



BRICS Role in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order

Editor

Ruchita Beri

© Vivekananda International Foundation

Published in 2026 by

Vivekananda International Foundation2
3, San Martin Marg | Chanakyapuri | New Delhi - 110021
Tel: 011-24121764 | Fax: 011-66173415

E-mail: info@vifindia.org
Website: www.vifindia.org

Follow us on:
Twitter | [@vifindia](https://twitter.com/vifindia)
Facebook | [/vifindia](https://www.facebook.com/vifindia)

Disclaimer: The paper is the author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article/paper is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/web upload elsewhere, and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed, and are believed to be correct. Views expressed by the author are personal in nature.

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	5
<i>Editor's Note</i>	11
<i>About the Contributors</i>	13

PART I

Perspectives from BRICS Member Countries

View From India <i>Sudhakar Dalela</i>	21
View From Brazil <i>Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega</i>	26
View From Russia <i>Roman Babushkin</i>	29
View From China <i>Xu Feihong</i>	32
View From South Africa <i>Cedrick C. Crowley</i>	35
View From Indonesia <i>Maulana Syahid</i>	38
View From Iran <i>Omid Babelian</i>	43
View From India <i>Shambhu L. Hakki</i>	47

PART II
BRICS Perspectives from India

BRICS at 20: Emerging Economies or Emerging powers	53
<i>Sanjay Bhattacharyya</i>	
The Future of BRICS: Strengthening Cooperation in an Evolving Global Order	60
<i>Anil Trigunayat</i>	
The Future of BRICS: Strengthening Cooperation in an Evolving Global Order	65
<i>Dammu Ravi</i>	
The Evolving Global Order and the Role of BRICS	71
<i>Gulshan Sachdeva</i>	
Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Another Priority for Cooperation amongst BRICS?	78
<i>Ruchita Beri</i>	
Beyond Declarations: BRICS and the Challenge of Coordinated Global Governance Reform	82
<i>Rajeesh Kumar</i>	
Customised Curriculum—The Key Missing Link in the BRICS Education Ecosystem	87
<i>Atul Aneja</i>	
India's BRICS Presidency at a Moment of Turbulence	91
<i>Indrani Talukdar</i>	
BRICS and the Gender Imperative: India's Chairship as a Turning Point	98
<i>Shambhavi Anand</i>	
Event Report	105
BRICS: Role and Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order	
Recommendations	128

Foreword

2026 is a consequential year for BRICS. India has assumed the Presidency at a time when the world is seeking new models of cooperation. A number of meetings are being held in the lead up to the summit meeting next month. BRICS has evolved significantly. The grouping now has 10 full members. Saudi Arabia is an invited country. In addition, there are 10 partner countries and over 30 countries that have formally expressed interest in joining or cooperating with BRICS. Today, BRICS represents 45 percent of the world's population and 30 percent of global GDP. The decisions we take here have real consequences for the Global South. This volume is our small contribution — to take stock, to identify challenges, and to suggest ideas for the BRICS Summit at New Delhi.

Review of Work Done: Concrete Outcomes

Under India's Presidency, we have already seen substantive engagement across tracks:

- *BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting*

A Chairman's Statement was issued. Consensus was reached on reforming global governance, denouncing terrorism, including the Pahalgam attack, climate action, DPI & AI, and energy/food security. The Statement also noted differing views on West Asia/Middle East.

- *BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting, Chandigarh*

Unanimously adopted the 16th Health Ministerial Declaration on pandemic preparedness, digital health, and mental wellness. NIMHANS will coordinate the BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on Mental Wellness.

- *BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting, Gurugram*
Adopted the 11th Joint Communiqué and launched the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage.
- *BRICS Transport Ministers' Meeting, Nagpur*
Unanimously adopted a Ministerial Declaration on sustainable transport, Sustainable Aviation Fuel, and logistics supply chain cooperation.
- *Other Tracks:* The Women track adopted its first-ever joint statement. Justice Ministers agreed on ADR and mediation. Disaster Risk Reduction Ministers met in New Delhi to strengthen early warning and resilience.

These outcomes show that BRICS is moving from dialogue to delivery.

- *BRICS Values*
If you look at the Presidency themes over the years, a clear set of BRICS values emerges. From Russia's emphasis on Partnership, to South Africa's focus on Inclusion, Brazil's push for Innovation, and China's call for Solidarity — each host has added to the BRICS DNA.

For the first time, India has given direct meaning to each letter of BRICS through our theme: Building Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.

These are not just words. They reflect what the Global South expects from BRICS — equity, development, and a stronger voice in global affairs.

- *BRICS Institutions: Beyond a Talk Shop*
And BRICS is no longer just a talk shop. Beyond the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, we now have a BRICS

Business Council, Women's Business Alliance, Institutes for Future Networks, Energy and Agriculture, and a Vaccine R&D Centre.

The BRICS Think Tanks Council has also been putting forward concrete ideas — from a BRICS cross-border payment system and local currency mechanisms, to the proposal for a BRICS Rating Agency and a stronger Global South development agenda.

Our Think Tanks Council and Academic Forum ensure policy ideas flow directly into government decisions.

These institutions show that BRICS is addressing real Global South concerns — from infrastructure financing and food security to digital inclusion and pandemic preparedness.

- *Financial Cooperation*

On financial cooperation, BRICS has also been clear. The Chairman's Statement of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, April 2026 notes that BRICS encourages "the use of local currencies in trade and financial transactions between BRICS countries and their trading partners" as part of building a more resilient international monetary system.

This reflects a shared priority to reduce vulnerabilities and expand options for developing economies.

- *Challenges We Face*

But let me also flag some challenges that will define our discussions:

- *Difficult Geopolitical Environment:* We meet at a time of ongoing wars and conflicts in different regions. This has deepened divisions and made consensus-building more difficult.
- *Erosion of Rule-Based Order and Multilateralism:* The principles of the UN Charter and a rules-based international system are

under stress. Institutions are being questioned, and selective approaches are weakening trust in multilateralism.

- o *Economic Volatility*: Debt, inflation, and fragmented trade are hurting developing economies most.
- o *Climate and Energy Transition*: The transition must be just, financed, and technology-driven.
- o *Digital & AI Divide*: Without cooperation, new technologies could widen inequalities.
- o *Credibility of Multilateralism*: If BRICS seeks reform of global institutions, we must demonstrate it in our own processes.

The Work Ahead

As we look to the Delhi Summit, three things will matter:

First, Outcomes: The Summit must deliver on health, energy, transport, digital infrastructure, and MSMEs. *Second, Inclusivity*: BRICS must remain open to the Global South and to voices beyond governments — think tanks, youth, and business. *Third, Credibility*: BRICS must speak with one voice on peace, development, and reform. India's theme captures this spirit.

Role of VIF and Think Tanks

At Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), we believe think tanks have a special responsibility to provide honest assessments and practical ideas. The BRICS Think Tanks Council's recommendations this year on financial cooperation, AI governance, and sustainable development are a case in point.

India's Presidency comes with both opportunity and responsibility. BRICS members represent some of the world's oldest and most vibrant civilisations, and together we carry the responsibility to shape a more just and inclusive global order. In the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — One Earth*,

One Family, One Future — and guided by our civilisational ideas of *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah* — May all be happy, and Swasti — May there be well-being for all, let us work to make BRICS more resilient, more relevant, and more responsive.

This special volume by Vivekananda International Foundation brings together the views expressed by BRICS Ambassadors, representatives, eminent persons and experts during a discussion organised by the Foundation on the theme “**BRICS Role and Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order**” on 2 August 2026 in New Delhi. I thank all authors, including the BRICS ambassadors for their contribution and hope this volume will provide readers a deeper understanding the role of BRICS grouping and their imperative to work together for a common destiny.

Arvind Gupta
Director, VIF

Editor's Note

Ruchita Beri

The international order is undergoing a period of significant transformation, marked by geopolitical uncertainties, economic fragmentation, technological disruption, climate change and growing pressures on existing multilateral institutions. These developments have reinforced the need for platforms that can facilitate dialogue, strengthen cooperation and contribute to practical and inclusive responses to emerging global challenges.

In this evolving environment, BRICS has assumed increasing importance as a platform for cooperation among emerging economies and for articulating the perspectives and aspirations of the Global South. Since its establishment, the grouping has expanded both in its membership and in the breadth of issues it addresses. As BRICS enters its third decade and marks its twentieth anniversary, its role in shaping a more resilient, sustainable and representative global order merits renewed consideration.

India's BRICS Chairship in 2026 comes at an important juncture in this evolution. Guided by the theme, **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability,"** India has sought to advance a practical and development-oriented agenda encompassing resilience, innovation, sustainable development, digital technologies, climate action, energy security, economic cooperation and reforms of global governance institutions.

Against this backdrop, the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) organised a Discussion on **"BRICS Role and Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order"** on 12 August 2026 in New

Delhi. The discussion brought together BRICS Ambassadors, diplomats, policymakers, scholars and strategic experts to examine the evolving role of BRICS and consider the priorities that could strengthen the grouping's contribution to global governance and international cooperation.

This publication is an outcome of that discussion and seeks to capture and carry forward the diverse perspectives that emerged during the deliberations. It brings together the proceedings and key interventions from the discussion alongside analytical and forward-looking opinion pieces on the role and priorities of BRICS. The contributions examine issues relating to multilateralism, global governance, economic cooperation, resilience, innovation, sustainable development and the broader aspirations of the Global South.

The publication does not seek to present a single or uniform view of BRICS. Rather, it reflects the diversity of perspectives surrounding the grouping at a consequential stage of its evolution. The views presented by diplomats, practitioners and scholars provide different lenses through which to understand the opportunities and challenges confronting BRICS and the possibilities for strengthening cooperation among its members.

As BRICS continues to evolve, its effectiveness will depend not only on the breadth of its membership but also on its ability to build consensus, deepen practical cooperation and translate shared priorities into meaningful outcomes. The discussions and contributions compiled in this volume seek to contribute to this continuing conversation.

I hope that this publication will serve as a useful reference for scholars, policymakers, practitioners and all those interested in BRICS, the Global South and the changing international order.

About the Contributors

Arvind Gupta is the Director of the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi, and a former Indian Foreign Service officer of the 1979 batch. He has held several senior diplomatic and strategic positions, including serving as Deputy National Security Adviser to the Government of India from 2014 to 2017. An eminent scholar and author, his latest book, *The Silent Enemy: Non-traditional Challenges to National Security*, was published in 2025.

