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BRICS EXPANSION: ASSESSING THE GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF A GROWING ECONOMIC BLOC

Abstract

Objective: The article aims to analyse the geopolitical and economic implications of the BRICS expansion to include new member states – Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – in 2024. The study focuses on understanding how this enlargement affects global governance, the balance of power, and the evolution of contemporary international relations. A specific objective is to determine the extent to which the new members contribute to shaping a multipolar world order, which represents one of the key ideological foundations underlying the creation of BRICS.

Methodology/approach: The study employs an analytical and critical approach based on secondary source research, incorporating theories of economic integration, South–South cooperation, and the fragmentation of global governance. A comparative analysis is used to assess the impact of new members on BRICS' position in the global economy.

Findings/conclusions: The inclusion of Middle Eastern and African countries has strengthened BRICS' position in energy markets, increasing its capacity to influence global commodity prices and trade relations. At the same time, the lack of transparent admission criteria and the political and economic diversity among members generate the risk of internal tensions, particularly between China and India.

Practical implications: The expansion of BRICS may contribute to greater diversification of global economic institutions and the gradual reduction of Western dominance; however, it requires the development of effective coordination mechanisms and transparent membership rules.

Originality/value: The article contributes to the debate on global governance, indicating that the expansion of BRICS provides the bloc with the potential to transform the international economic and political order and to strengthen the position of developing countries within the global economy.

Keywords: BRICS, Geopolitics, Middle East and North Africa, South-South Cooperation.



EKSPANSJA BRICS: OCENA GEOPOLITYCZNYCH I GOSPODARCZYCH SKUTKÓW ROSNĄCEGO BLOKU

Streszczenie

Cel: Celem artykułu jest analiza geopolitycznych i gospodarczych skutków rozszerzenia BRICS o nowe państwa – Argentynę, Egipt, Etiopię, Iran, Arabię Saudyjską i Zjednoczone Emiraty Arabskie – w 2024 roku. Badanie koncentruje się na zrozumieniu wpływu tej ekspansji na globalne zarządzanie, układ sił oraz ewolucję współczesnych relacji międzynarodowych. Celem szczegółowym jest także określenie, w jakim stopniu nowi członkowie przyczyniają się do kształtowania wielobiegunowego ładu światowego, co stanowi jedno z kluczowych założeń ideowych leżących u podstaw powstania BRICS.

Metodologia/podejście: Opracowanie wykorzystuje podejście analityczno-krytyczne oparte na badaniach źródeł wtórnych, z uwzględnieniem teorii integracji gospodarczej, współpracy Południe-Południe oraz koncepcji fragmentacji globalnego zarządzania. Analiza porównawcza umożliwia ocenę wpływu nowych członków na pozycję BRICS w gospodarce światowej.

Wyniki/Wnioski: Włączenie państw z Bliskiego Wschodu i Afryki wzmocniło pozycję BRICS na rynkach energii, zwiększając jego zdolność oddziaływania na globalne ceny surowców i relacje handlowe. Jednocześnie brak przejrzystych kryteriów przyjęć oraz zróżnicowanie polityczne i gospodarcze członków generują ryzyko wewnętrznych napięć, zwłaszcza między Chinami a Indiami.

Implikacje praktyczne: Rozszerzenie BRICS może przyczynić się do większej dywersyfikacji instytucji gospodarczych i stopniowego ograniczania dominacji Zachodu, jednak wymaga wypracowania skutecznych mechanizmów koordynacji i transparentnych zasad członkostwa.

Oryginalność/wartość: Artykuł wnosi wkład do debaty nad globalnym zarządzaniem, wskazując, że BRICS, poprzez rozszerzenie, zyskuje potencjał do przeobrażenia międzynarodowego porządku gospodarczego i politycznego oraz wzmocnienia pozycji krajów rozwijających się w gospodarce globalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: BRICS, geopolityka, Bliski Wschód i Afryka Północna, współpraca Południe-Południe.

Introduction

The BRICS group, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has emerged as a significant force in global governance, particularly as an economic

and political counterbalance to Western-led institutions¹. Initially conceptualised as BRIC in 2001 by Goldman Sachs, the group evolved with the inclusion of South Africa in 2011, signifying its growing ambition to reshape international economic and political structures². While BRICS is not a formal political alliance, scholars argue that its objectives extend beyond economic cooperation, encompassing a broader vision for geopolitical transformation and multipolarity³.

BRICS cooperation is structured around three primary pillars: security, economic and financial collaboration, and cultural exchange⁴. Among its key objectives are reducing the dominance of the US dollar in global transactions⁵, increasing the representation of developing countries in global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank⁶, and advocating for reforms within the United Nations (UN)⁷. Despite its ambitions, BRICS remains a heterogeneous coalition with differing national interests, which presents challenges to cohesive decision-making⁸. Nonetheless, its economic weight is undeniable, collectively accounting for 40% of the world's population⁹, 28% of global GDP¹⁰, and 20% of global merchandise exports¹¹.

¹ Almeida R.C., *The mortar of the BRICS: The untold narrative of a political alliance*, "Brazilian Journal of Development" 2021, vol. 7(5), p.53558–53572; Käkönen J., *BRICS as a new power in international relations*, „Geopolitics, History, and International Relations" 2014, vol. 6, p. 85–104.

² Dwyer T., & Arifon O., *Recognition and transformation: Beyond media discourses on the BRICS*, „Global Media and Communication" 2018, 15(1), p. 27–47.

³ Arapova E.Y., & Lissovnikov Y.D., *The BRICS Plus cooperation in international organizations: Prospects for reshaping the global agenda*, „Asia-Pacific Social Science Review" 2021, vol. 21(4), p. 192–206.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Kondratov D.I., *Internationalization of the currencies of BRICS countries*, „Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences" 2021, vol. 91(1), p. 37–50; Liu Z.Z., & Papa M., *Can BRICS de-dollarize the global financial system?*, Cambridge 2022.

⁶ <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12413/3599> [accessed 17.06.2025]; Qobo M., & Soko M., *The rise of emerging powers in the global development finance architecture: The case of the BRICS and the New Development Bank*, „South African Journal of International Affairs" 2015, vol. 22 (3), p. 277–288.

⁷ Jayan P.A., *BRICS: Advancing cooperation and strengthening regionalism*, „India Quarterly" 2013, vol. 68(4), 363–384.

⁸ Thakur R., *How representative are BRICS*, Weiss T., Abdenur A. (eds.) *Emerging powers and the UN. What Kind of Development Partnership?*, Oxon, New York 2018.

⁹ Siddiqui K., *Will the growth of the BRICS cause a shift in the global balance of economic power in the 21st century?*, „International Journal of Political Economy" 2016, vol. 45(4), p. 315–338.

¹⁰ Roberts C., Armijo L., & Katada S., *The BRICS and collective financial statecraft*, Oxford 2017.

¹¹ Zhang Z., Xi L., Bin S., Yuhuan Z., Song W., Ya L. & Guang S., *Energy, CO2 emissions, and value added flows embodied in the international trade of the BRICS group: A comprehensive assessment*, „Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews" 2019, vol. 116, 109432, p. 1–12.

