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## Challenging western hegemony: BRICS+ and the future of global trade, power-shifts and geopolitics

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### Abstract

The 21st century is witnessing a significant shift in world politics with the United States and Europe being increasingly challenged by the rising powers, especially the BRICS+ countries. BRICS+ countries include Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and the recently added nations (**Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates**) and Indonesia, which has expressed interest, accounting for more than half of the world's population and with huge natural resources, industrial capacity and technological potential. The bloc is increasingly defining the trade, financial and geopolitical landscape of the world.

In the economic field, BRICS+ aims to pressure Western institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO with its own projects, e.g. the New Development Bank and the push for de-dollarization of settlements. The internal trade of BRICS and the self-sufficiency of the region has been heightened because of the escalating geopolitical tensions such as the U.S.-China trade conflict and the disruptions in the global supply chains. Its importance in the area of energy security and global energy production networks is enhanced by the bloc's energy producers and industrial powers.

In addition to the economic aspects, BRICS+ fosters multi-polarity, sovereignty and South-South cooperation and challenges Western ideology. The bloc strengthens the voices of the Global South in the international arena via cultural diplomacy, infrastructure projects and increased African representation. Despite the tensions within, this BRICS+ represents the end of the era of unchallenged western supremacy and the beginning of a more multi-polar world order that will define future global governance, culture, power dynamics and trade.

**Keywords:** Western Hegemony; BRICS+; Trade and commerce; Power Dynamics; Geo-politics.

### 1. Introduction

The economic, political and cultural power of the West particularly that of the USA and its European allies, prevailed in the world and in the international arena of the 20th century. This unipolarity, dominance and hegemony came particularly after the Cold war, and brought together Western institutions and organizations of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO)**, as well as the Political-military umbrella of NATO. But the 21st century has seen a dramatic and much needed power shift with the growth of the BRICS-**Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa** and then more recently it has been extended as BRICS+, with States like **Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates** among the new additions. Indonesia is also in talks with the grouping to join it in 2025. Together these regional power countries have more than half of the world's population, access to and control over natural resource rich areas, and are becoming important strategic players in the world's current state of complexity in governance. Their ascent signals a drastic shift towards a better multipolar world order with regional powers that increasingly counter forces against the Western hegemony (**Siddiqui, 2024**).

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The trans-continental bloc has placed itself on the field as competitor to the western imposed monopolies on the structure of the global financial system. The New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement are possible alternatives to the IMF and World Bank, and the on-going discussions under BRICS+ on regional and alternative payment mechanisms in local currencies challenge the dominance of the U.S. dollar and its fast system. Such moves towards de-dollarization are designed to shrink the reliance on Western financial frameworks and currencies in the world, particularly after sanctions war game played by USA in recent times along with tariff slapping and disruption in the global trade. Some have argued that de-dollarization can bring about a more financially balanced and equitable order as well as more widespread sovereignty interests for the Global South in trade and investment **(Saaida, 2024; Gürcan, 2024)**.

The U.S.–China trade conflict, combined with their historical broader geopolitical struggle between the two capitals, has been further driving global trade flows to realign. As the world's leading resource exporters such as Russia, Brazil and Saudi Arabia consolidated their dominance in energy markets, China and India became important regional and global manufacturing and technological hubs. This gives BRICS+ a healthy degree of leverage over the production of goods, as well as the distribution of energy and well network of supply chains in the world economy **(van Niekerk, 2025)**. The bloc's combined GDP and trade is an increasing share of the global total, threatening the West's economic supremacy.

BRICS+ is also making progress in the cultural and ideological struggle against the cultural and ideological dominance of the western countries. The concepts of hegemony from Gramsci have shown that since the beginning of history, the West's dominance has not only been based on material power or financial dominance but also on the projection of norms, dominating political ideologies and imposed development. To this BRICS+ has opposed the narratives of multipolarity, mutual co-existence, equitable world order, sovereignty and non-interference and has highlighted South-South cooperation and brotherhood as an alternative to the liberal universalism of the West. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative is connected with cultural exchanges, India is using its diaspora and projecting its soft power via Bollywood, Yoga, Ayurveda, Music and education and Brazil is reaping the benefits of its Lusophone connections in Africa. These dynamics are a challenge to redefine the ideational field in world politics in a significant way.

