

## MS THESIS

### CHINA'S GROWING GEO-POLITICAL INFLUENCE: A CASE STUDY OF BRICS (2010-2023)



**RESEARCHER:**

**MUHAMMAD USMAN**  
**REG. NO. 229/FSS/MSIR-F22**

**SUPERVISOR:**

**DR. MARYAM SIDDIQA**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD.**  
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2025**



### FINAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that we gone through and evaluated the thesis titled "China's Growing Geo-Political Influence: A Case Study of BRICS (2010-2023)", submitted by Mr. Muhammad Usman, a student of MS International Relations under University Registration No. 229-FSS/MSIR/F22, for award of the degree of MS International Relations. This research work is satisfactory.

1. **Supervisor**

Dr. Maryam Siddiqi  
Lecturer  
Department of Politics & International Relations  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
International Islamic University  
Islamabad

2. **Internal Examiner**

Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Sargana  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Politics & International Relations  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
International Islamic University  
Islamabad.

3. **External Examiner**

Dr. Sohail Ahmad  
Associate Professor  
Department of Humanities, IR Program  
Comsats University, Chak Shehzad  
Islamabad

4. **Chairperson/HOD**

Department of Politics & International Relations  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
International Islamic University, Islamabad

5. **Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences**

International Islamic University  
Islamabad

DR. MANZOOR KHAN AFRIDI  
PROFESSOR / DEAN  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
International Islamic University  
Islamabad



## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this MS IR thesis to my beloved **Parents** & **Siblings** for the kindness, unparalleled inspiration, and endless support throughout my studies. Thank you for enabling me to achieve this feat.*

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>BRICS</b>	“Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa”
<b>NDB</b>	“National Development Bank”
<b>B3W</b>	“Build Back Better World”
<b>BDN</b>	“Blue Dot Network”
<b>OBOR</b>	“One Belt One Road”
<b>EAEU</b>	“Eurasian Economic Union”
<b>INSTC</b>	“The International North-South Transport Corridor”
<b>QII</b>	“Quality Infrastructure Investment”

## ABSTRACT

*“After the economic crises of 2007-2009, President Xi Jinping rose to extraordinary power. China got a chance to elevate its “DREAM GRAND STRATEGY,” with many factors playing their role and part in that dream. Many analysts of international relations debate the simple question, “What is the objective of China?”, Well the answer to this question is not that simple, China is step by step implementing its grand strategy in this 21<sup>st</sup> century in a variety of areas like geo-economics, geo-politics, global monetary policy, trade policy, security policy, climate change negotiations. One can see the great examples of the One Belt-One Road Project & BRICS. During President Trump’s era in the United States, Russia participated in the G-7 summit. President Trump’s intention was also to invite India, Australia, ROK & even Brazil which can be seen as the USA pulling away these countries with quasi-alliance with Beijing. This move of the United States cleared that China is very smartly implementing its “Dream grand strategy” particularly in the dimensions of geo-economics & geo-politics. Along with this strategy of China, it is moving forward after the “Economic Recession” 2008-2009 to search for achievements (SFA) Strategy, and BRICS is its great example which was started. Today China is evolving its multilateralism in every dimension of its politics and foreign affairs even with the platform of BRICS on 28 December 2023 BRICS Bank deposited One Billion US Dollars to Brazil in the form of a loan and also on 28 December 2023 due to BRICS platform Russian head of oil pipeline monopoly Transnet, Nikolai Tokarev said that Oil shipments to China rose to 100 million metric tons and there are other multiple examples of BRICS pros and cons which will be analyze in this research paper.*

## CHAPTER-1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, China's rise as a global power has reshaped the geopolitical landscape, influencing both regional dynamics and international relations. The scope of China's influence extends beyond its economic prowess; it now wields significant political, cultural, and diplomatic power worldwide. This paper delves into China's growing geopolitical influence through a focused case study of the BRICS alliance—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa between 2010 and 2023."

The BRICS nations collectively represent emerging economies with significant influence in global affairs, and China's leadership role within this group has been increasingly prominent. Through BRICS, China has sought to enhance cooperation on economic and development policies, promote multilateralism, and challenge Western-dominated financial and political structures. This paper explores the various facets of China's approach, examining how its policies and strategies within BRICS serve to bolster its geopolitical influence across different regions. By analyzing China's actions and impacts on BRICS, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the financial mechanisms China employs to expand its influence and the broader implications for the global order in the 21st century."

China plays a pivotal role in shaping the geopolitical and geo-economic landscape of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) alliance. BRICS, established as a coalition of emerging economies, aims to foster multilateral cooperation in the realms of trade, development, and finance while also challenging the dominance of Western institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

China, as the world's second-largest economy and the largest within BRICS, wields substantial influence in this coalition. Its role within BRICS is particularly significant in several ways.”

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

China is the largest economy within BRICS, and its rapid economic growth has positioned it as a global economic powerhouse. The sheer size and strength of China's economy within the BRICS framework contribute to its overall influence in the group. BRICS promotes economic cooperation among its members, and China has actively engaged in trade and investment with other BRICS nations. This has allowed China to diversify its economic partnerships and increase its presence in global market. BRICS established the NDB to finance infrastructure projects in member countries and other developing nations. China's financial contributions to the NDB have given it influence over the bank's operations and decision-making processes.

Within the BRICS framework, China has entered into various bilateral agreements with member countries. These agreements cover areas such as trade, investment, and technology exchange, further solidifying China's economic ties within the group. BRICS, led by China, has aimed to create an alternative financial system that reduces reliance on Western-dominated institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This effort enhances China's influence by providing an alternative path for economic cooperation and development financing.”

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What is China's role in the formation of BRICS?
2. Why and how are China and BRICS reshaping global economic governance?
3. What are some challenges to the effectiveness of BRICS in global politics?

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the financial & administrative role of China in the formation of

- BRICS.
2. To explore the reasons for China's active role in BRICS for reshaping global economic governance.
  3. To examine the challenges to the effectiveness of BRICS in global Politics.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The China-led BRICS has emerged as a global game-changer in the realm of geopolitics, trade, and finance. This research proposal aims to explore the growing geopolitical influence of China, with a specific focus on its impact on the multilateral trade institution which is BRICS and in developing countries. The context for this investigation is how BRICS and China are reshaping global economic governance.”

#### **1.5. Literature Review**

The literature review section provides an overview of existing scholarly works and research relevant to China's growing influence of BRICS and its implications for the United States of America. This section encompasses historical perspectives, contemporary assessments, and theoretical underpinnings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.”

#### **1.6. Review of Related Literature**

The expansion of the BRICS group, with the inclusion of new members, is expected to enhance the bloc's influence on the global stage. This addition brings the total population of the BRICS countries to about 3.5 billion, and their collective economy now represents over \$28.5 trillion, which is around 28% of the global economy.

While this growth could lead to a shift in the geopolitical landscape, analysts remain uncertain about whether it will strengthen or weaken the group's power, given potential internal conflicts (BNN Correspondents, 2024).

The latest changes within the BRICS alliance represent a crucial turning point in global geopolitics. The formal inclusion of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia as members since January 1, 2024, marks a major transformation, indicating a shift toward a more inclusive and

diverse international structure. While some may view this expansion as minor, it is essential to recognize the unity it reflects, with the Global South becoming more prominent on the world stage. Founded over a decade ago, BRICS originally included Brazil, Russia, India, China, and later South Africa, with the aim of amplifying the voices of emerging economies that were historically marginalized by Western powers. With the addition of five new nations, the alliance now includes a broader range of cultures, economic systems, and strategic priorities (Hussain, 2024).

Since its establishment 18 years ago, the BRICS cooperation mechanism, originally consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has expanded to include Egypt, Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia as of January 1, 2024. This expansion has increased its cohesion and influence, becoming a stable and positive force in international affairs, according to Wang Wenbin, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson. The new BRICS membership now represents over 40% of the global population and more than 30% of global GDP. The decision to expand reflects a response to requests from various countries and aligns with the global trend towards multipolarity (Tastan, 2024).

China is likely to maintain its more assertive foreign policy and multifaceted trade strategy for the next five to ten years. This shift is not only due to domestic economic factors but also a growing recognition of China's historical role and its recent experience in global economic governance. Beijing's strategy encompasses both multilateral and regional dimensions. Globally, China aims to continue enhancing its influence in existing economic institutions to challenge the US's dominant position. Regionally, China seeks to establish new institutions and strengthen trade agreements to assert its independence and promote its political and economic interests (Pantekoeck, 2022).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, while primarily a geopolitical event, will have significant implications for global geo-economics. "Geo-economics," referring to the intersection of economy and geography, is exemplified by infrastructure initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI), the EU's Global Gateway, the US-led Blue Dot Network (BDN), the G-7's Build Back Better World (B3W), Japan's Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII), Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), led by Russia, Iran, and India (Forough, 2022).

Over the past decade, China's rise as a global power has increasingly been noted. While much attention has been given to its economic rise, China's ambitions for global political leadership have become unmistakable under Xi Jinping's leadership. In the context of growing US-China rivalry, China aims to strengthen its global presence and reduce its dependence on the US technologically.

China's status as a major trading partner offers it significant leverage in bilateral and multilateral relations. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road, China has expanded its economic and political ties, creating new markets and trade routes worldwide. From China's perspective, global connectivity is central to its efforts to promote economic growth in previously isolated regions (Freedom Needs Security, 2024).

The rise of "emerging powers," particularly the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), is reshaping the global economy and influencing international politics. These nations, with their faster growth rates, are changing the dynamics of international trade, production, and capital flows. As their influence grows, they are shifting the global balance of power, compelling major powers to acknowledge the need for cooperative management of international systems. Amid global crises, such as environmental, energy, and food challenges, the BRICS nations have a crucial role in addressing systemic global issues. The question arises: can the BRICS countries leverage these crises to stabilize the world economy and foster growth (Vlad, 2011)

China's rise, alongside the perceived decline of the US and the West, remains a dominant trend. While China's ascent appears unstoppable, inherent weaknesses may eventually limit its

growth. Despite efforts by the Biden administration to reengage globally, the US is likely to retreat militarily, focusing on strengthening alliances instead of pursuing isolationist policies. The trade war with China initiated under the Trump administration may lead to calls for economic decoupling and the possible unraveling of globalization. One proposed solution is the creation of "political trade deals" under the WTO, which would prevent nations from hindering each other during political disputes. Implementing this system would require complex multilateral negotiations, particularly amid rising US-China tensions, but it could provide a more stable framework than the current trade system (Roland, 2021).

The growing competition between the US and China in East Asia is a critical issue in global geopolitics. The central question concerns whether a "geography of peace" will emerge, where both nations, despite vying for regional dominance, respect each other's spheres of influence. Traditionally, China, as a continental power, has focused on securing its land borders and expanding influence over the Eurasian landmass. However, this perspective is challenged by the view that the Sino-US rivalry will create a "geography of conflict" in East Asia. Drawing on the theories of geopolitical thinkers such as Sir Halford Mackinder, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Nicholas Spykman, this view suggests that strategic interests will drive increasing tension in the region (Schreer, 2017).

## **1.7. Theoretical Framework**

Power Transition theory (PTT) within the neorealist international relations paradigm is applied here because of their economic power and the appeal of disentangling from the West to a degree, BRICS claims that over 40 countries seek to join the group. "It announced that it invited additional countries to join the group at its 2023 summit. Full membership will be granted to Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates on Jan. 1, 2024. Power Transition Theory (PTT) is a theoretical framework developed to understand the shifting dynamics of international power, particularly in the context of great power conflicts and the rise of

new powers challenging the established order.

The theory suggests that the stability of the international system is determined by the relative power of dominant and rising states. A transition in global power is seen as inevitable when a challenger (usually a rising power) approaches or surpasses the hegemonic power in economic, military, or other forms of power. The theory was first outlined by A.F.K. Organski in his 1958 book *World Politics* and has been used to interpret historical events such as the rise of Germany challenging Britain and later the United States challenging the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The basic premise of Power Transition Theory is that the international order is most stable when there is a clear hegemon that holds overwhelming power relative to other states. However, as a challenger emerges, the existing global power structure becomes unstable, and the risk of conflict increases. In its simplest form, PTT states that when a rising power approaches or equals the global leader in terms of capability, a power transition is likely to occur, often resulting in a violent confrontation, especially when the existing hegemon feels threatened by the rise of the challenger. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) represents a group of emerging economies that, in the eyes of many analysts, could be seen as the challengers in the global power structure. They are often discussed within the context of Power Transition Theory because of their rapid economic growth, increasing political influence, and military modernization in the last few decades. These countries, particularly China and India, have been perceived as having the potential to alter the existing power dynamics, especially with respect to the United States, which has been the dominant global power since the end of World War II. BRICS' formation and its increasing cohesion can be understood in the context of Power Transition Theory. The collective rise of these countries suggests that they may be preparing to challenge the dominance of the United States and other Western powers in the international system.

While not all BRICS countries are equal in terms of their economic and military power, they share common goals of greater multipolarity, enhanced influence in global governance, and a

more balanced distribution of global power. This is evident in their push for reforms in international institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations, where they seek more influence for emerging economies. The central argument within PTT is that the existing hegemon, in this case, the United States, perceives the rise of China, India, and other BRICS nations as a potential threat to its global leadership. The United States has long held the position of the global hegemon, controlling international finance, technology, and military power. However, the increasing economic and political power of China and India, in particular, has led to shifts in global power dynamics. China, with its growing economy, military capabilities, and increasing geopolitical influence, is often cited as the primary challenger to U.S. hegemony.

China's rise has led to a reevaluation of the global balance of power. It is now the world's second-largest economy and is rapidly increasing its military capabilities. In many ways, China has already surpassed the U.S. in certain areas, particularly in economic terms. It is the world's largest trading partner and has become a major player in global infrastructure projects through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, China's assertiveness in regional disputes, such as in the South China Sea, has further raised concerns in the West. India, another key member of BRICS, has also seen significant economic growth and is becoming an increasingly important player in global geopolitics.

India's military modernization and its strategic alliances with other countries, such as the United States, Japan, and Australia, have led some analysts to speculate that India could eventually challenge China's dominance in the region and, by extension, influence global power dynamics. While Russia's role in the BRICS grouping is often seen as more limited compared to China and India, it remains an important player in global geopolitics. Russia's military strength, particularly its nuclear arsenal, and its geopolitical influence in regions such as Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia, make it a significant factor in the emerging global order. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its involvement in Syria have shown its willingness to assert itself on the global

stage, often in opposition to Western powers.

