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## Between Development and Geopolitics: A Semantic Analysis of the BRICS Summit Declarations

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BRICS  
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## Summary

Introduction .....	<b>04</b>
Methodology .....	<b>05</b>
Results and Discussion .....	<b>06</b>
Challenges and Transformations in the International Order: occupying spaces or building a new order? .....	<b>16</b>
Conclusion .....	<b>17</b>
Bibliographical References .....	<b>18</b>

# Between Development and Geopolitics: A Semantic Analysis of the BRICS Summit Declarations

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## Introduction

The BRICS, initially composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, emerged in 2009 as a coalition of emerging economies aimed at strengthening economic cooperation and expanding the voices of developing countries on the global stage. Over the years, the group has matured and established the New Development Bank (NDB), which rivals traditional institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, reinforcing development as a central objective of the group's joint agenda.

At the Kazan Summit in October 2024, under Russian presidency, the BRICS adopted a more assertive stance, with greater geopolitical weight. Initiatives such as BRICS Pay, aimed at reducing dollar dependency, and the formalization of BRICS+ with the accession of new members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE) and partners (Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam) reinforce the bloc's position as an important voice of the Global South, challenging the existing hegemony and maintaining a commitment to economic development.

While economic development and cooperation are the most visible focuses of the BRICS, geopolitical issues and challenging stances towards the Western order also have a significant presence. This tension between development and geopolitics is a central feature of the bloc: while members like Brazil, India, and South Africa prioritize development, there is an

underlying geopolitical force that manifests in actions like BRICS Pay and the strengthening of global influence, especially during the Russian presidency. Even China, which prioritizes development issues, recognizes the importance of the geopolitical agenda in shaping the international order in a way that suits its interests. Thus, the BRICS as a group seem to seek a balance between their development ambitions and the promotion of a more inclusive international governance.

This article investigates, through a semantic analysis of the BRICS summit declarations from 2009 to 2024, how the tension between development and geopolitics manifests during the presidency of each country. For this purpose, semantic graphs were generated that allowed the identification of patterns and relationships between the terms used, as well as assessing the relative weight of the development and geopolitical agendas in the declarations made under the leadership of each member.

The text is organized into sections that detail, firstly, the methodology applied, followed by the analysis of the graphs for each country. Subsequently, there is a section that, in light of the graphs, examines whether the BRICS adopt a reformist or confrontational stance in relation to the existing order, culminating in a conclusion that synthesizes the main findings of the analysis.

## Methodology

In this article, the texts of the BRICS declarations, grouped by country, were analyzed. All the summit declarations organized by Brazil (2010, 2014, 2019), Russia (2009, 2015, 2020, 2024), India (2012, 2016, 2021), China (2011, 2017, 2022), and South Africa (2013, 2018, 2023) were aggregated to provide an insight into the semantic universe constructed by each country and thus understand the weight attributed to the development and geopolitical agendas in each context.

While the declarations are the result of consensus, reflecting the general position of the group, the country in the presidency has the opportunity to set the agenda, allowing specific nuances to manifest in its declarations. This approach enabled a comprehensive analysis of the aggregate positioning of each country over the years, offering a more detailed view of the priorities and directions adopted by each, as well as their contributions to the bloc.

A text mining approach was used to analyze the BRICS declarations, focusing on the extraction and categorization of terms related to the categories of Development and Geopolitics. The methodological process involved several detailed steps to ensure an accurate and robust analysis of the declaration texts. The main steps are as follows:

- 1. Text Extraction:** The PyMuPDF (fitz) library was used for extracting content from the official BRICS declaration PDF files. Each page was converted into raw text, preserving the paragraph structure to facilitate context analysis.

- 2. Tokenization and Normalization:** The extracted text was tokenized, transforming the sentences into smaller units (tokens), such as individual words. Furthermore, all words were converted to lowercase to ensure standardization and prevent duplication of terms due to capitalization differences.

- 3. Identification and Classification of Relevant Terms:** Predefined lists of terms representing the categories of Development and Geopolitics were developed. Terms such as development, finance,

sustainable were classified as Development, while terms like sovereignty, security, reform were associated with Geopolitics. From these lists, tokens were compared and classified according to their respective thematic categories.

- 4. Frequency Counting and Co-occurrence Analysis:** The frequency of each term was counted to understand the relevance of certain concepts in the declarations. Additionally, the co-occurrences of terms within paragraphs were analyzed, recording which words appeared together, which allowed the identification of weight relationships between the themes of Development and Geopolitics.