BRICS+ in the field of defense and security is not proclaimed as a military alliance, but it's symbolic and strategic value is great and irrefutable. Russia and China have over time developed and strengthened their strategic and defense cooperation and alignment through frequent military exercises and participation, and India is yet to strike the right balance between its two "good options" of strategic relations with Europe and Russia and the balancing act with its hard-won alliances of the West and BRICS commitments. As the bloc expands, incorporating key Middle East nations such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, the platform is gaining contours and highlights that demonstrate the importance of a new, geopolitically significant trend toward regions that have traditionally been dominated by Western countries, and for this reason, BRICS+ is not just an economic alliance but also a geopolitical counterweight.

Africa and the Global South are amazingly close and confident, and this is certainly one of the most powerful features of BRICS+ to me. The bloc will include South Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia, which will help put African voices at the heart of an important global governance discussion that has previously overlooked and excluded the African continent. This is an acknowledgment of the weight of Africa's population, its aspirations, it's healing of the wound inflicted on it by the western world through the exploitation of its natural resource and human capital, its resource wealth and geostrategic importance.

However, there are some contradictions in BRICS+. The bloc is very diverse, as countries have their own agenda and national interest with internal conflicts like the border dispute between India and China and China's backing for Pakistan and different political systems, from democracy to authoritarianism. This also poses questions about the intentions of the dragon, whether BRICS+ is actually an inclusive vision that will allow the development of inclusive growth of all members or it is a propaganda to serve Beijing's global ambitions and intentions. However, despite its shortcomings and obvious weaknesses at the level of the bloc, BRICS+ represents the multipolar challenge and counterforce to Western unipolarity and Western dominance, and establishes an alternative space for power alignments.

In sum, the rise of BRICS+ showcases the phenomena of the erosion of Western hegemony and the emergence of a contested, and a counter pluralistic global order emerging from Asia. Through economic tactics such as de-dollarization, political assertions of multi-polarity, projection of cultural soft power, and growing defense alignments among the bloc members, BRICS+ is aiming to reshape the conventional framework of global trade, power dynamics, and global governance. This paper situates BRICS+ not merely as an economic coalition but as a transformative geopolitical project that reimagines the future of international order in the 21st century. The central argument is that the expansion and consolidation of BRICS+ is a double-edged sword as it represents both an opportunity and a challenge: an opportunity

for the Global South to assert agency in global affairs, and a challenge to the status- quo systems of Western-led hegemony that have long dominated the world politics.

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## 2. Review of the literature

The emergence of BRICS+ in the current global order has garnered significant scholarly interest, especially in international relations, political science and global governance. BRICS+ has been studied from the perspectives of economic cooperation and geopolitical significance as an alternative to the Western dominated global order.

As per **Oliver Stuenkel's** writing in the book **“The BRICS and the Future of Global Order (2015)”**, BRICS is the embodiment of the aspirations of the emerging powers for a more multipolar and inclusive global order. The grouping is aimed at undermining the dominance of Western-dominated institutions like the World Bank and IMF, which have a disproportionate influence in the world, says Stuenkel. He stresses that BRICS is not a short-term partnership and it can change the current global governance systems in the long term. His work reveals the evolution of the bloc, and the erosion of unipolarity in international politics over the last years.

Likewise, **Amitav Acharya's –“The End of American World Order (2014)”** offers a valuable theoretical framework on the rise of BRICS+. Acharya argues that global power is now being spread among growing Asian and Global South regional powers and rising economies. He states that institutions run by the West are losing in legitimacy and the other centres of power are increasing their influence. His analysis sheds light on why BRICS+ is important for fostering multipolarity, sovereignty and South-South cooperation, on an ideological level.