The concept of Power Transition Theory also emphasizes the importance of ideology and governance structures in shaping global power. The BRICS countries, although diverse in terms of political systems and ideologies, share a desire for a more multipolar world. They are critical of the existing international order, which they perceive as being dominated by Western powers, particularly the U.S. They argue that the current system is biased toward the interests of developed countries, and they call for reforms to give emerging economies a greater voice in global governance. One of the primary ways in which BRICS challenges the existing power structure is through its efforts to establish alternative financial and institutional mechanisms. In 2014, the BRICS nations established the New Development Bank (NDB), which is designed to provide financing for infrastructure and development projects in emerging economies. This move is seen as a direct challenge to the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, which have historically been dominated by the United States and Europe. The NDB provides an alternative source of funding for countries that may be excluded from the traditional Western-dominated financial system. Similarly, BRICS countries have sought to challenge the dominance of the U.S. dollar in global trade and finance. The creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the push for alternative reserve currencies are seen as steps toward reducing reliance on the dollar and establishing a more diversified global financial system. While these initiatives are still in their early stages, they represent a broader effort by BRICS countries to create a more balanced international order.

Despite the potential for a power transition, it is important to note that the global system is more complex than a simple contest between a rising challenger and an established hegemon. The rise of BRICS does not necessarily mean that the U.S. will be displaced as the global hegemon. The U.S. remains the world's largest economy in terms of GDP, its military is unparalleled in terms of capabilities and reach, and it continues to exert significant influence in international institutions

and security arrangements. Furthermore, the BRICS countries themselves are not a monolithic group. While they share common interests in promoting multipolarity and challenging Western dominance, they have divergent political systems, economic structures, and foreign policy priorities. For example, China and India, despite their shared interests in challenging the U.S.-led order, are often rivals, particularly in their competition for regional influence in Asia. Russia's relationship with China has also been characterized by a mix of cooperation and rivalry, particularly in Central Asia.

These internal divisions could limit the ability of BRICS to act cohesively as a challenger to U.S. dominance. Power Transition Theory also suggests that a global conflict or war can arise when a challenger overtakes or reaches parity with the hegemon. While this has occurred in historical instances (e.g., the rise of Germany leading to World War I), the possibility of a violent power transition in the modern world is complicated by the existence of nuclear weapons and the increasing economic interdependence among major powers. The risk of war between the U.S. and China, for example, may be mitigated by economic ties and the destructive potential of modern warfare. However, tensions and rivalry between the two powers are palpable, particularly in areas such as trade, technology, and military influence in the Asia-Pacific region. In conclusion, Power Transition Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the potential challenges posed by BRICS to the existing global order. The rise of China, India, and other emerging economies signals a shift in global power dynamics that could have profound implications for international politics, economics, and security. While a violent conflict may not be inevitable, the increasing influence of BRICS nations challenges the dominance of the United States and the Western-led international system. The global balance of power is likely to become more multipolar, with the potential for new alliances, rivalries, and global governance reforms. Ultimately, the power transition process will be shaped by both the actions of the rising powers and the responses of the existing hegemon and other global players.”

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

The thesis will rely on a qualitative research design. Secondary data will be used to explain the various dynamics of the China and BRICS strategies in shaping the geo-economics of the globe and response of the West particularly USA. The data shall be designed as per the requirement of qualitative method as exploratory and comparative approach.

## **1.9. Research Gap**

There is limited research on how China employs soft power within BRICS, such as cultural exchanges, media influence, and educational cooperation, in contrast to its more frequently studied economic and military strategies. Although China is often recognized as a leader within BRICS, there is insufficient analysis of how China shapes the agenda within BRICS institutions (e.g., the New Development Bank) to advance its geopolitical interests. China and India are the largest BRICS economies and have competing regional interests. However, there is a limited comparative analysis of how each nation projects influence differently within BRICS and in global forums like the UN or G20.

The dynamics of how China's influence is received by other BRICS countries, particularly those with competing economic or territorial interests (e.g., India and Brazil), remains under-researched. There is limited analysis of China's approach to using BRICS as a platform to lead or represent the Global South, especially in challenging Western-dominated financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

## **1.10. Research Design**

The study is based on qualitative research and qualifies in the Descriptive, Exploratory, and Predictive data analysis approaches. Secondary data will be used to investigate and elaborate on different aspects of the study.

## **1.11 Population**

The population of the study includes experts, academicians and researchers in particular areas of Geo-economics & geopolitics related to China, and the West,

particularly the USA & BRICS member countries.

### **1.12. Sampling**

Participants are randomly selected from the population. Sampling helps make research feasible while providing insights into larger social, cultural, and behavioral trends. Careful selection of sampling methods allows social scientists to build theories, test hypotheses, and generalize findings across diverse populations, enhancing the relevance and impact of their work.

The sampling methodology will be detailed, including the techniques and criteria used to select a representative subset of the population for the study.

### **1.13. Instrumentation**

Unstructured interviews conducted with academicians & scholars of International Relations considered in this Thesis.

### **1.14. Data Collection**

In this study, Secondary data will be collected. Data will be collected from academicians of International Relations as well as data will include other published work including books research, articles, and research papers.

### **1.15. Data analysis**

The study will be analytical and descriptive, secondary data of content analysis will be made by way of the literature available. Comparative Analysis will be done to conduct a comparative analysis of the China's geo-political influence on BRICS and through BRICS on West. Based on content analysis and comparative analysis conclusion will be drawn and findings will be generated.

### **1.16. Organization of the Study**

The proposed study can be organized into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction & Institutionalization of BRICS.

The "Introduction & Institutionalization of BRICS" topic can be broken down into several sub-chapters to cover different aspects of its formation, purpose, and growth as a multilateral institution.

This chapter broadly includes the following sub-headings: -

- 1)** Background and Formation of BRICS.
- 2)** Purpose and Objectives of BRICS.
- 3)** Institutionalization and Key Structures within BRICS.
- 4)** Economic and Developmental Cooperation within BRICS.

Chapter Two: Understanding the geopolitical interests of China & role of BRICS.

China's geopolitical interests are driven by several strategic priorities: securing energy and resource supplies, protecting its economic growth, enhancing its global influence, and asserting its position in regional and international power structures. The country's role in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) aligns with these interests, as BRICS provides a platform for advancing a multipolar world order that counters the traditional dominance of Western countries, particularly the United States, in global governance.

**China's Geopolitical Goals and Interests.**

**Economic Strategies: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).**

**China's Role within BRICS.**

**BRICS as a Counterweight to Western Influence.**

Chapter Three: Relationship of BRICS with emerging economies of the world.

The BRICS group plays a significant role in shaping economic, political, and social dynamics for emerging economies worldwide. Since its inception, BRICS has actively aimed to influence global economic policies and offer alternatives to traditional Western-dominated financial systems.

Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Investment and Financial Ties.

Political and Strategic Alliances.

Case Studies of BRICS Partnerships with Emerging Economies.

Future Prospects & Strategic goals.

Chapter Four: Challenges threatening the effectiveness of BRICS.

Several challenges pose significant threats to the effectiveness of BRICS as a coalition aiming for increased geopolitical influence and economic collaboration. BRICS countries vary widely in terms of political ideologies, economic structures, and governance models. China and Russia, for example, have more centralized, authoritarian governance styles, whereas India, Brazil, and South Africa are democracies. This diversity can lead to conflicting priorities and difficulty in reaching consensus on common goals.

Economic Disparities, Geopolitical Tensions and Rivalries among member States.

Economic Sanctions and External Pressures.

Trade, Investment Barriers, Currency & Financial Disparities.

Lack of a Unified Strategic Vision, Technological and Developmental Gaps.

Economic Sanctions and External Pressure.

## CHAPTER-2

### 1. INTRODUCTION & INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF BRICS.

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION:

The topic of "Introduction & Institutionalization of BRICS" explores the journey of a powerful coalition that has redefined the global political and economic landscape. BRICS comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa started as an informal group of emerging economies with substantial potential for growth and influence. Initially conceptualized as "BRIC" by economist Jim O'Neill in 2001, the term was used to identify four rapidly developing economies that could shape the future of the global economy. However, what began as a descriptive term quickly gained momentum as these countries began to collaborate more formally, establishing a platform for political and economic partnership. With South Africa's inclusion in 2010, BRICS became a formal institution, evolving into a robust alliance to represent the interests of developing nations. Through summits, policy frameworks, and the creation of institutions like the New Development Bank, BRICS has sought to challenge traditional Western-dominated international bodies and offer a voice for emerging markets. This introduction and institutionalization process underscores BRICS' ambition to foster a multipolar world, where economic and political power is more equitably distributed.

The term "BRIC" was coined in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs, who highlighted Brazil, Russia, India, and China as major emerging economies poised for substantial growth in the 21st century. O'Neill predicted that these four economies if combined, could potentially match the economic power of the G7 nations by 2050. However, BRIC was initially just a descriptive term, lacking any formal alliance or institutional framework. From its inception,

BRICS has continued to evolve by establishing joint institutions and mechanisms, such as the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), designed to provide financial support to member countries during economic crises. Regular summits have enabled dialogue and cooperation on critical issues and allowed the group to adapt to changing global dynamics.

In summary, BRICS began as a concept to describe emerging economies but transformed into an influential international alliance focused on reshaping the global order. Through institutional structures like the NDB and CRA, it has provided developing nations with platforms for collaboration & independence.

## **2.2. Background and Formation of BRICS.**

**BRICS**, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, along with five new members, is an informal alliance of emerging economies aiming to enhance their influence in the global arena. Formed in 2009, BRICS was established on the belief that international institutions were excessively controlled by Western powers and no longer served the interests of developing nations. The bloc has focused on aligning its members' economic and diplomatic strategies, creating new financial institutions, and decreasing reliance on the U.S. dollar. However, BRICS has faced challenges due to internal disagreements on various issues, such as its relationship with the United States and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The expansion of its membership has increased its global influence but also brought new tensions. While some experts caution that BRICS might challenge the Western-led international framework, others argue that its efforts to develop a shared currency and create alternatives to existing systems may face significant obstacles. The group is not a formal organization but rather a loose coalition of non-Western nations coordinating their economic and diplomatic policies with a common purpose. BRICS aims to offer an alternative to the perceived dominance of Western perspectives in major global institutions like the World Bank, G7, and the UN Security Council.

The bloc's enlargement in 2024 brings significant geopolitical consequences, adding both

economic and demographic power: the ten BRICS nations now represent over a quarter of the global economy and nearly half the world's population. The group is likely to influence global conflicts, including those in Gaza and Ukraine, shape the global economic system, fuel the competition between China and the West, and contribute to the shift toward clean energy. However, this expansion also presents new challenges, including increasing resistance from Western countries and internal divisions within the bloc. Experts suggest that the future of BRICS depends on how effectively its members address these tensions and whether they can present a unified front on the world stage. The BRICS concept was first introduced by economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001, who identified Brazil, Russia, India, and China as nations with the potential for rapid economic growth and significant influence in reshaping the global economy. (Ferragamo, 2024)

### **Formation Timeline**

- 2001 - 2006:** The term "BRIC" became popular, drawing attention to the influence of emerging economies
- 2009:** The first BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, marking the formal start of cooperation.
- 2010:** South Africa joined the alliance, making it "BRICS."
- 2011 - Present:** BRICS countries have held annual summits, cooperating on issues such as development finance, trade, climate change, and reform of global governance structures.

### **2.3 BRICS Purpose and Objectives**

#### **Objectives:**

- i. Cooperation, development, and influence in world affairs are at the heart of the BRICS goals. The following are a few of the main BRICS goals:
- ii. Economic cooperation: encouraging trade, cooperation and growth among members, as well as improving BRICS economies' access to markets.

- iii. Development financing: Creating institutions such as the CRA and the NDB to finance infrastructure and development projects in member nations.
- iv. Political coordination: Strengthening political discourse and coordination on international issues, such as modifying institutions of global governance to take into account the shifting global economic landscape and to provide rising economies with a stronger voice and representation.
- v. Social and cultural exchanges: Promoting interpersonal relationships and mutual respect for one another's cultures while also boosting social and cultural exchanges between member nations.
- vi. Technology and innovation: Strengthening international collaboration in the fields of science, technology and innovation to promote knowledge exchange, capacity building and technological advancements among member nations.
- vii. Sustainable development: Promoting environmentally friendly and sustainable development methods while working together to achieve sustainable development goals.
- viii. Peace and security: Promoting peace, stability and security locally and internationally while addressing shared security issues and risks, such as terrorism.
- ix. South–South cooperation: Strengthening cooperation and collaboration among developing countries, sharing best practices, and supporting initiatives that contribute to the overall development of the Global South. (Ivey, 2023)

#### **1.3.1. Recent Developments and Shifts in BRICS Objectives:**

**Expansion to BRICS:** In recent years, BRICS has invited other emerging economies to its annual summits and even proposed an expansion to include other developing nations, which would strengthen its influence and amplify its call for a multipolar world.

**DE Dollarization Efforts:** Amid changing global dynamics, BRICS countries have shown interest in reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar for international trade. This could pave the way for alternative currencies and mechanisms to facilitate trade within the group.

### 2.3.2. Institutionalization and Key Structures within BRICS.

#### 1. Annual Summits:

**Purpose:** These annual meetings are the core structure of BRICS, where leaders discuss global issues, make decisions on collaboration, and set the group's agenda.

**Rotational Chairmanship:** Each year, a different member country assumes the chairmanship and hosts the summit, allowing each member to lead and influence the agenda.

**Significance:** The annual summits provide an essential platform for deepening ties and addressing shared concerns like economic growth, trade, and development. Figure 1 reflects the significance and developments from BRICS platform in global financial markets).

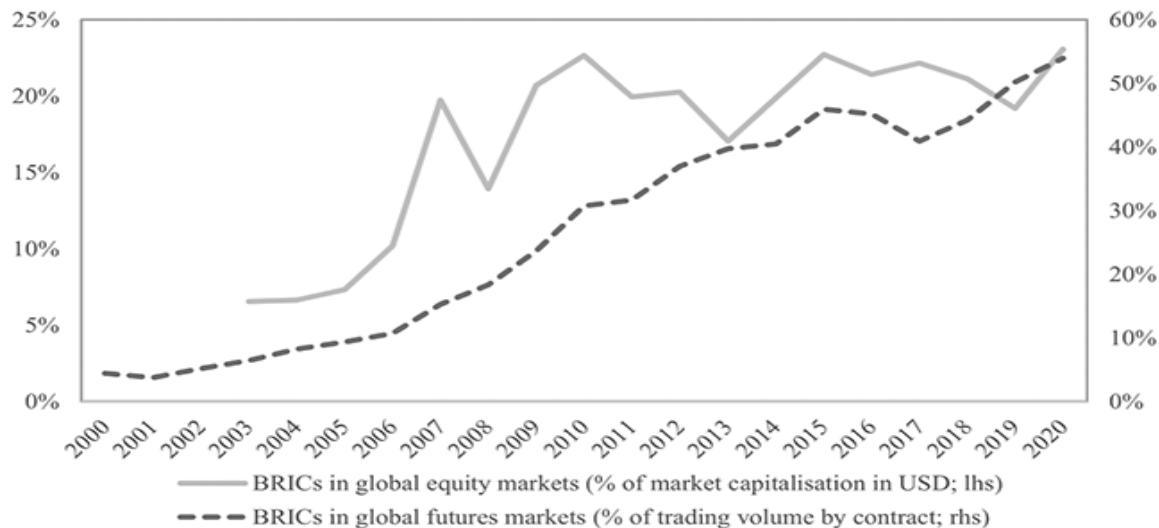


Figure 1 (BRICS in global equity & global future markets till 2020).