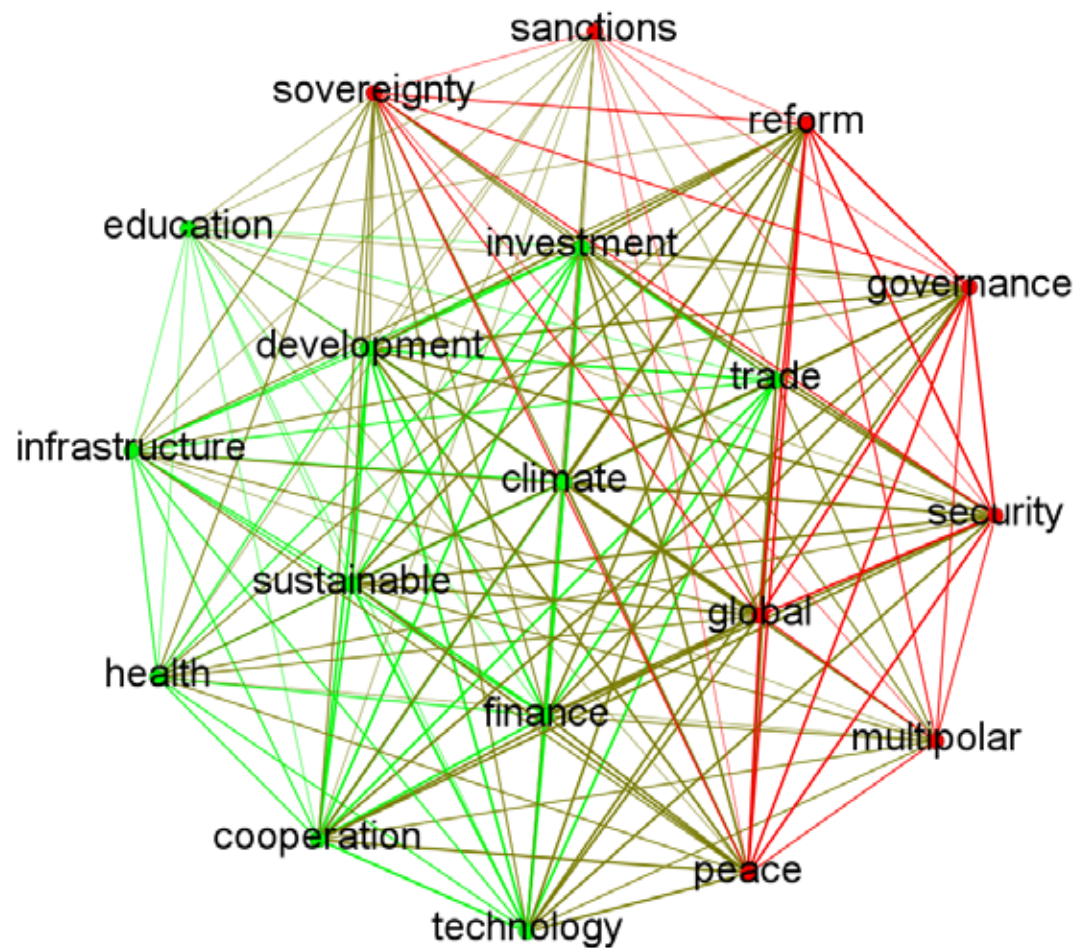
- 5. CSV File Generation and Graph Analysis:** From the frequency and co-occurrence data, two CSV files were generated—one for the nodes (terms) and another for the edges (connections between terms). These files were imported into Gephi, a software that allows the generation and analysis of semantic networks, identifying patterns of modularity and centrality, enabling a qualitative analysis of the main thematic clusters. The communities in the graphs were represented by colors: green for Development and red for Geopolitics, which facilitated the visualization of different thematic emphases.

- 6. Application of the Fruchterman-Reingold Plugin:** The Fruchterman-Reingold plugin was used on all generated graphs in Gephi. This plugin distributes the nodes in a way that minimizes overlap and maximizes readability of the graph, applying forces of attraction and repulsion between the nodes, which results in a clearer visualization of the relationships, hierarchies, and communities formed.

- 7. Qualitative Analysis:** Finally, the generated graphs were qualitatively analyzed to identify the main communities and understand how themes interconnect, highlighting the differences in emphasis between the BRICS member countries.

## Results and Discussion

### Brazil



In the aggregated analysis of the declarations from the summits organized by Brazil, it is evident that the agenda was predominantly focused on development, reflected by the high frequency of terms such as sustainable, investment, infrastructure, and cooperation. The graph for the Brazilian summit displayed 19 nodes and 169 edges, with the majority of the nodes belonging to the Development community, corresponding to 57.89% of the total.

The generated graph reveals Brazil's priorities in fostering sustainable economic growth, strengthening infrastructure, and promoting international cooperation. This approach is in line with the country's foreign policy, which has historically emphasized multilateralism and the construction of strategic partnerships aimed at development and reducing regional inequalities.

The qualitative analysis showed that terms related to development, such as investment, sustainable, and infrastructure, are strongly connected, indicating a focus on promoting initiatives that aim for inclusive growth and infrastructure strengthening. Examples of these

initiatives include the New Growth Acceleration Program (PAC), which seeks to modernize the transport and energy sectors, and efforts to attract foreign investments aimed at environmental sustainability.

Brazil also stands out for its emphasis on health and education, suggesting that Brazilian declarations reflect a significant interest in improving the population's quality of life, reinforcing the commitment to human development. These themes are presented in an interconnected manner, suggesting that social development is a natural extension of economic efforts, demonstrating a comprehensive approach by the country.

An important observation from the Brazilian graph is that due to the organization provided by the Fruchterman-Reingold plugin, the word climate was quite centralized. This centrality indicates that the climate theme plays a significant role in Brazil's declarations, suggesting a growing concern with environmental issues as part of the development effort. Examples of Brazilian climate initiatives that support this analysis include the commitment to the Paris Agreement, the creation of the National Climate Change Plan, and programs to reduce



deforestation in the Amazon. These actions reinforce Brazil's role as an advocate for sustainable development within BRICS.

Moreover, the centrality of climate reinforces Brazil's view that economic development needs to be allied with environmental sustainability, showing that the country seeks to position itself as a leader on climate issues within BRICS. This approach reflects an attempt to integrate economic and environmental objectives, indicating that Brazil views tackling climate change as an opportunity to strengthen its international position and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable growth.

International cooperation was also a central point in Brazil's declarations, evidenced by the strong connection of the term cooperation with other key terms such as investment and technology. This reflects the Brazilian strategy of seeking alliances that enable the strengthening of internal capacities through technology exchange and infrastructure project financing, aimed at reducing regional inequalities and promoting sustainable development. Examples of these alliances include the partnership with China for the development of agricultural technologies and cooperation with South Africa on renewable energy projects. These collaborations not only strengthen internal infrastructure but also promote sustainable growth and social inclusion.

Another important aspect is that, although the focus is clearly on development, terms related to geopolitics, such as global and multipolar, also appear significantly, albeit less centrally than in Russia, as we will see below.

This difference in emphasis is reflected in specific actions, such as Brazil's stance in international forums, where it prioritizes economic cooperation initiatives, like the New Development Bank (NDB), while Russia adopts a more assertive and confrontational posture, seeking to challenge Western hegemony. This demonstrates that, for Brazil, economic integration and cooperation are essential to shaping a more balanced global environment, rather than adopting a confrontational stance.

Brazil's role within BRICS, therefore, stands out for promoting development as a tool to achieve a fairer international system, without losing sight of the need for inclusive global governance that favors multipolarity.