They explore in their article **“The Emerging Powers and Global Governance (2014)”** how BRICS countries are jointly demanding changes in global economic governance. The authors pay special attention to the New Development Bank and the push for de-dollarization as the attempt to cut down the reliance on western financial systems. They say that while there are significant internal political and economic differences among the member states, BRICS is a symbolic and strategic attack on the liberal international order of the U.S. and Europe.

**Paulo Esteves and Manáira Assunção** are other authors who have made valuable contributions on BRICS and development cooperation. They believe that the idea of alternative development models by BRICS countries is based on sovereignty, non-interference and mutual benefit. Their scholarship underscores the growing importance of BRICS in Africa, Latin America and Asia in investment, infrastructure development and partnership for development. African countries' inclusion in BRICS+ is seen as an important move to improve the representation of the African Global South in global decision-making bodies.

Moreover, the thesis of Samuel Huntington in his book **“The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996)”**, a book that predates BRICS, is relevant to the study of the cultural and civilizational aspect of the shift in world power. The world was going to become a multipolar world, a world in which non-Western civilisations would gain increasing influence in the international arena, and in shaping it, Huntington predicted. Many of these changes in global politics are echoed in the contemporary dynamics of the BRICS+ bloc, such as cultural diplomacy, regional identity and defiance to the Western ideological hegemony.

In sum, these academic texts highlight the fact that BRICS+ is not simply an economic partnership, but a geopolitical phenomenon as well. Its importance in the fields of multi-polarity, questioning institutional dominance of the west, enhancing South-South cooperation and reshaping the future of global governance and international relations have been emphasized in the existing literature.

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## 3. Research gap and objectives

Focus on the current research is on the economic potential of the BRICS+ grouping, financial alternatives, and geopolitical orientation, while not enough emphasis has been placed on the simultaneous interaction of the listed factors in trade, cultural hegemony and defense and governance. The majority of research on BRICS+ focuses on its economic definition or its geopolitical view, and fails to acknowledge the nuanced nature of its contribution to the reshaping of the global order. Moreover, despite their strategic membership, few studies analyse the role of Africa and the Middle East in BRICS+. The aim of this study is to understand the role of BRICS+ as a multipolar and comprehensive counter-hegemonic project, which involves the fields of economics, culture, defense and multipolar diplomacy.

#### 4. Research methodology

The method used in this study is qualitative, which is based on the International Relations (IR) and political economy. The major aim of this research is to recognize the influence and its impact, and how BRICS+ undermines the western hegemony in different geopolitical spheres such as economic, cultural, security and so on. The method used in this study was multi-source which integrated several secondary data from different sources and interpretive analysis.

A thorough literature review was carried out and academic papers, journal articles, and policy papers from global think tanks, policy makers and organizations were used. The focus on some of the key issues examined include de-dollarization, provision of multi-polarity, trade disputes, cultural influences and defense cooperation imperatives. Secondly, data from global financial institutions, such as the **World Bank, IMF, WTO and BRICS New Development Bank** were analysed for trade flows, GDP contributions and trends of resources use. These are empirical figures that can be used for an evaluation of the change in global power. Moreover, analyses and references have been taken from the speeches and interviews of the leaders of the BRICS and the West, to gain an understanding of the different aspects and the different stories of hegemony, sovereignty and multipolar governance. As there were no direct interviews, the following sources were used to tap down the secondary analyses of policy statements and summit declarations were used.

The methodology relies on comparative analysis of different information gathered from different authentic and reliable sources, in order to make an accurate picture of the contrasting BRICS+ tactics with those of the Western led framework, and therefore situate the bloc within the area of broader discourses on global governance. Through this methodology, the research is supported by empirical evidence and theories.

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#### 5. Economic power and trade realignment

The shift and change in the 21st century for the world economy and trade has been hastened by the emergence of BRICS+ as a competing bloc to trade-led by the West and dominated by financial systems. The geo-financial situation has been turned upside down since the major tariff war that was launched mainly between the United States and China, with the Trump 2.0 administration blindly imposition of tariffs on competitive countries and historically close friends has created frustration by countries looking for more stable and rational partners to trade with outside of the Western bloc, as costs have risen and supply chains have been disrupted. The Western-dominated system has also been proven weak by the sanctions against Russian oil and LNG and restrictions on Iranian oil exports. The BRICS + bloc's relevance in the global trade realignment is being underscored by countries throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America turning to them for energy, trade and investment.