A particularly significant development in BRICS' trajectory is its recent expansion. At the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg (2023), the group formally invited Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE to join its ranks. This expansion raises critical questions regarding the geopolitical and economic implications of BRICS' evolving structure. While the group presents itself as an alternative to the Western-dominated global order, the selection criteria for new members remain ambiguous¹². Moreover, the integration of new economies with varying political alignments and economic strengths may present new opportunities and challenges.

This study examines the geopolitical and economic effects of BRICS' expansion, addressing a notable gap in current research regarding its membership criteria and the broader impact of this enlargement on global governance. The analysis is framed within the context of economic integration, a central theme in international economics, as well as South-South cooperation (SSC) and the fragmentation of global governance. The study evaluates the original BRICS countries and the newly admitted members, assessing the strategic motivations behind expansion and the potential reconfiguration of global power dynamics.

This research contributes to the existing literature by broadening analysis of BRICS' expansion through multiple theoretical lenses, including economic integration, SSC, and global governance fragmentation. By assessing the motivations, challenges, and potential outcomes of BRICS enlargement, this study enhances understanding of the bloc's evolving role in the global economic and political order. Additionally, it offers a comparative perspective on the integration of new members, highlighting the implications for economic policy, trade relations, and geopolitical influence. This study may serve as a useful reference for policymakers, economists, and scholars examining the future trajectory of BRICS and its potential to reshape international governance structures.

Literature Review

In recent years, economic integration has become a key priority for nearly all countries. By working to remove trade barriers, encourage investment, and promote the free movement of goods, services and capital, nations are forming alliances to secure a prosperous future for their citizens¹³. Economic integration is a key concept in international economics. It refers to the process of strengthening economic cooperation between at least two countries by gradually removing

¹² https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/08/25/brics-decide-to-welcome-new-members-under-pressure-from-beijing-and-moscow_6108157_4.html [accessed: 17.06.2025].

¹³ Porca-Konjikusic S., Hudson Jr., P.L., Lodha J.H., *Global Economic Integration: How do ASEAN and BRICS organizations contribute to the process?*, "BRICS Journal of Economics" 2024, vol. 5(2), p. 155–168.

barriers to collaboration¹⁴. This process leads to the alignment and eventual merging of national economies, resulting in the creation of an integrated economic entity. Countries engaging in integration seek to protect themselves from negative economic forces while leveraging the benefits of globalization. As noted by Stiglitz¹⁵, globalization often fails to meet the needs of the world's poor and does not always contribute to environmental sustainability. The ideal reference point for analysing international economic integration is a world where markets for goods, services, and production factors operate in complete harmony, free from any barriers. Despite popular belief and widespread commentary, international economic integration is still surprisingly constrained¹⁶.

Economic integration encourages the development of integrative groupings, which represent new economic entities within the global economy. This process can involve the merging of national economies, generating synergistic effects that enhance the efficiency of economic management among member states. These effects are reflected in gross domestic product (GDP) growth, technological advancements, improved economic stability, greater competitiveness, and overall prosperity¹⁷. Historically, the first integrative groupings emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s, making economic integration a relatively recent phenomenon.

Today, the eurozone within the European Union (EU) represents the most advanced stage of global integration¹⁸. Numerous preferential agreements and free trade zones also exist worldwide. The current international landscape is marked by intensifying competition and geopolitical rivalries, shaping new supraregional integration efforts while also introducing new security challenges. Emerging markets and developing countries are playing an increasingly prominent role in these dynamics, particularly through growing SSC¹⁹. International Relations (IR) theories provide insights into questions such as „who holds power“, „how governance functions“, and „what consequences it brings“ when it comes to international organisations across different periods. In this context, the four primary IR theories—liberalism, realism, constructivism, and Marxism—offer

¹⁴ Rabczun A., *Perspective of Arabian Members of BRICS—New Possibilities Thanks to Expansion*, Awwad B. (eds), *The AI Revolution: Driving Business Innovation and Research, Studies in Systems, Decision and Control*, vol 525, Cham 2024.

¹⁵ Stiglitz J.E., *Globalization and Its Discontents*, New York 2002.

¹⁶ Rodrick D., *How Far Will International Economic Integration Go?*, „Journal of Economic Perspective“ 2000, vol. 14 (1), p. 177–186.

¹⁷ Rabczun A., op.cit.

¹⁸ Lane P., *The Real Effects of European Monetary Union*, „Journal of Economic Perspectives“ 2006, vol. 20(4), p. 47–66; Subramanian M., Taghizadeh-Hesary F., Kim Ch., *Creation And Evolution Of European Economic And Monetary Union: Lessons For Asian Economic Integration*, „ADB Working Paper Series“, No. 1126, Mandaluyong City 2020.

¹⁹ Duggan N., Hooijmaaijers B., Rewizorski M., & Arapova E., *Introduction: The BRICS, global governance, and challenges for South-South cooperation in a post-Western world*, „International Political Science Review“ 2022, 43(4), p. 469–480.

distinct perspectives. Variations of these theories are essential for analysing and interpreting global transformations that influence the role and operations of BRICS²⁰.

Liberals argue that cooperation is achievable and will expand over time for two key reasons²¹. First, they perceive the international system as a dynamic environment where multiple interactions take place, allowing various actors to „learn“ from their experiences. Unlike perspectives that emphasize power distribution and rigid notions of state sovereignty, liberals see IR as shaped by continuous engagement. Bull²² introduced the idea that the international system functions as a society when actors follow shared norms, agree to common rules and institutions, and acknowledge mutual interests. While power remains significant, it operates within a structured framework of institutions and regulations that facilitate cooperation. Second, liberals believe that as interdependence, knowledge exchange, communication, and the spread of democratic values increase, so will shared interests among states. This, in turn, encourages greater collaboration, contributing to peace, economic prosperity, and justice. Liberals generally advocate for the role of international organizations and international law in maintaining global stability. Neoliberals, while optimistic about cooperation, acknowledge that not all attempts at collaboration will produce successful outcomes²³. From a liberal perspective, power is therefore dispersed among states and international organisations rather than concentrated in a few dominant actors; governance functions through dense networks of rules, regimes, and institutions that coordinate behaviour; and the expected consequence is a more stable, rules-based international order in which organisations such as BRICS can facilitate cooperation and mutual gains.

Rooted in a long-standing philosophical and historical tradition, realism, through its various forms, rests on the assumption that individuals are inherently driven by the pursuit of power and act rationally to safeguard their own interests. In the realm of IR, realists view states as the central actors, functioning as unified entities that prioritize their national interest, typically understood as the maximization of power and security. For most realists, maintaining peace is more effectively achieved through deterrence and the balance of power rather than reliance on international institutions. Structural realism, or neo-realism, differs from traditional realism in its focus on the structure of the international system as a key determinant in shaping global politics²⁴. From a realist perspective, power is thus concentrated in the hands of the most capable states; governance functions through self-help, shifting alliances, and the maintenance of a balance of power

²⁰ Jayan P.A., *BRICS: Advancing cooperation and strengthening regionalism*, „India Quarterly“ 2013, vol. 68(4), 363–384.