Anil Trigunayat is a Distinguished Fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) and a former Indian Foreign Service officer. During his diplomatic career, he served in Indian Missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Mongolia, the United States, Russia, Sweden, Nigeria, Libya and Jordan. At the Ministry of External Affairs, he worked in the Economic, West Asia and North Africa, and Consular Divisions, and served as Director General/Joint Secretary for the Gulf and Haj Divisions. He subsequently served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of India in Moscow and as Ambassador of India to Jordan and Libya and High Commissioner to Malta. His areas of interest include international relations, diplomacy, trade and geopolitical affairs.

Atul Aneja is a geopolitical analyst specializing on Eurasian transitions. He is also the chairman of the supervisory board of the BRICS Education Council based in Moscow.

Cedrick C. Crowley is Deputy High Commissioner and Minister Plenipotentiary at the High Commission of South Africa in New Delhi. With nearly two decades of experience in diplomacy and international relations, he has held senior

positions within South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation and its Permanent Mission to the United Nations. His areas of expertise include African affairs, multilateral diplomacy, peacebuilding, G20 and UN economic organisations, and AU-UN cooperation.

Dammu Ravi is a former Secretary (Economic Relations) and BRICS Sherpa in the Ministry of External Affairs. A 1989-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, he has served in Indian missions in Mexico, Cuba and Brussels and as Joint Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean. During his tenure in the Department of Commerce, he handled India's trade policy and WTO issues and was a lead negotiator for the RCEP. As Secretary (Economic Relations), he focused on India's economic diplomacy, development partnerships with the Global South, engagement with Africa and emerging strategic technologies.

Gulshan Sachdeva is Professor and Jean Monnet Chair at the Centre for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). His research focuses on European economic integration, Eurasian connectivity, development cooperation, energy security and India's external economic engagements. He has held several academic and institutional positions, including Chief Coordinator of DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence at RIS and Coordinator of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. He has published extensively on Europe, Russia and Eurasia, connectivity, geo-economics, energy security and South-South cooperation.

Indrani Talukdar is a Fellow at the Chintan Research Foundation, where she focuses on Eurasia, including Russia, the Baltics, the Caucasus and neighbouring regions, as well as Turkey and its foreign policy. Her broader research interests include international relations, security studies, conflict resolution and peace studies. She has previously served as faculty at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, where she contributed to the training of Indian Foreign Service officer trainees and other Ministry of External Affairs officials. She has

also worked as a Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi.

Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega is the Ambassador of Brazil to India. During his diplomatic career, he has held several senior positions in Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Secretary of State for Europe, Middle East and Africa, Director of Interregional Mechanisms, and BRICS and IBSA Sous-Sherpa. He has also served in Brazilian diplomatic missions in Washington, Berlin, Warsaw, Geneva and Lima, bringing extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and international cooperation.

Maulana Syahid is Minister Counsellor at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in New Delhi. A career diplomat, he has served in Indonesian diplomatic missions in Doha, Riyadh and Kabul. At headquarters, he has worked on ASEAN cultural cooperation, citizen protection and diplomatic facilities. He has also served as Deputy Director in the International Cooperation Division of Indonesia's National Counter-Terrorism Agency, contributing to international counter-terrorism cooperation and regional and global engagement.

Omid Babelian is the IPIS Representative in India at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He holds a PhD in Indian Subcontinent Studies from the University of Tehran, with research interests spanning India, international relations, diplomacy and political discourse. He has undertaken professional programmes in diplomacy, mediation, preventive diplomacy, international law and international trade negotiations. He also writes regularly for Indian and Iranian media.

Rajeesh Kumar is a Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA). He holds a PhD from the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and has previously taught at Jamia Millia Islamia and the University

of Calicut. His research interests include multilateralism, international security, peacekeeping and India's engagement with Africa. He is the author and co-editor of several books and has published extensively in academic journals and leading newspapers. He was also a Co-Chair of the Think-20 Task Force on 'Reformed Multilateralism: Transforming Global Institutions and Frameworks' during India's G20 Presidency.

Roman Babushkin is the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in India. He has extensive experience in India, the Asia-Pacific region and multilateral diplomacy. He has served in various capacities at the Russian Embassy in India and as Counsellor at the BRICS Desk of the Foreign Policy Planning Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has served as Minister-Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi since July 2019.

Ruchita Beri is a Senior Fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. Previously, she served as Senior Research Associate and Centre Coordinator for Africa, Latin America, Caribbean and United Nations at MP-IDSA. With over three decades of research experience, her areas of expertise include Sub-Saharan Africa, India-Africa relations, political economy, security, emerging powers in Africa and the Indian Ocean region. She is a former President of the African Studies Association of India and has served on several academic and editorial boards. She has authored and edited numerous books, articles and book chapters and holds an M.Phil. in African Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University and an advanced diploma in Conflict Studies from Uppsala University.

Sanjay Bhattacharyya is a former Secretary (CPV & OIA) and former BRICS Sherpa in the Ministry of External Affairs. A career diplomat with extensive experience in bilateral and multilateral affairs, he has served as India's Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Turkey, and Egypt and the

Arab League. He has also played a significant role in advancing India's Act East Policy and engagement with ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific. He is currently engaged as an independent consultant, academic, policy commentator and corporate adviser.

Shambhavi Anand is a Research Associate at the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. She has been a Research Assistant at VIF from November 2024 to December 2025. She holds a PhD from the Department of African Studies, University of Delhi, India. She completed her M.Phil. from the same department. Shambhavi has a Master's in History, specializing in Modern Indian History, from Hindu College, University of Delhi. She graduated in History from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. She has interned at the Ministry of Women and Child Development which helped her gain valuable firsthand experience in gender studies and public policy. Her primary area of research is Africa, with a special focus on conflict and security issues, as well as the role of Africa in international geopolitics.

Shambhu L. Hakki is Joint Secretary (Multilateral Economic Relations & G20) in the Ministry of External Affairs and India's G20 and BRICS Sous-Sherpa. A 2008-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, he has served as Consul General of India in Guangzhou and in Indian Missions in Beijing and Washington, D.C. He has also held positions in the Ministry of External Affairs, with experience spanning multilateral economic relations and India's international engagements.

Sudhakar Dalela is Secretary (Economic Relations) and BRICS Sherpa in the Ministry of External Affairs. A career diplomat, he has served in Indian Missions in Brasilia, Chicago, Dhaka, Geneva, Thimphu and Washington, D.C. He previously served as Ambassador of India to Bhutan from 2022 to 2025 and has held several senior positions in the Ministry of External Affairs and

the Prime Minister's Office, covering India's relations with South Asia, East Asia, the Indo-Pacific, the Gulf, the Middle East and Africa.

Xu Feihong is the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to India, a position he assumed in May 2024. A career diplomat who joined China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1987, he has held several senior positions, including Director of the Information Department, Deputy Director-General of the European Department and Assistant Foreign Minister for Administrative and Financial Affairs. He has previously served as China's Ambassador to Afghanistan and Romania.

PART I

Perspectives from BRICS Member Countries

View From India

Sudhakar Dalela

As India's BRICS Sherpa, it has been a privilege to witness, first-hand, BRICS members' collective commitment to strengthening the forum as a platform for dialogue and practical cooperation.

At a time when BRICS itself marks two decades of evolution, this is an opportune moment to take stock of the grouping's journey, the principles guiding our Chairship, progress across various tracks, and the outcomes shaping the Summit, and beyond.

Over the past two decades, BRICS has evolved from an idea into one of the foremost platforms for cooperation among Emerging Markets and Developing Countries. Representing nearly half the world's population, and around forty per cent of global GDP, it reflects the growing economic weight and collective voice of the developing world.

What began as a platform for economic cooperation and financial governance reform has grown into a broad-based strategic partnership — spanning trade and investment, sustainable development, energy security, health, agriculture, digital transformation, science and technology, security, business-to-business and people-to-people exchanges.

With its recent expansion, BRICS has further strengthened its role in advancing a more inclusive multipolar global order. Despite this transformation, at its core, BRICS remains a platform for practical cooperation, which India has had the opportunity to steer and shape on four occasions.

★★★

India's BRICS Chairships have repeatedly coincided with periods of profound global change. In 2012, it was a fragile post-crisis recovery period of the Eurozone crisis. In 2021, it was the unprecedented disruption caused by COVID-19, with the entire chairship conducted virtually. Today, in 2026, we navigate heightened geopolitical tensions, supply-chain disruptions and rapid technological transformation.

Assuming the BRICS Chairship for the fourth time, India did so with a clear purpose. Guided by the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision, our endeavour has been to redefine BRICS works around the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," and advance it through a people-centric approach", rooted in the spirit of "Humanity First."

This vision reflects the realities of today's world while seeking to build a shared future — founded on resilience in uncertainty, innovation that serves development, and sustainability for generations to come.



A vision, however compelling, is ultimately judged by its execution. Accordingly, India translated its Chairship priorities into an ambitious programme of engagement - over 400 meetings planned across over 30 Ministerial and Heads-of-Agencies tracks, in nearly 30 cities across the country.

This scale reflects both the diversity of the BRICS agenda and India's commitment to a substantive and outcome-oriented Chairship. It reflects a whole-of-nation approach, with Central Ministries, State Governments, industry, academia, think tanks, youth and other stakeholders contributing to the success of the Chairship.

With more than 350 meetings already concluded, these engagements have generated substantive progress across the BRICS agenda. I thank all BRICS

members and partner countries for their active participation and support to collaborative work this year.

Broadly speaking, India's initiatives under its Chairship have been guided by two complementary objectives: consolidating progress from previous Chairships while integrating the expanded membership with greater coherence; and translating the Chairship theme into practical outcomes through building digital platforms, cooperative frameworks and knowledge sharing initiatives, as enduring platforms for collaboration, not one-off deliverables.



While work continues across the breadth of the BRICS agenda, allow me to highlight a few areas that reflect the practical and future-oriented approach guiding our work this year.

Under the Resilience Pillar, we are strengthening cooperation towards secure supply chains, resilient infrastructure, climate adaptation and sustainable food systems. As regards the Innovation Pillar, we are promoting greater collaboration among start-ups, entrepreneurs, research institutions and technology ecosystems, building a more connected innovation landscape.

Under the Cooperation Pillar, partnerships are being pursued across economic, institutional, cultural and people-to-people domains. Under the Sustainability Pillar, cooperation spans across sustainable agriculture, clean energy, responsible lifestyles and environmental stewardship.