### **2.3.3. New Development Bank (NDB)**

**Establishment:** Created in 2014 and headquartered in Shanghai, China.

**Purpose:** The NDB provides financial support for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other developing nations.

**Structure:** Each member holds an equal voting power, unlike the World Bank and IMF, where influence is based on financial contributions.

**Regional Offices:** Regional offices have been set up, with a branch in South Africa and an office planned in India, to extend the bank's reach and operational capacity.

### **2.3.4. Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**

**Purpose:** Established as a financial safety net for BRICS countries to provide support in times of economic or liquidity crises, similar to an emergency fund.

**Size:** The CRA has a \$100 billion fund.

**Mechanism:** Members can access a portion of the CRA funds in case of balance of payments crises or significant economic instability.

### **2.3.5. BRICS Business Council**

**Composition:** Comprising members from each country's business sectors, this council facilitates economic cooperation and investment opportunities among BRICS nations.

**Role:** The council serves as a bridge between governments and private sectors, proposing initiatives that foster trade, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

**Key Activities:** Annual business forum meetings coincide with BRICS summits, where business leaders discuss trade challenges, economic trends, and investment

possibilities.

#### **2.3.6. BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC)**

**Objective:** The BTTC aims to foster intellectual exchange and research collaboration to support BRICS' policymaking and strategic direction.

**Collaborations:** It engages scholars and analysts to research issues like sustainable development, social policy, and international relations, offering data and insights to inform BRICS' policies.

**Impact:** The think tanks produce reports and host seminars that influence BRICS policies, fostering a knowledge-based approach to challenges faced by member states.

#### **2.3.7. BRICS Joint Science and Technology Innovation Collaboration**

**Purpose:** This initiative promotes collaboration in fields like space exploration, energy research, healthcare, and ICT.

**Funding and Projects:** BRICS countries jointly fund projects that advance technological innovation and scientific progress, providing access to cutting-edge research across borders.

**Education and Research Networks:** It also supports exchanges among universities, researchers, and students to build a collaborative network of innovation.

#### **2.3.8. Sectoral Working Groups and Forums**

**Structure:** Various working groups focus on specific sectors, such as agriculture, energy, health, trade, and finance.

**Function:** These groups allow BRICS members to coordinate and develop sector-specific policies that address common challenges and opportunities.

**Examples:** For instance, the BRICS Agricultural Research Platform enhances food security cooperation, while the BRICS Women's Business Alliance fosters gender-inclusive economic initiatives.

### **2.3.9. BRICS Outreach and BRICS Plus**

**Objective:** Launched in recent years, the BRICS Plus initiative aims to extend partnerships to other emerging economies.

**Activities:** BRICS Plus invites non-member countries to participate in BRICS activities, especially those with shared economic or political interests, creating a network that broadens BRICS' influence.

**Significance:** This initiative allows BRICS to connect with other regional groupings and promote its agenda in international forums more effectively.

## **2.4. Challenges in Institutionalization**

Despite these structures, BRICS still faces challenges in achieving deeper institutionalization, such as:

**Diverse Political Agendas:** Each member has unique political and economic interests, which can limit the cohesiveness and consistency of BRICS' policies.

**Economic Disparities:** Economic differences among BRICS members lead to varying priorities, impacting the group's ability to implement unified policies.

**External Pressures:** Pressure from Western economies and institutions can complicate BRICS' efforts to assert its influence globally.

## **2.5 Economic and Developmental Cooperation within BRICS.**

The emergence of BRICS reflects a collective conviction among significant emerging

nations that the Western-led, rules-based global order, particularly the framework of international economic governance, is not only biased against their interests but also increasingly obsolete. Interestingly, the term "BRIC" was originally coined by Jim O'Neill, a Goldman Sachs economist, in 2001. He predicted that Brazil, Russia, India, and China would become the primary drivers of global economic growth in the coming decade. This forecast was partly validated by a surge in commodity prices, leading to substantial economic expansion. From 2000 to 2011, the combined share of global output from these nations grew from 8% to 19%. In 2009, the four BRIC countries took a significant step by holding their inaugural leaders' summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia. This meeting, held in the aftermath of the global financial crisis that originated in the U.S. and severely impacted Western economies, symbolized the potential shift toward a new economic order led by emerging powers. South Africa joined the group in 2010, transforming it into BRICS.

From its inception, BRICS was envisioned as a geopolitical and economic counterbalance to the West, which had long controlled the global economy through exclusive clubs like the G7. The G7 originated in 1975 following the Arab oil embargo and subsequent economic instability, initially comprising the U.S., Japan, West Germany, the U.K., France, and Italy. Canada joined in 1976, and the European Economic Community (later the EU) began participating in 1977. In 1997, Russia was admitted to form the G8, a decision that later proved contentious due to Russia's authoritarian shift. Over time, the G7/G8 expanded its focus beyond economic issues to include topics like weapons proliferation, debt relief, global health, and climate change.

The 2007–2008 financial crisis marked a pivotal moment for both the G8 and BRICS. Unlike previous crises in Latin America and Asia, this one originated in the heart of global capitalism, Wall Street and required a coordinated response from all major economies, including China. In November 2008, the U.S. administration under George W. Bush convened the first G20 leaders' summit, elevating what had previously been a forum for finance ministers and central bankers.

The G20, representing two-thirds of the world's population and over 80% of global trade and GDP, was seen as a more inclusive and representative body than the G8. During the crisis, the G20 played a crucial role by injecting liquidity, revitalizing the IMF and World Bank, and establishing the Financial Stability Board. By 2009, it was declared the primary forum for international economic cooperation.

However, the G8 did not fade into irrelevance as many had anticipated. The G20, while effective in crisis management, struggled to maintain its role as a global steering committee due to its size and diversity. Additionally, the structural inequalities in global economic governance, such as the dominance of the U.S. dollar and Western control over international financial institutions, persisted. Geopolitical tensions between China, Russia, and the West further hindered G20 collaboration. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 led to its suspension from the G8, effectively reviving the G7 as a coalition of advanced democracies committed to the rule of law. Some have even proposed expanding the G7 to include Australia, South Korea, and the EU, forming a "D10" or "Democracies 10" alliance. (Patrick, 2024)

## **2.6. Impact on the G20**

Among the biggest uncertainties is what impact the BRICS+ will have on the role and functioning of the G20, which will hold its summit in Rio de Janeiro on November 18–19 under this year's chair, Brazil. "Since the G20's elevation to the leader level in 2008, one of its ostensible comparative advantages has been that it provides a setting for flexible coalitions of consensus to emerge that transcend rigid blocs.

That is, it provides a possible framework for members to build bridges and advance cooperation on shared interests, regardless of differences in regime type or tensions over other matters. Realizing this potential, however, depends on the willingness of G20 member states to compartmentalize and cooperate on certain shared challenges while continuing to compete, often fiercely, in other domains. Striking this balance has become increasingly difficult in recent years, as

evinced by the acrimonious G20 diplomacy during and after the coronavirus pandemic and, more recently, in response to the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the war in Gaza. Rather than a platform for collective action, the forum has too often become a setting for East-West and North-South recriminations.

The expansion of BRICS certainly has the potential to exacerbate these dynamics, by splitting the G20 into opposed G7 and BRICS+ factions. Since 2000, the G7's share of global GDP, as measured by purchasing power parity, has declined from 43 to 30 percent, while that of the five original BRICS countries has increased from just over 21 percent to nearly 35. When nominal dollar figures are used, the G7 continues to hold a significant edge, 43 to 27.7 percent, but the gap is shrinking. Presuming that Turkey joins Saudi Arabia in BRICS membership, BRICS+ will, like the G7, boast seven members in the G20 with the possibility that Indonesia could someday join them.

The pivotal question is whether the BRICS+ members of the G20 will seek (or be able) to translate this heft into unified economic and geopolitical positions within the latter body. One could imagine them treating BRICS+ as a pre-negotiation forum in which to reach common (and potentially rigid) stances that they then import to the G20 reinforcing the temptation of the G7 to do likewise. Although plausible, this scenario seems unlikely. Putting aside China and Russia, the four current BRICS+ members of the G20 India, Brazil, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia have a fundamental interest in keeping their strategic options and alignments open. Membership in both clubs allows them to play an inside and an outside game to rally a counterhegemonic coalition in BRICS+, while adopting a more pragmatic, mixed strategy within the G20, in which they can press for global governance reform but also build bridges across East-West and North-South divides. Nations, like people, are intersectional. Emerging powers have multiple, overlapping identities that influence their orientations, and they are capable of playing more than one game, as well as code-switching, in different settings.

Consider Brazil, a dynamic if fragile democracy. Under the leadership of President Luiz

Inácio Lula da Silva, it expresses solidarity with the Global Majority, rails against the inequities of the Bretton Woods institutions, and insists that it should not need to choose between East and West. At the same time, it cultivates friendly relations with the United States and is an accession candidate to the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, the club of wealthy market democracies. Like Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa each have complicated identities and preferences of their own and the same is true of other G20 nations that are not (yet) members of BRICS+, including Argentina, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, and Turkey. Middle powers have a critical role to play in ensuring that the G20 remains a setting in which international cooperation is possible, notwithstanding deepening East-West divides. This year marks the third of four consecutive years in which a country from the Global South, Brazil, succeeding Indonesia and India and preceding South Africa holds the rotating chair of the G20. All four countries seek to advance developing world priorities and global governance reform through constructive and inclusive multilateral diplomacy, and they have no interest in encouraging any further global fragmentation or getting caught in the cross fire of geopolitical competition. This genuine commitment to dialogue provides an opening for Western countries including the United States, which will once again chair the G20 process in 2026.”

(Patrick, 2024)

## CHAPTER-3

### 3. UNDERSTANDING THE GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS OF CHINA & ROLE OF BRICS.

#### 3.1. Introduction:

“ China's rise as a global power has been accompanied by its strategic engagement in multilateral platforms like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Understanding China's geopolitical interests provides insight into its global strategy, which is crucial for evaluating its role in shaping the objectives and dynamics of BRICS.

#### 3.2 China's Geopolitical Goals and Interests.

China's substantial economic scale and growing assertiveness in international affairs have positioned it as a dominant force within BRICS, influencing both intra-bloc trade dynamics and the group's collective foreign policy stances.

However, the future of BRICS remains uncertain due to its heavy reliance on China's economic trajectory and the rising skepticism toward China among its member states. India's rapid economic expansion and growing geopolitical influence further complicate the sustainability of BRICS as a China-led alliance.

Economist Jim O'Neill initially highlighted the potential of Brazil, Russia, India, and China to reshape the global economy, projecting that by 2050, these nations would collectively represent 40% of global economic output. In practice, from 2012 to 2022, China alone contributed approximately 25% of global GDP growth, while the BRICS nations together accounted for over 45%. The group, initially formed as BRIC in 2009, expanded to BRICS in 2010 with the inclusion of South Africa. Since then, trade within the bloc has grown unevenly, with China dominating trade flows while contributions from other members remained stagnant until recently, when India's accelerated growth began to shift the balance.

Despite deepening trade ties with China, intra-BRICS trade excluding China remains minimal. China's economic dominance, being five times larger than India's, coupled with its assertive foreign policy, underscores its leadership role within BRICS. This influence is evident in the group's alignment with China's positions at the United Nations, covering issues ranging from Xinjiang to global conflicts like Ukraine and Gaza. Brazil initially diverged from China on Ukraine but has since aligned more closely with Beijing, particularly on the Gaza conflict. China has been a key advocate for expanding BRICS to include additional nations, aiming to enhance the group's representation of the developing world and amplify its global influence.

However, the invited countries now five after Argentina's withdrawal are highly diverse, including both creditor nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE and financially weaker states. Half of these new members are major fossil fuel exporters, while Ethiopia and Egypt represent Africa, a region of growing strategic importance for both China and India. This heterogeneity raises questions about BRICS' ability to maintain cohesion and achieve its objectives post-expansion. The group has consistently pushed for reforms in global institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and UN, advocating for greater representation and accountability. BRICS also seeks to establish itself as a platform for developing nations to voice their concerns, particularly in reshaping the international financial architecture. The promotion of local currency usage in trade among members, especially with China, and support for rules-based global trade are central to this agenda. The success of BRICS' expansion will depend on its ability to address internal challenges and navigate Western responses. Nevertheless, the expansion signals a shift in global power dynamics, with developing nations playing an increasingly prominent role. The future of BRICS hinges on several factors, including China's economic trajectory, which is expected to slow, potentially reducing opportunities for other members.

Additionally, the perceptions of China among BRICS members and their populations will be critical. India, in particular, faces a delicate balancing act within a China-dominated group.

Despite these challenges, the diversity and unique strengths of BRICS members could offer mutual benefits, not only for China but also for India. Originally conceived as an economic initiative to reflect the rise of emerging economies, BRICS has evolved into a significant geopolitical entity. While China's central role and the group's diversity present both opportunities and challenges, the bloc's future remains uncertain due to its economic dependence on China and the growing unease among members regarding Beijing's influence. India's rise further complicates the prospect of maintaining a China-centric BRICS. (Garcia-Herrero, 2024)"

### **3.3 Economic Strategies: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched by China in 2013, is a global development strategy aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and fostering economic cooperation across Asia, Europe, Africa, "and beyond. The initiative focuses on building infrastructure, trade networks, and cultural exchanges to facilitate global economic integration. Here are some of the key economic strategies associated with the BRI:

#### **i) Infrastructure Development**

**Objective:** To create a modern Silk Road through physical connectivity.

**Key Sectors:** Roads, railways, and ports (e.g., Gwadar Port in Pakistan, Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Kenya).

#### **Energy pipelines and power projects.**

#### **ii) Funding Mechanisms:**

Loans and investments by Chinese financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund.