²¹ Karns M.P., Mingst K.A., *International organizations—The politics and processes of global governance*, Colorado 2010.

²² Bull H., *The anarchical society: A study of order in world politics*, New York 1977.

²³ Jayan P.A., op.cit.

²⁴ Ibidem.

rather than through formal international organisations; and the main consequence is a competitive, often conflict-prone international order in which groupings such as BRICS are primarily tools for enhancing member states' relative power.

Constructivism has become a significant approach in the study of global governance, particularly in analysing the role of norms. This perspective encompasses various strands, but it generally downplays the influence of structural forces. Wendt argues that a state's capacity for cooperation is shaped by whether its identity fosters self-interest or collective interest, emphasizing that "the state itself is a testimony to the role of collective identity in human affairs"²⁵. Constructivists challenge the notion of sovereignty as a fixed concept, highlighting how its interpretation has evolved since the Treaty of Westphalia. These transformations, they argue, have been influenced not only by states but also by non-state actors²⁶. From a constructivist perspective, power is closely linked to the ability of states and other actors to shape norms, ideas, and identities; governance functions through shared understandings and socially constructed rules rather than merely formal institutions; and the main consequence is that international organisations such as BRICS both reflect and reshape collective identities and normative frameworks within the global order.

The Marxist perspective remains relevant in explaining the hierarchical nature of the international system and the role of economics in shaping this structure. Marxist ideas continue to influence many in the developing world, where historical experiences of colonialism, economic vulnerability, and capitalism are often associated with poverty and inequality. Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches provide frameworks for analysing IR and global governance by linking politics, economics, social forces, and structures of power. Accordingly, the global system is fundamentally shaped by class relations, the capitalist mode of production, and power dynamics. The hierarchical order of the international system is a direct result of global capitalism, which benefits certain states, organizations, and groups while imposing constraints on others²⁷. From a Marxist perspective, power is thus concentrated in the hands of dominant classes, core capitalist states, and transnational corporations; governance functions through institutions and regimes that reflect and reproduce these underlying class interests; and the main consequence is a structurally unequal international order in which groupings such as BRICS can be seen either as potential challengers to, or new managers of, the existing capitalist hierarchy.

Developed countries have historically expanded their economies and, in the past, their political influence through imperialism, allowing them to export goods and

²⁵ Wendt A., *Collective identity formation and the international state*, „American Political Science Review“ 1994, vol. 88 (summer), p. 384–396.

²⁶ Reus-Smit C., *The other world wide web: Global public policy networks*, „Foreign Policy“ 1999–2000, vol. 117 (winter), p. 44–57.

²⁷ Jayan P.A., op.cit.

surplus wealth that could not be absorbed domestically. Meanwhile, developing nations have become increasingly dependent on and restricted by the economic actions of wealthier states²⁸. Within critical economics and related critical approaches, these dynamics are a central focus. Scholars representing critical economics have regained prominence in discussions on globalization, especially among those who challenge its effects. They focus on resisting corporate dominance over the economy and advocating for reforms that enhance protections for workers, small farmers, marginalized communities, and women²⁹.

The integration of developing countries into the global economy plays a crucial role in promoting long-term stable and balanced economic growth worldwide. As these countries gain economic strength, their increasing influence also reshapes IR, contributing to the emergence of a multipolar global system³⁰. The rise of emerging markets and developing economies has coincided with a growing fragmentation of global economic governance³¹. Governance structures are increasingly divided into intergovernmental clusters, where varying approaches to cooperation, competition, integration, and disintegration emerge³².

Following the Cold War, regional dynamics have become a key platform for emerging powers in the Global South to establish legitimacy, leadership, and soft power. With the decline of superpower interference in state affairs, local powers have gained greater flexibility in shaping regional politics³³. O'Neill contended that the rise of emerging markets was inevitable, considering the policy changes implemented by the developing nations of the Global South³⁴. For many decades, and even centuries, these countries have sought to ensure their voices are heard within the international system and to have control over the activities taking place within their own borders.

As China and India, along with other rising powers like Brazil and South Africa, have gained influence, international cooperation has encountered both new opportunities and distinct challenges. Political discussions have occasionally

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Broad R. (ed.), *Global backlash: Citizen initiatives for a just world economy*, Lanham 2002.

³⁰ Parfinenko T., *International Economic Integration of BRICS Countries—Driver of Regional and Global Economic Growth*, *Advances in Economics*, „Business and Management Research“ 2019, vol. 131, p. 462–431.

³¹ Biermann F., Pattberg P., van Asselt H., & Zelli F., *The Fragmentation of Global Governance Architectures: A framework for analysis*, „Global Environmental Politics“ 2009, vol. 9(4), p. 14–40.

³² Duggan N., Hooijmaaiers B., Rewizorski M., & Arapova E., *Introduction: The BRICS, global governance, and challenges for South-South cooperation in a post-Western world*, „International Political Science Review“ 2022, 43(4), p. 469–480.

³³ Vieira M.A., Alden C., *India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA): South-South Cooperation and the Paradox of Regional Leadership*, „Global Governance“ 2011, vol. 17(4), p. 507–528.

³⁴ <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/goldman-sachs-research/building-better> [accessed: 16.03.2025].

highlighted emerging forms of colonial-like relationships. However, a balanced perspective on SSC suggests that neither outright criticism nor excessive optimism is productive. Instead, a constructive and inclusive debate involving all stakeholders in development cooperation is essential³⁵.

SSC has served as a central concept and a set of practices aimed at achieving historical change through a vision of mutual benefit and solidarity among the disadvantaged in the global system. It embodies the hope that development can be achieved by the poor through their collective support for one another, ultimately transforming the global order to better reflect their shared interests in relation to the dominant global North³⁶. SSC also refers to the relationships and interactions between countries in the Global South³⁷. The core idea of SSC is that cooperation among these developing nations is driven by the countries themselves, without the involvement of developed countries from the Global North. A wide interpretation of SSC refers to the sharing of resources, technology, expertise, and technical knowledge between countries in the Global South³⁸.

In recent years, developing countries in the South have experienced significant economic growth, leading to an increase in their political and economic influence within the global political economy, which has traditionally been dominated by the developed Western nations³⁹. This newfound power has contributed to shifting the economic centre away from the developed countries⁴⁰. This shift has been driven by a rise in cooperation among the developing nations of the South. SSC is based on various international institutions. An example is IBSA, the trilateral partnership between India, Brazil, and South Africa which was based on a mutual understanding of the opportunities and benefits that could be achieved through cooperation. The leaders of these emerging industrialized economies aimed to establish a formal dialogue among developing countries, hoping to create a foundation for policy coordination on trade and security matters in the global arena. Cooperation among countries is based on selected sectors such as agriculture, defence, climate change and global warming, social themes, health, tourism,

³⁵ Chahoud T., *South-south cooperation – opportunities and challenges for international cooperation*, „Briefing Paper”, No. 9/2007, Bonn 2007.

³⁶ Gray K. & Gills B.K., *Introduction: South–South cooperation and the rise of the Global South*, „Third World Quarterly” 2016, 37(4), p. 557–574.