In agriculture, new platforms and frameworks are strengthening cooperation on digital agriculture, agroecology, regenerative agriculture and food security.

In trade and finance, efforts focus on strengthening resilient trade, internationalisation of MSMEs, global value-chain cooperation, advancing in-

voice-discounting mechanisms, and deepening cooperation on growth, development and taxation.

As regard industry track, cooperation on MSMEs, photovoltaics, start-ups, resilient logistics has been supported by new frameworks and action plans, including proposed BRICS Incubator Network and the possibility of a Start-up Innovation Fund to foster innovation-led growth.

In energy, initiatives include the Guiding Principles and Digital Centre of Excellence on Smart Grids and Energy Storage, and cooperation on hydrogen value chains. In health, our new priorities on healthy lifestyles, mental wellness, traditional, complimentary and integrative medicine are supported by frameworks for knowledge-sharing and capacity building.

In the culture track, members have advanced cooperation in cultural and creative industries and in promoting traditional knowledge systems.

Beyond these, new platforms in transport, labour and women-led development—including the BRICS Urban Mobility Hub, the BRICS Connect platform and repositories of best practices on financial and digital inclusion—are strengthening institutional linkages across BRICS.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect the central approach of moving from dialogue to delivery, from individual initiatives to enduring mechanisms, and cooperation that creates tangible value.



We have sought to make BRICS more inclusive by engaging beyond governments. Business, academia, think tanks, women entrepreneurs, youth and other stakeholders are contributing to a stronger BRICS partnership through engagements including BRICS Business Forum, Woman Business Alliance, Academic Forum, Civil Forum, and WAVES Bazaar.

Equally important has been Given your experience and interest in the subject, we would be pleased to invite you to the interaction and request you to share your valuable views during the discussion.to make India's BRICS Chairship a truly whole-of-society engagement through **Jan Bhagidari initiatives** - celebrating cultural traditions of BRICS through Music, Theatre, Arts and Crafts, Sports, Yoga, tree plantation drives. These initiatives reaffirm that diplomacy is strongest when it is anchored in people's participation.



As we move towards the Summit later this year, our focus is on translating months of consultations and consensus-building into a forward-looking, action-oriented agenda with tangible outcomes.

We expect the Summit to reaffirm the grouping's commitment to reform of global governance, inclusive multilateralism, global peace and security, fight against terrorism, and practical cooperation on development priorities of the Global South.

Alongside BRICS member and partner countries, we look forward to welcoming outreach invitees and heads of international organisations, reinforcing our belief that synergies are essential to addressing shared global challenges.

As BRICS enters its third decade, India's endeavour has been to help the grouping evolve with purpose - strengthening institutions, deepening partnerships and delivering practical, people-centric outcomes.

View From Brazil

Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega

I start, of course, already benefiting from my previous speakers that have set the stage regarding the geopolitical backdrop against which we are now living and against which BRICS is operating. I am also thankful for the very rich overview provided by Indian Sherpa of the BRICS Presidency this year. So, my starting point is by saying that much has been written about BRICS over the course of its almost 20 years of existence.

Assessments on the results achieved by the group and what its priorities should be vary, indeed, widely. These assessments, I think, vary widely often because they are based on different definitions of what BRICS is and its *raison d'être*. Of course, I will not comment at this time on the interests and ideological views that underlie these different definitions. But against this backdrop, let me propose as a starting point a working definition of BRICS from the Brazilian perspective. I take full responsibility when I articulate this definition. It's based, of course, on internal discussions throughout the years of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and based also on instructions sent to our missions.

But it's my entire responsibility. So here would be the definition: BRICS is an informal coordination and cooperation mechanism created by a common vision of the political leaders of its member countries. This common vision is that despite their geographical dispersion and diverse historical, socio-economic and cultural trajectories, all members share a common interest in

1. promoting the sustainable development of its members through practical

cooperation and 2. the reform of global government institutions so that they better reflect the new multipolar configuration of power created by the rise of emerging and developing countries.

So, this shared vision of our leaders, if we have in mind this working definition, has always been promoted with pragmatism and patience, always in a spirit of consensus building, and invariably sensitive to the diversity of its members, both in terms of interests and worldviews. And the focus has been always in seeking common ground rather than exacerbating our differences.

So, the recognition of diversity, of interests and worldviews has always impregnated or underlined the discussions and the BRICS negotiations. So, I think that the pursuit of cooperation amid diversity is part of BRICS DNA, therefore, and this makes it a group that continues to have much to contribute, especially against the backdrop of a challenging geopolitical context in which we live. So, I think it comes, I would say, perhaps naturally to BRICS, this proactive pursuit of cooperation amid diversity, and also this proactive effort to promote greater predictability and resilience for its members, and of course addressing the major global challenges in a pragmatic manner.

So, what we see as of late is that given that all the actions towards the reform of global governance are kind of blocked for a number of reasons that we know, we see BRICS becoming more and more inclusive in the sense of encompassing and giving more importance to a number of issues of global South prioritarian agenda. I think climate change financing, for example, is a case in point. And also, you see BRICS playing a role in trying in this moment where we are rewiring economic relations and value chains in the pursuit of ensuring resilience to its members.

And the Brazilian viewpoint regarding these two aspects has always been that we are not cooperating against any other country or interest. Of course, the two pillars of international relations are cooperation and competition.

Cooperation can, of course, lead to new configurations of competition, but not necessarily conflict.

I think drawing the line between competition and conflict, is another area where BRICS has in its DNA much to contribute. And this has been really the case in the Indian presidency, how it's been carrying out this presidency against such a challenging geopolitical backdrop. And the results are so far significant, not only in terms of concrete outcomes, per se, that's already been mentioned, but also from a political standpoint.

Despite the evident challenging geopolitical context, the conflict in West Asia, and its impact on the group's internal dynamics, India has demonstrated, convening power. Convening power in the sense that being effective in convincing all member countries, without exception, to sit around the same table to discuss notoriously difficult issues. And I think this is no small achievement given the world we are living in.

Just to conclude, I don't want to be too long, we have still a month to the summit, and some additional high-level meetings are still to be convened. But what we are seeing is a presidency that is delivering more than the simple sum of its concrete achievements. Because it's convening a message, not only that we can deliver practical cooperation, but also have the capacity to administrate the dynamics of a group in such a challenging moment.

View From Russia

Roman Babushkin

At the outset, I'd like to reaffirm Russia's full support for the priorities of the Indian Chairship. Highly appreciated is the successful and exceptionally hospital hosting crucial meetings of national security advisers, ministers of foreign affairs, justice, health, energy, agriculture, trade, industry, education, culture and hundreds of many others. Russia is committed to contribute in every possible way to India's endeavors to make the forthcoming Summit a landmark.

Over the past two decades, BRICS has evolved into a genuinely comprehensive platform of cooperation, spanning political and security matters, economy and finance, and humanitarian ties – what is often described as our three pillars. It now touches on almost every dimension of interstate engagement. Regular channels of dialogue among ministries, parliaments, business communities and civil society got robust with the agenda growing wider and more diverse. The expansion of our membership has brought clear benefits emanating from new opportunities for cooperation and a stronger BRICS voice on the world stage to support the establishment of just and equal multipolarity amid a broader shift in the world economy towards Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our founding principles of consensus, continuity, sovereign equality, mutual respect as well as the central role of the UN remain the basis of our work, together with a constant focus on improving the practical returns of our cooperation.

As like-minded partners on major global issues from the strengthening of the multilateral trading system to artificial intelligence, international terrorism

and cyber- and information security, Russia believes it's natural to strengthen BRICS coordination in the framework of multilateral fora, first of all the UN. We've got a very successful experience of coordination on the G20 agenda, including at the Leaders' level, so it would be very instrumental to build on such a practice.

Even if sometimes our positions don't entirely coincide, like what we witness around the current controversial stage of the Middle East crisis, it's an irresistible culture of dialogue in the BRICS family that brings all of us to the same table and makes everyone's voice heard and respected. Again, a large credit goes to India's Chairship.

Moreover, BRICS is of an increasingly high demand in today's period of profound transformation in international relations followed by greater complexity and uncertainty. In these circumstances BRICS's core capability is to create independent mechanisms for pragmatic cooperation, with the purpose remains entirely constructive: to foster favourable conditions for sustained growth, to build up the social, economic, innovative and human potential of its members, and to support developing countries and emerging markets in addressing pressing challenges. This is exactly the value added of BRICS partnership.

The New Development Bank is set to play a central role as a leading financial institution supporting large-scale infrastructure and sustainable development projects. Additionally, the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism's emphasis on financing in local currencies is critical for economic resilience. Success in these areas will not only benefit BRICS members but also contribute to a more balanced and equitable global economic system. As a matter of fact, de-dollarization is an increasing global trend, with the global settlement infrastructure has dramatically diversified starting from just 35 states promoting national payment systems in 2020 to more than

140 as of now. Therefore, the initiatives launched during Russia's Chairship in 2024 such as the BRICS Cross-Border Payment Initiative, BRICS Clear, a BRICS reinsurance capacity, the New Investment Platform, and the BRICS Grain Exchange, seem especially relevant. Currently, the ongoing meeting of BRICS central banks governors in Jaipur today and tomorrow is expected to expand this agenda further, including possible use of digital currencies.

More to add, our forward-looking energy dialogue is aimed to support ensuring predictability of the global energy market as well as the balance of interests between major energy producers and consumers. Solid steps were taken recently during trade ministers' meeting in Jaipur, which proposed a Jaipur Consensus to support MSMEs, establishment of the BRICS Technical Council and the BRICS Connect initiative. The comprehensive BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy 2030 is about also to be adopted at the Summit. We are advancing with confidence in the areas of e-commerce, outer space, innovations, youth exchanges, water and waste management, urban development, healthcare, including nuclear medicine, closing technological gaps, etc.

No doubt that India's BRICS presidency, with our shared support, will mark another milestone in the evolution of the grouping. The BRICS phenomenon continues to gain momentum, offering a coherent and compelling vision for the future. By prioritizing practical cooperation, reforming global governance institutions, and advancing inclusive development, BRICS contributes meaningfully to the creation of a more just, sustainable, and multipolar world order.

While the challenges ahead are considerable, our collective potential forms a solid foundation to address the complexities of the 21st century and shape a future that benefits all nations. Thank you.