#### **Trade and Investment Facilitation**

#### **Trade Corridors:**

Strengthening overland routes (e.g., Silk Road Economic Belt).

Expanding maritime trade routes (e.g., Maritime Silk Road).

**Investment Goals:**

Facilitate access to markets for Chinese goods.

Increase bilateral trade flows with partner nations.

**Special Economic Zones (SEZs):**

Development of industrial parks and trade hubs in countries like Pakistan, Malaysia, and Ethiopia.

**iii) Financial Integration****Currency Policy:**

Encourage the use of the Renminbi (RMB) in international transactions.

**Partnerships:**

Agreements between Chinese banks and local financial institutions to ease credit access.

**Risk Mitigation:**

Creating funds to manage project risks and ensure long-term sustainability.

**iv) Technology and Digital Silk Road****Focus Areas:**

Investment in telecommunication infrastructure like 5G networks.

Support for e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba and JD.com.

**Outcome:**

Digital economy partnerships to connect BRI regions via a "Digital Silk Road."

**v) Cultural and Policy Coordination****Cultural Exchanges:**

Promote mutual understanding through educational programs, cultural festivals, and media collaborations.

**Policy Dialogue:**

Strengthen collaboration via bilateral agreements and multilateral forums like the Belt and

Road Forum.

**vi) Opportunities and Challenges**

**Opportunities:**

Enhancing global trade efficiency.

Providing developmental opportunities to partner nations.

**Challenges:**

Debt sustainability concerns for some participating countries.

Criticism of lack of transparency in agreements.

Geopolitical tensions, especially with Western countries wary of China's strategic intentions.

**Conclusion:**

The BRI represents one of the most ambitious economic strategies of the 21st century, aiming to reshape global trade and economic landscapes. While it offers significant development opportunities, it also demands careful management of financial, environmental, and geopolitical risks.”

**3.4 China's Role within BRICS.**

China has played a central role within BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) since the group's establishment. “Here's a detailed overview of its role and influence in BRICS up to 2023:

**3.4.1. Foundational Member and Economic Powerhouse**

As one of the founding members of BRICS, China has been instrumental in shaping the group's vision of promoting cooperation among major emerging economies. It is the largest economy in BRICS, contributing over 70% of the bloc's GDP in nominal terms and driving global influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

### **3.4.2. Economic Leadership**

China has actively supported the establishment and expansion of financial mechanisms within BRICS. It played a key role in the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), both aimed at providing alternatives to Western-dominated financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. The NDB, headquartered in Shanghai, reflects China's commitment to financial development in the Global South.

### **3.4.3. Promoting Multilateralism**

China has consistently advocated for a multipolar world order and reforming global governance structures, including the United Nations and international financial institutions, to give greater voice to emerging economies. Through BRICS, it seeks to counterbalance Western economic and political dominance.

### **3.4.4. Driving Innovation and Collaboration**

China has encouraged cooperation within BRICS in fields like science, technology, and innovation (STI), fostering knowledge-sharing and joint research. Initiatives such as the BRICS STI Framework and innovation hubs often leverage China's technological advancements and resources.

### **3.4.5. Diplomatic Mediation**

As a major player within BRICS, China has often worked to mediate and balance tensions, such as those between India and Russia or India and itself, ensuring the bloc remains cohesive despite geopolitical differences.

### **3.4.6. Trade and Investment**

China is a leading trade partner for other BRICS countries. It actively promotes intra-BRICS trade by advocating for reduced barriers and expanding trade corridors,

benefiting from its large-scale manufacturing base and infrastructure.

#### **3.4.7. Global Strategic Goals**

China uses BRICS to build alliances with like-minded countries on issues like climate change, digital transformation, and sustainable development, aligning with its broader global strategic ambitions. It has also promoted dialogue on using national currencies in trade to reduce reliance on the US dollar, echoing its broader efforts to internationalize the renminbi.

#### **Challenges:**

Despite its leading role, China faces challenges within BRICS, including managing its differences with India over border disputes and geopolitical alignments. Its dominance sometimes raises concerns among other members about equitable decision-making within the bloc.

#### **3.5. Recent Developments (Till 2023):**

China has been a strong proponent of BRICS expansion, welcoming discussions about new members to make the bloc more representative of the Global South. In the 2023 BRICS summit in Johannesburg, China actively supported the inclusion of six new countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, UAE) to enhance the bloc's economic and geopolitical weight.

China's role within BRICS reflects its aspirations to reshape the global order while fostering unity among emerging economies. Its leadership in economic, technological, and diplomatic dimensions makes it a cornerstone of the group's activities.”

#### **3.5 BRICS as a Counterweight to Western Influence.**

Here is an “overview of how BRICS has acted as a counterweight to Western influence until 2023:

**i) Economic Influence**

**Emerging Economic Bloc:** BRICS nations collectively represent a significant portion of the world's population and GDP. By 2023, BRICS accounted for over 40% of the global population and around 26% of global GDP. Their economic integration serves as a balance to Western-led organizations like the G7.

**New Development Bank (NDB):** The BRICS-established NDB, launched in 2014, finances infrastructure and sustainable development projects in member states and other developing countries. It provides an alternative to Western-dominated institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

**ii) Political Cooperation**

**Advocacy for Multipolarity:** BRICS countries consistently advocate for a multipolar world order, challenging the unipolar dominance historically exerted by the U.S. and its Western allies.

**United Nations Reform:** The bloc collectively demands reforms in global governance, particularly expanding the United Nations Security Council to include greater representation from developing countries.

**Non-Western Diplomacy:** BRICS serves as a forum for coordinated stances on international issues, including responses to Western sanctions and interventions.

**iii) Trade and Currency Alternatives**

The group has discussed reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar for trade. By 2023, efforts to settle bilateral and multilateral trade in local currencies have gained momentum, challenging the dollar's hegemony in global trade. BRICS fosters trade among its members and other developing nations, reducing dependency on Western markets.

**iv) Technology and Innovation**

BRICS nations have been investing in technological collaborations, particularly in AI, 5G, and renewable energy, to compete with Western technological dominance. The bloc promotes policies supporting cyber sovereignty, allowing nations to regulate their internet space independently of Western tech giants.

**v) Challenges to Western Policy Dominance**

During crises like the Ukraine conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, BRICS nations often provided alternative narratives to Western viewpoints. For instance: Russia and China offered sharp critiques of Western sanctions and NATO expansion. India and South Africa resisted aligning with Western pressure on specific geopolitical issues, advocating for neutral or balanced approaches.

**vi) Challenges and Limitations**

Despite its efforts, BRICS faces significant internal challenges & Divergent Interests. Members often have conflicting geopolitical agendas, such as the India-China border disputes. The economic disparity among members sometimes hinders cohesive decision-making, while growing, BRICS' influence remains limited compared to Western alliances in terms of military and financial reach.

## **Conclusion**

By 2023, BRICS has positioned itself as a formidable bloc advocating for the interests of the Global South and presenting a counter-narrative to Western dominance. While it has made strides in economic and political realms, its ability to effectively counterbalance Western influence depends on resolving internal differences and further institutionalizing its initiatives."

## CHAPTER-4

### 4. THREE: RELATIONSHIP OF BRICS WITH EMERGING ECONOMIES OF THE WORLD.

#### 4.1 Introduction.

The relationship between BRICS and emerging economies is a cornerstone of the evolving global economic landscape. As a coalition of major emerging markets, BRICS plays a significant role in fostering cooperation, promoting sustainable development, and addressing global challenges in collaboration with other developing nations.

BRICS nations and other emerging economies often face similar developmental challenges, such as poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and industrialization. This shared context provides a basis for collaboration through knowledge exchange, joint projects, and capacity-building initiatives.”

#### 4.2 Trade and Economic Cooperation.

##### 4.2.1. Development of BRICS Trade and Economic Cooperation (2001-2023).

BRICS, an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, “was formalized as a cohesive bloc in 2009 to foster collaboration among major emerging economies. Initially, the focus was on identifying synergies to amplify their collective voice in global economic governance. Over time, economic cooperation has become central, with trade and investment initiatives serving as vital tools for boosting growth and development among member nations.

##### 4.2.2. Economic Contributions and Key Developments.

The BRICS countries collectively account for about 40% of the global population and over 25% of global GDP, making them a significant force in the world economy. Early efforts emphasized enhancing trade, reducing barriers, and promoting investment. Key milestones include the establishment of the *New Development Bank (NDB)* in 2014, aimed at funding infrastructure

projects in member states and other developing nations. Additionally, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) was launched to provide liquidity support in times of financial instability.

#### **4.2.3 Growing Intra-BRICS Trade**

Intra-BRICS trade has steadily increased, driven by diverse commodities, technology transfers, and growing consumer markets. China, the largest economy among the members, has played a pivotal role as a trade partner for all. Trade agreements have targeted reducing dependence on Western-dominated trade systems, exploring the use of local currencies, and enhancing trade efficiency.

#### **4.2.4. Recent Developments (2020-2023).**

Amid global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, BRICS emphasized economic resilience. In 2023, efforts intensified to expand trade in sustainable technologies and digitalization. Members also explored mechanisms to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar in cross-border transactions. Discussions on expanding the bloc to include other emerging economies have gained traction, further underlining the bloc's growing ambition to influence global trade rules and economic governance.

#### **4.2.5. Challenges and Future Prospects**

While BRICS has achieved significant milestones, challenges persist, including economic disparities among members, varying political systems, and external geopolitical pressures. However, with continued focus on sustainable growth, digital cooperation, and expanded membership, BRICS is likely to deepen its influence on global economic dynamics in the coming decades.”

### **4.3 Investment and Financial Ties.**

The BRICS alliance, has progressively strengthened its financial and investment ties with the outside world, significantly influencing global economic dynamics. Here's an overview of these connections up to 2023:

#### **4.3.1. Cross-Border Investments and Trade.**

***China's Leadership:*** China remains the most influential BRICS member, with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) driving infrastructure investments across Asia, Africa, and Europe. By 2023, China had invested billions in energy, transportation, and telecommunications in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

***India's Strategic Focus:*** India expanded its trade and investment outreach, particularly with the Global South. Key initiatives included investments in Africa's healthcare and education sectors and fostering tech and innovation collaborations with the US and EU.

***Brazil's Agri-business and Energy Expansion:*** Brazil leveraged its natural resources, particularly agriculture and biofuels, to strengthen ties with markets in Asia and the Middle East.

***Russia's Pivot to Asia:*** Facing Western sanctions, Russia deepened its economic ties with China, India, and the Middle East, particularly in energy exports and arms trade.

***South Africa's Mineral Wealth:*** South Africa's mining sector attracted investments from countries like China and India, capitalizing on its vast reserves of precious metals and minerals.

#### **4.3.2. Institutional Collaboration.**

***New Development Bank (NDB):*** Established by BRICS in 2014, the NDB has extended loans to projects worldwide. By 2023, the bank had financed over \$30 billion in sustainable development projects, including renewable energy and infrastructure, in non-BRICS countries.

***BRICS Currency Initiatives:*** BRICS members have increasingly emphasized DE dollarization, promoting trade settlements in local currencies to reduce reliance on the US dollar. For example, China and Russia extensively used the yuan and ruble in bilateral trade by 2023.

#### **4.3.3. Partnerships beyond BRICS.**

***Outreach to Africa:*** BRICS nations, particularly China and India, enhanced investments in Africa's infrastructure, energy, and technology sectors. The BRICS-Africa Outreach initiative emphasized economic integration and capacity building.

***Middle East Connections:*** Russia, China, and India increased their engagement in the Middle East, focusing on energy, defense, and infrastructure partnerships. Notably, the UAE and Saudi Arabia emerged as key collaborators with BRICS nations.

***Latin America Engagement:*** Brazil's position within BRICS facilitated greater South-South cooperation with neighboring Latin American countries, bolstered by Chinese investments in the region's energy and mining sectors.

#### **4.3.4. Challenges and Criticism.**

***Geopolitical Risks:*** Russia's Ukraine invasion in 2022 heightened scrutiny of BRICS unity, with Western nations viewing BRICS as a potential counterweight to their influence.

***Economic Dependencies:*** Critics highlight China's dominance in intra-BRICS trade and investment, potentially creating imbalances within the bloc.

***Global Perception:*** While BRICS positions itself as a voice for the Global South, some view its initiatives as lacking coherence compared to Western alliances.

#### **4.3.5. Future Prospects**

***Expanding Membership:*** By 2023, BRICS expressed interest in expanding its membership, with countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Argentina exploring potential inclusion.”

***Green Financing:*** The BRICS bloc is set to play a pivotal role in global green transitions, emphasizing renewable energy investments and sustainable development.”

***Global Governance:*** BRICS aims to reform global financial institutions, advocating for more equitable representation in entities like the IMF and World Bank. The BRICS alliance's investment and financial outreach have established it as a critical player in shaping a multipolar world economy, blending strategic self-interest with a focus on developmental partnerships.”

#### **4.4 Political and Strategic Alliances.**

“ BRICS, an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has emerged as a prominent coalition influencing global politics and strategic alignments between 2010 and 2023. This period witnessed the group consolidating its position as a voice for emerging economies, challenging the dominance of Western-led institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

The annual BRICS summits became platforms to discuss pressing global issues, including economic development, climate change, and geopolitical stability. Cooperation among members extended to the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014, aimed at funding infrastructure and sustainable development projects in member states and other developing nations, symbolizing their commitment to reducing dependency on Western financial systems. Strategically, BRICS nations coordinated

efforts to address global challenges while navigating individual geopolitical priorities. Russia and China, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, used BRICS to bolster their positions against Western influence, often aligning on issues such as NATO expansion and U.S. sanctions. India balanced its participation by advocating for multipolarity while maintaining its strategic autonomy, navigating complex dynamics with China, particularly following border disputes like the 2020 Galwan Valley clash. South Africa's inclusion in 2010 brought an African perspective to the alliance, emphasizing development and equity for the Global South.

Throughout this period, BRICS expanded its influence by engaging with other developing nations and forming partnerships through outreach programs like the BRICS Plus initiative. However, internal divergences persisted, especially regarding economic growth rates, political systems, and strategic priorities. China's dominant economic position and its Belt and Road Initiative sometimes created friction within the group, as other members sought to assert their regional leadership. Despite these challenges, BRICS remained a significant platform for coordinating policies and amplifying the voices of emerging economies in global governance.”