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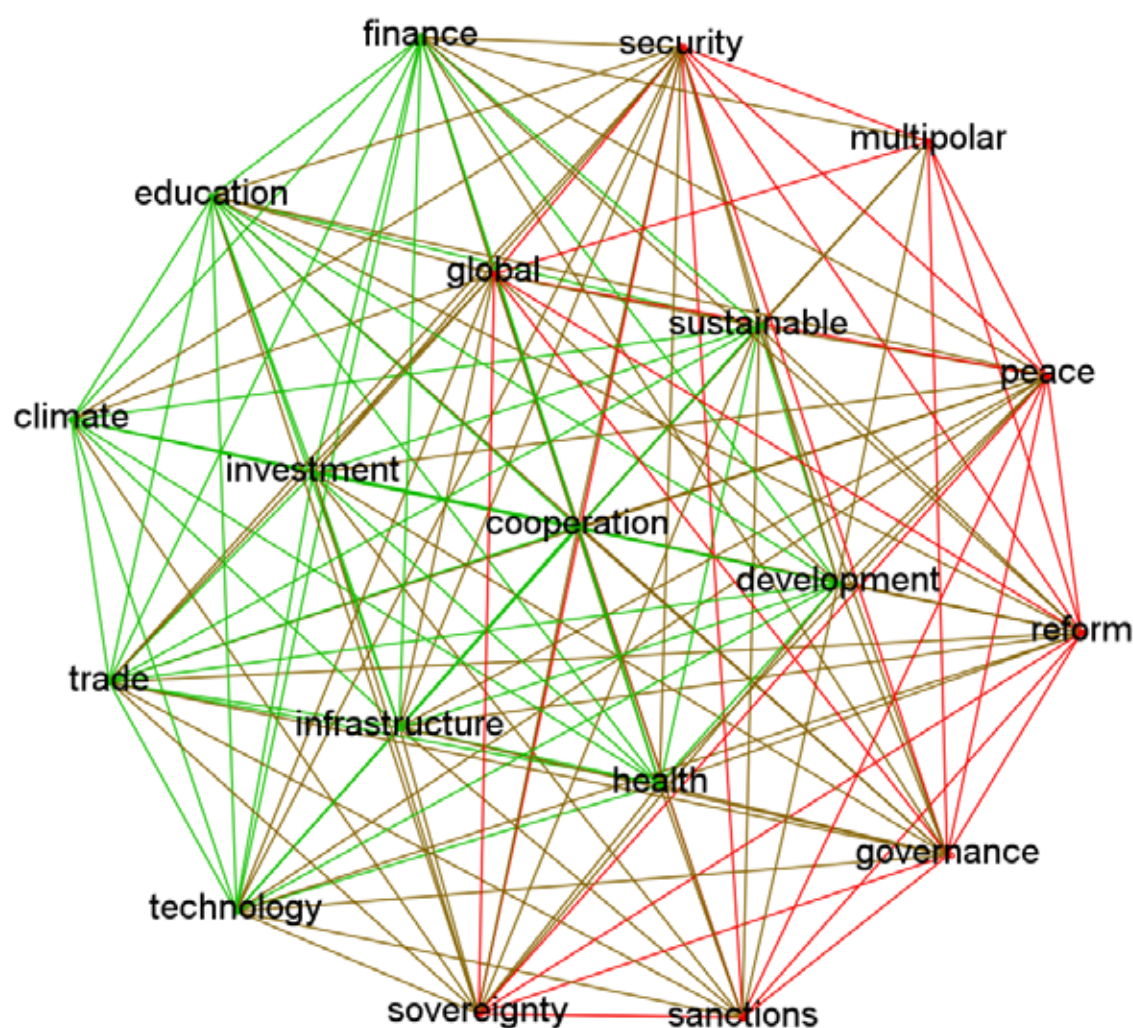
<sup>1</sup> The New Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) of Brazil is a government initiative aimed at boosting economic development through substantial investments in infrastructure. The program seeks to modernize key sectors such as transportation, energy, and urbanization to stimulate growth, generate jobs, and reduce social and regional inequalities in the country. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/secom/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2023/12/governo-lula-recupera-investimentos-na-infraestrutura-do-brasil> (last accessed November 28, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> The National Plan on Climate Change, launched in December 2008, aims to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and promote adaptation to climate change. Structured around four axes — mitigation, adaptation, research, and education — its main objectives include: reducing emissions, maintaining the share of renewable energies, increasing the use of biofuels, reducing deforestation, eliminating the loss of forest cover, and promoting adaptation actions and scientific research. For more information, visit <https://antigo.mma.gov.br/clima/politica-nacional-sobre-mudanca-do-clima/plano-nacional-sobre-mudanca-do-clima.html> (last accessed November 30, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> On April 14, 2023, in Beijing, Ministers Paulo Teixeira (MDA) and Tang Renjian (Ministry of Agriculture of China) signed a memorandum of understanding in the presence of Presidents Lula and Xi Jinping to promote the development of rural and sustainable family agriculture, aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The agreement establishes a joint work plan with goals to be presented at the next meeting of the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN) in 2024. The partnership aims to share innovative solutions to common challenges such as infrastructure, market access, and technologies for small producers. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.br/mda/pt-br/noticias/2023/04/acordo-inedito-entre-mda-e-ministerio-da-agricultura-chines> (last accessed December 03, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> In March 2021, the Brazil Africa Institute organized the seminar "Renewable Energies in Brazil and Africa," bringing together experts to discuss trends in the sector and opportunities for cooperation between Brazil and African countries, including South Africa. Later, in August 2023, during the 8th BRICS Ministerial Meeting on Energy in South Africa, Brazil reaffirmed its commitment to a more sustainable energy matrix, highlighting programs such as "Energias da Amazônia," which aim to decarbonize the Amazon region. These initiatives strengthen collaboration on renewable energies among BRICS member countries. For more information, visit [https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202308/brasil-reafirmar-brics-que-esta-empenhado-em-buscar-matriz-energetica-mais-limpa-segura-e-sustentavel?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202308/brasil-reafirmar-brics-que-esta-empenhado-em-buscar-matriz-energetica-mais-limpa-segura-e-sustentavel?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (last accessed December 3, 2024).

## Russia



In the analysis of Russia, the emphasis was largely on the geopolitical agenda, reflected by the high frequency of terms such as sovereignty, security, and multipolar. The graph for the Russian summit displayed 19 nodes and 173 edges, highlighting a high density of connections among the geopolitical terms, indicating the centrality of this theme in the country's declarations.