View From China

Xu Feihong

In September 2026, the leaders of BRICS countries will gather in New Delhi to discuss the prospects for greater BRICS cooperation. As Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out, standing at the forefront of the Global South, BRICS countries should act on the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, jointly uphold multilateralism, advance greater BRICS cooperation, and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Over the past two decades since its founding, BRICS has grown into a MAGIC force in the world that safeguards peace, promotes development, and upholds justice. Entering the third decade, we have the responsibility to enable BRICS to achieve more MAGIC outcomes. Now, I would like to share my personal views on the characteristic and development direction of BRICS cooperation with the help of the five letters of MAGIC.

M for multilateralism. History tells us that multilateralism is the shared aspiration of the people and overarching trend of our time. In today's world, hegemonism, unilateralism and protectionism are getting more and more rampant. As an important force driving the reform of the global governance system, BRICS should always hold high the banner of multilateralism, safeguard the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, unequivocally oppose hegemonism, unilateralism and protectionism, and steadfastly safeguard the common interests of the Global South.

A for action. BRICS is not a talking shop, but a task force that gets things done. Over the past two decades, BRICS countries have actively advanced practical cooperation and achieved fruitful outcomes in areas such as economy, trade,

finance, science, technology, education, culture and health. As the most tangible manifestation of BRICS cooperation, the New Development Bank has approved 120 projects, with a total loan portfolio of approximately \$40 billion, providing robust financial support for the development of member states across numerous fields. In the future, we should strengthen coordination on macroeconomic policies, adopt more trade and investment facilitation measures, advance cooperation on local currency and cross-border payment systems, and yield more tangible outcomes.

G for global governance. The collective rise of the Global South is unstoppable, yet we remain severely underrepresented in terms of voices in global governance. Facing the severe global governance deficit, we must consolidate the rule-of-law foundation of global governance. The Global Governance Initiative (GGI) put forward by President Xi Jinping provides a Chinese approach for reforming and improving global governance. Last month, China hosted the 2026 World AI Conference and established the World AI Cooperation Organization. China welcomes BRICS countries to actively join the Organization and work together to build a fair and equitable global AI governance system.

I for inclusiveness. The BRICS' expansion in recent years truly demonstrated its strong vitality. We should uphold the inclusiveness and universally-beneficial nature of BRICS cooperation, ensure more Global South countries participate in BRICS cooperation and share the fruits of development. Regarding issues such as climate change, energy security and sustainable development, China has built the world's largest clean energy system and established platforms such as the China-BRICS New Quality Productive Forces Research Center. China is ready to share its experiences with other countries to benefit more people.

C for cooperation. Greater BRICS cooperation cannot succeed without the joint efforts of all member states and partners. This year and next year, India

and China will serve as the BRICS rotating presidents respectively. As the two largest developing countries, we share the responsibility to strengthen constructive cooperation with other member states and partner countries. Through the joint efforts of all parties, I believe we can achieve a durable and fruitful greater BRICS cooperation.

BRICS countries account for nearly half of the world's population, about 30 percent of global economic output, and one-fifth of global trade. The more closely we work together, the more resilient, resourceful and effective we will be in addressing external risks and challenges.

As BRICS president this year, India has successfully convened the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, National Security Advisers' Meeting and a series of Ministerial level meetings. During the meetings, all parties had in-depth exchanges of views on addressing international hotspot issues, enhancing practical cooperation, and preparing for the outcomes of the 18th Summit.

China extends full support to India for its BRICS presidency and the holding of the Summit this year. China has sent multiple high-level delegations to the meetings hosted by India, and will continue to make constructive contributions to the meetings that are about to come.

Before my conclusion, I sincerely wish the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi a great success!

View From South Africa

Cedrick C. Crowley

This year, BRICS marks 20 years since its inception. What began as a dialogue among emerging economies has evolved into a dynamic and influential Forum that now represents a substantial share of the world's population, economic output, and development potential.

Over these 20 years, BRICS' evolution has demonstrated that cooperation among the emerging markets and developing countries can shape global discourse, advocate for reform, and offer practical solutions grounded in mutual respect, sovereignty, and shared growth.

As we are approaching the 18th BRICS Leaders' Summit under India's Chairship, we wish to appreciate India's leadership and vision under the theme: **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"**.

In today's international environment where uncertainty and overlapping crises has become a defining feature of global affairs, a vision that centres humanity is more important than ever.

The meeting will take place at a time when the global environment requires a deepened commitment for intra-BRICS cooperation to respond innovatively to the global economic, political and social challenges that we are facing.

In this regard, BRICS with its diverse and broad geographical footprint and growing influence, is uniquely positioned to advocate for reform in global governance structures.

Central to the BRICS cooperation is the understanding the multilateral system must be strengthened, reformed and remain as the core system for global

governance. South Africa shares India's commitment to strengthening BRICS as a platform for enhanced policy coordination, development finance, and trade facilitation, while advancing reforms of the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and International Financial Institutions.

These reforms are essential to make global governance structures more representative, inclusive, and responsive to the realities of developing countries.

The pillar on Sustainability is an important, one where we share a strong convergence and look forward to advancing key initiatives in the environment and energy transition sector.

We also welcome the continued prioritisation of people-to-people exchanges, particularly among youth, academics, and cultural practitioners, as a foundation for long-term BRICS solidarity and strongly support India's intention to further strengthen the New Development Bank as a credible and responsive institution for financing infrastructure and sustainable development across the Global South.

We must reaffirm our BRICS' shared vision for a more just, peaceful, and inclusive global order. It underscores the urgent need to reform global governance institutions so that they are more democratic, representative, and responsive to today's multipolar realities. Reform of the United Nations system, including the Security Council, and of the international financial architecture, remains essential to restoring legitimacy, effectiveness, and trust especially in the current climate where multilateralism is being weakened.

BRICS has a vital role in this evolving landscape. We must play a greater role in upholding the principles of global governance and must strengthen its voice for the pursuit of global peace and security. The link between peace, security, and development are indivisibly tied. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of conflict, including underdevelopment,

inequality, and exclusion. In this regard, we must continue BRICS' emphasis on dialogue, regional solutions, and preventive diplomacy as it strengthens our collective efforts to maintain international peace while upholding sovereignty and international law.

The importance of our ever-increasing cooperation on emerging and cross-cutting challenges, including digital governance, counterterrorism, cyber security, disaster resilience, climate action, and sustainable development financing must be deepened in this era of deep uncertainty and transition. These priorities reflect a shared commitment to protecting both present and future generations.

In the context of heightened geo-political tensions, economic fragmentation, climate change crises and developmental disparities, BRICS must serve as a stabilising force.

This Forum is a strategic space for dialogue at a time when consensus and global cooperation are increasingly difficult to achieve. We must preserve channels of engagement and deepen our cooperation to achieve meaningful gains as we look to build on the 20-year milestone of BRICS.

As BRICS looks ahead, its priorities must build on this momentum to strengthen multilateralism, to advance global governance reform, promote inclusive growth, and enhance our collective responses to global crises. Together, these efforts send a clear message: cooperation, solidarity, and principled multilateralism remain indispensable to securing a peaceful, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

View From Indonesia

Maulana Syahid

Allow me to share Indonesia's perspectives on two questions that are particularly relevant to the future of BRICS: first, the relevance of BRICS in the evolving international landscape; and second, how BRICS can strengthen cooperation amid growing global uncertainty and economic fragmentation.

On the future relevance of BRICS

Indonesia believes that the relevance of BRICS is closely linked to its ability to respond to the aspirations and concrete needs of the Global South. We are witnessing a profound transformation of the international environment. Geopolitical tensions are increasing, global economic growth remains uncertain, trade and investment are becoming more fragmented, and developing countries continue to face challenges in accessing finance, technology, markets and sustainable development opportunities.

Against this backdrop, BRICS has the potential to become an increasingly important platform for cooperation among major economies of the Global South. For Indonesia, however, the value of BRICS should not be measured simply by the size of its membership or its collective economic weight.

Its relevance should ultimately be measured by what BRICS can deliver.

- Can BRICS help make the international economic system more inclusive?
- Can it strengthen the voice and representation of developing countries?
- Can it contribute to greater economic resilience and development?

- Can it help bridge differences among countries at a time when the international system is becoming increasingly fragmented?

Indonesia believes the answer should be yes. Our participation in BRICS is therefore part of Indonesia's broader commitment to strengthening multilateralism and advancing the interests and aspirations of developing countries.

At the same time, Indonesia does not view BRICS as a platform directed against any particular country or group. Rather, we see BRICS as a platform for constructive engagement, practical cooperation and the strengthening of multilateralism. This is important because the Global South itself is diverse. Our countries have different economic structures, national priorities, political systems and strategic interests.

The strength of BRICS will therefore depend on our ability to find common ground despite these differences. In this regard, Indonesia believes that BRICS should continue to uphold the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation.

It should also complement—not replace—other multilateral mechanisms.

Indonesia will continue to engage actively through the United Nations, the G20, ASEAN and other relevant platforms, while maintaining constructive engagement with both developing and developed countries.

This reflects Indonesia's longstanding foreign policy approach: to be an active contributor to global solutions and a bridge between different perspectives, rather than adding to existing divisions.

Turning to the second issue—how we can enhance BRICS cooperation in the context of global uncertainty and economic fragmentation—Indonesia believes that our priority should be to translate the growing weight of BRICS into concrete economic and development outcomes.

First, we should strengthen economic and trade cooperation.

At a time when protectionism and fragmentation are affecting global trade, BRICS should contribute to a more open, fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory trading environment. We should explore ways to facilitate greater trade and investment among BRICS members, including by addressing unnecessary barriers and strengthening connectivity between our economies. At the same time, BRICS should continue supporting the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core.

Second, we should strengthen development financing and financial cooperation.

For many developing countries, the availability of affordable and predictable financing remains a major constraint to achieving sustainable development. Indonesia therefore attaches importance to strengthening the role and capacity of the New Development Bank, including in supporting infrastructure, sustainable development and other development priorities of the Global South. Our objective should be to expand access to financing and ensure that development financing responds to the actual needs of developing countries.

Third, we should strengthen supply-chain resilience.

Recent global disruptions have demonstrated the vulnerabilities of highly concentrated supply chains. BRICS can contribute to building more resilient and diversified value chains, particularly in strategic sectors such as food, energy, health, critical minerals and technology. This is not about replacing one dependency with another. Rather, it is about creating a more diversified, predictable and resilient global economic system in which developing countries have greater opportunities to participate in and benefit from global value chains.

