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Title: Economic, Political, and Strategic Dynamics: India in BRICS

Abstract

The world is experiencing another paradigm shift in the 21st century in form of an emerging economy driven world. BRICS has become an important forum for developing countries to cooperate in fields of trade, finance, diplomacy and global governance. The bloc was created in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India and China and subsequently South Africa joined, all representing the desire to achieve a more balanced and multipolar international order. BRICS' members have an important role in global affairs since they make up a large share of the world's population, production and international trade. BRICS provides important opportunities for India to strengthen its trade and financial partnership, enhance its political standing, and reduce its dependence on West through institutions like the New Development Bank. However, barriers still persist, from trade imbalances, and infrastructural issues, geopolitical conflicts to the differing interests of member states.

Keywords: BRICS, India, Global South, Trade Cooperation, Multipolar World Order, Strategic Autonomy

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Economic, Political, and Strategic Dynamics: India in BRICS



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Abstract

The world is experiencing another paradigm shift in the 21st century in form of an emerging economy driven world. BRICS has become an important forum for developing countries to cooperate in fields of trade, finance, diplomacy and global governance. The bloc was created in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India and China and subsequently South Africa joined, all representing the desire to achieve a more balanced and multipolar international order. BRICS' members have an important role in global affairs since they make up a large share of the world's population, production and international trade. BRICS provides important opportunities for India to strengthen its trade and financial partnership, enhance its political standing, and reduce its dependence on West through institutions like the New Development Bank. However, barriers still persist, from trade imbalances, and infrastructural issues, geopolitical conflicts to the differing interests of member states.

Keywords: BRICS; India; Global South; Trade Cooperation; Multipolar World Order; Strategic Autonomy

Introduction

The last 20 years have witnessed significant economic and political changes in the international system, mainly due to the swift development of emerging economies. Recently, the voice of developing world has steadily grown stronger in the global economy. The most prominent emerging powers include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). BRICS has evolved from initially being an economic concept to an important platform for cooperation between the emerging economies in the fields of trade, finance, development and diplomacy. The term BRIC was coined by Jim O'Neill in 2001, and it signaled the beginning of strategies and diplomatic relations that have achieved different levels of impact on the world (O'Neill, 2001). The idea evolved into a political and institutional framework. The BRICS in aggregate constitutes more than 42 percent world population size, almost 30 percent world GDP as well as approximately 18 percent world trade (BRICS Brasil, 2025). The first official summit of the BRIC countries and the first official co-operation among the members countries was carried out in 2009. In 2010, South Africa joined the group and this extended the political and geographical scope of the bloc, which was renamed to BRICS. The bloc has undergone further expansion through the inclusion of additional developing countries under the framework of BRICS Plus, demonstrating the growing appeal of alternative multilateral platforms among Global South nations. The growing significance of BRICS can be seen in terms of its demography and economic importance in the international system. Together the BRICS countries have a significant share of the world's population and



economic production. Their participation in international trade, industry, energy markets and technological development is gaining in importance, thus increasing their role in international affairs. This is why, BRICS is regarded as a new competitor to the Western institutions like the group of seven (G7), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the world bank (The Globalist, 2024). The blocs seek to bring developing countries into the mix of the global institutions and modify the balance of power to more diversified institutions. BRICS hold tremendous strategic and economic significance for India. India's participation in the bloc will help in enhancing trade cooperation, facilitating foreign investments, financial relations and Indian influence in the global arena. India is one of the most dynamic major economies that would want to leverage on BRICS to enhance its role in international economic governance and speak on behalf of developing nations. Through institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and initiatives promoting local currency transactions, India can access alternative mechanisms for development financing. India has applied its power in influencing agendas in areas of development including infrastructure development, technology transfer, food and energy security, climate change resilience and counter-terrorism. NDB has financed more than 30 billion dollars in projects in both member and non-member states (New Development Bank, 2022).

India also encounter some challenges within the framework of BRICS. The key issue is the persistent trade imbalance of India with other BRICS countries, particularly China. India's imports from BRICS economies remain substantially higher than its exports, resulting in high trade deficit and a dependence on external markets for economic growth. In addition, Indian competitiveness in intra-BRICS trade is still limited due to the lack of diversification of exports (Dewan, 2025), regulatory restrictions, infrastructure constraints. Logistic and geographical distance between the member states is another obstacle to economic cooperation in the bloc (Suresh Lal, 2023). There are also differences in political and strategic preferences that hinder the enhancement of the cooperation among the bloc. The bloc believes in multipolarity and collective action on global problems, but the member states have divergent national interests and foreign policy agendas. Political unity among the BRICS is encounters serious challenges, especially from the increasing India and China rivalry. Members have not been able to reach a common stance on foreign policy, as evidenced by their divergent views on international crises like the Russia-Ukraine war and Israel-Palestine conflict. The bloc has become the center of attention, especially after Russia illegally invaded Ukraine in February 2022, causing a lot of geopolitical turmoil (Iqbal & Rahman, 2023). The security dimension of BRICS further highlights the limitations of collective coordination within the bloc. Unlike military alliances such as NATO, BRICS is not a defense pact. The member states have different priorities in their strategies and defense arrangements. While China and Russia talk about strategic competition with the Western powers, other countries, such as India, Brazil and South Africa, still follow more balanced and multi-aligned foreign policies. As a result, there is still no institutionalization of military cooperation within BRICS and it is rather symbolic.