“The first formal BRIC summit was held in 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia, marking the bloc's shift from an economic concept to a political alliance. South Africa joined in 2010, transforming BRIC into BRICS, reflecting its broader representation of emerging markets. Key moments include the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014 to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects, challenging the dominance of traditional financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF. Over the years, BRICS summits have consistently emphasized multilateralism, global economic

reform, and cooperation in areas such as technology, health, and climate change. The 2017 Xiamen Summit marked a turning point in addressing security challenges, with a joint declaration condemning terrorism.

Amid rising global tensions, the 2022 Beijing Summit highlighted unity against unilateralism, stressing the importance of sovereignty and non-interference. Geopolitical crises, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have tested the group's cohesion, with differing national stances reflecting diverse priorities. The 2023 Johannesburg Summit further expanded BRICS' influence, inviting countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and others to join, signaling a push for greater representation of the Global South. BRICS' evolving role underscores its ambition to reshape global governance by fostering an alternative to Western-dominated structures."

#### **4.5 Case Studies of BRICS Partnerships with Emerging Economies.**

The BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) have played a significant role in fostering partnerships with emerging economies, driving initiatives in trade, development, and diplomacy. In Africa, BRICS members, especially China and South Africa, have collaborated extensively on infrastructure projects. China's Belt and Road Initiative has invested heavily in African ports, railways, and energy projects, while South Africa has leveraged its BRICS membership to advocate for African priorities in global forums.

Brazil has engaged with Latin American neighbors through regional trade agreements, offering agricultural and technological expertise, while India has strengthened ties with Southeast Asian nations, particularly through investments in technology and pharmaceuticals. Russia has partnered with emerging economies in Central Asia and the

Middle East, focusing on energy exports, defense cooperation, and development projects. The New Development Bank (NDB), established by BRICS in 2014, has funded numerous infrastructure and sustainable development projects across member states and other developing countries, reflecting BRICS' collective commitment to supporting global south-south cooperation.

The group's emphasis on reducing dependence on Western financial systems has also encouraged partnerships that prioritize local currencies in trade settlements, further integrating emerging markets. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, BRICS demonstrated a coordinated response by sharing vaccines and medical supplies with other developing nations. India's Vaccine Maitri initiative and China's large-scale vaccine donations played pivotal roles.

BRICS' advocacy for a more equitable global governance system has bolstered partnerships with countries seeking reform in institutions like the United Nations and the World Bank, aligning with the group's broader vision of reshaping the global order to better represent developing economies. In 2010 South Africa is invited to join BRIC, transforming it into BRICS and enhancing the group's engagement with Africa. In 2011, First BRICS Summit held in China, focusing on global governance reforms and deeper cooperation among emerging economies. In 2012, BRICS nations agree to establish a New Development Bank (NDB) to address infrastructure and sustainable development needs in emerging economies. In 2013, BRICS nations commit to the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) to provide liquidity support during financial crises, strengthening economic partnerships.

In 2014, NDB headquarters are established in Shanghai, marking a milestone for

South-South cooperation through BRICS. In 2015 NDB becomes operational and approves its first batch of loans, funding infrastructure projects in Brazil, India, and China. In 2016, BRICS intensifies cooperation with other emerging markets, promoting inclusive economic development and sharing technology. In 2017, BRICS Plus initiative launched to deepen partnerships with non-member emerging economies, inviting countries like Mexico, Egypt, and Kenya to participate in dialogues. In 2018, BRICS explores greater cooperation in areas like digital economy and innovation, fostering partnerships in technological development. In 2019, NDB expands its membership by including non-BRICS countries to enhance its global reach. In 2020, BRICS nations coordinate efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on healthcare and economic recovery in emerging economies. In 2021, BRICS expands its focus on climate change, launching initiatives to assist emerging economies in transitioning to green energy. In 2022, BRICS partners with regional organizations like ASEAN and African Union to enhance trade and connectivity in emerging markets. In 2023, BRICS expands its membership by admitting six new countries, signaling a stronger focus on global South solidarity and partnerships with emerging economies.”

#### **4.6 Future Prospects & Strategic goals.**

BRICS nations collectively represent a substantial portion of the world's population, economic output, and natural resources. This gives the group a significant advantage in shaping global narratives and policies. “However, their diversity in terms of political systems, economic models, and cultural identities presents both opportunities and challenges for effective coordination. The strategic goals of BRICS encompass economic cooperation, political alignment, technological collaboration, and environmental sustainability.

A key focus for BRICS is economic integration and collaboration. Despite differences in economic structures, the members aim to promote trade and investment among themselves to reduce dependency on Western markets and financial institutions. Efforts to establish mechanisms like the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) underscore their intent to provide alternatives to institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

These initiatives enable member nations to address infrastructure deficits, stabilize financial markets during crises, and fund sustainable development projects. Strengthening these mechanisms remains a crucial goal for BRICS as they seek to consolidate their economic influence. Trade remains a vital area for prospects. BRICS countries are working towards enhancing intra-BRICS trade by reducing trade barriers and increasing mutual market access. Developing comprehensive frameworks for trade agreements and harmonizing regulations across sectors such as agriculture, technology, and manufacturing can unlock new opportunities for economic growth. By emphasizing regional value chains, the group can capitalize on each member's comparative advantages, fostering economic resilience and reducing external dependencies. Technological collaboration is another strategic priority. BRICS nations recognize the transformative potential of advancements in artificial intelligence, clean energy, biotechnology, and digital infrastructure. Joint investments in research and development, coupled with knowledge-sharing initiatives, can help members develop cutting-edge technologies while fostering innovation ecosystems. Establishing technology parks, research centers, and funding mechanisms for joint ventures can bolster cooperation in this domain. Such collaboration not only accelerates technological progress but also strengthens the group's competitive edge in the global

economy. In addition to economic and technological cooperation, BRICS is increasingly focused on geopolitical and institutional reforms. “

Members share concerns about the disproportionate influence of Western powers in international organizations and decision-making processes. As such, they are advocating for reforms in the United Nations, IMF, and World Bank to ensure more equitable representation for developing nations. This push for a multipolar world order aligns with BRICS' vision of fostering global governance that reflects the aspirations of emerging economies. Security cooperation also features prominently in BRICS' strategic goals.

As global security challenges evolve, including terrorism, cyber threats, and regional conflicts, BRICS countries are seeking to enhance their collective capacity to address these issues. Joint exercises, intelligence-sharing, and capacity-building initiatives can strengthen the group's ability to respond to common threats. Establishing platforms for dialogue and cooperation in security matters ensures a coordinated approach to maintaining regional and global stability. Environmental sustainability is a growing concern for BRICS, given the diverse environmental challenges faced by its members. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion require concerted efforts to transition toward green economies.

The group aims to enhance cooperation in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation initiatives. Leveraging the NDB to finance green projects and promoting multilateral agreements on climate action within BRICS can significantly contribute to global sustainability goals. Cultural and educational exchanges represent another promising area of collaboration. BRICS nations have rich and diverse cultural heritages, and fostering greater people-to-people connections can enhance mutual

understanding and goodwill. Educational partnerships, including student exchange programs, scholarships, and joint research initiatives, can strengthen ties between academic and cultural institutions. Such efforts help build a sense of shared identity and purpose among BRICS populations.

While the prospects for BRICS are promising, the group faces several challenges. Geopolitical tensions among members, differences in economic development levels, and divergent national priorities can impede progress. For instance, China's economic dominance and its complex relations with India require careful management to avoid undermining unity. Similarly, economic sanctions on Russia and South Africa's domestic challenges pose hurdles to achieving the group's shared objectives. Addressing these issues necessitates transparent communication, trust-building measures, and a commitment to multilateralism.

To achieve their strategic goals, BRICS countries must also strengthen their institutional frameworks. Establishing a permanent secretariat and improving coordination mechanisms can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the group's initiatives. Additionally, engaging with other emerging economies and regional organizations can expand BRICS' influence and create new opportunities for collaboration. In conclusion, the future prospects and strategic goals of BRICS revolve around fostering economic resilience, technological advancement, political reform, and environmental sustainability. By leveraging their collective strengths and addressing internal and external challenges, BRICS can emerge as a formidable force in shaping the 21st-century global order.” Their success hinges on maintaining unity, promoting equitable partnerships, and embracing innovation to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

## CHAPTER-5

### 5. CHALLENGES THREATENING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BRICS.

#### 5.1 Introduction.

Divergent national interests among member states often hinder collective decision-making and policy alignment. Each country's unique political, economic, and strategic priorities can lead to disagreements, weakening the bloc's cohesion. Additionally, geopolitical tensions between member states, such as the border disputes between India and China, further complicate cooperative efforts. Economic disparities among BRICS members also pose a challenge.

The economies of China and India, for instance, are significantly larger and more influential than those of South Africa or Brazil, creating an imbalance in contributions and influence within the group. This disparity can lead to perceptions of dominance by larger economies, undermining trust and equal partnership.

Moreover, external factors, such as the global economic environment and shifting alliances with Western powers, affect the bloc's ability to operate as a unified entity. The lack of a clear and cohesive agenda further limits the effectiveness of BRICS. While the group has initiated several promising projects, such as the New Development Bank, the absence of a well-defined long-term vision hampers its ability to address global challenges systematically. Institutional inefficiencies and the slow pace of implementation also detract from the bloc's impact on global governance reform. Consequently, while BRICS holds considerable potential, these challenges must be addressed to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in the evolving global order.”

## **5.2 Economic Disparities, Geopolitical Tensions and Rivalries among member States.**

Despite its potential to act as a counterbalance to “Western-dominated global institutions, the BRICS grouping faces substantial internal challenges, particularly in terms of economic disparities, geopolitical tensions, and rivalries among its member states. Economic disparities within BRICS are pronounced, reflecting the diverse developmental trajectories of its member countries. China’s economy dwarfs those of its partners, with its GDP accounting for over 70% of the combined economic output of the group.

This economic dominance is both a strength and a source of contention. While China’s robust economic performance drives BRICS’ collective economic clout, it also exacerbates imbalances in influence and decision-making within the group. For instance, China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) underscores its economic ambitions but has raised concerns among BRICS members about Beijing’s growing influence and its potential to overshadow collective agendas. India, the second-largest economy in the group, follows a growth model distinct from China’s, emphasizing democratic governance and a more decentralized economic structure. While India has achieved remarkable economic progress, its GDP and technological advancements still lag significantly behind China’s.

This disparity fuels competition between the two nations, particularly as both vie for leadership roles within BRICS and broader international platforms. The India-China rivalry has implications not only for the group’s cohesion but also for its ability to present a united front on global issues. Russia’s economic position within BRICS is unique, as it relies heavily on energy exports to sustain its economy. While this grants Russia leverage in energy markets, it also makes its economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil and gas prices. Additionally, Western sanctions imposed on Russia following its actions in

Ukraine have further strained its economy. Despite these challenges, Russia remains a critical player in BRICS due to its geopolitical clout and military capabilities.

However, its economic challenges limit its ability to contribute significantly to the group's collective economic initiatives. Brazil and South Africa represent the smaller economies within BRICS, facing distinct developmental challenges. Brazil's economy has struggled with political instability, corruption scandals, and sluggish growth. As the largest economy in South America, Brazil's participation in BRICS provides it with a platform to amplify its voice on global issues, yet its domestic challenges constrain its contributions to the group's objectives.

South Africa, the smallest BRICS economy, faces high unemployment rates, socio-economic inequalities, and energy crises. While its inclusion in BRICS underscores the group's commitment to representing diverse regions, South Africa's limited economic power raises questions about its role and influence within the bloc. Geopolitical tensions among BRICS members further complicate their collaboration. The longstanding border disputes between India and China have periodically escalated into military confrontations, such as the 2020 clash in the Galwan Valley.

These incidents highlight deep-seated mistrust between the two nations, undermining efforts to foster unity within BRICS. Moreover, India's growing strategic alignment with Western powers, particularly through initiatives like the Quad, has fueled Chinese suspicions and added to the group's internal frictions. Russia's actions on the global stage, particularly its annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, have also impacted BRICS dynamics. While some members, such as China and India, have refrained from outright condemnation of Russia, their responses reflect varying degrees of

discomfort with Moscow's approach.

This divergence in perspectives complicates efforts to establish a cohesive BRICS stance on international conflicts and undermines the group's credibility as a unified entity. Economic rivalries within BRICS extend beyond bilateral tensions, encompassing competition for investment, markets, and influence in emerging economies. China's extensive investments in Africa, Latin America, and Asia through initiatives like the BRI have positioned it as a dominant player in the Global South. However, these efforts have also sparked concerns about debt dependency and Beijing's strategic motives.

For countries like India and Brazil, China's economic assertiveness represents both an opportunity and a challenge, as they seek to balance cooperation with the need to protect their own economic interests. Trade imbalances within BRICS further exacerbate tensions. China's trade surplus with other BRICS nations highlights the asymmetrical economic relationships within the group.

For instance, India's trade deficit with China has been a recurring source of friction, prompting calls for diversifying trade partnerships and reducing dependency on Chinese imports. Similarly, Brazil's reliance on commodity exports to China underscores the structural disparities in their economic engagements. The governance structure of BRICS also reflects these internal disparities and rivalries. The New Development Bank (NDB), established to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects, has been a key achievement of the group.

However, disagreements over funding priorities and leadership roles within the bank mirror the broader economic and political imbalances among members. For instance, debates over the NDB's expansion and the inclusion of new members have highlighted

differing priorities and visions for the institution's future. Despite these challenges, BRICS continues to offer its members opportunities to collaborate on shared interests. Initiatives aimed at enhancing trade, investment, and technological cooperation demonstrate the group's potential to drive collective progress. For example, the establishment of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) reflects a commitment to financial stability and resilience among members. Additionally, BRICS summits provide a platform for dialogue and coordination on global issues such as climate change, healthcare, and multilateral reform.

However, the effectiveness of BRICS in achieving its objectives depends on its ability to navigate internal differences and foster a sense of common purpose. Addressing economic disparities requires a commitment to equitable growth and development within the group. Initiatives that promote knowledge sharing, capacity building, and inclusive economic policies can help bridge the gaps between member states. Furthermore, enhancing intra-BRICS trade and investment through mechanisms like the NDB can strengthen economic ties and reduce dependency on external markets. Mitigating geopolitical tensions necessitates a pragmatic approach that prioritizes dialogue and conflict resolution.

Confidence-building measures between India and China, such as enhanced communication channels and border management mechanisms, are crucial to reducing the risk of future confrontations. Similarly, fostering a balanced approach to contentious global issues, such as Russia's actions in Ukraine, requires mutual understanding and respect for diverse perspectives within the group. Ultimately, the success of BRICS depends on its ability to transcend internal divisions and present a cohesive vision for global governance.