³⁷ <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/articles/development-inequality-and-poverty/evolution-south-south-cooperation-personal-reflection> [accessed: 16.03.2025].

³⁸ Diko N., Sempijja N., *Does participation in BRICS foster South-South cooperation? Brazil, South Africa, and the Global South*, „Journal of Contemporary African Studies” 2020, vol. 39(1), p. 151–167.

³⁹ <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/articles/development-inequality-and-poverty/evolution-south-south-cooperation-personal-reflection> [accessed: 16.03.2025].

⁴⁰ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8cebcebd-6255-5d3a-94ff-2518144fe11a/content> [accessed: 16.03.2025].

energy, transportation, information society, science and technology, education, culture, commerce, and investment⁴¹.

To better understand the role of SSC, the following key areas need to be considered⁴²:

- Emerging trends in SSC, including trade, investment, and finance,
- The influence of major Asian economies on African nations within the framework of South-South collaboration,
- Future prospects for SSC and policy recommendations formulated in the literature for enhancing international partnerships.

Over the past ten years, trade between countries in the Global South has grown at a faster pace than trade between the Global North and South. Investment flows within the South have also demonstrated remarkable dynamism. Southern investors often possess valuable regional expertise, use suitable technologies, and show greater readiness to navigate business risks in politically challenging environments. Another sign of the rising significance of SSC is the increasing role of Southern nations as contributors to official development assistance (ODA)⁴³.

At present, the majority of South-South trade occurs within regional boundaries, though cross-regional trade is also expanding. Another sign of strengthening SSC is the increasing number of regional trade agreements established among developing nations. South-South Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has also experienced unprecedented dynamism in the past decade. A significant portion of FDI from developing countries has recently remained within their own regions, making it increasingly relevant for nations at similar or lower levels of development. Sector-wise, data suggest that South-South FDI is primarily directed toward the extractive industry, infrastructure, and services. South-South FDI is frequently promoted through various government policies. In addition to removing many restrictions on capital exports, developing country governments provide tax breaks and other benefits to encourage investment in other developing nations⁴⁴.

Another sign of growing SSC is that not just the rising powers, but other developing countries as well, have become more significant sources of ODA. However, data on the actual scope of South-South development cooperation remains incomplete. It appears that a substantial portion of these financial resources comes from only a few countries, with considerable fluctuations from year to year⁴⁵.

The rapid economic growth of China and India has not only significantly boosted global growth but also improved the economic conditions of African nations. Trade and investment between Africa and Asia are largely driven by the

⁴¹ Vieira M.A., Alden C., op.cit.

⁴² Chahoud T., op.cit.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

complementary economic structures of the two regions: while Africa imports manufactures and machinery from China and India, these countries primarily seek natural resources, particularly energy, from Africa. Indian FDI in Africa mainly supports the manufacturing sector, with Mauritius being the top recipient. FDI in Africa's raw materials sector, especially oil, is a more recent development. On the other hand, China's FDI in African countries has been focused on the raw materials sector. Both China's and India's development cooperation are closely aligned with their broader foreign, economic, and security policies. As a result, financial aid is not typically contingent on conditions such as „good governance," „rule of law", „market economy," or „human rights." The reporting on development outcomes is based on their own frameworks, which are often vague, making it difficult to compare with Development Assistance Committee standards. Africa remains China's most significant development cooperation partner, while India, unlike China, primarily focuses its efforts on neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Afghanistan, with more recent involvement in African development⁴⁶.

The growing dynamism of SSC has brought clear benefits, particularly through increased resource inflows that support poorer developing nations. However, many African countries face significant challenges, including heightened reliance on raw materials and stronger competition from Asian economies in light manufacturing. High-level discussions between the G8 and key emerging economies, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, initiated during the Heiligendamm process could play an important role in maximizing the advantages of closer SSC while openly addressing potential risks⁴⁷. China and India's presence in African countries also brings several challenges. While their rapid economic growth and the resulting increased demand for raw materials have spurred significant economic development in many African nations, there is a risk that the extraction of raw materials may occur without creating broader economic linkages or benefits, potentially leading to the rise or deepening of enclave economies⁴⁸. In this context, the Heiligendamm process, which initiated dialogue with key countries and placed African development on the agenda, is highly relevant. To effectively address the challenges in Africa, it is crucial to launch the proposed high-level dialogue and continue the conversation in an organized manner, focusing on the diverse perspectives on development cooperation

Regional structures shaped by emerging powers in the Global South have become essential components of modern global governance, influencing both international economics and security. The significance of regional dynamics is evident in the increasing foreign policy focus of major powers on established or

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

potential regional leaders⁴⁹. Due to the complex nature of modern South-South relations, securing international recognition as an emerging power is most effectively accomplished by strengthening leadership within each country's immediate regional sphere⁵⁰. South-South cooperation continues to face challenges due to the lack of consensus on shared values needed to establish a fairer framework for enhancing international collaboration⁵¹.

The global governance system is facing a crisis, as demonstrated by repeated failures to reform institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the IMF. As a result, a widening gap exists between the influence of emerging markets and developing countries in the global economy and their ability to shape decision-making within major international institutions. Despite their economic growth in recent decades, their political influence remains constrained due to the persistence of the traditional global order.

The early 21st century has highlighted the complexity of global governance, as new constellations of emerging powers and efforts to enhance transregional cooperation have taken shape. Institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the G20 exemplify this evolving landscape. In an age of growing regional ties and increasing interdependence, organizations such as BRICS are poised to play a significant role both globally and within their respective regions in the coming years⁵².

Group Formation

Paradoxically, the term BRIC was coined many years before the group was formally established. It was first introduced by Jim O'Neill in his paper *Building Better Economic BRICs*. As the head of the asset management division at Goldman Sachs, O'Neill promoted the use of the term to describe the countries whose initials formed the acronym⁵³. His efforts proved highly successful, as in 2003, the bank published an economic forecast predicting that the BRICS countries would emerge as global powers by the mid-21st century⁵⁴. In its report, Goldman Sachs outlined the potential future of the BRIC countries but cautioned against forming an economic bloc or trade association akin to the EU. Instead, it suggested that they should consider establishing a political club or alliance to translate their

⁴⁹ Katzenstein P.J., *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*, Ithaca, New York 2005.

⁵⁰ Vieira M.A., Alden C., op.cit.

⁵¹ Chandiwana S., Ornbjerg N., *Review of North-South and South-South Cooperation and Conditions Necessary to Sustain Research Capability in Developing Countries*, „Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition” 2003, vol. 21(3), p. 288–297.

⁵² Jayan P.A., op. cit.

⁵³ Rabczun A., *BRICS: rola, ekspansja i przyszłe możliwości*, „Przestrzeń. Ekonomia. Społeczeństwo” 2023, vol. 24/II/2023, p. 225–257.

⁵⁴ Wilson D., Purushothaman R., *Dreaming with BRIC: The path to 2050*, „Global Economics Paper” 2002, vol. 2003(no. 99), p.1–24.

economic strength into greater geopolitical influence on the international stage⁵⁵.