This paper explores opportunities and challenges of India's participation in BRICS in the new global order. It talks about the economic, financial, political and strategic dynamics within the framework of BRICS and India's role in it. In addition, the present study examines the prospects of BRICS to emerge as an alternative or to the Western institutions or will it remain caught up in its own internal conflicts and competing national agendas. BRICS presents India with new strategic challenges and opportunities. India in BRICS is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the future course of international politics, economics, and global governance for the coming decades.

Literature review

Agarwal and Kumar in their article "BRICS Countries Increasing Role in the World Economy, including Institutional Innovation" (2023), discuss the growing influence by BRICS to transform the

world economy. The authors claim that BRICS economies have grown their share of world GDP and their share of trade substantially in the last 20 years. They emphasize that, although countries like China and India have been observed to have maintained high growth rate, some of them like Brazil and Russia are more volatile economically because they are commodity based and can be affected by external shocks. The paper also highlights the emergence of intra-BRICS trade, which indicates that an increase in trade complementarities and a decline in non-tariff barriers might reinforce economic integration and decrease dependence on Western markets (Agarwal & Kumar, 2023).

In “*The Crucial Challenges Facing the BRICS: On the Unstoppable Growth of the Bloc of Global Emerging Economies*”, Deilton Ribeiro Brasil et al. (2024) explore how the BRICS is becoming a key force shaping global political and economic governance, and what internal limitations impede its expansion. The authors claim that the BRICS has become a prominent pole in the international system in the quest to restructure global financial and institutional framework in the interest of the Global South. On the economic front, they draw attention to the existence of sharp inequality in BRICS, where the industrial and financial might of China is in sharp contrast with the commodity-reliant and structurally weak economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa. Institutionally and politically, the authors highlight the fact that BRICS has weak supranational institutions, binding legal frameworks, and dispute-resolution mechanisms, which undermines its capability of acting as a cohesive player in the global governance (de Castro et al., 2025).

Bunskoek and Verburg in their policy report “*The BRICS and the Emerging Order of Multipolarity published*” in 2025, offer the detailed analysis of major transformations of the BRICS and their implication on the global order in general. In the report, the inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Indonesia in BRICS in the 2024-2025 period is offered as one of the signal events, which is indicative of the actualization of a multipolar world order. According to the authors, the expansion of BRICS is a consequence and a factor in the decrease of unipolarity and the rise of a more pluralistic international order. (Bunskoek & Verburg, 2025).

In the article BRICS and India in the Context of Russia-Ukraine Crisis: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities, published in 2023, Babar Alam Iqbal and Nayyer Rehman provide a critique on the way the intra-BRICS dynamics have been reshaped and specific reference is paid to the India’s strategic positioning in light of Russia-Ukraine war. The authors explain that the contradiction has added diplomatic pressure internationally among BRICS members, particularly, as India tries both to refocus on the historical partnership with Russia and at the same time remain globally legitimate, adhering to international standards. (Iqbal & Rahman, 2023).

Research Methodology

The research has adopted a qualitative and a case study design with India as the pivotal case. The research will make use of a combination of primary and secondary sources of data. Major sources are official BRICS Summit declarations (2009-2025), reports and lending statistics provided by the New Development Bank (NDB) and policy documents by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, national parliaments, and regional bodies. Further on, relevant data of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank will be applied to monitor macroeconomic indicators, trade flows, and financial connections depicting the ways in which BRICS involvement can affect the regional developments. Secondary sources will include Journal articles and Books. Data is collected qualitatively by referring to the official statements, press releases published by the Ministry of External Affairs of India, and the speeches given by the governmental officials and the Prime Minister during different international and national conferences.

Research Question

Q. How has India's participation in BRICS influenced its economic growth, political influence, and strategic position in the evolving global order?