The Geopolitics community accounted for 46.15% of the nodes, while the Development community made up 53.85%. These values indicate that, although geopolitics has a lesser weight than development, following the pattern of other members, Russia is the country that most emphasizes this agenda in its summits. For comparison, in other countries, the percentage of nodes related to Geopolitics is: Brazil (42.11%), India (42.11%), China (38.89%), and South Africa (42.11%).

Russia's emphasis on geopolitics manifests in practical actions, such as its assertive stance in international forums and leadership in initiatives like BRICS Pay, which seeks to reduce dollar dependency. Notably, terms like sovereignty, security, reform, and sanctions underscore Russia's concern with maintaining

its sovereignty and resisting international sanctions imposed by the West.

There is also a strong interconnection between sovereignty and security, suggesting a narrative focused on protecting Russian autonomy and promoting security against external pressures. Moreover, the term sanctions frequently appeared in association with reform, which seems to highlight the Russian effort to promote reforms in international institutions, in order to reduce the influence of Western powers and create a more balanced global governance system.

Terms like multipolar and reform reinforce the Russian vision of a decentralized international order, less dependent on traditional power structures. This geopolitical emphasis translates into concrete actions, such as Russian leadership in the creation of BRICS Pay and the continuous effort to strengthen alliances with countries that share a multipolar vision. These initiatives demonstrate Russia's attempt to shape a new international dynamic that challenges Western hegemony.

An important observation from the Russian graph is that, due to the organization provided by the



Fruchterman-Reingold plugin, the term cooperation was quite centralized. This suggests that, despite the emphasis on geopolitics, international cooperation remains a relevant element in the Russian agenda. Examples of this cooperation include joint energy projects with China and bilateral trade agreements with BRICS countries that seek to strengthen supply chains and reduce dependence on the West.

The centrality of the term cooperation reflects a clear strategy to strengthen alliances in the face of isolation imposed by Western sanctions. In this context, the Kazan Summit stood out as a success, bringing together heads of state and high-level representatives from a wide range of Global South countries. With this, Russia demonstrated that its isolation is essentially limited to the West, consolidating itself as the leader of a coalition that seeks alternatives to the dominant hegemonic model.

Another important point is the strength of terms related to economic development within the Geopolitics community, such as investment and infrastructure. This interconnection allows for the understanding that, for Russia, economic development is used as a tool to strengthen its geopolitical position. Examples of this strategy include investments in joint energy infrastructure with China and the development of economic corridors that aim to increase integration with BRICS partners and reduce dependence on Western markets.

The context of the war in Ukraine was decisive for Russia's posture during the BRICS summits, showing a more assertive and confrontational approach, which is clearly manifested in the articulations and initiatives of the Kazan Summit of 2024. The war led Russia to seek to strengthen its alliances within BRICS to resist the isolation imposed by Western sanctions.

Overall, Russia appears to use BRICS as a platform to strengthen alliances with countries that share an anti-hegemonic worldview, seeking to promote a multipolar order.

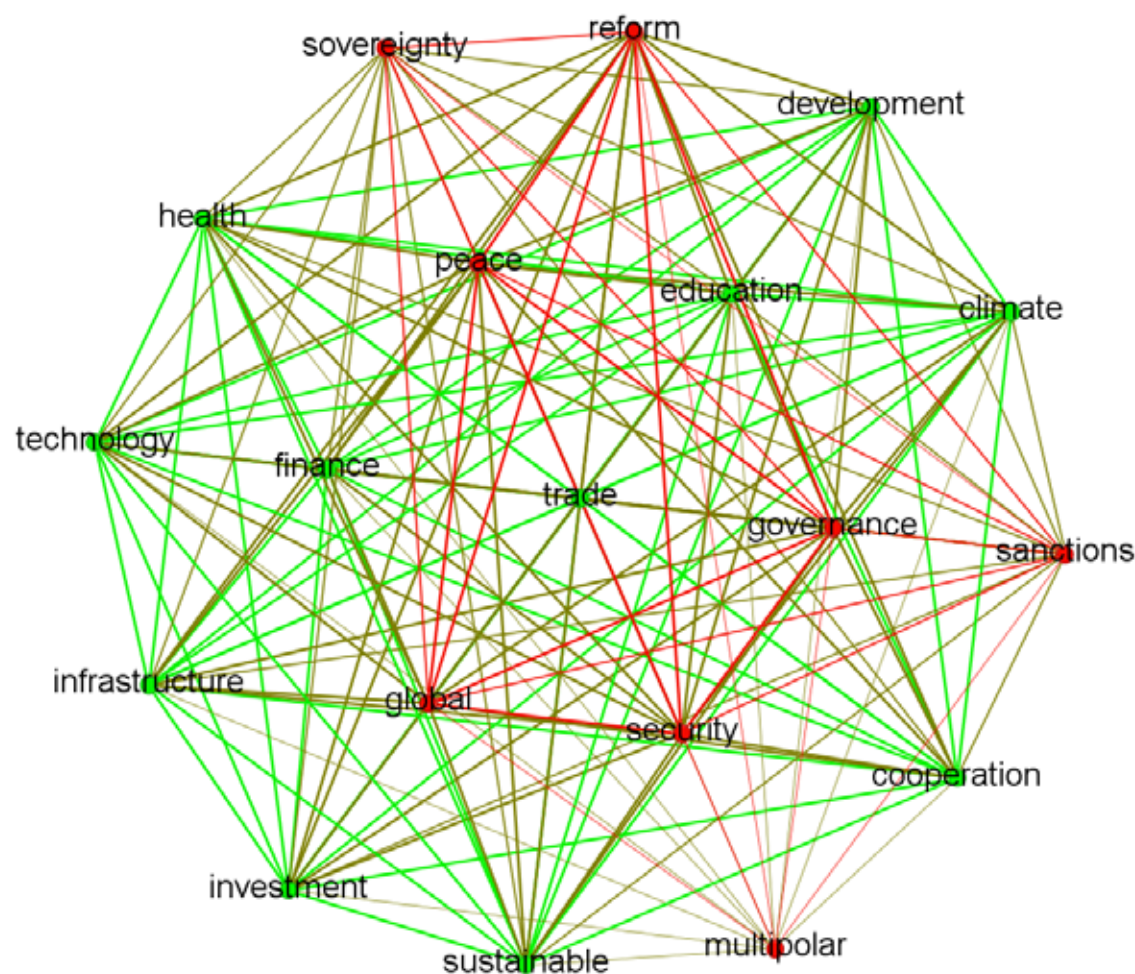
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<sup>5</sup> For more information on BRICS Pay, including details about its services and initiatives, visit the official website: [www.brics-pay.com](http://www.brics-pay.com) (last accessed November 28, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> China and Russia have strengthened their energy cooperation through projects like the "Power of Siberia" pipeline, inaugurated in 2019, which transports natural gas from Eastern Siberia to China, and the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant in Jiangsu Province, a collaboration between China National Nuclear Corporation and Russia's Atomstroyexport. In May 2024, Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin signed an agreement to ensure mutual economic and energy security, committing to large-scale projects. Additionally, Russia has increased its supply of energy resources to China, establishing itself as one of the main suppliers of oil and natural gas to the Chinese market. For more information, visit [https://english.news.cn/20240516/a427b8f256ac4678b2ee0d0213df09aa/c.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://english.news.cn/20240516/a427b8f256ac4678b2ee0d0213df09aa/c.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (last accessed December 3, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Russia has been promoting strategic economic corridors, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), connecting Russia and India via Iran, and the "Ice Silk Road," in partnership with China, which utilizes the Northern Sea Route in the Arctic. These initiatives strengthen integration with BRICS partners and reduce dependence on Western markets. For more information, visit <https://tvbrics.com/en/news/expansion-of-the-north-south-transport-corridor-strengthens-cooperation-between-russia-iran-and-india/> (last accessed November 28, 2024).