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#### 6. A new trend: de-dollarization and the alternative payment networks.

The question of de-dollarization is at the core of these unprecedented and radical changes. Dollar's supremacy has always given the United States an unparalleled financial leverage over the world, because it can control the trade of dollar and good all over the world. But, BRICS+ countries have begun to doubt and challenge the supremacy of dollar in payment systems mechanism and have started to look for alternate payment networks, BRICS currency and trade with the local currencies. The New Development Bank (NDB) and talks about a new currency to replace the U.S. dollar (**Tshikovhi et al, 2025**); demonstrate the desire to free from U.S. dollar dependency. Practical examples of this transition included the rising number of transactions between Russia and China in Yuan and rubbles and the discounting of Russian oil by India in rupees, notwithstanding the west's sanctions. Likewise, Iran's return to BRICS+ enhances the energy markets with undeniably great opportunities of escaping U.S. - controlled crude-dollar financial channels.

The U.S.-China tariff war is a pivotal moment in the reshaping. In particular, Trump's Tariffs, which targeted hundreds of billions of dollars in goods and wreaked havoc on global supply chains, revealed the fragility and over dependence on the World Trade Organization's World Trade Organization dispute settlement system of origin in the West. This not only eroded the level of trust and cooperation among Western allies, but also encouraged and prompted the Global South economies to look for and establish more stable trade deals and financial flows. The BRICS+ economies, which have got the production capacity (China, India) and the endowment of resources (Russia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia), are now considered as reliable, sound and viable alternatives to the trade partner. The erosion of trust among the west after secondary sanctions against the countries that have ties with Russia and Iran, has presented the opportunity for BRICS+ unification and expansion.

### 6.1. BRICS+ Trade Growth and Intra-Bloc Dynamics

Over the last decade, intra-BRICS trade has been growing steadily and strategically, thus highlighting the potential growth of the bloc and its future prospects. Intra-BRICS merchandise trade has increased almost by a factor of three from 2010 to 2022, with China accounting for the bulk of the growth between 2010 and 2022. The new members of BRICS+ further expand the trade and strength of the bloc, Saudi Arabia and Iran provide energy supply, and Egypt and Ethiopia open the door for the bloc to Africa's expanding consumer base. This table represents the shifting trend of BRICS+ economic growth-

**Table 1** BRICS and Global Trade

Year	Intra-BRICS Trade (USD Trillions)	Share of Global Trade (%)	Notes
2010	0.28	~8%	Early consolidation phase
2015	0.56	~12%	NDB launched
2020	0.78	~15%	Tariff war, COVID disruptions
2022	1.05	~18%	Russia sanctions, oil trade in local currencies
2024*	1.20 (est.)	~20%	BRICS+ expansion, Yuan/rupee settlements

(Data compiled from Saaida, 2024 and van Niekerk, 2025)

This growth reflects both the expansion and growth of trade and value supply chains within BRICS and the increasing importance of South-South trade solidarity for all-inclusive mutual growth. For instance, Brazil's agricultural exports to China, India's exports of pharmaceuticals to Africa, and discounted Russian oil to India demonstrate the bloc's diversified trade patterns, and also provide alternatives to trade as per the requirements and interests.

### 6.2. Global Supply Chains and Future Outlook

The chaos around disrupted Western-led supply chains, caused by dubious actions of the white house of tariff imposition, has spurred BRICS+ countries to strengthen and expand multiple layers of robust economic integration and supply chains. Various projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in China and the port development projects in Africa by India help create horizontal and vertical value chain linkages, thereby reducing the need for and dependence on Western markets (**van Niekerk, 2025**).