Fourth, we should accelerate cooperation in technology and innovation.

The digital and technological transformation presents enormous opportunities, but it also risks widening the development gap. BRICS can play a meaningful role in promoting technology cooperation, capacity-building and the exchange of knowledge, particularly in areas such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, health and green technologies. Technology should ultimately serve development and contribute to greater inclusion.

Fifth, BRICS should continue strengthening cooperation on food and energy security, climate change and disaster resilience.

These are not separate challenges. For developing countries, food security, energy security, climate resilience and economic stability are increasingly interconnected. Practical cooperation in these areas can therefore demonstrate the tangible value of BRICS to our people.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, BRICS should continue contributing to the reform of global governance.

The institutions created decades ago do not always adequately reflect today's economic and geopolitical realities. Indonesia believes that developing countries should have a greater voice and representation in global decision-making. BRICS can make an important contribution by advocating for a more representative, inclusive and responsive international architecture—including international financial institutions and the broader multilateral system.

For Indonesia, the future of BRICS is ultimately about relevance, delivery and inclusivity.

BRICS will remain relevant if it can translate its collective strength into concrete benefits for its members and the wider Global South. It will become more effective if we focus on practical cooperation rather than differences.

And it will have greater global credibility if it remains inclusive, constructive and open to dialogue with the broader international community.

In an increasingly uncertain and fragmented world, we should avoid creating further divisions. Instead, we should use BRICS to build bridges, strengthen cooperation and contribute to solutions. Indonesia stands ready to work with all BRICS members towards this objective. We believe that a stronger BRICS should not mean a more divided world. A stronger BRICS should contribute to a more balanced, inclusive and resilient global order.

View From Iran

Omid Babelian

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to India for its warm hospitality and for its leadership of BRICS. During these days, we have experienced India through different cities, cultures and histories from the remarkable story of the Begums of Bhopal, to the green landscapes of Assam, and the spiritual atmosphere of Varanasi we saw different faces of India, but one common message: diversity can create connection. In many ways, this is also the strength of BRICS. Different countries, different histories, different political systems and different civilizations coming together to build cooperation.

And this brings me to the future of BRICS. We are living through a major historical transition. The international order that emerged after the Cold War is facing serious limitations, while a new order has not yet fully taken shape. Antonio Gramsci once described such moments by saying that the old is dying, while the new is struggling to be born. I believe this is a powerful description of our time. We are moving towards a new international order, while still carrying many of the structures and inequalities of the old one. And this is precisely where BRICS matters.

For Iran, BRICS is not simply an economic grouping. It is an important platform for shaping the emerging international order. The world has changed significantly. Economic power has become more distributed. New political, economic and technological centers have emerged. And the Global South has become a major force in the global economy.

But the structures of global governance have not changed at the same

speed. This has created a growing crisis of legitimacy. Many of the rules and institutions of the international system were shaped in another historical period, and they do not always fully reflect the realities and aspirations of today's world.

But there is another dimension that I believe is equally important: the question of narrative. For decades, many societies in the Global South have learned to see themselves through frameworks and expectations produced elsewhere. Sometimes, we have even learned to judge ourselves through the eyes of others. This is where the debate around **cancel culture** becomes interesting. It reminds us that control over narratives is also a form of power, the power to decide whose history is remembered, whose values are legitimate, whose voice is heard and whose voice is dismissed.

BRICS can help overcome this imbalance. Not by creating a new hierarchy, but by creating a space where different societies can speak in their own voices and from their own historical and civilizational perspectives. In the language of Jacques Lacan, we might say that we should not always seek our identity in the gaze or desire of the other.

BRICS gives the Global South an opportunity to look at itself differently, not only through the eyes of others, but through its own history, experience, civilization and aspirations. And this is why BRICS is important not only for changing institutions, but also for changing the narrative of international relations.

Iran has taken its BRICS membership very seriously. Since joining BRICS, we have maintained a full, active and substantive presence in its meetings, working groups and different areas of cooperation. We do so because we believe that the Global South should not simply be represented in the international system. It should have a meaningful role in shaping it. But the future of BRICS should be measured not only by its size. Its real success will

be measured by what it can deliver. Food security. Energy security. Health. Climate change. Digital development. Artificial intelligence. Technology and financial cooperation.

These are no longer separate issues. The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that a crisis in one country can quickly become a global crisis. Climate change crosses borders. Food insecurity can spread through global markets. And unequal access to technology can create new forms of structural inequality.

The lesson is simple: We should build resilience before the next crisis arrives. BRICS has the collective capacity to do this.

And there is also a civilizational dimension that should not be overlooked. BRICS brings together some of the world's great civilizations. For Iran, our civilizational experience reminds us that political orders may change, but civilizations carry memory, knowledge and ideas into the future.

Let me give you a very short example from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi. When the relationship between Zal and Rudabeh creates the possibility of a serious conflict, it is Sindokht, Rudabeh's mother, who steps forward. She chooses dialogue instead of confrontation. She goes to the other side, speaks, negotiates, and helps turn a potential conflict into an agreement. It is a small story, but it carries a powerful message:

Sometimes the greatest strength is the ability to create space for dialogue.

I think this is also relevant to BRICS. Our diversity should not be an obstacle. It can become a source of imagination, resilience and cooperation.

For Iran, the answer to today's crisis of global governance is not less multilateralism. We need stronger, more inclusive and more representative multilateralism. BRICS can strengthen South-South cooperation, give greater voice to the Global South, and build practical mechanisms for responding to common challenges.

Excellencies, Gramsci reminded us that periods of transition are difficult because the old order is losing its strength while the new one has not yet fully emerged. We are living through such a moment. But the future is not predetermined.

It will be shaped by those who have the confidence to imagine it, the capacity to cooperate, and the courage to tell their own story.

As Vivekananda says: “Hold your own values with one hand, close to your heart. Stretch your other hand into the universe, and collect as much wisdom as you can.”

This is the opportunity before BRICS: To transform diversity into cooperation, economic weight into collective capacity, and the voice of the Global South into meaningful influence in shaping the international order.

For Iran, this is the real strategic importance of BRICS. We are not here simply to participate. We are here to contribute.

And, as India celebrates its Independence Day, let me extend my warmest congratulations to the people of India. May India continue to inspire the world with its diversity, confidence and civilizational strength.

View From India

Shambhu L. Hakki

The global order today is marked by growing volatility and sort of interconnected risk. So, there are economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, climate change, public health emergencies, and technology disruptions increasingly intersect with shops traveling faster and farther across borders. A disruption in one part of the world, as we have increasingly realized, can affect supply chain in markets elsewhere.

And environmental shock can quickly become a challenge to food security for the people who are very far away. And livelihood and economic stability can be endangered by doing so. Technology can create enormous opportunities, but also new vulnerabilities when its benefits and risks are unevenly distributed.

In this environment, resilience is no longer simply about reactive crisis management. It is about proactive uncertainty preparation. So what it means is that we have to build the capacity to anticipate risk, absorb shocks, and recover without allowing temporary disruptions to become long-term setbacks.

This requires stronger institutions and infrastructure, resilient supply chains, better preparedness, and most importantly, placing people and communities at the center of resilience. The urgency of building resilience is particularly evident in the context of climate change. The rising temperatures, extreme weather events, water stress, and declining agricultural productivity are already imposing significant economic and social costs.

The World Bank, in fact, estimates that nearly one in five people globally is at high risk of suffering welfare losses from an extreme weather event from which

they may struggle to recover. For developing economies, it is one of them. Such shocks can reverse years of progress and deepen existing vulnerabilities.

Resilience must, therefore, be seen not merely as a response to disasters, but as an essential component of development itself. This brings us to the sustainability. Sustainability is about ensuring that the progress we make today does not compromise the opportunities available to future generations.

It requires economic growth, social progress, and environmentally sustainability to reinforce one another. Since we are talking about BRICS, for BRICS economies, this balance is particularly important. Our countries are simultaneously seeking greater energy access, industrialization, employment, and higher incomes while confronting climate and environmental pressures.

So, sustainability, therefore, cannot be viewed simply as a constraint on development. It must increasingly shape how development is designed through cleaner energy, efficient use of resources, resilient infrastructure, sustainable production and consumption, and greater attention to communities and future generations. The objective is not to choose between development and sustainability, but to ensure that development itself becomes more sustainable and sustainability becomes an enabler of development.

Neither resilience nor sustainability can be achieved in isolation. These challenges are inherently transboundary. They require the exchange of knowledge and experience, access to technology and finance, capacity building, and partnership that can translate shared understanding into practical action.

This is where I would feel that BRICS has an important role to play, and therefore, the today's event was very timely. Over the past two decades, starting from 2006 when four foreign ministers met in New York, the BRICS has evolved into an important platform for cooperation among emerging and developing economies. Its strength lies not only in its economic weight,

which is significant, but also in the diversity of experiences, capacities and development pathways represented within the grouping.

Diversity is an asset. It enables us to learn from different approaches, share solutions that have worked in different contexts and identify areas where collective action can make a difference. With the recent expansion of BRICS, this pool of experience and expertise has become even broader. So, India's chairship in 2026 has sought to build on this potential. Our vision of building resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability anchored in a people-centric approach and the spirit of humanity first has guided our engagement. This was very much based on the Honorable Prime Minister's call to redefine BRICS last year.

Under the resilience pillar, just to give you a broad sense of how we are addressing in the current chairship, we have already held more than 300 events. Our focus has been strengthening the capacity of BRICS country to anticipate, withstand and recover from disruptions. Across the BRICS agenda, that has included cooperation, early warning and preparedness, disaster risk reduction, resilient infrastructure, health security, supply chains, agriculture and livelihoods.

Under the sustainability pillar, we have sought to reveal the transition towards sustainable economies, not merely as an environmental imperative, but also as an opportunity for innovation, investment and development. Cooperation on clean energy, smart grids and energy storage, sustainable agriculture, circular economy, landscape restoration, biodiversity and sustainable lifestyles reflect this approach. These two priorities interlinking with the other two priorities we have, innovation as well as cooperation, enables us to withstand uncertainty and afford to secure the future for us as well as the future generation.

An important emphasis of India's chairship has also been on practical cooperation. We are not just discussing the issues, but we are also implementing

on the ground, which is resulting in actually creating an enabling environment for our people. So, there are the platforms, there are knowledge exchange platforms, there are capacity building programs that we are doing and we are also sharing the best practices and technical cooperation.