Economic Dynamics

The international economic order has been changing radically since the start of the 21st century, with the new economies becoming the major forces behind the world development. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa have become influential countries having an effect on the international economic relations (Lo & Hiscock, 2014). BRICS has slowly evolved into a formal institutional platform despite the fact that the whole concept was established as an economic bloc (Singh, 2020). The New Development Bank (NDB) has become one of the prominent institutes where funding, infrastructure, and sustainable development projects are discussed. The number of projects approved so far exceeds 70, with an approximate cost of about 25 billion with key sectors of concern being renewable energy, urban development and transportation networks. India, in particular, has already obtained funding for 18 projects valuing 6.9 billion dollars (Iqbal & Rahman, 2023). Over the recent years, BRICS has expanded and is currently termed as BRICS Plus adding new countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates as well as Indonesia. Such a growth represents the rise of the Global South and the desire of a group of developing countries to establish alternative economic cooperation platforms without the traditional Western systems (Kantha, 2025). BRICS is an opportunity as well as a challenge to India. Being one of the fastest developing leading economies, India can expect to gain a lot in terms of increased trading, inflows of investments, and financial collaboration in the bloc.

Investment and Trade Cooperation.

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BRICS engagement is based on trade and investment collaboration, and the economic interaction of India in the bloc has increased dramatically over the course of time. The total trade between India and BRICS Plus countries has grown by an approximated \$189 billion in 2008-09 to approximately 335 billion in 2023-24 and this shows how these economies have become of increasing significance in the trade of India (Kantha, 2025). Even with this development, the trade structure shows a lot of imbalances that create a challenge to the long-term economic stability in India. In 2023-24 India exported around 82 billion to BRICS Plus countries, which constituted 19 percent of the total exports. Conversely, imports from these nations were way more, around 253 billion, or 37 percent of the total imports (Kantha, 2025). This has led to a huge trade deficit as BRICS Plus countries alone have added up to over 70 percent of the total trade deficit in India. One of the key contributing factors to this difference is the trade relationship India has with China which leads intra-BRICS trade because it has a high manufacturing capacity and also has low prices to export its products. Along with China, the growing imports of crude oil both by Russia and especially by Russia in the face of new geopolitical events have also increased the trade deficit of India (Suresh Lal, 2023). Although these imports can sustain the energy requirement and economy of India, they increase the imbalance in these trade flows, pointing towards a structural problem in terms of trade pattern i.e. imports are fueled by basic commodities but exports are limited. BRICS Plus countries are becoming increasingly significant on the investment front in the economic development of India. UAE has become a big investor as it has invested more than 19 billion dollars and Indian companies have made considerable investments in other countries like Russia and especially in the energy sector (UN, 2023).

Geographical distance is one of the main factors that contribute to the relatively low extent of intra-BRICS trade even though the members of the BRIC are large economies.. India trades more

with its close neighbors like China than with their faraway partners like Brazil, which demonstrates that the closer the countries, the more they trade (Singh, 2020). Lack of diversification in the Indian export basket is another major challenge. Indian exports on BRICS countries are also limited to few products and this limits the potential of the country to fully capitalize on the increasing demand in these markets (Dewan, 2025). Issues regarding poor logistics network, bureaucratic delays and poor infrastructure still pose a problem to the competitiveness of trade. These challenges are manifested in the relatively low rank of India in terms of indicators as "Trading Across Borders" (Singh, 2020). The solutions to such issues are critical to the improvement of the integration of India into the global and regional value chains. As a way of coping with these issues, India needs to implement a multi-dimensional approach to competitiveness through export competitiveness, infrastructural, and regulatory simplification of the process. The regional agreements like IBSA and trade systems with blocs like MERCOSUR can be used to diversify its trade relations and minimize its reliance on its dominant partners.

Financial and Monetary Unification.

Monetary and financial unification are playing an even bigger role in BRICS engagement, reflecting the need of the member states to lessen their reliance on conventional Western-dominated financial frameworks. Projects like BRICS Pay, BRICS Bridge and BRICS Clear (Lyu, 2026) are launched in order to make cross-border payment, improve financial connectivity, simplify settlement and other procedures. Such measures are included in a larger campaign to encourage the adoption of local currencies in global trade and minimize the dependence on the US dollar (Kantha, 2025). In the case of India, there are a number of potential benefits of participating in such initiatives. Transaction costs can be lowered and the exchange rate risks can be alleviated by using local currencies in trade transactions, thereby increase efficiency in the trade. Also, India has a chance to increase the range of digital payment options, including the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of the BRICS (PIB, 2025). This may empower India as a digital innovator in the financial services sector of the emerging economies.

Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA) also emphasizes the significance of financial cooperation in BRICS. The CRA is a financial safety net providing liquidity support to member countries as they face economic hardships. This scheme is especially useful to the developing economies which tend to be more exposed to external shocks like currency and capital outflows (Imtiaz et al., 2023). In the case of India, CRA membership increases the financial stability and even adds an extra level of security in an uncertain global economic condition. Nonetheless, the way to the further monetary and financial unification of BRICS is not entirely smooth. External influences and geopolitical strains especially by the developed economies are major challenges to the initiatives directed at de-dollarization. The second issue that persists is the possible decisive role of China in defining the path that BRICS take (Verma & Papa, 2021). China could have massive influence on the formulation of such systems considering its economic size and technological competencies which could restrict other member countries, such as India to impact the outcome to suit their interests. Also, the lack of a permanent institutional structure e.g. a BRICS secretariat, hinders coordination and sustainability in financial cooperation processes.

