other conceptions of justice, sovereignty and progress. Instead of reflecting the existing hierarchies, it questions the notion that a single model should shape the future of the world.

The only thing that will determine whether BRICS can translate its symbolic promise into institutional impact that is here to stay will be how it can lead ethically, inclusively and credibly. Success would not simply redistribute global power it would re-establish the principles upon which international cooperation would be based in the 21st century.

Policy Recommendations:

Empowering BRICS as an Aggregate of Equitable Multipolar Governance.

The success of BRICS, as it transitions to more institution-building rhetoric, is determined by its ability to address the internal asymmetries and provide plausible alternatives to liberal global governance. The recommendations have been proposed to make the bloc more coherent, strengthen its normative influence, and place it as a transformative power in developing a more just and multipolar international order.

Policy Continuity and Cohesion of Institution:

In order to maintain continuity and minimize the impact of change of domestic leadership, BRICS ought to substitute informal summits with permanent structures including a Secretariat and rotating technical working groups. These agencies would enhance the ownership of the project, standardize schedules, and reduce dependence on state agendas. The process of institutionalization is needed to make BRICS a stable actor of governance rather than a political brand (Acharya, 2014)

Resolving Internal Asymmetries:

The fact that China controls almost 60 per cent of intra-BRICS trade is a cause of concern in the replication of North-South hierarchies. Probably a capped voting process would achieve a more balanced representation without the power asymmetries being entrenched. Alternatively, assigning leadership on such projects as digital governance or climate change, to less influential members like South Africa or Brazil would allow a more equal balance of power and reflect a genuinely pluralistic approach to global governance (Mamdani, 2020; Gallagher and Irwin, 2015).

Integrating Ethical Standards in Development Cooperation:

BRICS ought to embrace a Charter on Ethical Development to stand out among other extractive models of development, with an outline of common commitments to sustainability, inclusivity and transparency. Independent impact assessment of infrastructure and finance projects, and in particular, the New Development Bank, should be conducted in accordance with international standards such as the UN SDGs. This would authorize the model of BRICS development and entrench long-term responsibility (Gallagher and Irwin, 2015).

Enhancing the South-South Cooperation beyond trade:

BRICS need to go beyond trade and develop institutional knowledge-sharing systems in the fields of education, public health, and digital infrastructure. BRICS Scholarship Fund might contribute to the development of local experience and reduce the dependence on Western educational and research institutions as the main sources of knowledge generation.

Digital sovereignty can be strengthened by collaborative investments in health research and development and open-source technologies and through regional data infrastructure, as well as by improving collective resilience among BRICS countries (Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Roy, 2017).

Positive Multilateral Interaction:

Instead of supplanting the institutions of the West, BRICS ought to be a reformist coalition, promoting change within the global institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO and the UN Security Council. Practical recommendations like those to reform IMF quotas, to have fair trade arbitration, and to assure permanent representation to Africa and Latin America should not remain mere words on paper but should be translated into practical commitments. Such a practical reformist approach will increase the credibility of BRICS and rebrand it as a co-architect of global governance (Acharya, 2014; Mamdani, 2020).

Integrating ethical standards, sharing power, and transforming the relations with multilateral organizations, BRICS can go beyond the mere symbolic resistance to create real global alternatives. The long-term applicability of the bloc will not just be regarding its economic weight, but also its capacity to establish inclusive institutions that are based on pluralism, justice, and collective agency.

Way Forward:

BRICS Governance Reinvented to create a Just and Multipolar World Order.

With the increasing climate crises, the demand to have digital sovereignty, and the general disappointment with the Western-dominated global institutions, BRICS is developing not only as a political coalition, but as a laboratory where new forms of international governance are tested that challenge the liberal international order. The long-term acceptability of the bloc, however, will depend on whether it can institutionalize its normative ambitions by being inclusive, ethical, and pluralist. In order to transcend the symbolic opposition to substantive change, the following strategic priorities are necessary to scholars and policymakers who believe in transforming global governance.

Combine Inter-disciplinary and Evidence-based Strategies:

Researchers interested in BRICS are expected to go beyond their own disciplines and engage with knowledge from areas such as international political economy, digital ethics, environmental governance, and postcolonial theory. This integration provides an overall perspective of how BRICS countries redefine global standards, particularly in institutional reform, sovereignty and infrastructural development. Methodological decisions should be informed by concepts of relational sovereignty and pluriversality

(Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Escobar, 2018) to reflect the complexity of the bloc in terms of its cultural, ecological, and geopolitical aspects. The connection between general theoretical areas and concrete, on-the-ground effects (job creation, environmental consequences, and communal strength) will enhance the scholarly expertise and enhance the practical utility of BRICS policy analysis.

Interrogate Strategic Contradictions and Internal Asymmetries:

Although the BRICS as a bloc criticizes Western hegemony, its internal divisions, including regime types to geopolitical orientations, are threatening its cohesion and its credibility. These tensions can be highlighted by economic power of China, geopolitical isolation of Russia, and the balancing game of India between multilateralism and national sovereignty. Unless these asymmetries are challenged, BRICS might end up reproducing the hierarchies that it aims to destroy (Mamdani, 2020; Gallagher & Irwin, 2015). The future models of governance should be able to deal with these contradictions not as a liability but as a reality that needs to be negotiated systematically and share burdens in a fair manner.

Measuring the Structural Effect of BRICS-Led Institutions: In order to prevent exaggerating symbolic gestures, it is essential to conduct stringent outcome-based analysis of BRICS projects, including the New Development Bank, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, and Belt and Road Initiative. Such projects should not just be evaluated based on financial outputs. The governance efficacy, debt sustainability, environmental protection, and community impact should also be paid attention to. These frameworks assist in finding the difference between rhetorical conformity to global justice and real structural impact (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Roy, 2017). This is especially critical in areas where BRICS investments are met with environmental risks and unresolved development models tensions.

Rebalance Epistemic Power with Global Reciprocity in Research:

A multipolar future that is really just must not only be achieved through the redistribution of material resources but also through the acknowledgement and integration of different knowledge systems. BRICS should be on the frontline of promoting collaborative, context-specific and multilingual production of knowledge. This involves the provision of collaborative research platforms, open standards of access and peer-exchange programs between Global South and Global North institutions. Mignolo (2011) and Mbembe (2021) believe that the emergence of pluriversal governance is only possible through the destruction of intellectual hierarchies and incorporating historically marginalized views of the world. Formalizing this kind of reciprocity

will enhance the normative legitimacy of BRICS and redefine knowledge governance in the world.

Integrate Reformist Ambition and Strategic Institutional Engagement:

BRICS ought to present itself as a reformer instead of trying to replace the already existing multilateral institutions. Advocating equal representation in IMF quotas, even trade, inclusive climate, and data governance structures to ensure digital sovereignty on member states. The idea is not to reverse the power, as Acharya (2014) and Mbembe (2021) argue; the idea is to establish cooperative structures that are inclusive of varying historical experiences and moral values. In this respect, BRICS can transform into a challenge of norms to co-creation of norms.

Building Institutions to a Global Order of plural and ethical global order:

BRICS is at a historic crossroads - it is not only a threat to the Western-dominated order but also an opportunity to restructure global rule based on the principles of inclusion, justice, and historical plurality. Its success will not be counted by the economic output only but by its ability to incorporate the ethical responsibility and structural coherence as part of the new institutional structures. It is time to leave rhetorical opposition behind and present constructive design BRICS need to create resilient, pluralistic, and accountable alternatives not only to redistribute power but also to reinvent the principles of cooperation in the 21st century.

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