The author also argued that these countries would emerge as key economic powers, a perspective that has continued to influence debates about global governance and economic policy. Later, O'Neill proposed the concept of the „Next 11" (N11) and pushed for the inclusion of BRIC nations in an expanded version of the G7. Despite substantial economic growth among the BRICS countries, they have maintained their identity as a separate group rather than merging into formal economic alliances. The 2008 financial crisis highlighted the resilience of the BRIC economies, especially China, and reinforced their growing influence in shaping global economic governance, particularly through forums like the G20.

The Russian Federation played a key role in initiating the establishment of the BRIC grouping. The inaugural meeting, convened at the request of President Vladimir Putin, was held in September 2006 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. This ministerial-level meeting was attended by the foreign ministers of Russia, Brazil, and China, alongside the defence minister of India. During the deliberations, the participants articulated a shared commitment to encouraging multilateral cooperation and expressed openness to the prospective expansion of the grouping. Subsequently, in May 2008, another meeting of BRIC foreign ministers was convened under Russian auspices. This meeting yielded a Joint Communiqué, which articulated the collective stance of the member states on contemporary issues of global development. In the same year, the leaders of Russia, Brazil, India, and China met on the margins of the G8 Summit in Japan, further consolidating the framework of intergovernmental collaboration within BRIC⁵⁶.

On 16 June 2009, the inaugural BRIC summit was convened in Yekaterinburg, driven by the explicit initiative of the Russian Federation. Following the summit, the heads of state issued a joint declaration delineating the strategic objectives of the grouping. The document underlined that cooperation among the member states was to be pursued through dialogue, in a gradual, proactive, pragmatic, open, and transparent manner. Furthermore, the declaration highlighted that the BRIC framework sought not only to advance the collective interests of emerging economies but also to make a constructive contribution to the creation of a harmonious international order characterized by sustainable peace and shared prosperity. The statement additionally articulated a unified perspective on measures to address the global financial and economic crisis, reflecting a high degree of consensus among the member states⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ Sułek M., *The BRIC group in the global balance of power*, In *Strategic Yearbook 2008/09*, Warsaw 2009.

⁵⁶ Rabczun A., op. cit. p. 231.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

The rationale underpinning the establishment of the BRICS grouping was multi-part, stemming from the considerable demographic potential, aggregate GDP, and substantial share of global trade attributable to its member states. Furthermore, these countries held significant positions within major international organizations, including the UN and the G20, as well as within regional frameworks such as ASEAN. Given their universal membership in the UN, intra-group relations were shaped by adherence to the UN Charter, the principles of international law, and the norms formally articulated during the 2011 summit. These norms encompassed openness, pragmatism, solidarity, the non-bloc nature of the grouping, and neutrality toward third states. It is of particular relevance that, although South Africa formally acceded to BRICS in 2010, it acquired full membership status only with its participation in the 2011 summit, during which the aforementioned principles were institutionalized. Additionally, it was agreed that the group's activities would be organized around action plans endorsed at the annual BRICS summits, convened on a rotating basis by each member state.

As the group itself indicates, between 2009 and 2016, BRICS focused on a dozen priorities⁵⁸:

- developing a position on regional issues, including the conflicts in Libya, Syria, and Afghanistan,
- developing a position on Iran's nuclear programme,
- reaching a common agreement on financial and economic issues, most notably achieving a compromise on World Bank and IMF reforms, which is at the heart of one of BRICS' main objectives,
- establishing the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism, which facilitates credit for the activities of countries to which it has been granted.

An important achievement has been the establishment of the basis for operating a common currency and the creation of the BRICS Exchanges Alliance.

Over the years, while BRICS has been in operation, efforts have been made to further reform the IMF, develop information and communication technology collaboratively, and create favourable terms of trade in accordance with WTO rules. Notably, despite the group's informal nature, BRICS countries apply preferential tax treatment to one another, even though they do not constitute a customs union under international economic definitions⁵⁹. Additionally, since 2015, agreements have been reached on establishing a joint management board for the BRICS website, as well as on encouraging cultural cooperation.

Group Expansion

The idea of expanding BRICS has been discussed since its inception. Initially, Goldman Sachs economists proposed including Mexico, while a 2005 report identified a 'second wave' of potential members, including Egypt, Indonesia, Iran,

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ Garcia A.O., *The role of China and the BRICS project*, „Mexican Law Review” 2014, vol. 7 (1), p. 109–136.

and others. However, doubts remained about whether these nations could match BRIC economies⁶⁰. At the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg on 24 August 2023, the group expanded to include Iran, Argentina, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Ethiopia, effective from 1 January 2024. BRICS framed this as offering an alternative to the Western-dominated global order. However, membership criteria remain unclear. Despite their economic strength, Indonesia⁶¹ and Nigeria were excluded, raising questions about the selection process⁶². Over 40 countries have expressed interest in joining BRICS, and expansion is expected to continue. The enlarged bloc will represent 46% of the world's population, 29% of global GDP, and 37% of global GDP at purchasing power parity⁶³.

The inclusion of new members, particularly oil-exporting states, has the potential to significantly enhance BRICS' influence over global oil markets. Should Venezuela accede to the grouping, BRICS could collectively control up to 80% of the world's proven oil reserves. Despite this potential, China and India are expected to retain their dominant positions within the alliance, with Saudi Arabia being the sole new member possessing an economy exceeding one trillion dollars. O'Neill contends that Saudi Arabia's unilateral accession would have been more consequential, suggesting that the enlargement of the bloc may complicate internal decision-making processes. The most recent expansion has been primarily oriented toward the Middle East, with Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joining the coalition. The motivations of these states are diverse: Iran seeks to mitigate international isolation, whereas Saudi Arabia and the UAE aim to consolidate non-Western trade and financial networks⁶⁴. This enlargement also reflects China's growing political influence in the region, aligning the BRICS agenda with its broader geopolitical objectives⁶⁵.

The formation of state groupings is not a novel phenomenon within the global economic architecture, as numerous international organizations have historically been established to advance collective interests. Unlike formalized entities, which are governed by treaties, statutory frameworks, and structured decision-making mechanisms, BRICS lacks an institutionalized legal foundation. The grouping is frequently characterized as a "quasi-organization", a term denoting international entities that do not fully conform to the criteria of

⁶⁰ Sułek M., *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Since 2025, Indonesia has officially joined BRICS.

⁶² <https://eastasiaforum.org/2023/10/25/why-indonesia-chose-autonomy-over-brics-membership/> [accessed: 15.05.2025].

⁶³ <https://www.statista.com/chart/30684/gdp-of-brics-members/?srsltid=AfmBOoqtn-rIfHJL3G9J7kMEfbtFY-4OP3DBiSILjmTly6SZdqQ0SA1YM> [accessed: 07.12.2025].

⁶⁴ <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2023/09/iiss-experts-assess-the-brics-expansion/> [accessed: 16.05.2025].