The BRICS+ Initiatives and New Development Bank.

The BRICS Plus phenomenon is a major milestone in the evolution of the group as it indicates its increased applicability in the global economic governance. Addition of new members like the United Arab Emirates and the Indonesia has made the group economically diversified and globally engaged. This growth highlights the growing need of the developing nations to have alternative platforms that respond to their distinct economic needs and ambitions (Konwer, 2025). Another

major accomplishment of BRICS is the formation of the new development bank (NDB) which is a substitute of the traditional multilateral development banks. The NDB has already provided approval to many projects, including the financing of more than 30 billion, focusing primarily on infrastructure and sustainable development (Ferragamo, 2025). In the case of India, NDB is a significant source of funds for critical development projects on top of local sources and reducing dependence on organizations like the World Bank. Besides the NDB, BRICS has also initiated some projects to facilitate industrial and technological collaboration. The BRICS Centre of Industrial Competencies (BCIC), which was created in cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), is aimed at strengthening the production forces and stimulating the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (UNIDO, 2026). This initiative supports India as the country is determined to develop its industry and implement new technologies, which can be related to Industry 4.0 (PIB, 2026). The disparity in economic priorities and development of the member countries can also make the decision-making process complicated and restrict the coverage of cooperation. In the case of India, assuming a leadership role in BRICS such as pushing towards the formation of permanent secretariat would make this bloc more effective.

Political Dynamics

The BRICS is at a critical cross-road, which has been influenced by the changing geopolitical dynamics. As the world grows more aggressive in the balance of power, the emerging economies are more demanding in asserting strategic autonomy both in economic and diplomatic decision making (Wso & Mahmood, 2025). The leadership in India wants to enhance cohesion in the bloc, reverse the negative perception, and promote a positive agenda on development, reforms in global governance, and responses to current challenges in the world (Bhattacharyya, 2026). India took over the BRICS chair in 2026 in challenging conditions in both opportunity and constraint. On the one hand, the bloc is full of expectations since it is a platform that can be used to solve the development issues and enhance the dreams of the upcoming economies (Bhattacharyya, 2026). India plays the role as a stabilizing force that can help BRICS move in the right direction of coherence without losing its original goals.

Group Diplomacy and Political Coordination

BRICS as a transcontinental alliance of the emerging economies has shown a tremendous growth and ambition in a comparatively limited time. The bloc has grown in membership, grown its share of world GDP even more than G7 and expressed a developing agenda on development and governance (The Globalist, 2024). In addition to collaboration at the state level, BRICS has also promoted interaction among civil society and people-to-people interactions, which enhances its multidimensional nature (Bhattacharyya, 2026). Its international applicability is also enhanced by its demographic and economic mass such as its large portion of the world population, production scale, trade, energy sources, and its contribution to the growth of the world GDP. As a result, BRICS has assumed a middle ground in the new global order indicating a reciprocal reliant relationship among the bloc and the international system at large. Creation of a multilateral framework of cooperation in the areas of politics, security, and governance has been the initial aim of BRICS (Imtiaz et al., 2023). The bloc envisions both to organize responses to challenges facing the world like terrorism, cybersecurity threats, organized crimes, and regional conflicts, as well as to enhance an inclusive and more representative global order. BRICS national security advisers meet to organize a BRICS approach to peace and security issues (UN, 2023). These institutional processes suggest that BRICS has intentionally tried to codify political participation and establish a uniform channel of diplomatic co-ordination.

BRICS is a significant vehicle of promoting multipolarity. Originally seen as a check to organizations like the IMF and World Bank, the bloc is an indication of a larger agenda to re-organize world governance to approach more accurately the economic needs of emerging economies. India has remained committed to this goal, through its involvement in BRICS, to champion reforms in the global financial architecture, encourage fair trade policies and put the concerns of the Global South first (Kumar, 2024). This interaction will enable India to help build a more inclusive and representative international system. The platform allows India to facilitate a more democratic international order that includes the views of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that traditionally were underrepresented in the global decisions (Singh, 2025).