While economic disparities, geopolitical tensions, and rivalries pose significant challenges, they also underscore the importance of collective action and cooperation. By leveraging their shared interests and strengths, BRICS members can work towards a more inclusive and equitable global order, reaffirming the relevance of the group in an increasingly multipolar world. These tensions have stemmed from political, economic, and strategic differences. One of the most prominent rivalries within BRICS has been between India and China. The two nations have long-standing territorial disputes, particularly in the Himalayan region. These tensions escalated dramatically in 2020 during the Galwan Valley clashes, resulting in fatalities on both sides.

This confrontation strained bilateral ties, with India taking measures such as banning Chinese apps and increasing scrutiny of Chinese investments. Despite their economic interdependence and shared goals within BRICS, the underlying distrust has remained a persistent challenge. Russia and China have developed a closer strategic partnership, often aligning their interests in opposition to Western policies. However, their dominance within BRICS has occasionally caused unease among other members.

Russia's focus on strengthening ties with China, particularly after its isolation due to the Ukraine crisis from 2014 onwards, has led to a perception of an emerging Sino-Russian bloc within the group. This alignment has sometimes sidelined the interests of smaller BRICS members like Brazil and South Africa. Brazil's approach to BRICS has fluctuated with changes in its domestic political leadership. Under President Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022), Brazil's foreign policy took a more U.S.-aligned stance, leading to questions about its commitment to the BRICS agenda.

This shift created friction, particularly with China, Brazil's largest trading partner,

as Bolsonaro's government made statements critical of China. While subsequent leadership changes aimed to restore balance, these periods of divergence highlighted the varying priorities of BRICS members. South Africa, the smallest economy in the group, has often found itself overshadowed by the larger members. Its inclusion in BRICS was meant to represent Africa, but its economic challenges and limited influence within the group have sometimes caused tensions. South Africa's concerns about equitable decision-making and the prioritization of African development issues have occasionally clashed with the broader strategic interests of the group.

The diverse political systems and economic priorities of BRICS nations have further complicated cohesion. While China and Russia favor a more state-driven model, Brazil, India, and South Africa have traditionally leaned towards democratic frameworks.

These ideological differences have sometimes impeded the group's ability to present a united front on global issues. Disparities in economic size and influence have also contributed to an imbalance, with China's dominant economic position and ambitious Belt and Road Initiative occasionally causing apprehension among other members. Despite these rivalries, BRICS has managed to sustain its relevance, largely through shared discontent with Western-dominated institutions and a common interest in reshaping the global order. Initiatives like the New Development Bank have underscored a commitment to cooperation, even as underlying tensions persist. However, the period from 2010 to 2023 has shown that while BRICS can serve as a platform for collaboration, its internal rivalries remain a significant challenge to achieving deeper integration.”

### **5.3 Economic Sanctions and External Pressures.**

“From 2010 to 2023, BRICS countries have faced varying degrees of economic sanctions

and external pressures. These challenges often arose due to geopolitical tensions, trade disputes, and internal policies conflicting with global norms or interests of powerful nations. Russia experienced the most significant sanctions among the BRICS countries. Following its annexation of Crimea in 2014, Western nations, particularly the United States and the European Union, imposed comprehensive sanctions targeting its financial, energy, and defense sectors. These sanctions were expanded after Russia's military actions in Ukraine in 2022, severely limiting its access to international capital markets and advanced technologies. Russia responded by seeking closer economic ties with China and other non-Western partners, promoting self-reliance, and boosting trade in local currencies to mitigate dependence on the US dollar. ”

“Economic sanctions on BRICS countries China and Russia from 2010 to 2023 were primarily driven by geopolitical tensions, human rights concerns, and violations of international norms. Russia faced substantial sanctions from Western nations, particularly after its annexation of Crimea in 2014. These sanctions targeted various sectors, including finance, energy, and defense. Restrictions were imposed on Russian banks and corporations, limiting their access to Western capital markets. The United States and the European Union also placed travel bans and asset freezes on key Russian officials and oligarchs. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, sanctions intensified significantly, including bans on energy imports, freezes on foreign reserves, and further exclusion of Russian financial institutions from global systems like SWIFT.

These measures aimed to weaken Russia's ability to fund its military operations and create economic pressure to deter further aggression. Sanctions on China during this period were less sweeping but targeted specific areas due to concerns over human rights abuses, especially in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet. The United States imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and entities linked to the repression of Uyghurs and the crackdown on pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Measures included export controls on technologies such as semiconductors, restrictions on

investments in Chinese firms linked to the military, and bans on products suspected of using forced labor. The trade war between the United States and China during the Trump administration led to additional tariffs rather than traditional sanctions, escalating economic tensions between the two nations. Both countries faced challenges navigating the sanctions landscape but adapted to varying degrees. Russia turned to alternative markets in Asia, including increased energy exports to China and India, to mitigate the impact of Western sanctions. China continued to leverage its economic clout and pursued efforts to reduce dependency on Western technologies and markets, including advancing its Belt and Road Initiative and fostering self-reliance in critical industries. Despite these adaptations, sanctions had significant impacts on the economic, financial, and geopolitical strategies of both countries.”

China encountered increasing external pressures, particularly during the escalating US-China trade war that began in 2018. The United States imposed tariffs on a wide range of Chinese goods, citing unfair trade practices, intellectual property theft, and trade imbalances. Additionally, sanctions were imposed on Chinese tech companies like Huawei, with accusations of espionage and national security threats. China retaliated with its own tariffs and sought to strengthen its domestic technology and innovation capabilities. Geopolitical tensions further increased with issues surrounding Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea, leading to additional restrictions on Chinese companies and individuals. India faced less direct sanctions but encountered external pressures, especially from the United States, concerning its defense ties with Russia. India's purchase of the S-400 missile defense system from Russia led to potential sanctions under the US CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act). However, India's strategic importance in counterbalancing China often allowed for leniency in enforcement. Trade disputes with the US and European Union also emerged, particularly regarding intellectual property rights, agriculture, and market access for goods and services. Brazil dealt with external pressures primarily related to environmental policies under President Jair Bolsonaro.

International criticism mounted over deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, which led to threats of trade restrictions and reduced foreign investment. European countries, in particular, linked environmental concerns to trade agreements, urging Brazil to take stronger action against illegal logging and environmental degradation. Despite the lack of formal sanctions, these pressures influenced Brazil's international trade negotiations and foreign policy decisions. South Africa faced economic challenges related to its domestic policies and governance issues rather than direct external sanctions.

However, international financial institutions and investors expressed concerns over corruption, policy uncertainty, and energy sector inefficiencies. The US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) offered South Africa trade benefits, but potential non-compliance with eligibility criteria occasionally raised concerns about losing preferential access to the US market. The BRICS nations collectively sought to counterbalance these external pressures by deepening intra-BRICS cooperation and promoting multipolarity in global governance. They prioritized initiatives to establish financial independence, such as the New Development Bank (NDB), which aimed to reduce reliance on Western-dominated financial institutions. These countries also worked on increasing trade in local currencies and reducing dependency on the US dollar, reflecting a broader push to reshape the global economic order.”

#### **5.4 Trade, Investment Barriers, Currency & Financial Disparities.**

Between 2010 and 2023, the BRICS countries experienced significant challenges related to trade, investment barriers, currency fluctuations, and financial disparities. Despite their collective aim of enhancing economic cooperation and reducing dependency on Western financial systems, the BRICS nations faced persistent structural issues that impacted their economies and integration. Trade barriers have been a prominent concern within the BRICS bloc. While these countries pushed for deeper economic ties, tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and regulatory differences remained obstacles.

For instance, Brazil and India encountered trade barriers in areas like agriculture, technology, and manufacturing. Russia's geopolitical tensions, particularly with the West, resulted in sanctions that hurt trade, especially in energy and defense sectors. China's trade policies, including subsidies to local industries, often drew criticism from BRICS members who felt that these policies created an uneven playing field. Investment barriers also varied across BRICS countries. Brazil, India, and South Africa, for example, faced challenges in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) due to concerns about political instability, complex regulatory environments, and slow reforms. In Russia, foreign investment was limited by international sanctions, particularly after its annexation of Crimea in 2014, which restricted access to global markets and capital. China, despite its status as a global investment hub, faced accusations of unfair trade practices and limited market access for foreign companies. The countries within the BRICS sought to mitigate these barriers by proposing reforms and measures such as the New Development Bank (NDB) to fund infrastructure projects and development goals.”

Currency disparities were another issue, as the BRICS countries had varying levels of currency stability and exchange rate fluctuations. The Chinese yuan became increasingly significant, especially as China pursued greater internationalization of its currency. However, the yuan's exchange rate management often faced criticism for being artificially maintained to give China a competitive trade advantage. The Brazilian real, Russian ruble, and South African rand experienced significant volatility, exacerbating inflationary pressures and making trade more expensive for these nations.

India's rupee was similarly susceptible to inflation and global economic pressures, affecting its trade competitiveness. Financial disparities among BRICS countries also contributed to uneven development within the bloc. While China emerged as the dominant economic force, contributing over 60% of the group's GDP by the end of the period, the other nations faced varying degrees of economic underperformance. Brazil struggled with stagnation and recession in the mid-2010s,

while Russia's economy was hampered by both the oil price collapse and sanctions. South Africa's growth remained tepid due to structural challenges and political instability, and India, though one of the fastest-growing major economies, faced considerable poverty and inequality.

In conclusion, while the BRICS nations made strides in addressing some of these issues through initiatives such as the NDB and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), the challenges of trade barriers, investment restrictions, currency instability, and financial disparities hindered the full realization of their economic potential. The period from 2010 to 2023 revealed the complexities of balancing economic ambitions with internal and external pressures. BRICS countries, which include Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, face a variety of trade, investment, and financial disparities despite their shared goals of fostering economic growth and cooperation. One of the primary challenges within the group is the differing levels of economic development and the mismatch in industrial capacities. For example, China and India, as the largest economies in BRICS, have a greater capacity to dominate trade and investment flows, which sometimes leads to imbalances in trade relationships. Brazil and South Africa, being more dependent on exports of raw materials, are often less competitive in high-tech or manufactured goods compared to China and India.

This disparity can create trade imbalances, where certain countries consistently run trade surpluses or deficits. Investment barriers are another area of concern. While these countries generally seek to increase foreign direct investment (FDI), differences in investment climates such as regulatory environments, political stability, and infrastructure can complicate cross-border investments. For instance, Russia and Brazil may face investor caution due to political instability or policy unpredictability, whereas China and India have more robust and investor-friendly markets, despite their own regulatory challenges. Additionally, some BRICS countries maintain protectionist measures to safeguard domestic industries, limiting the flow of foreign investments within the bloc. Currency and financial disparities also pose significant challenges.

The value of national currencies can fluctuate, affecting trade and investment stability. For instance, the Brazilian real and the South African rand are highly susceptible to market volatility, which can make trade and investment with these countries riskier. In contrast, the Chinese yuan has more stability but is subject to tight controls by the Chinese government, limiting its use in international trade and finance. Furthermore, the financial systems in these countries vary significantly. China, with its highly regulated financial system, contrasts with India's more open but still developing financial sector. These differences complicate efforts to harmonize financial practices and policies within BRICS. These disparities also create difficulties in monetary cooperation.

While there have been efforts to promote alternative currencies and reduce dependency on the US dollar (e.g., through local currency swaps), the lack of a unified financial infrastructure means that BRICS countries often rely on external financial institutions like the IMF or World Bank for stability and assistance, undermining their autonomy in global finance. Additionally, the absence of a common currency further hinders deeper economic integration, as each country's monetary policy remains independently managed, limiting the potential for seamless financial cooperation within the bloc.

Despite these challenges, BRICS countries continue to work toward closer economic ties, but these disparities in trade, investment, and financial systems make progress slow and uneven. The BRICS group, composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, represents a unique and influential coalition in the global economy. "Since its inception in 2009, BRICS has positioned itself as a bloc of emerging economies with the potential to reshape global power dynamics, challenging the established dominance of Western nations. Despite their collective power in terms of population, landmass, and economic influence, the group has faced significant challenges in developing a cohesive and unified strategic vision.

This has, in turn, affected their ability to address technological and developmental gaps

that hinder their progress toward becoming a more influential global entity. Between 2010 and 2023, the BRICS countries have made significant strides in some areas, but these efforts have often been undermined by a lack of coordination, political divergence, and internal disparities. The lack of a unified strategic vision within BRICS is perhaps the most pronounced issue facing the group. Each member country has its own national interests, priorities, and ideological inclinations, which makes it difficult to develop a shared vision for the future. For instance, while China has often pushed for greater economic integration and the promotion of a multipolar world order, India's primary focus has been on its economic development and maintaining its strategic autonomy. Brazil, Russia, and South Africa have their own sets of priorities, some of which are regional rather than global.

These differences in outlook have resulted in fragmented efforts and a lack of coherent strategies on issues such as trade, security, and governance. In addition to the lack of a unified vision, the BRICS countries face technological gaps that hinder their development and their ability to compete on the global stage. China, being the most technologically advanced of the BRICS countries, has made significant investments in sectors such as artificial intelligence, 5G, and green technologies. However, the other BRICS countries are not as technologically advanced, with India, Brazil, and South Africa facing considerable challenges in modernizing their industrial sectors and digital infrastructures. Russia's technological landscape is also limited by its reliance on oil and gas exports, which reduces its incentives to invest heavily in high-tech industries.

Technological disparity within BRICS is not merely a matter of access to technology; it is also about the lack of domestic innovation capabilities. While China has become a global leader in several technological fields, the other BRICS countries often rely on foreign technologies and face challenges in creating competitive domestic industries. For example, India's information technology sector has flourished, but its manufacturing and R&D capabilities are still not at par with global leaders. Brazil's technological development is similarly constrained by its heavy

dependence on agriculture and natural resources, which limits the potential for high-tech industry growth. South Africa, with its relatively small economy, faces even greater hurdles in terms of innovation and technological infrastructure. The lack of technological innovation within BRICS has broader implications for the group's ability to pursue developmental goals.

Each member country faces distinct challenges in terms of economic inequality, infrastructure, education, and healthcare. While BRICS has made efforts to address these challenges through initiatives such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), progress has been slow and uneven. These development banks and financial mechanisms have provided some much-needed financial support to member countries, but the lack of strategic alignment on how to utilize these resources has prevented the group from achieving meaningful results. One of the most notable gaps in development is the disparity in growth rates among BRICS nations. China and India have experienced rapid economic growth over the past decade, lifting millions out of poverty and becoming global economic players in their own right. However, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa have faced stagnation or decline in their economies, primarily due to political instability, internal economic crises, and external pressures such as fluctuating commodity prices.