In the future, the BRICS+ is to become not only a "free trade bloc" in the region, but an alternative global system of economy. The talks regarding a new currency of the BRICS+ and its increased dependence and utilization on settlements in Yuan and rupees reflect a gradual and logical decline of dollar reliance and a reduction of the dollar's influence. The discussion about a new currency for the BRICS+ and the increased reliance on Yuan and rupee settlements is an attempt to gradually and organically reduce the dollar dependence and the dollar influence of the West (**Liu & Papa, 2022**). Yet the issues are most pressing, especially the imbalance in China's influence in the bloc. However, researchers point out that even partial de-dollarization would be enough to drastically alter the financial sovereignty of the world, with a loss of trust in dollars, and with the implementation of their own systems, thus reducing the monopoly and dependence of dollars.

Overall, tariffs, sanctions and dollar dependency have intensified anger towards the Western-dominated trade regimes that are asymmetric, non-equitable and imposed due to this development, which is moving states towards BRICS+ as an alternative trade regime. The expansion of intra-BRICS trade, introduction of local currency in trade settlements and integration of the bloc into international value chains highlight the growing potential of BRICS and its pragmatic approach towards changing the global trade landscape. The BRICS+ is gradually evolving from an alliance of loose members into a structural and formidable competitor to the West's dominance in the global economy, with new payment systems mechanism, alternative global supply chains and currency initiatives being developed.

## 7. The relevance of BRICS+ in global geo-politics and governance

The world's architecture and framework for governance since mid-20th century is largely dominated and regulated by Western institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Because of the world war-II, these organizations came into being as a result of Bretton Woods system and have become stable institutions that have ensured the monopoly of western countries in international economic and political life. Their critics say that they are biased, favour western interests and they allow the institutionalise asymmetrical power relations which are usually enjoyed by the west, where voting quotas and decision-making mechanisms are unevenly weighted towards the USA and Europe (**Chakraborty, 2018**). The imbalance has on many occasions angered the emerging economies because they've always been asking for the necessary structural changes that will allow them to be well-represented in the global sphere and have a new economic global order based on multi polarity, equitable growth and value shared interests.

In this regard, BRICS+ has found itself right in the middle of being a geopolitical bloc, as well as a different governance model. This is because of the discontent of the developing countries with the practices of IMF and World Bank loans and the nature and history of their decisions, which always began to include stringent conditions that were imposed by the IMF and World Bank unilaterally. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement are two examples of this discontent because the decisions of the IMF and World Bank always included stringent conditions imposed unilaterally by the two institutions to the loans. BRICS+ gives the developing countries some sovereignty and policy space that can be hard to come by in other western institutions, as it is not dependent on political conditions. (**Armijo & Roberts, 2014**).

### 7.1. Developing Alternative Systems of Money and Banking

Western hegemony has shown itself especially in the monetary global order, where the U.S. dollar continues to serve as the only means of collecting payments for trade, and the most important reserve and transaction currency in the world. This provides Washington with leverage and power in controlling the flow of trade by imposing sanctions, slapping the trade unreasonable tariff rates, and denying access to the financial world. BRICS+ countries have, in turn, been adopting measures towards de-dollarization, such as the use of local regional currencies for trade settlements, which would bolster the use of local regional currencies and facilitate trade, and considering the establishment of a BRICS common currency.

Already, a significant portion of Russian trade with China is in rubbles and Yuan, and India has experimented with rupee payments for oil from Russia at a discounted rate. In particular, the adoption of the sanctions, the purchase of Russian oil at a lower price, and all other such measures reduce the vulnerability of the country to the oil market disruptions and price fluctuations, and create a solid base for the development of a multipolar currency system in which the dollar plays a less dominant role.

The concept of a BRICS currency, or the "R5" currency (as the idea is sometimes called, based on the initials of members' currencies), is not delusional, but is still aspirational. Yet its potential impact on global governance is significant as it will reduce the undue monopoly and centrality of the dollar, BRICS+ would undermine one of the pillars of Western economic hegemony.

### 7.2. BRICS+ in Global Institutions

BRICS+ is changing the patterns of countries that take part in multilateral organizations in more ways than just money. The group has been an important voice of the south-south cooperation in the UN with a constant demand for rapid democratic changes to the membership of the UN Security Council to ensure that there is a better representation from Asian, African and Latin American countries, in order to dilute the traditionally arranged western domination in the UN Security Council and in the UN as a whole.