Although such structured interactions exist, political coordination among BRICS is not that effective. The prime cause of this has been the unequal power and influence of its members especially in the global institutions like the United Nations. Russia and China are permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), which means they can veto and make critical decisions that affect the global security, but India, Brazil, and South Africa have to be content with non-permanent status and being a part of the committees. Despite the fact that all members of the BRICS have been interacting with the UNSC since 2011, their interests on key resolutions show that they have converged selectively. Two cases in which the positions of the BRICS converged were the Resolution 1984 concerning Iran and the Israel-Palestine Resolution S/2011/24 (Ryzhov et al., 2024). The most emblematic vote was the vote on Resolution 1973 about Libya. Brazil, Russia, China and India abstained, while South Africa voted in favor (Júnior & Branco, 2022). The fact that south Africa voted against Libya also proves that regional interests and outside compulsions may supersede bloc level coordination. The same trend of incoherent decision-making is supported by other instances, including Eritrea and Syria. In Syria, the convergence between China and Russia can be seen as a manifestation of mutual geopolitical goal of challenging the Western interventionism. The move by China to cooperate with Russia in voting the resolutions in the Security Council against Syria showed that both believed in combating the unilateralism of the United States with the clear aim of creating a more egalitarian relationship on the basis of a new multipolar political order (Júnior & Branco, 2022). This indicates that although BRICS might purport to be a unified bloc, internal sub-groups, especially between Russia and China, dominates the results. Political coordination in BRICS can therefore be perceived as contingent and issue-based as opposed to structural and stable.

Internal Tensions and divergence

The role of India in BRICS is becoming more and more influenced by the intricacies of the balancing of different strategic relationships. With the bloc growing and aiming to have more global influence, India is confronted with the challenge of keeping close relations with the United States and at the same time participate in China and Russia led multilateral frameworks. This indicates a larger trend in Indian foreign policy of multi-alignment and a flexible foreign policy (Panda, 2024). The increased size of BRICS especially the introduction of new members in 2024 has further complicated its internal dynamics. Although expansion increases the economic and geopolitical relevance of the group, it also poses the question of institutional coherence and coordination of the group effectively. India has taken a conservative stance to further expansion, advocating new members on their ability to add to the economy and on their compatibility with its strategic interests, but is also concerned with states that have a hostile stance to India (Maiorano & Kaur, 2024). This discriminatory aspect highlights the practical involvement of India in the bloc. Although there are spheres of collaboration, there are still traces of differences between the members of BRICS.

The Ukraine Conflict.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is one of the biggest tests of political coherence of BRICS. The war did not only redefine the global geopolitical map but it also revealed great divisions within the bloc. Although Western countries reacted with a concerted sanction and diplomatic isolation of Russia, the members of BRICS acted differently and cautiously, as they have different strategic priorities and foreign alignments. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many analysts believed that the bloc would split, denounce its actions against Ukraine, exclude Russia and cut down on cooperation, given that Russia's actions seemed to contradict many of the concepts the bloc puts forward, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual respect for international law, and non-aggression. Rather, BRICS acquired more cohesiveness and resilience that many observed. The member states mostly walked away from condemning Russia, rejected Western sanctions and continued to meet with Moscow in high-level forums, such as the BRICS summits. This assistance enabled Russia to stay out of the diplomatic isolation that was being imposed and undermined western attempts at forming a coherent international response to the invasion. Both strategic and ideological factors drove the ongoing alignment with Russia. India has a stockpile of Russian military hardware, Brazil uses Russian fertilizers and Russia sold its energy resources at cheap prices to India and China after the introduction of Western sanctions (Hopewell, 2026). In addition to these material interests, the BRICS countries have a common desire to advance a more multipolar world order and mitigate the U.S. and West's dominance in global governance. Many members also voice discontent with what they see as a double standard in the application of international law and norms by the West and are open to narratives about the conflict pushed by the West and its policies of 'NATO expansion'.

During the 2022 BRICS Summit, the BRICS Foreign Ministers declared a joint statement, stating that they recalled their national positions instead of taking a common position on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Mc Lean & Mpungose, 2022). Such lack of a common stance signifies the other perspective. The most notable divergences are observed in the voting behavior at international forums. Brazil is the only BRICS member to have voted in favor of the condemnation of war, with Russia voting against it and the other members abstained taking a part (Júnior & Branco, 2022). The location of Brazil demonstrates its more oriented attitude to Western standards and its wish to ensure good relations with the United States and European Union. The positions of India and South Africa are more neutral and diplomatic, focusing on neutrality and diplomatic solution. India attempts to maintain a neutral position (Sharshenova, 2023). The standpoint of India, especially, represents its loyalty to strategic independence, its historical relationships with Russia compared to its increased interaction with the Western powers. The fact that India remains economically active in Russia, especially, in energy imports, contributes to the practicality of Indian foreign policy.

The Israel-Palestine Issue.