This uneven development within BRICS undermines the group's ability to present a unified front in global negotiations and to push for changes that benefit the entire bloc. In addition to economic disparities, there are significant social and political differences among BRICS countries. China, with its one-party authoritarian system, has a very different political model from India, the world's largest democracy. Russia's political landscape is characterized by a strong central government under Vladimir Putin, while Brazil and South Africa are more democratic but still face internal political challenges. These differences make it difficult for BRICS to develop a common policy approach on global issues such as climate change, security, and human rights. Furthermore, these political differences have often led to tensions within the group, with some countries

questioning the legitimacy of others' political systems and governance structures. The technological and developmental gaps among BRICS countries are also compounded by global challenges that affect the entire group. Climate change, for example, presents a major challenge for all BRICS countries, but the solutions to this crisis vary widely depending on national priorities. China, with its massive industrial base, has been working on reducing emissions and transitioning to green energy, but its rapid development has also contributed to environmental degradation. India faces similar challenges, with its growing population and industrialization placing a strain on natural resources. Brazil, with its vast rainforests, is a key player in global environmental policy but has struggled with deforestation in recent years. Russia, with its vast landmass and energy resources, is a significant emitter of greenhouse gases, while South Africa's reliance on coal for energy generation has made it one of the largest per capita emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> in the world. The lack of technological infrastructure to address these challenges is a critical issue for BRICS countries. While China is investing heavily in green technologies, other BRICS nations are struggling to develop the necessary infrastructure to transition to renewable energy and improve environmental sustainability. For example, Brazil has made some progress in biofuels and renewable energy, but the country is still highly dependent on fossil fuels. India has made strides in solar energy, but its progress is hampered by a lack of financial resources and infrastructure. South Africa, meanwhile, faces a severe energy crisis, with regular power outages and a heavy reliance on coal for electricity generation. Despite these challenges, there have been some attempts within BRICS to address the technological and developmental gaps.

The creation of the NDB, designed to finance infrastructure and development projects in member countries, is a step in the right direction. The bank has provided funding for projects in sectors such as renewable energy, transportation, and education, but the overall impact has been limited due to the aforementioned issues of coordination and alignment of interests. The CRA, aimed at providing financial support in times of crisis, has also been useful in addressing short-

term liquidity issues, but it does not address the deeper structural problems facing the BRICS economies. One area where BRICS has made some progress is in trade and economic cooperation. The BRICS nations have sought to reduce their reliance on Western institutions and promote trade among themselves. Initiatives such as the BRICS Business Council and the BRICS New Development Bank have helped facilitate greater economic cooperation, and the bloc has made progress in increasing intra-BRICS trade. However, trade among BRICS countries still represents a small fraction of their total trade, and much of the economic cooperation remains limited to specific sectors rather than comprehensive integration. In conclusion, the lack of a unified strategic vision, technological gaps, and developmental disparities are major challenges facing the BRICS countries. While there has been some progress in areas such as economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and climate change, these efforts have been undermined by internal divisions and external pressures.

The technological and developmental gaps between the BRICS countries continue to hinder their ability to compete on the global stage, and the lack of a coherent strategic vision prevents the bloc from effectively addressing the challenges of the 21st century. As the global geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, the BRICS countries will need to find ways to overcome these obstacles and develop a more coordinated and integrated approach to achieving their collective goals.”

## **5.5      Lack of a Unified Strategic Vision, Technological and Developmental Gaps.**

The BRICS bloc with aspirations to reshape global governance and provide a counterbalance to Western-dominated institutions. “Despite its potential, BRICS has faced numerous challenges, including the absence of a unified strategic vision and technological and developmental gaps among member states. These issues have been particularly evident during the period from 2010 to 2023, affecting the bloc's cohesion and its ability to achieve

its objectives. The lack of a unified strategic vision has been one of the most critical impediments to BRICS' effectiveness. Although the member states share common goals, such as promoting multipolarity and reforming global institutions, their divergent national interests and priorities have often prevented the development of a cohesive strategy. For instance, China and India, the two largest economies in the group, have frequently been at odds due to geopolitical tensions, such as the border disputes in the Himalayas. These conflicts have undermined trust and limited cooperation within the bloc.

Similarly, Russia's growing estrangement from the West, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, has shifted its focus towards fostering closer ties with China, which may not align with the interests of other BRICS members. The economic disparities among BRICS nations further complicate the formation of a unified vision. China's economy dwarfs those of the other members, accounting for over 70% of the bloc's combined GDP by 2023. This imbalance has created a sense of asymmetry within the group, with China often perceived as the dominant player. While Beijing has invested heavily in BRICS initiatives such as the New Development Bank (NDB), other members have sometimes viewed these efforts with skepticism, concerned about potential Chinese dominance. Brazil, South Africa, and India, for instance, have been wary of initiatives that might disproportionately benefit China at their expense, further stalling unified action. Technological gaps among BRICS members have also posed significant challenges.

China has emerged as a global leader in technology, with advancements in artificial intelligence, telecommunications, and renewable energy. In contrast, other BRICS nations have lagged in technological innovation and infrastructure development. For example,

Brazil and South Africa have struggled with inadequate investment in research and development, leading to slower adoption of new technologies. India, despite its strong IT sector, faces challenges in areas such as manufacturing and basic infrastructure.”

Russia, while a leader in military technology, has struggled to diversify its technological base due to economic sanctions and a heavy reliance on energy exports. These technological disparities have hindered collaborative efforts within BRICS. Initiatives such as the establishment of a BRICS Institute of Future Networks, aimed at fostering cooperation in digital technologies, have faced difficulties due to varying levels of technological expertise and investment among member states.

While China has been eager to lead such initiatives, other members have been hesitant, fearing that they might become overly dependent on Chinese technology and standards. Developmental gaps within BRICS have further complicated the bloc’s efforts to achieve its goals. While China has made significant strides in poverty reduction and infrastructure development, other members continue to grapple with socio-economic challenges. Brazil and South Africa, for example, have faced periods of economic stagnation and political instability, which have hampered their ability to contribute effectively to BRICS initiatives. India, despite its economic growth, struggles with significant income inequality and infrastructure deficits. Russia’s reliance on energy exports and its economic isolation have also limited its developmental progress.

These disparities have led to differing priorities among BRICS members. While China has focused on expanding its global influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), other members have been more concerned with addressing domestic challenges. For instance, Brazil and South Africa have prioritized social development and

poverty alleviation, while India has focused on infrastructure development and job creation. These differing priorities have made it difficult for BRICS to agree on common development goals and strategies. The absence of a unified strategic vision and the technological and developmental gaps have also affected the functioning of BRICS institutions.

The New Development Bank, established in 2014 to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects, has faced criticism for its slow pace of project approvals and disbursements. While the NDB has made some progress in funding projects in member states, its impact has been limited by bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of coordination among members. Additionally, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, designed to provide financial support during crises, has been underutilized, reflecting the bloc's inability to effectively leverage its collective resources. The challenges faced by BRICS have also been exacerbated by external factors, such as global economic uncertainty and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in 2020, highlighted the vulnerabilities of BRICS nations, particularly in terms of healthcare infrastructure and economic resilience. While China managed to recover relatively quickly, other members faced prolonged economic disruptions and struggled to coordinate their responses to the pandemic. This lack of coordination further underscored the absence of a unified vision and strategy within the bloc. Geopolitical developments have also influenced BRICS dynamics.”

The increasing polarization between the United States and China has placed BRICS in a difficult position, with members having to navigate complex relationships with both

powers. For instance, India's growing strategic partnership with the United States through initiatives like the Quad has created tensions with China, complicating BRICS' efforts to present a united front on global issues. Similarly, Russia's confrontational stance towards the West has sometimes clashed with the more balanced approaches of other BRICS members, further highlighting the bloc's internal divisions.

Despite these challenges, BRICS has made some progress in fostering cooperation and promoting its agenda on the global stage. The bloc has consistently called for reforms in international institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to reflect the changing realities of the global economy.

BRICS has also sought to enhance cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, and climate change. However, these efforts have often been hampered by the lack of a unified strategic vision and the technological and developmental disparities among members. Looking ahead, addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort by BRICS members to bridge their differences and strengthen their cooperation. Developing a shared long-term vision that takes into account the diverse priorities and capabilities of member states will be crucial. This will require greater dialogue and trust-building measures, particularly between China and India.

Additionally, BRICS must invest in capacity-building initiatives to address technological and developmental gaps, ensuring that all members can contribute effectively to the bloc's goals. Enhancing the effectiveness of BRICS institutions will also be critical. Streamlining decision-making processes and improving coordination among members can help ensure that initiatives like the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement achieve their intended impact.

Furthermore, BRICS should explore opportunities for collaboration with other regional and global organizations, leveraging its collective influence to address pressing global challenges. Ultimately, the success of BRICS will depend on its ability to overcome internal divisions and harness its collective potential. While the period from 2010 to 2023 has highlighted significant challenges, it has also underscored the importance of collaboration and solidarity in addressing shared challenges. By addressing the lack of a unified strategic vision and bridging technological and developmental gaps, BRICS can position itself as a more effective and cohesive force in shaping the future of global governance.”

One of the fundamental issues with the BRICS framework has been the diversity of its member states. These countries differ widely in terms of political systems, economic models, and regional priorities. Brazil and South Africa, for instance, have been more focused on addressing domestic socio-economic inequalities and consolidating regional influence, whereas China and Russia have sought to challenge Western dominance on the global stage.

India, meanwhile, has oscillated between its aspirations for greater global influence and its need to address internal developmental challenges. These divergent priorities have made it difficult for BRICS to coalesce around a common strategic vision. Economic asymmetry within the group has also been a significant obstacle. China’s economic dominance overshadows the other members, creating an imbalance that complicates cooperative efforts. By 2023, China’s GDP surpassed the combined GDPs of the other four members, reinforcing perceptions of its hegemonic intentions within the group.

This economic disparity has fueled mistrust, particularly from India and Russia,

which are wary of becoming subordinate to China's economic agenda. The lack of a balanced economic structure has prevented BRICS from functioning as a genuinely collaborative entity, undermining its capacity to present a united front in global economic forums. Geopolitical tensions have further exacerbated the lack of cohesion within BRICS. The India-China border disputes, which escalated into violent clashes in 2020, epitomize the challenges of fostering strategic alignment among members with conflicting interests.

These tensions have not only strained bilateral relations but also impeded the group's ability to pursue collective initiatives. Similarly, Russia's growing estrangement from the West, particularly following its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has isolated it diplomatically and economically. While China has offered conditional support to Russia, other BRICS members have been more cautious, unwilling to jeopardize their relationships with Western nations. This divergence in approach has further fragmented the group's strategic posture. The lack of institutional mechanisms within BRICS has also contributed to its inefficacy. Unlike organizations such as the European Union or ASEAN, BRICS lacks a robust institutional framework to drive policy implementation and ensure accountability.

The annual summits, while providing a platform for dialogue, have often resulted in vague declarations that lack actionable follow-through. For example, the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014 was hailed as a significant achievement. However, its impact has been limited due to underfunding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the absence of a clear strategy to distinguish it from existing global financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. Domestic political instability in member countries has further impeded BRICS' ability to formulate a strategic vision. Brazil's political turmoil,

marked by corruption scandals and frequent changes in leadership, has diverted its focus away from international engagements.

South Africa has faced similar challenges, with economic stagnation and political corruption undermining its capacity to contribute meaningfully to BRICS initiatives. India, while relatively stable, has grappled with internal socio-economic disparities and rising nationalism, which have influenced its foreign policy priorities. Russia's increasing authoritarianism and China's assertive foreign policy have also raised concerns among the other members about aligning too closely with these powers. Global economic trends have presented additional challenges for BRICS.

The slowdown in economic growth across member states, coupled with external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has constrained their ability to invest in joint initiatives. The pandemic, in particular, highlighted the group's lack of coordination in responding to global crises. While individual members pursued their own strategies for vaccine development and distribution, BRICS as a collective failed to play a significant role in addressing the global health emergency. This lack of coordination underscored the absence of a strategic vision that could guide the group's actions in times of crisis. The shifting dynamics of global politics have also affected BRICS' strategic coherence. The rise of regional alliances and partnerships, such as the Quad (comprising the US, India, Japan, and Australia) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has diverted attention and resources away from BRICS. India's growing alignment with the Quad, driven by its concerns over China's regional ambitions, has created further divisions within the group. Similarly, China's focus on the BRI has raised questions about its commitment to BRICS as a platform for multilateral cooperation. These competing priorities have diluted the

group's ability to project a unified vision on the global stage."

Despite these challenges, there have been occasional instances of collaboration within BRICS. The NDB, while limited in its impact, has financed several infrastructure projects in member countries. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), "established to provide liquidity support during financial crises, represents another effort to promote economic stability within the group. However, these initiatives have been sporadic and insufficient to overcome the broader strategic and structural challenges facing BRICS.

The lack of a shared ideological foundation has further complicated efforts to develop a cohesive strategic vision. Unlike NATO or the EU, which are anchored in shared democratic values or a common security framework, BRICS lacks a unifying ideology.

The group's members have fundamentally different governance models, ranging from China's one-party system to India's vibrant democracy. This ideological diversity has made it difficult to articulate a coherent narrative that resonates with both member states and the broader international community. The absence of strong leadership within BRICS has also contributed to its lack of strategic direction. While China has often sought to position itself as the de facto leader of the group, its assertive approach has alienated other members.

India, which has the potential to play a balancing role, has been hesitant to take on a leadership mantle, given its own domestic challenges and geopolitical constraints. The lack of a clear leader has resulted in a diffusion of responsibility, with no single member willing or able to drive the group's agenda. External perceptions of BRICS have further undermined its credibility. Critics argue that the group has failed to live up to its initial promise of reshaping the global order. The lack of tangible outcomes from its summits and

initiatives has led to skepticism about its relevance and effectiveness.

This perception has been reinforced by the group's inability to address pressing global issues such as climate change, trade imbalances, and geopolitical conflicts. Without a clear and compelling strategic vision, BRICS risks being seen as little more than a symbolic coalition with limited practical impact. In conclusion, the lack of a strategic vision between BRICS countries from 2010 to 2023 has been a result of diverse priorities, economic asymmetries, geopolitical tensions, weak institutional frameworks, and domestic political challenges.

While the group has made some progress in fostering dialogue and launching initiatives like the NDB and CRA, these efforts have been insufficient to overcome the fundamental issues that undermine its coherence and effectiveness. Moving forward, BRICS will need to address these challenges and develop a more unified and actionable strategic vision if it hopes to realize its potential as a transformative force in global politics and economics.”