This is to counter the traditional West power in global organizations. BRICS members have worked together at various levels especially in the G20 platform to balance out and even out play the G7's power, especially when it comes to areas like trade, climate finance, tourism and development aid. Likewise, the BRICS have formed negotiating groups in the WTO to fight Western protectionism and seek better trade rules, such as agricultural subsidies and intellectual property rights protections, as well as more fair rules. The BRICS+ also cooperates with other organizations, including the African Union and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.

### 7.3. BRICS+ as the Promoter of Multi-polar World Order

The more important geopolitical aspect of the BRICS+ is that they discuss multi-polarity. BRICS+ promotes a pluralistic order, sovereignty and non-interference, in contrast with the Universalist paradigm of the West. The vision also largely lingers with developing countries that are frequently overlooked in the governance of the world (**Đorđević, 2024**). Although not a full-blown model, at the moment, BRICS+ provides countries with an opportunity to counterbalance the Western powers and experiment with new global cooperation formats. But there are numerous issues in the project, such as contradictions and split-ups. Due to various political systems, national interests, aspirations and intentions, people are interested in the durability of this power bloc. Political rivalry (particularly between India and China) and economic inequalities (most controversially, China and the United States) were present. Despite the loose nature of the organization, BRICS+ demonstrates the decline of unipolarity in the world and the shift towards a multipolar and broken global governance system.

### 7.4. Implementing cultural and ideological counteraction to Western dominance

The tools of hegemony were Hollywood, English as the world language, international colleges, and liberal political ideas. In the 21st century, the cultural monopoly is beginning to crumble as BRICS+ countries such as China and India cultivate their brand of soft power in Asian, African and Latin American nations. A country has risen by the power of culture, China. Chinese media such as the film, Confucius Institutes, digital platforms and Beijing's CGTN and Xinhua are reshaping stories told around the world. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative is not only about trade, but also culture and education, with cultural exchanges and educational scholarships being part of the program. This has enabled China to pose challenges to Western perspectives and champion the development and governance model not centered around a single country (**Chakraborty, 2018**). India uses its cultural history as a sort of soft power. The culture can be utilized in diplomacy, as demonstrated by the popularity of yoga, Ayurveda, Bollywood and the Indian diaspora all over the world. International Yoga Day is celebrated by the UN, which demonstrates the significance of India's culture. The music from Bollywood and India is quite popular in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. This enhances the culture without Western influence. These efforts are supported by the cooperation between the countries in the South East Asian region in the framework of the BRICS+ program. BRICS+ promotes the exchange of cultures rather than cultural imperialism. Brazilian music, football, African culture, Buddhism in India, Yoga, Bollywood, music and Russian culture (literature and art) create counter-hegemonic environment. This perspective on the global culture is not that of the universal dominance of Western culture over the world, but of a global culture consisting of many cultures. The Asian and global South media, such as **TikTok, Zee, and Rede Globo, are rivalling with CNN, BBC, and Netflix in the global market**. These platforms develop other narratives and stories of identity, sovereignty and growth that are not intentionally specifically offered in the western media. Culture has a big impact in determining who is the best narrative setter and influencer in the world. The culture, media, language, heritage, art forms and education are adopted by the BRICS+ countries to oppose western dominance. Globalisation is interwoven with cultural diffusion that allows a geopolitical multi-polarity.

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## 8. Africa and BRICS+: journey from exploitation to partnership building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The inclusion of Egypt and Ethiopia to BRICS+ has put Africa at the centre of developing multipolar discussions, and have expanded the reach of the bloc in Africa, pulling it to the main stage from the edges of world politics. The West has historically interacted, rather exploited with Africa through colonial extraction of their natural resources and hampering their human capital, and unfair trade agreements. BRICS+, on the other hand, is a forum for equitable cooperation and development. BRICS aims to create trust on African countries by putting aside the idea of neo-colonialism openly and providing inclusive growth. They wish to demonstrate that African nations are not only sources of cheap labour or raw materials for other nations, but equal deserving partners in shaping the future of the global order in the 21st century. (**Moyo, 2024**).