Another prism through which to evaluate how much political alignment exists in BRICS is the Israel-Palestine war. In the past, the group has shown some form of agreement in its stand on two-state solution and peaceful negotiations. The BRICS States call upon the restoration of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations that will result in the creation of sovereign State of Palestine (UN, 2011). This is an overlapping normative commitment to international law and conflict resolution. But There has been a recent development that has revealed serious differences in member positions. Although BRICS as a bloc voiced their concern about the humanitarian situation and demanded dialogue (Alqarout, 2023) responses were quite different on the individual level. According to Russian President Vladimir Putin, a long-term and lasting ceasefire was important. Brazil has been more moderate, denouncing both Hamas and disproportionate Israeli actions, and South Africa has

been more outspoken in condemnation of the Israeli actions and international law violations (Chutel & Bigg, 2023) India, however, has taken a reserved and measured approach which can be attributed to its attempt to reconcile its relations with Israel, the United States and its past backing to Palestine. These distinctions underscore the boundaries of commonality in the perception of threats in BRICS. Although the group can be united around general principles, the group members perceive and react to the conflicts on the global scale with specific national perceptions, and the unified framework of the foreign policy will never appear.

In May 2026, during the Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the BRICS in New Delhi, the bloc reaffirmed its support for the establishment of a sovereign and independent state of Palestine based on the internationally recognized pre-1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital and reiterated its support for a two-state solution in accordance with international law and UN resolutions (Dhrishtias, 2026). The meeting highlighted that the Gaza strip is part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and sparked the call for reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. The need to secure maritime trade routes and civilian facilities in West Asia, including differing perspectives on regional tensions over the Strait of Hormuz, the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait was also discussed (Dawn, 2026). During the event, Iran highlighted the strategic significance of Chabahar Port as a gateway for India to reach Central and European countries, and Russia pledged to provide stable energy supply to India and to enhance cooperation in transport connectivity, nuclear power, and trade settlements using national currencies (Dhrishtias, 2026).

Strategic Dynamics

In the case of India, BRICS also acts as a mean to expand its economic and strategic periphery, especially in other parts of the world like Middle East and Central Asia. Its involvement adds to its leadership status in the world and strengthens its perception as a mediator between Western and non-Western blocs. This stance enhances the bargaining power of India and enables it to achieve its multi-aligned foreign policy goals in a more efficient manner. The engagement of India in BRICS also overlaps with its general relations with the western powers especially the US. Although the interaction with other states like Russia and Iran brings in complexity, it is consistent with the long held belief of India in strategic independence. India can still have its own benefits in BRICS by sparing its western alliances instead of compromising them, as it allows the country greater diplomatic freedom and to act in rival geopolitical arenas (Panda, 2013). BRICS is also a strategically viable platform to engage in dialogue between major powers, such as India and China, in spite of the existing tensions.

Military Power and Defense Expenditure

Military strength as one of the main aspects of state power and the means of shaping the international system according to Joseph S. Nye Jr (Nye, 2008). As a member of BRICS, defense spending is a key measure of national security priorities and strategic intent. Member states have tended to raise their military expenditures over the years as a result of the changing geo-political environment, and the changing security challenges in the region. Though this kind of expenditure strengthens defense capabilities, it is also helps to maintain global stability by keeping peace and providing security aid. China became the second-largest military spender in the world in 2023, with an expenditure of about 296 billion, which is a 6% rise compared to 2022 (Liang et al., 2025). The military spending in China reached 12 per cent globally and 50 per cent in Asia and Oceania (SIPRI, 2024). The rising defense budget in China is an indication of the desire by China to consolidate its regional superiority and enhance its production of arms partly because of the limitations on the imports of western arms. Analysts say this growth is directed towards the improvement of combat readiness in the People's Liberation Army. The strategic orientation of China towards Russia and

the West in general, and the issue of tension in Taiwan have also influenced its increasing military spending. This growth has sparked off regional reaction as the neighboring nations are boosting their defense budgets. In 2023, Japan spent 50.2 billion on its military and Taiwan spent 16.6 billion (11 per cent more than 2022) (Liang et al., 2025). India has also been concerned by such developments especially in the wake of existing border wrangles, which intensifies the competitive security dynamics as opposed to the cooperative dynamics within the BRICS.