## India



In the analysis of the declarations from the summits hosted by India, a balanced emphasis between development and geopolitical agendas was observed, reflected by the high frequency of terms such as investment, sustainable, infrastructure, multipolar, and security. The graph for the Indian summit displayed 19 nodes and 170 edges, with the Development community representing 57.89% of the nodes and the Geopolitics community corresponding to 42.11%.

This distribution demonstrates a robust focus on economic growth and infrastructure, while also showing a certain concern for international order and security. Specific examples include the strengthening of cooperation with BRICS countries on regional infrastructure projects and active participation in promoting regional security initiatives, such as defense cooperation with Russia. Moreover, India has been leading efforts in developing sustainable technologies, showcasing its commitment to balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility.

India also stands out for its strong commitment

to sustainable development, particularly in areas like education and health. Terms such as investment and infrastructure are strongly interconnected, suggesting a focus on improving economic conditions through investments in infrastructure and social well-being.

The emphasis on education and health, in turn, indicates a prioritization of social issues, showing India's concern to ensure that economic development is accompanied by improvements in the quality of life for its population. Examples of these initiatives include the Ayushman Bharat program, which aims to extend health services to the population, and the Samagra Shiksha Mission, aimed at improving the quality of education and access to schooling across the country.

An important observation from the Indian graph is that due to the organization provided by the Fruchterman-Reingold plugin, the term trade was quite centralized. This indicates that trade issues play a crucial role in India's priorities within BRICS, reflecting its concern with strengthening trade relations and economic expansion, both regionally and globally.

In the graph, the term “multipolar” carries significance, though it is somewhat peripheral, indicating India’s commitment to fostering a decentralized and balanced global order. While India supports the multipolarity agenda, it adopts a more cautious strategy than, for instance, Russia. This approach underscores India’s preference for resolving conflicts through diplomatic means and promoting more inclusive governance, reflecting a deliberate and thoughtful engagement with international relations.

This stance is reflected in the defense of reforms at the UN for fairer representation of developing countries and in India’s role in BRICS as a mediator in sensitive issues, always prioritizing diplomatic solutions aimed at regional stability. This approach is evidenced by the interconnection of the terms security and cooperation, highlighting the Indian focus on strengthening international alliances to ensure a peaceful environment conducive to development.

India positions itself as a moderate voice within BRICS, favoring diplomacy and multilateralism while seeking to strengthen its economic and technological capacities. The focus on technology and cooperation reflects a strategy to create an environment conducive to technological innovations and partnerships that contribute to sustainable development. Thus, India, within BRICS, seems to play the role of a mediator that seeks to balance geopolitical ambitions with the promotion of development, always emphasizing the importance of a fair and peaceful global order.