### 8.1. Historical Grievances of Africa and Western Exploitation

This book presents the historical grievances of Africa and its exploitation by westerners. Patterns of exploitation have been a part of Africa's history. Colonial powers exploited a great deal of natural resources and people, resulting in weak economies and weak borders that contributed to instability. Western institutions perpetuated neo-colonial practices after independence through rigid trade policies, structural adjustment policies and imbalanced credit policies, thus maintaining dependence of African countries (**Ogbonna, 2024**). This heritage has continued to perpetuate poverty and inequalities, leaving people angry with Western political systems. BRICS and the Search for Fair Cooperation BRICS+ is opposed to these developments. These include mutual respect, no interference and sustainable development. While BRICS does not have the same conditions as the IMF and World Bank (**Msibi, 2024**), it continues to support the

development of the African industrialization and urbanization programs and connectivity projects through the New Development Bank and its planned infrastructure investments.

China's investment in railway projects in East Africa and India's educational scholarships are two examples of providing valuable investments in technology and people can help build partnerships and sustainable eco systems, which will eventually lead to betterment of African continent. The projects demonstrate that BRICS are not going to work with Africans as subordinates or servants, but as equals. Africa has always called for changes to the **UN Security Council (UNSC)** because the continent, which has more than 1.4 billion people, is not represented by any of the permanent members. African demands for permanent seats in the UN have not gone away since the inception of BRICS, which has always endorsed Africa's calls for African involvement in real multi-polarity (**Moerane, 2019; van Nieuwkerk, 2023**). By giving Africa a say in global governance, BRICS+ not only makes its claim to be a multipolar alliance more credible, but it also makes Africa feel more confident as a political partner.

### 8.2. Collaboration between Africa and Asia and South-South solidarity

The inclusion of Africa in the BRICS+ will enhance cooperation between Asia and Africa, which will give rise to a new Afro-Asian union, some experts said. The alliance is akin to the **Bandung Conference of 1955**, in which newly independent nations aimed to combat Western domination. In the present day, BRICS renews that spirit by fostering the cooperation in education, technology transfer and renewable energy between countries of the South. Brazil's agricultural knowledge, India's IT industry and pharmaceuticals, Russia's defense ties and China's strategic infrastructure projects complement Africa's population and resources, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship rather than dependence (**Mkhuma, 2019**).

### 8.3. Building Sustainable Ecosystems for African Continent

The goal of BRICS+ programs is to establish sustainable, long-term and not only exploitative ecosystems. African countries are working more and more with BRICS on various important areas like on renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and digital economy to get over the historical resource curse. (**Tikly, 2019**). While the West is mostly interested in extractive sectors, BRICS has put more emphasis on elements of human capability development like healthcare, education, technological transfer, and long-term skills development. This has been instrumental in making African countries thrive and ultimately stand tall it has witnessed in 2025 that African countries have become one of the world's fastest growth countries. This reinforces the vision of Africa's Agenda 2063, which seeks 'inclusive and sustainable development'. BRICS+ extends its global footprint and provides an opportunity for African nations to supplant centuries of exploitation. Africa's strategic role and position is being transformed by BRICS+ into that of a key player, from being a fence sitter to a strategic partner in multi-polarity through strategic infrastructure, new age (technology, education, governance) reform advocacy. The opportunities are still there, including the need to be fair within the group and not let any one nation dominate, but the group's strategy of "collaborative and respectful engagement" is a turning point from the West's legacy of "exploitative engagement".