In Mumbai an event called BRICS Friendship City, is taking place. In this meeting, BRICS countries are discussing about how to address the challenge of environment pollution, for example, the air pollution. So, what we do in this platform, we exchange the ideas and share our own national experiences by way of learning and we can develop our own solutions rather than depending upon the costly and unprofitable solutions. Excellencies, as India progressed further into BRICS chairship, our experience this year has reinforced a fundamental proposition.

The relevance of BRICS will ultimately be measured by its ability to turn collective strengths into practical solutions. The challenges before us are complex and constantly evolving, but so too are the capabilities within BRICS. Our motive has been to connect these capabilities to learn from one another, build practical partnerships and ensure that our cooperation remains responsive to the realities confronting our societies and economies.

One just example I would like to give you is recently held industry's ministers meeting. They came up with a joint statement saying that how do we address the funding of our startups. There's a plan to set up BRICS startup innovation fund. This is some kind of a practical solution that I was referring to earlier. I'm very sure the deliberations at VIF today have contributed meaningfully to this endeavor. They have also reminded us that building resilient and sustainable global order is not one-time exercise. It is a continuing process of strengthening institutions, building trust, sharing knowledge and ensuring that development can withstand shocks and endure over time.

PART II

BRICS Perspectives from India

BRICS at 20: Emerging Economies or Emerging powers

Sanjay Bhattacharyya

BRICS evolved from an idea to a movement. As its influence spread, its profile grew with expansion of membership, inclusion of partners and establishment of new institutions and mechanisms. BRICS has been a beacon and a magnet for the Global South. After two decades, BRICS can celebrate many achievements, yet has to deal with an uncertain future. The global order is crumbling with the old hegemon seeking to rewrite the game of dominance. Prolonged conflict, rising protectionism and growing fragmentation are some of the new uncertainties.

BRICS was created to promote growth and development in emerging economies and to push for reform of global governance. The agenda grew to include political consultations and people-to-people exchanges. It was flexible, pragmatic and outcome oriented. Over time, the BRICS economic agenda-built leverage in the global arena. As a group, BRICS has not been directed against any other group or country, although certain members held antagonistic positions. The BRICS approach provided economic and diplomatic space to emerging economies and found appeal within the Global South.

India's Chairship of BRICS 2026

India framed the BRICS 2026 agenda on the theme of building for resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability. This provided a thematic perspective that was consistent with current priorities. It added an Indian

touch with people-centric and human-first approach seeking pragmatic outcomes. Across 350 meetings featuring consultations on political-security issues, economic engagement and civil society and people exchanges, it showcased India's vision. It will climax in a high-profile summit with the participation of BRICS leaders. Apart from the BRICS agenda, bilateral exchanges are likely to add value. It is expected the summit will confirm consensus on new mechanisms that promote efficiency and dynamism in the economic sphere, encourage solidarity between people and achieve better understanding in navigating choppy geopolitical waters. BRICS will enter its third decade with greater capacity and capability to use economic leverage and willingness to engage in power dynamics.

The relevance of BRICS

Faced with geopolitical uncertainty and geoeconomic costs, nations are reviewing traditional security alliances and seeking resilient supply chains. Today, BRICS is a major driver of global growth, having overtaken the G7 in terms of GDP, in 2022, and is expected to have higher trade flows, by 2026. In technology and innovation, BRICS is still evolving, although certain members have taken big strides.

BRICS expansion to 11 members and 10 partners extended its reach and representation. Its rich pool of resources and ideas that can drive future growth. BRICS measures to enhance trade in local currency, introduce digital transboundary financial settlements and use of central bank digital currencies can improve efficiency of global financial markets, and should not be misconstrued as de-dollarisation. Its financial arm, the NDB is considering the inclusion of the new BRICS members to increase its capital base to finance more projects in BRICS and Global South countries. More efficient utilisation of CRA is also under discussion.

On geopolitical developments, BRICS provides a platform for discussion and engagement on both traditional and non-traditional threats. Its consensus-based approach favours local solutions rather than externally forced options. BRICS provides a platform for diversity, dialogue and convergence. It has established new mechanisms to deal with non-traditional threats such as terrorism, cyber threats and climate change. On conflict situations, BRICS has advocated the imperative to end conflict and to engage in negotiated diplomatic settlements. The BRICS story has been one of success in several domains.

BRICS and economic development

The thrust of the BRICS agenda since inception has been economic development through intra-BRICS cooperation, leveraging globalisation and support of MDBs. BRICS projects have yielded economic growth and tangible benefits. Over the last two decades BRICS has accumulated a rich database of potential projects, partner institutions in key areas of cooperation and established working mechanisms and institutions. Today, with BRICS growing faster than the global average, its capacity to deliver is much greater.

The extent of intra-BRICS economic cooperation is often not well known in public. Yet, its pragmatic approach and project outcomes have had profound impact on the lives of citizens. This is the principal reason for the popularity of BRICS and why many countries seek membership.

As BRICS celebrates 20 years of delivery to members and citizens, it is useful to highlight 20 significant outcomes of the BRICS 2026 process that make a difference.

1. BRICS network on digital agriculture
2. BRICS AGRIN for agro inputs, genetic resources and information network

3. BRICS roadmap for healthy lifestyle
4. BRICS network of institutions for advancing sustainable lifestyles
5. BRICS centres of excellence for promotion of mental wellness
6. BRICS expert group on traditional, complimentary and integrative medicine
7. BRICS principles for mainstreaming traditional knowledge for climate resilience
8. BRICS CONNECT for skilling
9. BRICS guiding principles on smart grids and energy storage
10. BRICS urban mobility hub for sustainable urban infrastructure
11. BRICS MSME cooperation portal for digital ecosystem
12. BRICS incubator network
13. BRICS start-up innovation fund
14. BRICS science and research repository
15. BRICS logistics supply chain cooperation framework
16. BRICS cooperation on global value chains and GVC action plan 2026-2030
17. BRICS agreement on customs cooperation
18. BRICS MOU for cooperation in the field of standardisation
19. BRICS youth cooperation framework
20. BRICS sports technology cooperation

BRICS in an age of fragmentation

Recent developments their testimony to the abuse of dominant power status, which has challenged all countries and groups. BRICS was not immune. Unfortunately, the anti-West nature of certain BRICS members cast a shadow on the group itself, making it the target of negative narratives and punitive action. Yet, BRICS with its unique ethos of solidarity, consensus based working methods, strength of its diversity, and ambition based on pragmatic approach was able to maintain high growth and economic integration while seeking reforms in multilateralism for better global governance.

As BRICS moves into the third decade, the challenges will sharpen and it may have to explore deeper in areas that were not as urgent in the past. Three measures would be invaluable in this effort.

First, not to repeat the mistakes of 20th century governance models. The old global order was built on hierarchy to maintain hegemonic power. Hegemony was challenged by emerging powers. Multipolarity is still weak and balance of power dynamics dominate. BRICS was not designed to be an alliance but rather a partnership of equals. Although one member has a large presence within the group, the principles of equality, free participation and consensus have generally kept group interest above hegemonic interest. The anti-West tendency of certain members led the group to adopt a non-West posture, but that was inconsistent with the nature of BRICS and its priorities. BRICS must develop common position for interaction with G7, G20 and OECD, and develop common approaches at UN, WTO and COP of the UNFCCC. BRICS will benefit from bridging the divide and having a regular outreach to the West (G7) to supplement the outreach the G7 maintains with the Global South.

Second, focus on economic development will benefit citizens and strengthen brand value. BRICS countries need to maintain high growth rates to improve their economic leverage. The diversity of the growing BRICS family provides

complementarities in energy security, access to resources, grain exchange and mobility understandings to mutual benefit. Further, the market size is large and growing. A BRICS agreement on resilient supply chain for critical minerals and technologies with guarantees to not weaponise such resources is necessary and will strengthen BRICS partnership with win-win solutions.

Third, develop capacity for conflict resolution. BRICS realises that wars are likely to intensify in these uncertain times. These wars will happen in our periphery and will impact our peace, stability and development. While non-BRICS parties began the Iran war, it put BRICS members in opposing ends of the conflict. The erosion of trust and confidence impacted BRICS consensus. There was devastating impact on the regional and global economy, supply chains and legacy security arrangements. Conflict became the currency of leverage while diplomacy fell a step behind. This was counter to the BRICS way of seeking convergence and building consensus. BRICS engaged on the issue and while it improved understanding, greater convergence was needed to achieve de-escalation.

The impasse over the Iran war highlighted two lessons for the BRICS group. It indicated an urgent need for BRICS to evolve more persuasive and participative crisis management mechanisms to deal with conflict. Despite mediation efforts, there was a gap in diplomatic mechanisms for conflict resolution. On expectation management, particularly for citizens, BRICS will benefit from developing SOPs to have a handle on the spread of narratives, curtailing activities of radical and militant ideas and allowing quiet diplomacy to play its role.

Conclusion

The first two decades were the golden age of BRICS with the attainment of emerging economy status. Given the sense of global responsibility, BRICS is willing to assume the mantle of emerging powers. However, political flux and

economic protectionism pose externalities that BRICS must deal with. At the same time, the equal and full participation of all members and solidarity on BRICS ethos can stem the rise of hegemonistic tendency within the group. BRICS working methods and governance ethos would find resonance in the reform of global governance.

The Future of BRICS: Strengthening Cooperation in an Evolving Global Order

Anil Trigunayat

Jim O' Neal, the original protagonist of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) as the futuristic emerging economies, recently opined that in the fractured world order if India and China could cooperate constructively a lot could change. No doubt in goods trade China has merged India's biggest trading partner. There is also no doubt that BRICS plus with its 11 members and ten partner countries has reignited its attraction for large number of countries especially from the Global South as the world order is crumbling at a breakneck speed accelerated by the very western powers led by USA under President Trump and the jungle raj prevails with the utter defiance of the so-called international law by most powers including the middle powers. In such a dim and disappointing scenario BRICS plus has emerged as a beacon of hope despite its intrinsic limitations and paradoxes and intra-group geo-political and geo-economic contestations. Several of its members are involved in overt or covert conflicts and frictional relationships including Russia in the Ukraine war; Iran Vs UAE and Saudi Arabia; and India -China unhappy relations - which are all having their impact in some measure on its efficacy.