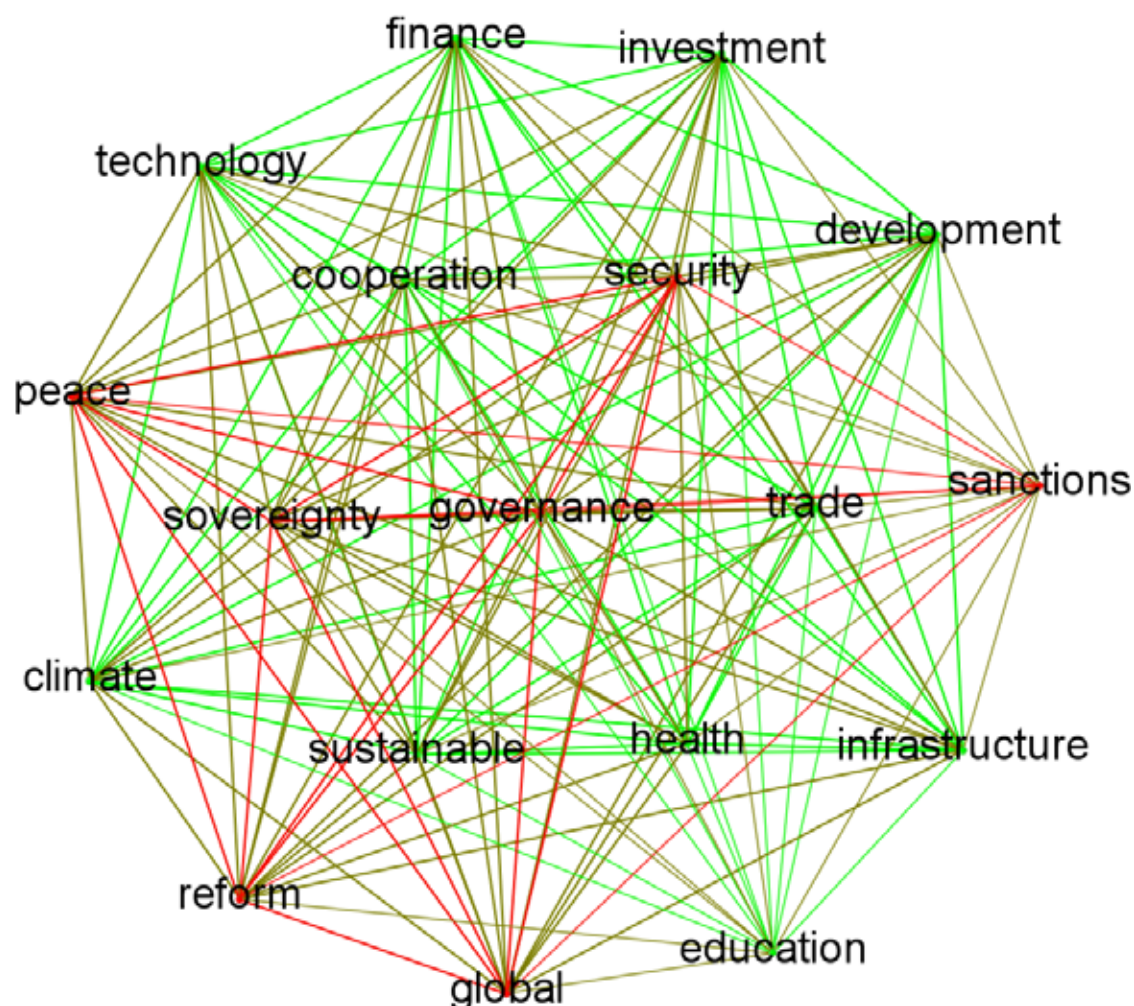
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<sup>8</sup> Ayushman Bharat, also known as Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), is a public health program launched by the government of India in 2018, aimed at providing free health care services to low-income families, covering approximately 50% of the country’s population. The program offers coverage of up to 5 lakh rupees (about \$6,000) per family, per year, for secondary and tertiary hospital treatments. Additionally, Ayushman Bharat aims to strengthen primary health infrastructure through the establishment of Health and Wellness Centers across the country, promoting a comprehensive approach to public health. For more information, visit <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/ayushman-bharat-national-health-protection-mission> (last accessed November 28, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> The Samagra Shiksha Mission is an initiative by the Indian government that integrates the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education, covering education from preschool to high school. Launched in 2018, the mission aims to universalize access to quality education, promote equity, and improve learning outcomes, aligning with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. The program also supports the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 and aligns with the recommendations of the National Education Policy of 2020. For more information, visit <https://dse.education.gov.in/scheme/samagra-shiksha> (last accessed November 28, 2024).



## China



In the analysis of China, the predominance of the development agenda was evident, marked by the high frequency of terms such as development, investment, infrastructure, sustainable, and technology. The graph for the Chinese summit displayed 18 nodes and 153 edges, revealing that the Development community accounted for 61.11% of the nodes, the highest proportional weight among all the member countries analyzed.

China stands out as the largest economic power among the BRICS, prioritizing projects that boost its domestic development and expand its international economic influence. Specific examples include the Belt and Road Initiative, aimed at developing infrastructure in various partner countries, and bilateral economic agreements that extend its commercial presence in emerging markets, demonstrating its effort to expand influence beyond its borders.

Terms such as investment and infrastructure played a central role in the Chinese declarations, suggesting a clear emphasis on financing and expanding infrastructure both within its borders and in other partner countries. The prominence of the term technology indicates that

China views technological advancement as an essential component of development, seeking to consolidate its leadership position in technological innovations.

This approach is also associated with strengthening technological cooperation within BRICS, aiming to share advancements and enhance the competitiveness of member countries. Specific examples include technology transfer initiatives to African countries, notably joint projects with South Africa focused on developing renewable energies.

In the graph of China, the centrality of the term governance, highlighted by the Fruchterman-Reingold layout, suggests that, in addition to focusing on economic development, China seeks to consolidate its position in global governance. This centrality infers a strategy to shape international dynamics to favor a stable economic environment, open to trade and aligned with a multipolar order.

Furthermore, terms such as sovereignty and security also appear, but less frequently than in countries like Russia. This suggests that for China, stability and economic cooperation are prioritized over an openly

confrontational stance towards the established order. Within BRICS, China seeks to balance its economic ambitions with cautious diplomacy, using the bloc as a platform to expand its influence without directly conflicting with Western powers.