India had the fourth largest military spending in 2023 of 83.6 billion dollars; this is an increase of 4.2 per cent relative to 2022 and 44 per cent relative to 2014 (Liang et al., 2025). A significant portion of this spending around 80% was allocated to operational costs. The Indian defense policy is not aimed at challenging the western powers but to counter regional threats especially that of China and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the rise in procurement that increased to 22% in 2023 indicates the attempts to enhance the national defense production. This strategy highlights that India sought a strategic balance and independence, as opposed to alliances with any anti-Western military agenda. In 2023, Russia allocated \$109 billion to defense (SIPRI, 2024). In 2023, Russia had a military expenditure of 5.9 per cent of GDP, and 16 per cent of total government expenditure (Liang et al., 2025). There has been an organizing of additional funds via off-budget sources and national security allocations have risen significantly. It is likely that Russian military expenditure will keep increasing in the next few years, which is partially facilitated by economic and technological collaboration with China within their so-called no-limit alliance (Christoffersen, 2024). Defense spending in Brazil is relatively moderate and is representative of the regional priorities. Its expenditure amounted to 22.9 billion with the growth of 3.1 per cent in 2023 (Brazil, 2024). Brazil does not prefer to confront Western countries but focus on the stability of the region and maintaining a balanced relationship. South Africa on the other hand is limited by its limited defense budgets. The military spending has also dropped to approximately 1 percent of GDP, which is lower than the world average of 2.2 percent (SIPRI, 2024). The defense capacity has also diminished over the years (Neethling, 2024) which has impacted its influence regionally. In South Africa, it is mostly used in peacekeeping operations especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique, but with funding constraints becoming a major constraint.

Weapons Trade and Technology.

The purchasing habits of arms further demonstrate how disjointed security cooperation is in BRICS. India had the second largest arms imports in the world. Its imports decreased marginally (4.0 per cent) between 2016–20 and 2021–25. India imported the most arms from Russia (40 per cent), which was much less than the 51 per cent in 2016–20, but nearly half of that in 2011–15 (George et al., 2026). India has traditionally been reliant on Russia, but its diversification has been driven by Russian delivery delays and the changing geopolitical environment. In 2019 Russian imports decreased to 36% with more dependence on France and the United States whose shares increased by 33 and 17 percent respectively (SIPRI, 2024). The increased association between India and France consists of co-production projects and increased maritime collaboration (Kumar, 2024) and the purchase of Rafale jets (Gupta, 2024). In spite of the fact that the United States is a reserved partner because of its relations with Pakistan, defense cooperation has also increased in other aspects, including engine technology (Vohra, 2024). Brazil is also very dependent on Western suppliers. It received the largest imports of arms in the years 2019–2023, mostly from France, Sweden and Italy. Being the non-NATO partner of the United States, Brazil is still interested in collaborations with Western defense sectors, which is strengthened by the accords like the RDT&E model (Brazil, 2024). This tendency means that there is less intra-BRICS defense integration. Although historically China has been dependent on Russian imports, its dependence has decreased because of the growth of its domestic defense industry. However, in 2019 Russia contributed 77 per cent of China imports

(SIPRI, [2024](#)). Although technology has advanced, there are concerns about the quality and competitiveness of the Chinese defense production. The war in Ukraine has changed the procurement patterns in Russia dramatically. It has been forced to depend more on Iran, North Korea, and China due to the supply constraint. Since February 2022 (the time of the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine), Iran has provided Moscow with over 2,000 Shahed136/131 kamikaze drones and 18 Mohajer-6 drones (Martynyuk, [2024](#)). Other reinforcement involves missiles and artillery provided by North Korea, and technological support provided by China (Madhani, [2024](#)). South Africa, in spite of the political alignment, remains heavily reliant on Western suppliers. Imports include equipment of French and Swiss origin, as well as other countries belonging to NATO, China and Norway (Martin, [2023](#)). This dependency is representative of a general trend in BRICS, with a majority of the members being dependent on highly developed Western defense technologies as they are reliable and efficient.

Military Exercises and Cooperation.

Joint military exercises are very important in promoting the defense collaboration among states. Military drills with ally states lead to positive interactions and development of the military forces by sharing the tactical and technological practices (PIB, [2018](#)). India, Brazil and South Africa have had a rather stable military cooperation in IBSA. Rotating between the Brazil and South African coasts and the Indian coasts, IBSAMAR is a bi-annual exercise that was launched in 2008 (GDN, [2024](#)). This three-way involvement indicates an attempt to enhance collaboration between three continents, yet it significantly does not include China and Russia, thus restricting the level of military integration of BRICS. The US Navy recently has had a presence in Brazil, and joint military exercises between the US Army and Brazilian Army have been taking place recently in Atlantic Ocean (Pagano, [2026](#)). These historic alliances show that Brazil is more interested in Western defense cooperation than in intra-BRICS military alignment.