**Table 2** Infrastructure and Global Trade

Year/Period	Trade Volume (USD)	Infrastructure Projects	Key Sectors
2000	~\$28 billion	<100 projects	Extractives, basic trade
2013	~\$340 billion	~1,673 projects (Russia & China-led)	Transport, energy, agriculture
2019	~\$425 billion	1,000+ China-financed projects in >50 countries	Rail, ports, power plants
2024*	~\$500+ billion (est.)	Expanding BRICS+ projects in Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa	Renewable energy, ICT, infrastructure corridors

Source: INTERNET

## 9. The relevance, challenges and the way forward for the future of BRICS+ in 21<sup>st</sup> century

The world order is shifting in significant and large ways. With the addition of key countries in Africa and the Middle East, BRICS+ demonstrates that power is shifting away from the West toward a spread of powers. The international system previously dominated by the United States and its allies is becoming dominated by emerging economies, some of which have been victims of the double standards of Western-based institutions. The economic, political, and cultural

integration of BRICS+ is building a strong platform of counter-hegemony to the West. In BRICS+, the respect was for each other, the non-interference was for avoiding forced dominance. The business impact of the change is demonstrated through the following: The percentage of BRICS countries' GDP and population in the world is projected to be larger by 2050. In fact, China already trades more with Africa and Latin America than the US. India is all the more significant in the Global South due to its digital and pharmaceutical exports. The West is losing the battle to become Russia's main competitor as it becomes a key energy supplier to Africa and Asia. The increase reinforces the bloc's geopolitical legitimacy and evidence the bloc would oppose the U.S. and Europe from being the most influential countries in global politics by going to the fight with the Global South (Hurrell, 2018).

### 9.1. Conflicts within the Grouping Due to Clash of Ideologies and Interests

There are difficulties within BRICS+ itself. The rivalry between India and China over Asian borders and influence is detrimental to India-China partnership. It is difficult to reach an agreement due to the different political systems, economic differences (China's GDP is higher than others) and foreign policy goals. In spite of the ongoing tensions, BRICS has been able to consolidate its position on issues related to global governance. Russia-China partnership, multipolar solidarity through India-Russia and India-global south cooperation, and multipolar partnership between BRICS countries and new African countries are being promoted (Doğan, 2025). Normally bilateral relations between the BRICS help to defuse tensions. Russia and India are good friends in the fields of defense and energy. As in Africa, Indian cultural and diplomatic development is akin to China's commercial dominance. Brazil offers agriculture knowledge to Africa in order to achieve food security, and Africa helps South Africa get to know Brazil. BRICS may choose to collaborate as a bloc based on their common characteristics despite the political disagreements, as they have complementary interests. BRICS+ could impact the international order in three significant ways for a future of numerous poles. Changing trade and money systems through local currency exchanges, BRICS currency, and South-South supply connections might weaken the dollar's dominance and provide developing nations more financial freedom (Öniş & Kutlay, 2020). Changing the governance of the west and advocating for them to change the UN Security Council, the WTO, and IMF are a way to ensure that the voices of the Global South will never be silenced. Third, by projecting a cultural and ideological alternative: from the Chinese media to the Indian yoga diplomacy, from the African heritage to the Brazilian culture, BRICS offers an alternative to Western cultural hegemony, a pluralistic modernity.

To reach its full potential, BRICS has to settle its internal disagreements and make sure that its development projects are long-lasting and not exploitative. This will help it avoid making the same mistakes that the West does. To be seen as a credible alternative, BRICS need to be honest, inclusive, and work together as a leader.

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## 10. Conclusion

In conclusion, BRICS+ is not merely a temporary alliance, it's a shift in the global status quo. The era of hegemony of the United States has become a pluralistic, multipolar one. The BRICS+ is a challenge to the dominance of the West as it is complicated and the countries gaining in power are powerful. The bloc's vision of equality, respect for others, and a multipolar world is well-received in the Global South, with some dissenting voices within its own ranks. The future of politics in the world will not be determined by one of these three cities alone: DC, Brussels, and London. Talks will be held in Beijing, New Delhi, Moscow, Brasília, Johannesburg, Riyadh, Cairo and Addis Ababa. BRICS+ is not just a group of countries, it is an era of global diversity that has given new strength to those countries that have been side-lined. Transition is not seamless and easy, but it cannot be reversed. There is no longer a single pole in the world. BRICS+ is leading the way in the move to a multipolar world.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The author(s) declare that they have no known financial, professional, institutional, or personal conflicts that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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