In these turbulent times and ongoing Eurasian and Middle East wars, New Delhi will be hosting the 16th BRICS Summit where leaders of Russia, China, Iran and some others have already confirmed their presence. Task for India is not easy as it has already hosted over 350 meetings across the whole BRICS engagement spectrum which requires consensus for definitive outcomes and more importantly stakeholder-ship of each member country for the implementation of the adopted course and recommendations. By the time

the Summit is held it might touch 400 -a creditable achievement. Not only because of the number of meetings alone but also due to achievement of consensual outcomes on all major tracks and ministerials except the crucial meeting of Foreign Ministers where a Chair's statement had to be issued in view of UAE-Iran differences on account of repeated violations of sovereignty of the GCC countries by Iran as declared strategy of retaliation against US bases in the region. This is an issue which will require deft diplomacy, smart drafting and handling of sovereignty issues at the Summit as well. India has shown remarkable agility and comprehension of the deeper nuances of the diplomatic fissures and fillers in the past especially with regard to Russian and western differences during the G20 Bali and New Delhi summits and carried the day. But the fact remains that these geopolitical divides can be cumbersome and conflictual which is not desirable for the wellbeing of BRICS per se.

Moreover, there are countries especially in the West and USA in particular which would not be unhappy with the expansion and integration of BRICS as an alternate pole in the emerging world order. Trump has even threatened BRICS countries with 100 percent tariffs if they chose to resort to a BRICS currency or other alternate financial mechanisms to challenge the supremacy of US dollar, forgetting that de-dollarization had begun because of a strategic folly of the United States itself. They had weaponized the financial instruments by cutting off Russia from the SWIFT and confiscating their over \$ 300 billion reserves in the Western banks, in the wake of Russian aggression against Ukraine that continues unabated. More and more countries are resorting to trading in their national currencies and it is a matter of time that alternate financial models will become more popular and possibly more beneficial and dependable. Already the BRICS New Development Bank and contingency reserve fund and other mechanisms are fine tuning the new initiatives as digital currencies and prevailing alternatives to SWIFT etc. are on the anvil of being announced and integrated. There will be headwinds but surely

and smartly the group can wade through the upcoming challenges from the detractors.

Even though India and most of the member countries including China, Russia and South Africa do not consider BRICS as anti-western but are hoping to develop it into a robust non-western alternative. It has the requisite heft both economic and civilizations with demographic dividend and huge markets are on its side. The largest democracy to several of the top ten economies and most populous countries inhabit the BRICS plus strategic space across continents. The fact that strategic economic pivot has definitively shifted towards the South and East augur well for BRICS as a potent alternative as the quest for multilateralism and multipolarity continues. This has also become a major bone of contention for the West. it is not coincidental that all of the BRICS original founders are facing US unilateral sanctions and among the new ones there is no dearth of such measures. But India which is committed to multilateralism and multipolarity and multi-alignment with differences and disputes to be resolved through dialogue, diplomacy and de-escalation also sees its role as a bridgebuilder between north and south and east and west given its sane foreign policy and adherence to strategic autonomy and vast expanse of relationships across the global spectrum.

Earlier, chairing the Foreign Ministers session, Dr Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs spoke of the global churn and regional challenges due to the ongoing wars. He underscored that over the years, BRICS has grown both in scale and in relevance, reflecting the aspirations of emerging markets and developing economies for a more balanced and inclusive international order. BRICS has expanded its agenda and membership in response to changing global realities, while remaining focused on people-centric development and practical cooperation. 'In this spirit, our four priorities; Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability; each provide a practical framework for engagement, including with partner countries.' Independence and diversity

of BRICS is its real strength. We are perceived globally as a force seeking change and reform. We are the very embodiment of multi-polarity. In a world that is focused on de-risking and diversifying, he added.

BRICS essential focus is driven by 4 M's which comprise of Multilateralism, Multipolarity, Multi-alignment and Mutual Trust. While these may be obvious at least desirable parameters and objectives the trust deficit between major powers among themselves remains a challenge going forward and how would these be aligned will decide the future of BRICS. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) nearly encompass the BRICS current and potential members but impinges on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity concerns. Similar concerns are invoked when the civilizational dimension, which differentiates it from any other grouping, is brought on the table that can only exist in a matrix underscored by mutual respect and accommodation.

Besides Beijing has charted new 4 G paradigms of global governance like the Global Governance Initiative, Global Developmental Initiative, Global Civilizational Initiative and Global Security Initiative. Even though Beijing may be trying to avoid the overtly hegemonistic undertones to these initiatives their projected primacy might essentially cement that perception and may not find consensus from other members. Hence a transparent and trust generating approach needs to be advanced for a better strategy and understanding which should be marked by the interests of BRICS in particular and Global South in general while avoiding direct conflict with the current even if declining hegemons. For this to succeed India has propagated its policy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (World is one family) underpinned and driven by mix of 4 M's which includes Mutual Respect; Mutual Sensitivities; Mutual Interests for Mutual Benefit. BRICS has to be people centric, equity driven and inclusive with emphasis on making global goods and global commons and global governance architecture available and amenable to the global majority inhabited by the Global South.

Common challenges from reforms of UN and other international institutions, climate change to sustainable development to cyber security, food and energy security and confronting terrorism without double standards as well as how to make technology affordable, available and accessible for all confront the BRICS and the world for which global and group solidarity is essential especially in this era of unfortunate wars. PM Modi gave a new meaning to the BRICS acronym – Building for resilience, Innovation, cooperation and Sustainability is so apt and relevant for the BRICS to emerge as a benevolent force for change. BRICS can be a gamechanger if it successfully addresses and overcomes its own internal contradictions. As for competition or conflict with the western institutions the comment by French President Emmanuel Macron sound pleasing when he said before hosting the G7, ‘India is going to be President of BRICS. I want to work with India to build bridges. BRICS countries must not become anti-G7 and G7 must not become anti-BRICS’. This is a recognition of the growing heft of the BRICS and emerging multipolarity and need for collaborative rather than conflictual approaches.” Hopefully, the geo politics will not ruin the sentiment on both sides of the aisle.

The Future of BRICS: Strengthening Cooperation in an Evolving Global Order

Dammu Ravi

Backdrop

The world today is going through a major churn due to both geopolitical conflicts and geoeconomic competition. Digital technologies, in particular the impact of AI, adds another layer of complexity to this churn. Three major forces at play should be reckoned with in this evolving scenario: a hegemonic unipolar world of US; a competitive bipolar world of US-China; and a moderating multipolar world of emerging economies.

BRICS symbolises a multipolar world. Its members characterised as emerging economies provide much needed stability in these uncertain times. The expanded BRICS at the Johannesburg Summit in 2023 with 10 full members (Saudi is an observer) plus 10 partner countries have enhanced its voice and stature on the global stage. The fact that about 20 more countries are aspiring to join the group reflects its growing significance. The heft that expanded BRICS generates presents new dynamism: it represents 46 percent of global population; 36 percent of global GDP (PPP); 32 percent of world landmass; 25 percent of global trade at \$ 9.6 trillion (merchandise trade). Its members are also present in important plurilateral groups, such as, G20, QUAD, SCO, IBSA. Its uniqueness is defined by its geographical spread and vibrant cultural and religious diversity.

Overcoming challenges

India will be hosting the BRICS Leaders' Summit in New Delhi on 12-13 September, 2026. The occasion will provide opportunity to reflect on its global vision for making meaningful contribution to world peace and prosperity. As a founding member of BRICS, India always attaches importance to its role, conscious of the fact that its members being developing countries, it forms the core of Global South. Overtime, BRICS agenda has expanded significantly covering vast areas of interest to developing countries, whose common challenges and shared aspirations require urgent solutions. The impact of Covid 19 and prolonged geopolitical conflicts have seriously disrupted global supply chains, making economic recovery of developing countries an uphill task. Having to service their mounting debt at approximately \$960 bn annually undermines their ability to deliver basic livelihood promises made to their people, causing internal unrest. Increasing optimism in BRICS' ability to find solutions to problems of the South is contrasted with the diminishing development commitments of the North. If anything, the latter has become more protectionist of late, often disrespecting multilateral rules and institutions when they don't suit them.

To play a meaningful role on the world stage, BRICS ought to overcome its internal contradictions. Mounting criticism and scepticism over lack of progress on its agenda can be attributable to persisting irreconcilable differences between its member countries: India-China; Egypt-Ethiopia; and Iran-UAE-Saudi. Much hinges on its members' willingness to shed their differences and their leaders adapting a statesman-like approach on issues of common interest. It should be possible to build consensus around non-political issues such as trade, investment, technology, climate change, energy, food, health etc. as well as on the reform of UN.

Prioritization

Saving multilateralism should be a priority for BRICS. This assertion is premised on the belief that multilateral institutions and rules provide global

stability and serve as guardrails for developing countries against hegemonic tendencies. Further, BRICS can take a lead on the long pending UN reforms for making global governance inclusive and reflect contemporary realities.

Infrastructure creation propels economic growth as India has shown the way in recent times under the GatiShakti initiative. 'Startup India' holds immense value for self-employment of youth. Similarly, strengthening MSME connect in BRICS, using digital tools, could go a long way in fostering collaborations and market access. The subject of energy security assumes urgency now in the context of standoff in the Hormuz straits; it has disproportionately affected developing countries' economies even though they are not party to the conflict.

Cooperation in renewable energy can be an effective alternative for tackling energy shortages. India and China have set up gigawatt scale projects in solar, wind, hydro energy as well as made significant progress in bio fuels (ethanol) electric vehicles and green hydrogen. Their experiences could hold valuable lessons for stabilising domestic prices and saving precious foreign exchange. Indian renewable energy models can be easily replicated in Global South but requires improvement in regulatory frameworks to make it facilitative. Similarly, India's success in food security through the green revolution merits emulation: countries in Africa and Latin America that are endowed with large agricultural lands and freshwater could be attractive for Indian entrepreneurs to grow food grains their both for local consumption and exports to global markets.

Trilateral Cooperation

The high cost of infrastructure projects may be discouraging for any single BRICS country to commit. Instead, a collaborative approach under a trilateral cooperation framework in a manner of pooling resources, skills and sharing risks is worth exploring. The underdevelopment of global south itself

presents vast opportunities for BRICS countries and the way to go about it is to first map out potential project proposals under a working group with a mandate to facilitate and monitor. Since access to capital is critical for these projects, BRICS should be open to exploring tapping finance from various sources, including from MDBs, sovereign wealth funds, private capital etc.