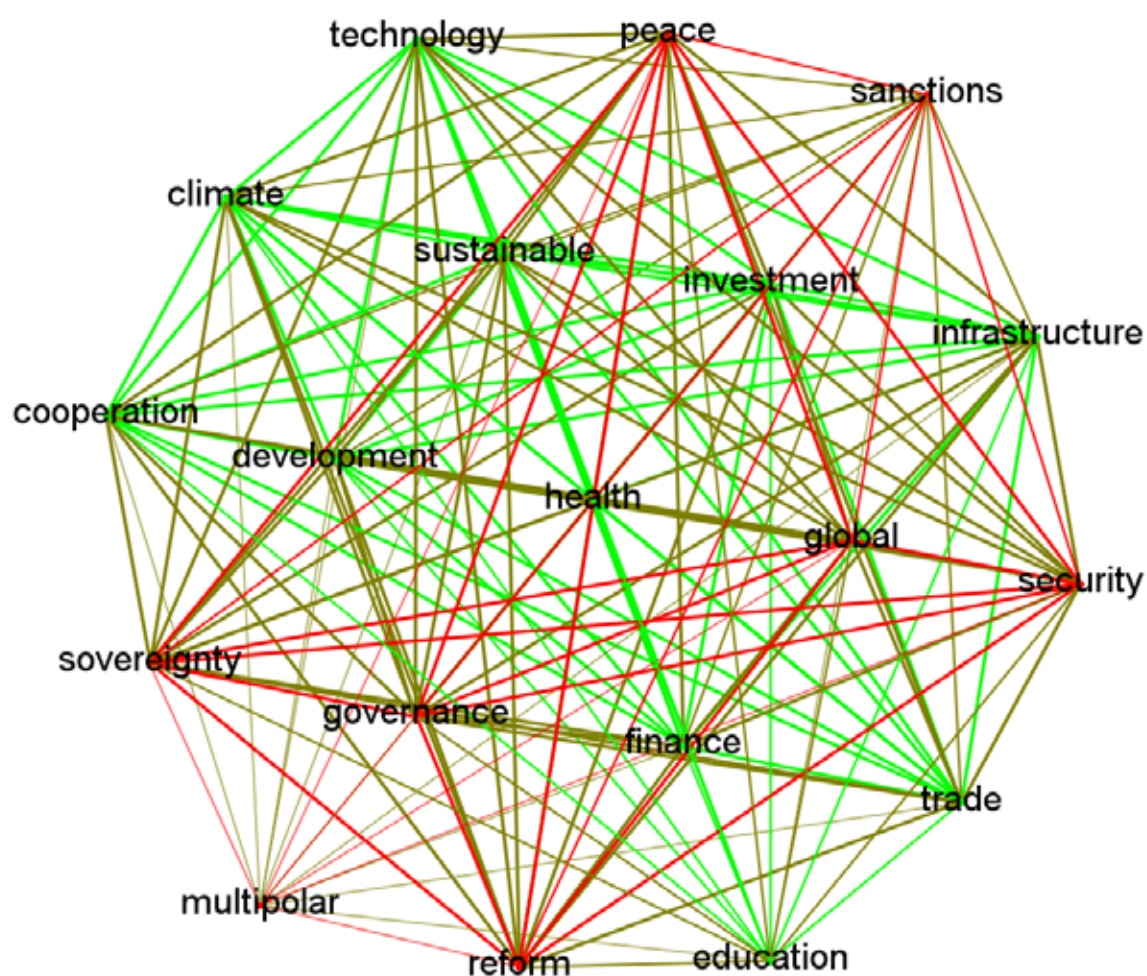
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<sup>10</sup> The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a global development strategy launched by China in 2013, aimed at promoting connectivity and economic cooperation among countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa through investments in infrastructure and development projects. The initiative comprises the Silk Road Economic Belt (land routes) and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (sea routes), encompassing over 60 countries and approximately 30% of the global GDP. For more information, visit <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/> (last accessed November 28, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> China has been promoting technology transfer to African countries, exemplified by joint projects with South Africa in the development of renewable energies. One example is the 100 MW Redstone Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) project, the first of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa, constructed by a subsidiary of POWERCHINA. For more information, visit [https://portuguese.xinhuanet.com/20240906/b9f12b90710f40bb9ab2d34aff981ec/c.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://portuguese.xinhuanet.com/20240906/b9f12b90710f40bb9ab2d34aff981ec/c.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (last accessed November 28, 2024).



## South Africa



In the analysis of South Africa, the predominance of the development agenda was evident, reflected by the high frequency of terms such as development, investment, sustainable, infrastructure, and climate. The graph for the South African summit displayed 19 nodes and 170 edges, with the Development community representing 57.89% of the nodes, showing a significant focus on sustainable economic growth and the reduction of social inequalities.

South Africa, as the representative of the African continent, has sought to highlight the importance of inclusive development that benefits not just the BRICS member countries but also other developing nations, particularly in Africa. Examples of these initiatives include the National Development Plan 2030, which aims to reduce poverty and inequality, and partnerships with the New Development Bank to finance infrastructure projects that benefit the region, reinforcing South Africa’s commitment to equitable and sustainable growth.

The term climate carries significant weight in the South African graph, reflecting the country’s interest in

environmental issues and sustainability. This highlights South Africa’s stance on promoting initiatives aimed at combating climate change, integrating these actions into the economic development effort. Examples include the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which seeks to reduce the country’s vulnerability to climate impacts. South Africa appears to view sustainability as an essential path to ensuring a more equitable and resilient future, both for its population and other developing nations.

An important observation from the South African graph was that due to the organization provided by the Fruchterman-Reingold plugin, the term health was quite centralized. This reflects the emphasis on health-related issues, highlighting the importance of improving population well-being as a fundamental part of sustainable development effort. Examples of this commitment include the National Health Insurance, which aims to ensure universal access to health services.

Terms like investment and infrastructure also appeared frequently and were strongly connected,

indicating South Africa's efforts to attract investments to improve its infrastructure and, thus, promote more equitable development. The prominence of the term sustainable reinforces the country's vision that economic development must be accompanied by environmental sustainability, consolidating South Africa's role as a leader in sustainable growth initiatives.

Furthermore, although the primary focus is on development, terms related to geopolitics, such as multipolar and cooperation, also had relevance, suggesting that South Africa recognizes the importance of a more balanced global order and the need to strengthen strategic alliances. The interconnection between cooperation and investment suggests that the country seeks international partnerships to facilitate infrastructure development and technological innovation, highlighting the importance of multilateral collaboration to achieve growth objectives.

In summary, South Africa's stance within BRICS appears to reflect a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability, with a strong focus on multilateral cooperation. The country seeks, through BRICS, to promote an agenda that favors not only the economic growth of its members but also the construction of a more inclusive and sustainable future for the entire Global South.

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<sup>12</sup> The National Development Plan (NDP) of South Africa, launched in 2012, aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. Its goals include creating 11 million jobs, improving education, expanding access to healthcare, and strengthening infrastructure to promote an inclusive and sustainable economy. The NDP also emphasizes the need to strengthen state capacity and promote social cohesion, ensuring that economic development is accompanied by social progress and effective governance. The implementation of the plan is regularly monitored to ensure the achievement of its objectives and to allow for strategic adjustments as necessary. For more information, visit <https://www.cabri-sbo.org/en/documents/national-development-plan-2030> (last accessed November 28, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) of South Africa, approved in 2019, establishes a common vision for climate adaptation and resilience in the country, identifying priority areas such as water resources, agriculture, health, biodiversity, human settlements, and disaster risk reduction. For more information, visit [https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/nationalclimatechange\\_adaptationstrategy\\_ue10november2019.pdf](https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/nationalclimatechange_adaptationstrategy_ue10november2019.pdf) (last accessed November 30, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> South Africa's National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill seeks to implement universal health coverage (UHC) by creating a single fund to finance medical services accessible to the entire population, reducing inequalities in access and costs of the health system, in line with the right to health guaranteed by the country's Constitution. For more information, visit <https://www.parliament.gov.za/project-event-details/54> (last accessed November 30, 2024).