## **5.6 Economic Sanctions and External Pressures.**

Economic sanctions have become a powerful tool of statecraft, employed by nations and international organizations to influence the behavior of targeted countries. Among the key recipients of such measures are the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. These countries, representing a significant portion of global economic activity, have faced varying degrees of external pressure through sanctions and economic restrictions. The impact of these measures varies based on the economic structures, political systems, and strategic priorities of each member state.”

Russia has been one of the most sanctioned countries in recent history. Following

its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its military actions in Ukraine in 2022, Russia faced a comprehensive package of economic sanctions from Western countries, including the United States, European Union, and their allies. These sanctions targeted key sectors such as energy, finance, and defense. Major Russian banks were excluded from the SWIFT international payment system, while technology exports to Russia were curtailed. Despite these measures, Russia leveraged its natural resource wealth, particularly in oil and gas, to cushion the blow.

The government also pursued closer economic ties with China and other non-Western partners, thereby mitigating some of the adverse effects. However, the sanctions have undeniably strained the Russian economy, limiting access to international capital markets and advanced technologies, and resulting in reduced foreign investment. China, as the second-largest economy in the world, has faced economic pressures primarily from the United States, driven by concerns over trade imbalances, intellectual property theft, and geopolitical rivalries.

The trade war initiated during the Trump administration saw the imposition of tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods. While these measures aimed to reduce the U.S. trade deficit and curb China's technological ascent, they also disrupted global supply chains and led to retaliatory tariffs on American goods. Beyond tariffs, the U.S. has imposed restrictions on Chinese technology firms like Huawei, citing national security concerns.

These restrictions have included bans on the export of semiconductor technologies and limits on business dealings with U.S. companies. In response, China has invested heavily in domestic innovation and technology development to reduce dependence on

foreign suppliers, though this transition remains a work in progress.”

India’s experience with external pressures has been less intense compared to Russia and China. While India has occasionally faced sanctions, such as after its nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998, these measures have typically been temporary. More recently, India’s purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system attracted threats of U.S. sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). However, India’s strategic importance as a counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific region has often led to waivers or moderated responses. Furthermore, India’s non-aligned stance and diversified foreign relations have allowed it to navigate external pressures with relative success. The country’s economic reforms and engagement in global trade have further strengthened its resilience against such measures.”

Brazil has faced economic pressures in the form of trade disputes and environmental criticisms, particularly concerning the Amazon rainforest. International concerns over deforestation and climate change have led to threats of economic sanctions and trade restrictions, especially from European countries. While these measures have not yet materialized on a large scale, they underscore the vulnerabilities Brazil faces due to its reliance on agricultural exports. The Bolsonaro administration’s environmental policies attracted significant global criticism, leading to the suspension of trade agreements and a decline in foreign investment in certain sectors. However, Brazil’s rich natural resources and strong agricultural base provide it with economic leverage, enabling it to counteract some external pressures.”

South Africa’s experience with sanctions is deeply rooted in its history of apartheid. During the late 20th century, international sanctions played a crucial role in pressuring the

apartheid regime to transition to a democratic government. These measures included trade embargoes, financial restrictions, and cultural boycotts. While the sanctions were eventually lifted following the end of apartheid in 1994, the legacy of economic isolation has had long-term implications for South Africa's development. In the contemporary era, South Africa faces fewer sanctions but remains vulnerable to external economic pressures, particularly due to its reliance on mining exports and foreign investment. Issues such as political corruption and policy uncertainty have further compounded these vulnerabilities, making the country susceptible to fluctuations in global economic conditions.”

Despite their differences, the BRICS countries share common strategies in responding to external pressures. One of the key approaches has been fostering intra-BRICS cooperation to reduce dependency on Western-dominated financial systems. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) is a testament to this effort, providing an alternative source of funding for infrastructure and sustainable development projects. Additionally, the BRICS nations have explored mechanisms to facilitate trade in local currencies, thereby reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar and mitigating the impact of financial sanctions. Another common strategy has been the pursuit of economic diversification and self-reliance.

For instance, China's "Made in China 2025" initiative aims to achieve technological independence in critical industries, while Russia's import substitution policies seek to develop domestic alternatives to Western goods and services. Similarly, India's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India) campaign emphasizes domestic manufacturing and reduced reliance on imports. These initiatives reflect a broader trend among BRICS countries to bolster their economic sovereignty in the face of external

pressures.”

However, these strategies are not without challenges. The shift towards self-reliance and diversification requires significant investment, time, and policy coherence. For countries like South Africa and Brazil, economic structural constraints and political instability can hinder the implementation of such measures. Moreover, intra-BRICS cooperation is often hampered by differing priorities and geopolitical rivalries, such as the border tensions between China and India. These challenges underscore the complexity of forging a unified response to external pressures. The effectiveness of sanctions and external pressures on BRICS countries also depends on the broader geopolitical context.

In a multipolar world, the availability of alternative partners and markets can dilute the impact of sanctions. For example, China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has expanded its economic influence across Asia, Africa, and Europe, creating new opportunities for trade and investment. Similarly, Russia’s pivot towards Asia and the Middle East has helped it secure alternative markets for its energy exports. These developments highlight the limitations of sanctions in an interconnected global economy.”

At the same time, the use of sanctions as a foreign policy tool has raised questions about their long-term efficacy and ethical implications. Critics argue that sanctions often harm ordinary citizens more than political elites, exacerbating poverty and inequality. For instance, the sanctions on Russia have contributed to inflation and economic hardship for its population, while the political leadership remains relatively insulated. Similarly, trade restrictions on China have disrupted global supply chains, affecting businesses and consumers worldwide. These unintended consequences have fueled debates about the need for more targeted and nuanced approaches to economic pressures.

The resilience of BRICS countries to sanctions and external pressures is also shaped by domestic factors such as governance, economic policies, and public sentiment. Strong institutions and effective governance can enhance a country's ability to withstand external shocks, while weak institutions can amplify vulnerabilities. Public support for government policies and resilience to hardship also play a crucial role. For instance, nationalist sentiments in Russia and China have bolstered domestic support for policies aimed at countering Western sanctions, even at the cost of economic hardship.”

Economic sanctions and external pressures have had varied impacts on BRICS countries, reflecting their diverse economic and political contexts. While these measures have created significant challenges, they have also spurred efforts to enhance economic resilience and independence. The BRICS nations' responses to these pressures underscore the complexities of a multipolar world, where the effectiveness of sanctions is often contingent on the availability of alternative economic and political alliances. As global dynamics continue to evolve, the interplay between sanctions and the strategic responses of BRICS countries will remain a critical area of study, with implications for international relations and global economic stability.”

### **5.7. Conclusion:**

The growing geopolitical influence of China has become a defining feature of the 21st century, marking a significant shift in the global balance of power. Through its active engagement in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), China has strategically positioned itself as a leader among emerging economies, leveraging this platform to challenge the dominance of traditional Western powers and promote a multipolar world order.

The case study of BRICS serves as a lens through which China's ambitions, strategies, and impacts on global geopolitics can be understood. China's participation in BRICS is emblematic of

its broader geopolitical strategy to enhance its influence across multiple dimensions: economic, political, and cultural. Economically, China's role within BRICS has been pivotal, as it is the largest economy among the member states and a primary driver of the bloc's initiatives. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) under BRICS, headquartered in Shanghai, underscores China's commitment to providing alternatives to Western-dominated financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Through the NDB, China has advanced its vision of development finance, emphasizing infrastructure and sustainable growth in member states and beyond, while simultaneously reinforcing its economic leadership within the bloc. Politically, China has utilized BRICS as a forum to advocate for reforms in global governance.

This includes efforts to restructure institutions like the United Nations to better reflect the interests and representation of developing countries. China's assertive stance on issues such as sovereignty and non-interference aligns with the broader BRICS agenda of resisting Western hegemony. By aligning itself with other BRICS nations, China not only amplifies its voice but also cultivates a coalition that can collectively negotiate and exert influence on global issues ranging from climate change to trade policies. China's growing influence within BRICS is also evident in its strategic diplomacy.

It has fostered bilateral relationships with individual member states, reinforcing economic interdependence and political alignment. For instance, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly impacted countries like Russia and South Africa, integrating them into a broader framework of connectivity that serves Beijing's strategic interests. These bilateral engagements complement China's multilateral approach within BRICS, creating a layered and resilient network of influence. However, China's dominance within BRICS is not without challenges. The asymmetry in economic power among the member states has led to concerns about China overshadowing the collective agenda of the bloc. Other BRICS nations, such as India and Brazil, have occasionally expressed apprehension about China's outsized role and its implications for their

own strategic autonomy.

These dynamics underscore the complexities within BRICS as a coalition, where cooperation is often tempered by competition and differing national interests. Culturally, China has sought to project its soft power through BRICS by promoting initiatives that emphasize cultural exchange and mutual understanding. This includes fostering people-to-people connections and advocating for a shared identity among the member states. Such efforts align with China's broader strategy to present itself as a benign and constructive global power, countering narratives that depict its rise as a threat.

The case study of BRICS illustrates how China has adeptly navigated the complexities of international relations to expand its geopolitical influence. By positioning itself as both a leader and a partner within BRICS, China has demonstrated a capacity to shape the global agenda in ways that align with its strategic objectives. This has involved a delicate balancing act: asserting its dominance while maintaining the cohesion and relevance of the BRICS coalition. China's growing influence within BRICS also has broader implications for the international system. It reflects a shift towards a more multipolar world where emerging economies play a greater role in shaping global governance. This shift challenges the traditional dominance of Western powers and introduces new dynamics into international relations, characterized by a more distributed and contested exercise of power.

Through BRICS, China has not only advanced its own interests but also contributed to a reconfiguration of global power structures, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and representation in international institutions. At the same time, the trajectory of China's influence within BRICS and beyond is not without uncertainties. Geopolitical tensions, economic disparities, and differing national priorities within the bloc pose ongoing challenges to its cohesion and effectiveness. Additionally, China's assertive policies, particularly in its immediate neighborhood, have elicited resistance and suspicion from other countries, complicating its efforts to build a broad-

based coalition of support. China's engagement with BRICS underscores its strategic approach to enhancing its geopolitical influence.

By leveraging the platform of BRICS, China has not only consolidated its leadership among emerging economies but also contributed to reshaping the global order in ways that reflect its vision and interests. The dynamics within BRICS highlight both the opportunities and challenges of China's rise, offering insights into the broader implications of its growing role on the world stage. As China continues to assert itself within BRICS and other multilateral frameworks, its ability to navigate the complexities of international relations will be crucial in determining the sustainability and impact of its geopolitical ambitions." China's geopolitical influence, particularly within the context of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) from 2010 to 2025, is a multifaceted subject that encapsulates the evolution of global power dynamics, economic shifts, and diplomatic maneuvering.

The BRICS grouping, established in 2006, was initially envisioned as a platform for emerging economies to collectively influence global decision-making, economic policy, and security affairs. Over the years, China has emerged as the dominant force within BRICS, shaping its direction and global relevance. China's rise as a global power has been underscored by its rapid economic growth, military expansion, and technological advancements. The country's strategic goals have largely been focused on enhancing its economic and political leverage on the global stage. Its involvement in BRICS, therefore, is not merely a cooperative venture with other emerging economies, but rather a strategic effort to further solidify its influence in the broader geopolitical landscape.

From 2010 onwards, China has consistently used BRICS to challenge the dominance of the West, particularly the United States and its allies in the West. The global financial crisis of 2008 marked the beginning of a shift in the global balance of power.

China, leveraging its economic growth and financial reserves, began to advocate for reforms in global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Through BRICS, China pushed for greater representation of emerging economies in these institutions, seeking to shift the global economic governance from the traditional Western-dominated model to a more inclusive one. This was evident in China's role in the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014, which aimed to provide an alternative source of financing for infrastructure and development projects in emerging economies, challenging the hegemony of the World Bank and the IMF.

China's geopolitical influence in BRICS is also reflected in its economic diplomacy. The country has become the largest trading partner for many countries in the group, particularly Brazil, South Africa, and India. Through trade, investment, and infrastructure projects, China has sought to deepen its ties with these nations, positioning itself as a key player in their economic development. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, further exemplifies China's growing influence. This initiative, aimed at improving global connectivity through infrastructure development, has seen significant investment in BRICS countries, strengthening economic and political ties. China's role in providing financing and development assistance through the BRI has allowed it to increase its political leverage within the group. In addition to economic ties, China's geopolitical strategy within BRICS has involved the cultivation of soft power.

The Chinese government has utilized cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and media initiatives to improve its image and influence within the BRICS nations. This is particularly important as BRICS countries, while united in their desire for a more equitable global order, have divergent political systems, cultural values, and historical experiences. China's ability to navigate these differences and present itself as a leader of the emerging world has been key to its success in shaping the group's agenda. China's dominance within BRICS, however, has not been without its challenges. While the group has shared interests in promoting multipolarity and countering Western

influence, there have been instances of divergence within the member countries. For example, India has often been wary of China's growing influence, particularly in the context of regional security issues such as the border dispute between the two nations.

Russia, while sharing many of China's geopolitical goals, has occasionally expressed concerns about becoming too dependent on China, especially in the face of Western sanctions. South Africa, as a representative of the African continent, has sought to balance its ties with China while maintaining strong relations with other global powers. These internal tensions within BRICS have, at times, hampered the group's ability to present a united front on global issues. Nonetheless, China's ability to maintain a leadership role within BRICS can be attributed to its economic power, diplomatic skill, and ability to frame global issues in ways that resonate with the group's members.

As China's economic influence continues to expand, particularly in Africa and Latin America, it is likely to strengthen its position within BRICS and further shape the geopolitical trajectory of the group. Moreover, China's growing involvement in regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) allows it to further consolidate its influence across different regions and sectors. Looking ahead, China's role within BRICS is expected to continue evolving in line with its broader geopolitical strategy. The country's focus on innovation, technological advancement, and environmental sustainability will likely shape its diplomatic approach within the group.

Furthermore, as China becomes increasingly assertive in global affairs, it may seek to further align BRICS with its vision for a new international order, one that emphasizes multipolarity, development, and sovereignty. China's geopolitical influence within BRICS from 2010 to 2023 is a testament to the country's growing stature on the global stage. Through a combination of economic power, diplomatic engagement, and strategic initiatives, China has positioned itself as the key player in the BRICS grouping. While challenges remain, China's ability to navigate the

complex dynamics within the group and leverage its economic and political resources has allowed it to shape the geopolitical trajectory of BRICS and contribute to the broader shift towards a more multipolar world order. The next decade will likely see China continue to assert its dominance, both within BRICS and in the international arena, as it seeks to redefine the global balance of power.

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