The defense cooperation in India has also been developing significantly, especially with its involvement in the QUAD. The relations with the United States, Japan, and Australia have empowered the operations and strategic location of India in the Indo-Pacific. “Tarang Shakti” and the “Malabar Exercise” are exercises that include a combination of air, naval, and combat operations (Pandit, [2024a](#)). Further collaboration involves shared exercises, and the involvement of observers by Japan (Meijer et al., [2018](#)) and defensive alliances with other nations like the Philippines (Pandit, [2024b](#)). These efforts are mainly directed at the counteraction of the increasing Chinese influence in the region. India has continued to have a defense relationship with France that has seen the two countries conduct joint exercises (INN, [2024](#)). These agreements engage high tech military equipment and participation by multinational forces, which further strengthens the transition of India into diversified defense relations (IDN, [2024](#)). Meanwhile, India is still maintaining contact with Russia the partnership can be traced back to the historical scale through joint exercises, such as INDRA, AVIA INDRA, and INDRA NAVY, and collaborative projects, such as the BrahMos missile system, (INN, [2024](#)). Since the Ukrainian conflict, Russia and China have engaged in numerous joint exercises, such as naval drills in strategically important areas like the East China Sea and the Baltic Sea (Fong, [2024](#)). Chinese and Russian naval flotillas carried out their fifth joint patrol in the Pacific Ocean as part of the “Ocean-2024” strategic exercise (Yang, [2024](#)).

India is exhibiting a policy of strategic independence by pursuing an engagement with both the West and non-West defense partners. Its membership in the QUAD, and its ongoing cooperation with Russia, underscores a multi-aligned strategy to realize maximum security benefits. In the same way, Brazil has got a good relationship with NATO and BRICS membership, and South Africa balances the limited defense capabilities with selective partnerships. The bilateral disputes, in particular, between China and India, is a threat to cohesion. A Chinese government map shows the potential of additional conflict (Katz, [2024](#)). The involvement of India in the Quad is an attempt to offset the regional hegemony

of China (Patrick, 2024) which shows that the foreign balancing of interests comes into conflict with the tension inside the BRICS. Even the Russia-China alliance that is usually seen as a source of strength of the BRICS is characterized by structural inequities. In 2023, 38 per cent of Russian imports was made up of China (Christoffersen, 2024). Meanwhile, China has numerous economic connections with the West which can be viewed as an expression of a pragmatic strategy of focusing on economic interests rather than ideological orientation (Chaulia, 2021). Member states have different political structures and are characterized by different geopolitical aims, making it difficult to unite towards a shared strategic vision. Although Brazil, India and South Africa have dissociated themselves with Beijing and Moscow against the West, aiming at maximising their diplomatic freedom (Patrick, 2024).

BRICS and NATO are two of the most influential geopolitical groups in today's international system, but are very different in terms of structure, goals, and military power. BRICS has an edge on land forces, with a much bigger tank force than NATO, and China, Russia, India and Egypt have significant land force inventories. BRICS countries hold more than 6,300 nuclear warheads (Ali, 2026), mostly because of Russia's enormous nuclear arsenal, which puts the bloc on a league with NATO countries in terms of nuclear parity. But NATO still has the advantage of spending more on defense at \$1.4 trillion a year, whereas the total defense spending of its members is around \$480 billion a year. NATO is a technologically sophisticated and institutionally well-coordinated military entity while BRICS has become an emerging challenger with its vast manpower, industrial capabilities and rising geopolitical power in the global South. NATO was formed as a united defense coalition that had well-defined responsibilities and military planning. Member states make commitments on defense expenditures and joint security systems. By 2024, 23 Allies will have achieved or surpassed the goal of spending at least 2% of GDP on defense, spending a total of over USD 430 billion on defense (NATO, 2025). NATO has a higher estimated spending of 1.47 trillion in 2023 compared to the total spending of BRICS of about 514.4 billion (SIPRI, 2024). Also, NATO has integrated procurement and production systems mechanisms like NATO Defense Planning Process in contrast to BRICS members who depend on a variety of and sometimes external sources of defense equipment. Other than New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Israel and South Korea, The US reckons that India will be one of its key partners under NATO PLUS (Borah, 2024). These trends can further complicate the cohesion of BRICS, in the case where India increasingly integrates itself into Western security structures.

Conclusion

The establishment of BRICS is not merely an economic partnership, but also a shift in power dynamics in the international arena. The achievements of BRICS reflect the growing desires of the Global South. The economic strength, population and political status reflect the 21st century reconfiguration of the world order. BRICS offers strategic opportunities as well as tricky challenges to India. The bloc serves as an opportunity to boost economic growth, expand international cooperation, extend diplomatic backing and to have a more active role in influencing international governance. Trade imbalances, geopolitical tensions and diverging national interests have hindered greater depth of integration between member states. These internal divisions show that BRICS may have the same dreams and aspirations, but its unity is incomplete. In the present uncertain and unpredictable time, geopolitical competition and institutional changes are growing louder, this is where BRICS emerged as a significant group demanding a multipolar and inclusive international order. As the world's geopolitical landscape evolves, BRICS will continue to exert significant influence on global politics, economics, and governance in the coming years. BRICS will continue to play a significant role in the future of international politics, economics and global governance, elevating member nations especially India to new heights in the coming decades.

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