## Challenges and Transformations in the International Order: Occupying Spaces or Building a New Order?

In the article “Brics as a Dynamic and in Process Phenomenon of Global Planning: An Analysis Based on the 2009-2020 Annual Summit Declarations”, Daldegan and Carvalho (2022) argue, based on a semantic analysis of summit declarations from 2009 to 2020, that the BRICS are not necessarily seeking to create a new international order but rather to occupy vacant spaces within existing governance structures. According to the authors:

The five countries use the group to enlarge the international order, occupying vacant spaces in the governance structures, but do not put such initiatives as embryos nor initial steps for a new international order. The BRICS do not seek to put itself as an alternative to the current order. As the major powers do not meet the demands for governance bodies reforms and democratization, the BRICS has decided to play its own role in these processes. In doing so, they created a new space to stress their common claims, year by year, and to present opinions and critics about relevant issues in each one. (Daldegan & Carvalho, 2022, p. 119).

This article suggests that the BRICS might be moving in a different direction. While Daldegan and Carvalho describe an adaptive approach aimed at occupying spaces, the graphs above indicate an underlying anti-hegemonic tone, especially under Russian leadership.

Recent events, such as the escalation of tensions with the West and economic sanctions on Russia, have made this stance more evident.

Initiatives such as BRICS Pay and efforts to create a new international reserve currency reflect this more assertive and confrontational posture, underscoring a move to reduce dependence on the US-dominated financial system. As pointed out by Paulo Nogueira Batista Jr. (2024), the growing hostility between members like Russia and China and the West has led to concrete actions, such as alternatives to the dollar, that explicitly challenge Western hegemony.

It cannot be said that this more assertive and anti-hegemonic tone is exclusive to Russia. Although the graphs show that the geopolitical agenda is more prominent in summits held in Russia, these declarations are products of consensus. In other words, the expressed positions reflect a shared vision among all BRICS members.

The desire to build a new order, less centered on the hegemonic power structures of the US and the West, is present across all BRICS members, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis. Initiatives such as the development of BRICS Pay and discussions on a new reserve currency represent a collective effort to strengthen the group's economic sovereignty and reduce vulnerability to external pressures. This movement aims not only at de-dollarization but also at creating concrete mechanisms for financial cooperation that can directly benefit the member countries' economies and the entire Global South, promoting greater stability and economic independence in the global context.

The return of Donald Trump to the US presidency represents a new challenge for the BRICS, heightening

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<sup>15</sup> As reported by Reuters on November 30, 2024, during an event in Texas, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump warned BRICS countries about the consequences of replacing the U.S. dollar with a new currency or supporting another currency that could replace it. Trump stated that the implementation of an alternative currency by BRICS or support for another currency would result in the imposition of 100% tariffs by the United States, jeopardizing these countries' access to the American market. For more information, visit <https://www.reuters.com/world/trump-warns-brics-nations-against-replacing-us-dollar-2024-11-30/> (last accessed November 30, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> During the 16th BRICS Summit, held in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva participated via videoconference and advocated for the creation of alternative payment methods for transactions among BRICS countries. He emphasized that this initiative does not aim to replace national currencies but rather to reflect the desired multipolar order in the international financial system. Lula highlighted the need to address this issue with seriousness, caution, and technical soundness, asserting that the debate can no longer be postponed. For more information, access Lula's full speech at: [https://www.gov.br/planalto/pt-br/acompanhe-o-planalto/discursos-e-pronunciamentos/2024/10/discorso-do-presidente-lula-em-sessao-plenaria-aberta-da-xvi-cupula-do-brics-na-russia?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.gov.br/planalto/pt-br/acompanhe-o-planalto/discursos-e-pronunciamentos/2024/10/discorso-do-presidente-lula-em-sessao-plenaria-aberta-da-xvi-cupula-do-brics-na-russia?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (last accessed December 3, 2024).

tensions with the West. The resumption of protectionist and aggressive policies by the US may push the group to intensify its coordination, particularly regarding de-dollarization and the strengthening of alternatives to the Western financial system.

In this context, the 2025 summit in Brazil emerges as a crucial opportunity for BRICS to advance its strategic agenda, especially considering the potential intensification of geopolitical tensions resulting from Donald Trump's stance. President Lula has publicly expressed his support for de-dollarization and the strengthening of alternative financial mechanisms on multiple occasions, reinforcing expectations that Brazilian leadership could play a decisive role in driving concrete actions in this direction.

It is therefore anticipated that Brazilian leadership will contribute to strengthening consensus and promoting concrete actions to solidify the group's position as a relevant alternative to Western hegemony.

In summary, BRICS presents itself as a diverse and multifaceted coalition, in which the tensions between development and geopolitics are reflected in the declarations and stances of its members. The coexistence of these agendas shapes the joint actions of the group and defines its role as a relevant actor both in promoting inclusive development and in reconfiguring global power dynamics. Continuing this analysis is essential to understand how BRICS, in its expansion and transformation, will continue to impact global governance and redefine relationships in the international system.

## Conclusion

In this article, I explored the dynamic between the agendas of development and geopolitics within BRICS, highlighting how these two streams coexist and manifest distinctly in each of the member countries.

Through a semantic analysis of the declarations from the summits of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, it was possible to identify patterns that reflect the specific priorities and directions of each country, revealing the nuances of their contributions to the group. While all five countries share the intention of challenging the established international order, each adheres to this agenda in a distinct manner, according to their specific political, economic, and military capacities.

The Kazan Summit in 2024 symbolized a turning point, underscoring the growing role of geopolitics in BRICS, particularly with the creation of BRICS Pay and the entry of new members and partners. However, the aggregated analysis of the declarations shows that development remains a central element for the majority of the group's countries, although there is a growing movement towards a more assertive and challenging agenda against the established international order.



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