⁶⁵ <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2023/08/with-brics-expansion-china-and-middle-eastern-powers-draw-closer/> [accessed: on 26.04.2025].

intergovernmental organizations⁶⁶. BRICS operates without a permanent secretariat or a formal charter, relying instead on annual summits as its principal platform for the adoption of key documents and the coordination of cooperation across various domains. By contrast, organizations such as the UN derive their legal status from foundational treaties—most notably, the UN Charter, which explicitly defines membership criteria in Chapter II⁶⁷. The absence of a comparable legal instrument underscores the unique, non-institutionalized nature of BRICS⁶⁸.

Lagutina indicates that the strength of the BRICS countries is that, despite all their differences, they seek to identify and pursue a common aspiration: multipolarity and resisting a US-hegemonic unipolar world, therefore, any country close to these ideals should be able to join the group⁶⁹. The rise of several developing powers has played a significant role in the process of global regionalization. In practice, these influential developing nations also serve as dominant regional powers within their respective areas. This supports experts' assertions that the shift toward a multipolar world enhances the political and economic structuring of regional systems, reinforcing the broader trend of increasing regionalization within the international order⁷⁰. In view of this, the BRICS may be keen to cooperate closely with other regional powers in, for example, the Middle East or North Africa. In view of this, they may seek to include such countries in their ranks.

Vague criteria for joining BRICS

Lacking a unified ideological stance, BRICS membership is defined by their size, economic potential, and revisionist approach⁷¹. First, the foundational criteria for BRICS membership include economic size, growth potential, regional significance, and political commitment to the group's ideals. Rahmatulummah et al. emphasize that joining BRICS is seen as a strategic manoeuvre for countries like Indonesia to enhance their economic and political stature globally, using the group's collective resources to address international challenges such as pandemic recovery and commodity fluctuations⁷². Additionally, studies highlight that new members, such as the UAE joining the NDB, are assessed based on both

⁶⁶ Lagutina M.L., *BRICS in a world of regions*, „Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal” 2019, vol. 4 (6), p. 442–458.

⁶⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text> [accessed: 15.05.2025].

⁶⁸ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10136/CBP-10136.pdf> [accessed: 17.06.2025].

⁶⁹ Lagutina M.L., op. cit.

⁷⁰ Acharya A., *The end of the American world order*, Cambridge, Malden 2012.

⁷¹ <http://dseu.lboro.ac.uk> [accessed: 16.06.2025].

⁷² Rahmatulummah A., Ramadhan B., & Naura I., *Opportunities to advance Indonesia's economy through the OECD and BRICS*, „Journal SGS” 2025, vol. 3(1), p. 65–95.

their economic metrics and mutual strategic interests that align with BRICS' goals⁷³.

The dynamics of trade and investment play a significant role in the expansion of BRICS, with new members often evaluated on their capacity to positively contribute to the BRICS economic environment. This includes the potential for increased market coverage and the establishment of deeper trade ties, suggesting that membership can enhance cooperative economic opportunities among member states and beyond⁷⁴.

Moreover, barriers to entry have been discussed by Kazelko, who introduced the idea of tied access to BRICS membership, indicating that varying levels of economic and political alignment may present 'low, medium, or high barriers' for prospective members⁷⁵. This approach reflects the fact that not all economies might integrate seamlessly into the BRICS framework without careful consideration of their geopolitical impact and economic viability.

Collectively, the expansion of BRICS membership rests on a foundation of shared values that prioritize economic metrics alongside a broader commitment to cooperative governance and political alignment with the group's objectives. This multidimensional view aligns with the characterization of states as emerging powers, obliging aspirants to demonstrate a commitment to the collective vision of BRICS⁷⁶. Such an assessment methodology ensures that the integrity and strategic aims of BRICS are upheld, while also accommodating new members that can contribute to its collective strength. It is worth mentioning that joining BRICS is attractive due to the economic advantages it offers, yet it also comes with certain political and economic challenges⁷⁷.

At the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg (2023), the organization outlined its approach to expansion for the first time by introducing three key guidelines: guiding principles for expanding BRICS membership, standards and criteria for admitting new member and formal procedure for the membership expansion process⁷⁸. At the same time, BRICS announced its decision to invite six new countries – Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE – to join the

⁷³ Cooper A., & Cannon B., *The United Arab Emirates and the New Development Bank: Mutual interests and first-mover advantages*, „Global Policy” 2023, vol. 15(2), p. 398–404.

⁷⁴ Akinyele O., Toluwabori L., Owolabi S., & Olatunde O., *The dynamics of trade and investment on the expansion of BRICS economies*, „Journal of Economics Management and Trade” 2024, vol. 30(11), p.50–62.

⁷⁵ Kazelko A., *Knight's move: Brazil's future in BRICS+*, „Мировая Политика” 2022, vol. 3, p. 18–27.

⁷⁶ Schoeman M., *South Africa as an emerging power: From label to 'status consistency'*, „South African Journal of International Affairs” 2015, vol. 22 (4), p. 429–445.

⁷⁷ Bacik G., *Turkey and the BRICS: Can Turkey join the BRICS?*, „Turkish Studies” 2013, vol. 14(4), p. 758–773.

⁷⁸ <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/230823-membership-expansion.html> [accessed: 15.06.2025].

group. The Stimson Centre noted that in the months preceding the Summit, reaching a consensus on the criteria, principles, and normative framework for BRICS expansion proved challenging⁷⁹. Although the membership standards and criteria include specific requirements, such as supporting comprehensive UN Security Council reform and refraining from imposing sanctions on BRICS members without UN Security Council authorization, most are broad and flexible, allowing existing BRICS members significant discretion in selecting new members⁸⁰.

According to BRICS⁸¹ a new member state should:

- Adhere to BRICS' guiding principles,
- Contribute to strengthening the alliance,
- Be an emerging or developing country with regional and global strategic influence,
- Align with BRICS' founding values, including solidarity, equality, mutual respect, openness, inclusiveness, mutually beneficial cooperation, and consensus,
- Maintain diplomatic and friendly relations with all existing BRICS members and refrain from imposing sanctions on them without UN Security Council authorization,
- Be committed to fostering international and regional peace, security, sustainable social and economic development, and global economic growth through enhanced trade, commerce, and investment,
- Be a UN member state that supports multilateralism, global governance reform, and upholding international law,
- Advocate for comprehensive UN reform, particularly of the Security Council, to make it more democratic, representative, effective, and inclusive, ensuring greater participation of developing countries, especially from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, including Brazil, India, and South Africa, in international affairs,
- Demonstrate commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,
- Possess significant economic strength and influence both regionally and globally,
- Maintain substantial trade relations with existing BRICS members,
- Support a multilateral trading system that is open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, and rules-based, in line with the WTO,
- Recognize BRICS statements and declarations as a reflection of the group's vision, principles, and objectives,

⁷⁹ <https://www.stimson.org/2023/the-future-of-brics-between-objectives-and-challenges/> [accessed: 15.06.2025].

⁸⁰ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10136/CBP-10136.pdf> [accessed: 17.06.2025].

⁸¹ <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/BRICS-Membership-expansion-guiding-principles-criteria-and-standards-2023.pdf> [accessed: 16.06.2025].

- Accept BRICS cooperation agreements, including memoranda of understanding, frameworks, letters of intent, mechanisms, and work cycles,
- Adhere to BRICS' working methods as defined in the Terms of Reference adopted by BRICS Sherpas and approved by BRICS leaders.

BRICS defines the stages of its membership expansion process using the following terminology: interested country, prospective BRICS member state, invited BRICS member state and BRICS member state. A country is classified as interested when its Leader or Foreign Minister formally expresses a desire to join BRICS by communicating with the BRICS Chair. The BRICS Chair then shares this request with existing member states. An interested country becomes a prospective BRICS member state once BRICS Sherpas provide a positive recommendation for its consideration by BRICS Foreign Ministers. BRICS Leaders decide on membership expansion through full consultation and consensus. A prospective BRICS member state advances to an invited BRICS member state when the BRICS Chair officially announces the consensus of BRICS Leaders on which countries will be invited to join. Finally, an invited BRICS member state attains full BRICS membership when its Leader or Foreign Minister formally confirms acceptance of the invitation to the BRICS Chair⁸².

In sum, to become a member of BRICS, a country must meet various requirements, including strong economic potential, dedication to sustainable development, progress in digital technologies, and geopolitical influence. These criteria demonstrate the bloc's goal of adjusting to shifting global power structures and trade patterns, ensuring greater inclusivity and representation for emerging economies.

The Geopolitical and Economic Impacts of BRICS Expansion

One of the key geopolitical effects of BRICS expansion is its challenge to Western dominance in global governance. Despite internal diversity, the coalition seeks to weaken Western hegemony by advocating for state sovereignty and promoting a multipolar world order⁸³. This aligns with Stephen's argument that BRICS' developmentalism aims to construct a new global governance framework, resisting traditional capitalist paradigms while prioritising the interests of non-Western nations⁸⁴. Unlike Western alliances, BRICS does not rely on ideological alignment but on shared strategic interests in reshaping international norms.

Historically, institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have been dominated by Western powers, particularly the United States and Europe. BRICS nations have voiced dissatisfaction with this imbalance and advocated for reforms

⁸² <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/230823-membership-expansion.html> [accessed: 15.06.2025].

⁸³ Laïdi Z., *The BRICS against the West*, „CERI Strategy Paper” 2011 No. 11, p. 1–12.

⁸⁴ Stephen M.D., *Rising powers, global capitalism and liberal global governance: A historical materialist account of the BRICs challenge*, „European Journal of International Relations” 2014, vol. 20 (4), p. 912–938.

granting emerging economies greater representation and voting power⁸⁵. The establishment of the NDB in 2014, with an initial capital of 100 billion USD, exemplifies BRICS' efforts to challenge Western financial dominance. By financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other developing nations, the NDB offers an alternative to Western-led financial institutions, strengthening the economic resilience of BRICS members⁸⁶.

BRICS has leveraged its collective weight to influence global institutions such as the UN and the WTO. In the UN, China and Russia, as permanent Security Council members, have significantly shaped global security and peace policies, often challenging Western-led interventions, particularly in conflicts like Syria and Ukraine⁸⁷. In the WTO, BRICS has championed trade policies favouring emerging economies, arguing that the current trade system disproportionately benefits wealthier nations. By presenting a unified front, BRICS has pushed for fairer trade practices, enhancing the economic competitiveness of developing countries⁸⁸.

The BRICS+ initiative, which seeks to incorporate Argentina, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and others, reflects the group's ambition to increase its representation of the Global South. This expansion aims to reinforce BRICS' economic and political influence, further challenging Western institutions⁸⁹. However, integrating politically and economically diverse nations may complicate consensus-building. Despite this, BRICS+ signifies a step towards a more inclusive global governance structure that better represents developing nations.

Nevertheless, BRICS faces internal geopolitical tensions that threaten its cohesion. Border disputes and economic competition between India and China have weakened unity⁹⁰. Similarly, Russia's foreign policy decisions, including the annexation of Crimea and its involvement in Syria, have caused friction, particularly with BRICS members maintaining strong ties with the West⁹¹. These challenges highlight the difficulty BRICS faces in maintaining a unified stance on global

⁸⁵ Duggan N., Hooijmaaijers B., Rewizorski M., & Arapova E., *Introduction: The BRICS, global governance, and challenges for South-South cooperation in a post-Western world*, „International Political Science Review” 2022, 43(4), p. 469–480.

⁸⁶ <https://www.orfonline.org/research/navigating-postpandemic-recovery-brics-and-the-sdgs> [accessed: 10.05.2025].

⁸⁷ Cochrane L., & Zaidan E., *Shifting global dynamics: An empirical analysis of BRICS+ expansion and its economic, trade, and military implications in the context of the G7*, „Cogent Social Science” 2024, vol. 10 (1), p. 1–20.

⁸⁸ <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/moscow-brics-summit-expanded-bloc-still-rudderless-and-ineffective-by-jim-o-neill-2024-10> [accessed: 17.06.2025].

⁸⁹ Cochrane L., & Zaidan E., op. cit.

⁹⁰ Nuruzzaman M., *Conflicts, strategic divergences and the survival of economic groupings: Will China-India rivalry make BRICS obsolete?*, „Asian Journal of Comparative Politics” 2022, vol. 7(4), p. 1025–1044.

⁹¹ Rinaldi A.L., & Júnior L.A., *A comparative analysis of the BRICS in the International Development Cooperation field*, „Conjuntura Austral” 2020, vol. 11 (53), p. 8–27.

issues. However, the group's continued engagement and strategic cooperation demonstrate its resilience and growing geopolitical importance.

The inclusion of Middle Eastern nations such as Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE signals a significant shift in regional power dynamics. Historically, the Middle East has been heavily influenced by Western powers, particularly the United States, which has shaped economic policies, alliances, and security arrangements⁹². BRICS offers Middle Eastern countries an alternative to traditional Western alliances, aligning with its broader objective of creating a multipolar world order⁹³. This shift is strongly evident in the energy sector, where BRICS nations, especially China and India, aim to secure energy resources from the Middle East, reducing dependence on Western-controlled markets⁹⁴.

BRICS has positioned itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, promoting non-interference and multilateral dialogue as an alternative to Western-led interventionist policies⁹⁵. It has been involved in mediation efforts in Syria and Yemen, advocating for peaceful resolutions and regional stability⁹⁶. However, BRICS' effectiveness as a mediator is limited by internal divisions. China and Russia support Iran's regional ambitions, whereas India and Brazil maintain stronger ties with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, leading to potential conflicts of interest⁹⁷. Despite these challenges, BRICS' engagement in conflict resolution provides an alternative diplomatic framework that complements existing regional and global efforts.

One of the primary economic effects of BRICS expansion is the enhancement of trade and investment opportunities among member nations, fostering economic growth. Research indicates that trade openness plays a crucial role in economic expansion, highlighting a bidirectional relationship between trade liberalisation and economic development within BRICS nations⁹⁸. Additionally, the integration of tourism, financial development, and economic growth underscores the importance of policies that encourage tourism as a means of further boosting economic performance⁹⁹.

⁹² Halliday F., *The Middle East in international relations: Power, politics and ideology*, Cambridge 2005.

⁹³ Glosny M.A., *China and the BRICs: A real (but limited) partnership in a unipolar world*, „Polity” 2010, 42(1), p. 100–129; Stuenkel O., *BRICS e o futuro da ordem global*, Rio de Janeiro, Sau Paulo 2017.

⁹⁴ Ahmad I., Haider A., & Afzal J., *The geopolitical and economic impact of BRICS on the Middle East*, „FWU Journal of Social Sciences” 2024. vol. 18(4), p. 80–95.

⁹⁵ Brosig M., *The role of BRICS in large-scale armed conflict*, Coventry 2019.

⁹⁶ Griffith-Jones S., *A BRICS development bank: A dream coming true?*, „UNCTAD Discussion Paper” 2014, No. 215, p. 1–21.

⁹⁷ Nuruzzaman M., op. cit.

⁹⁸ Akinyele O., Toluwabori L., Owolabi S., & Olatunde O., op. cit.

⁹⁹ Rasool H., Maqbool S., & Tarique M., *The relationship between tourism and economic growth among BRICS countries: A panel cointegration analysis*, „Future Business Journal” 2021, vol. 7(1), p. 1–11.

FDI has been identified as a key driver of economic growth and technological transfer within BRICS nations. Research highlights FDI as a catalyst for innovation and enhanced economic capabilities, contributing to sustained economic expansion¹⁰⁰. However, the determinants of FDI vary across BRICS countries, necessitating appropriate strategies to attract sustainable investment¹⁰¹. The economic interdependencies created through investment flows demonstrate the transformative potential of BRICS integration in reshaping member economies.

Despite the economic benefits of expansion, BRICS members must balance growth with environmental sustainability. Studies suggest that economic expansion exerts pressure on environmental resources while also presenting opportunities for green technological innovation¹⁰². This highlights BRICS' dual role as both a driver of economic development and a key actor in global climate change mitigation efforts. BRICS' expansion also strengthens its leadership in global economic policy formulation, reinforcing its influence in trade negotiations and financial cooperation¹⁰³. Given global market volatility, BRICS' ability to articulate a shared economic agenda positions it as an influential player in international economic governance¹⁰⁴.

BRICS' economic influence in the Middle East has also expanded, particularly in trade, investment, and infrastructure development. China's Belt and Road Initiative has facilitated major infrastructure investments in the region, including ports, railways, and energy projects, driving regional economic growth and integration into global markets¹⁰⁵. China has strengthened economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Saudi Arabia emerging as one of China's largest oil suppliers¹⁰⁶. Similarly, India has expanded its economic engagement with the Middle East, particularly in energy and technology sectors, leveraging

¹⁰⁰ Ali N., Phoungthong K., Khan A., Abbas S., Dilanchiev A., Tariq S., & Sadiq M.N., *Does FDI foster technological innovations? Empirical evidence from BRICS economies*, „PLoS ONE” 2023, vol. 18(3), p. 1–20.

¹⁰¹ Maryam J., & Mittal A., *Foreign direct investment into BRICS: An empirical analysis*, „Transnational Corporations Review” 2020, vol. 12(1), p. 1–9.

¹⁰² Leitão N.C., Balsalobre-Lorente D., & Cantos-Cantos J.M., *The impact of renewable energy and economic complexity on carbon emissions in BRICS countries under the EKC scheme*, „Energies” 2021, vol. 14(16), 4908, p. 1–15; Tian X., Sarkis J., Geng Y., Bleischwitz R., Qian Y., Xu L., & Wu R., *Examining the role of BRICS countries at the global economic and environmental resources nexus*, „Journal of Environmental Management” 2020, vol. 262, 110330, p. 1–11.

¹⁰³ Diko N., Sempijja N., op. cit.

¹⁰⁴ Vyas-Doorgapersad S., *The role of BRICS in global governance to promote economic development*, „Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review” 2022, vol. 10(1), 633, p. 1–9.

¹⁰⁵ Kamel M.S., *China's belt and road initiative: Implications for the Middle East*, „Cambridge Review of International Affairs” 2018, vol. 31(1), p. 76–95.

¹⁰⁶ Chen J., Xie Q., Shahbaz M., Song M., & Wu Y., *The fossil energy trade relations among BRICS countries*, „Energy” 2021, vol. 217, p. 1–46.

its large diaspora in the region¹⁰⁷. These diversified economic partnerships allow Middle Eastern countries to reduce dependence on Western markets, mitigating risks associated with global economic volatility¹⁰⁸.

Conclusions

The expansion of BRICS represents a critical shift in the global economic and political landscape, reinforcing the bloc's role as a counterweight to Western-led institutions. This study has explored the geopolitical and economic effects of the group's enlargement, highlighting both opportunities and challenges associated with integrating new members. The inclusion of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE extends BRICS' influence across key regions, enhancing its strategic importance in global governance. However, the expansion also raises concerns regarding internal cohesion, decision-making complexities, and the alignment of diverse economic and political interests.

From an economic perspective, the new members bring substantial resources, particularly in energy markets, increasing BRICS' leverage over global commodity prices. This could strengthen the bloc's ability to negotiate trade agreements and financial arrangements that reduce dependence on Western financial systems. However, disparities in economic structures and development levels among members may complicate policy coordination. Furthermore, while the expansion enhances BRICS' legitimacy as a representative of the Global South, the opaque criteria for membership selection could undermine its credibility.

Geopolitically, the enlargement of BRICS signals a move towards a more multipolar world order. The group's growing influence challenges the dominance of Western institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the G7. Yet, internal divisions, such as India-China tensions and differing foreign policy priorities, pose risks to the effectiveness of BRICS as a unified entity. The inclusion of politically diverse countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia further complicates diplomatic cohesion within the group.

To enhance the effectiveness of BRICS in the wake of its expansion, several measures should be taken. First, establishing transparent and well-defined criteria for future membership would improve the bloc's legitimacy and strategic coherence. Institutional strengthening, including the creation of a formal secretariat or governing body, would enhance decision-making efficiency and policy coordination, while mechanisms for dispute resolution could help manage geopolitical tensions. Economic integration initiatives, such as strengthening intra-bloc trade agreements, investment cooperation, and financial integration through the NDB, would further harness the economic potential of new members. Additionally, BRICS should develop a unified stance on key global governance issues, such as climate change, digital economy regulations, and financial

¹⁰⁷ Nandy D., *India and Russia: An investigation of relational equations (1991–2020)*, „Social Inquiry: Journal of Social Science Research” 2020, vol. 2(2), p. 116–132.

¹⁰⁸ Stuenkel O., *op. cit.*

system reforms, to solidify its role as a credible alternative to Western-led institutions. Finally, fostering diplomatic engagement among members through structured dialogue platforms would help align differing national interests and strengthen collective decision-making. By implementing these measures, BRICS can maximize the benefits of its expansion while addressing the inherent challenges of increased diversity within the bloc. Strengthening institutional frameworks and economic cooperation can be crucial for BRICS to emerge as a stable and influential global actor in the coming decades.

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