An expansive NDB

The New Development Bank (NDB) has played a seminal role in supporting infrastructure projects in member countries since its inception in July 2014. With a modest corpus of \$50 billion and authorised capital up to \$100 billion, it has successfully executed about 130 projects in BRICS countries, with China and India being the largest beneficiaries. NDB's lending loans in national currencies is making borrowing and repayment easy for countries constrained by hard currency shortages and sanctions. NDB's non-prescriptive approach, unlike multilateral development banks (MDBs), is indeed a motivating factor for developing countries to join BRICS. With new members seeking NDB support its outreach will naturally expand to be able to accommodate their development aspirations. Accordingly, NDB may have to consider doubling its corpus in near time.

Trade settlement in National Currencies

Trade is a catalyst of development for global south, unlike the West that sees it as profit and loss activity. Since much of international trade is being carried out in dollars its shortfall limits developing countries' potential to trade. Trade settlement in national currencies could be an effective alternative. This proposal was first mooted in 2016 at the Fortaleza Leaders' Summit in Brazil but progress has been slow owing to its operational ignorance and misgivings over US tariff threats. Achieving 'BRICS currency' in physical form is still a far cry as achieving harmonisation of fiscal and monetary policies across a spectrum of varying economic capacities will be a big challenge. The

underlying sentiment is not de-dollarisation more than finding alternatives to overcome hard currency shortages and circumvent sanctions. The way forward within BRICS is to work on easing regulatory frameworks for developing capital markets in a manner of allowing earnings from trade surplus in local currency to be reinvested in host countries in the form of equity, debt, bonds and government securities. To begin with member countries could be encouraged to transact in their own national currencies bilaterally as per their choice and comfort. Barter trade could be another option to consider; it will open up opportunities for trade in value added natural resources, particularly in Africa.

Transformative DPI

Successful implementation of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) tools has been truly transformative in India's journey. Its low-cost solutions apart, it brings in transparency, predictability, good governance and outcomes, all of which have empowering effect on common man, even while retaining its commercial viability. Member countries can learn from each other's' experiences in digital space. India can take lead in popularising DPI in Global South by customising it to local needs and creating win-win solutions for everyone. Improvement in regulatory alignment and facilitation will encourage businesses to step in with confidence. Further, India could steer discussion on AI impact on humanity, especially its consequential job losses, fake news, imitation games and so on that are socially disruptive. The emphasis should be on framing global rules for a responsible AI that puts humanity at the centre.

Building Trust

Building trust in a group as complex as BRICS is critical for achieving progress. Many BRICS countries are fountains of civilisations with ancient

wisdom percolated across continents. It is important to recall and remind time and again their enduring cultural connect and shared heritage to foment trust amongst its members. Members should endeavour to encourage people to people contacts through tourism, business, academy, artists, student exchanges in greater numbers. Relaxation on visa processes, enhancing connectivity are low hanging fruits to overcome trust deficit. More importantly, regular meetings of Leaders at BRICS Summits as well as on the margins of multilateral and plurilateral events would go a long way in reviving trust and boosting confidence in BRICS. The forthcoming 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi in September 2026 is an opportune moment to put in place a visionary BRICS for building a better world.

References:

Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability: <https://www.brics2026.gov.in>

Milena Megre, BRICS And the Multipolar World, Centre for International Relations and Sustainable Development, Summer 2026

The BRICS and the Emerging Order of Multipolarity by Raoul Bunschoek, Clingendael, May 2025

BRICS Cooperation in Sustainable Development - BRICS Council Russia, May 2026: <https://bricscouncil.ru/en/analytics/sotrudnichestvo-stran-briks-v-oblasti-ustoychivogo-razvitiyai>

BRICS+ agriculture beyond borders: Trade and resilience for a food-secure world https://m.economictimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/brics-agriculture-beyond-borders-trade-and-resilience-for-a-food-secure-world/amp_articleshow/131599383.cms

How Would a New BRICS Currency Affect the US Dollar? By Melissa Pistilli, Feb 2026 <https://investingnews.com/author/melissa-pestilli>

New Development Bank: <https://www.ndb.int>

BRICS as a center of interfacing civilizations: <https://journals.rudn.ru/economics/article/view/50619>

The Evolving Global Order and the Role of BRICS

Gulshan Sachdeva

Introduction

The global order is undergoing a profound transformation, while existing institutions of global political and economic governance are increasingly struggling to respond effectively to contemporary challenges. Institutions such as the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are marked by dysfunction and limited effectiveness. The Ukraine war, the West Asian crisis, and Trump's tariff policies all underscore this reality. Although many of the economic decisions are still being debated within forums such as the G7 and OECD, these institutions no longer have the capacity to effectively implement or deliver on them.

Many in the Global South have been highlighting this reality for quite some time. What is notable now is that leaders of major Western powers have also begun to openly acknowledge the same shift. The US under Donald Trump has become a leading force challenging established rules, norms, and institutions. Washington's imposition of sweeping tariffs in 2025, widely regarded as inconsistent with WTO rules, marked a significant departure from established global trade norms. The subsequent proliferation of bilateral trade agreements with the United States underscores the broader systemic rupture affecting the multilateral trading system. While the United States may be seeking to build what Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called 'a new Western century', the global order has already undergone fundamental transformation. Power is no longer concentrated in a single civilizational or geopolitical bloc. For India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, the international system is evolving toward greater multipolarity, characterized

by an increasing number of autonomous and self-confident centres of decision-making.

In contrast to the rupture in the western dominated governance system, the Global South has transformed and is no longer what it once was. It now carries substantial weight economically, politically, strategically, technologically, and intellectually. Over the past two decades, while the North has faced repeated crises—such as the sub-prime collapse and the Eurozone crisis—the Global South has been resurgent. Beyond trade and finance, the South is also emerging as a leader in renewable energy, artificial intelligence, and financial inclusion. Global South is leading many connectivity initiatives and can play very significant role in shaping global development architecture.

Platforms such as the G20, BRICS, the SCO, IBSA, the African Union, and various Latin American institutions are providing the Global South with greater representation and influence in global affairs. The weaponization of financial systems by the United States and Europe has further underscored the urgency of reform. Sanctions imposed on Russia, Iran, and Venezuela have led many countries in the Global South to recognize that similar measures could one day be directed against them, thereby accelerating efforts to rethink and reform the existing international order. U.S. intervention in Venezuela and the U.S.-Israel military campaign against Iran have heightened strategic anxieties across the Global South. These developments have not only raised questions about sovereignty and the use of force but have also generated significant economic concerns, particularly regarding energy security, trade disruptions, and the stability of global markets. As a result, calls for a more inclusive, equitable, and multipolar international order have gained further momentum.

The Significance of BRICS for the Global South

To a large extent, a multipolar world has already arrived, with the non-Western majority poised to shape many of the key global developments in

the years ahead. Elements of this emerging reality are increasingly visible in BRICS. Although BRICS began as primarily an economic grouping, it has the potential to evolve into a major political, economic, and demographic force. Despite contemporary challenges—including sanctions against Russia and Iran, the Russia–Ukraine war, the US–Israeli war against Iran, and difficulties in India–China relations—it is likely to remain one of the most influential global groupings, given the combined economic weight, demographic scale, and political influence of its members. The importance of BRICS within the Global South is underscored by its substantial economic weight. BRICS members account for nearly 70 percent of the Global South’s GDP and around 53 percent of its trade. Given that the grouping includes several of the world’s most dynamic and rapidly growing economies, there is considerable scope for deepening economic ties among its members. Several areas offer particularly promising opportunities for practical and mutually beneficial cooperation

BRICS has already established important institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). Coordinated action by BRICS countries could make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The expansion of the grouping in 2025 and interest of large number of countries in its membership reflects its growing attractiveness and relevance in an evolving international order

As more influential non-Western countries join the grouping, BRICS could gradually emerge as an important alternative platform in global governance, particularly in specific economic and financial domains. While it is unlikely to replace existing international institutions in the foreseeable future, it has the potential to provide complementary mechanisms and greater representation for the interests and priorities of the Global South.

Concrete Economic Projects Can Create Alternatives

Despite their growing economic size and trade capacity, intra-BRICS trade remains relatively modest compared with the group's overall economic weight. In 2024, intra-BRICS trade accounted for only about 5% of global trade and 20% of South-South trade. While Brazil, China, Russia, and Indonesia have increased the share of intra-BRICS markets in their total exports, other members, including India, the UAE, and Iran, remain relatively less dependent on BRICS markets for their exports.

BRICS has initiated several initiatives covering MSMEs, investment facilitation, e-portals, e-commerce, and value chains, among other areas. Its members are also connected through several bilateral trade corridors, including China–Russia, India–China, India–Russia, Brazil–China, China–Indonesia, India–UAE, and India–Saudi Arabia. They are further linked through a range of trade agreements. Still, the grouping has yet to move towards a comprehensive trade agreement among its members. BRICS cooperation therefore remains largely focused on soft commitments and sector-specific initiatives rather than deeper trade liberalisation and binding market-access commitments. A key prerequisite for transforming BRICS into a more cohesive trading bloc will be the development of a common understanding on trade related issues between India and China.

Today BRICS grouping consists of major energy producers and consumers. Many countries including China, India, Iran, Russia, Iran, and the UAE are already doing some of their energy transactions in local currencies. At the moment, most of these transactions are bilateral. India has also used UAE Dirham and Chinese Yuan to pay for Russian oil imports. The creation of a single BRICS currency is unlikely to materialize in the foreseeable future. However, BRICS countries may need to develop a common alternative payment mechanism based on their national currencies, at least for trade in key commodities such as energy. Instead of working bilateral mechanisms, a common BRICS mechanism will be useful.

Many Global South countries, including most BRICS members, now play an important role in international development cooperation. Yet there has been no concerted effort to develop an alternative BRICS development strategy. The potential for genuine South-South Cooperation and BRICS solidarity could be demonstrated through joint action in third countries. As the role of BRICS members in international development cooperation is likely to expand in the coming years, the grouping could develop its own definitions, modalities, and evaluation frameworks for development cooperation.

BRICS members and partner countries are already involved in major connectivity initiatives, including the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and transport connectivity projects under the Eurasian Economic Union. Individual members have also developed their own connectivity strategies, such as India’s MAHASAGAR initiative. The key challenge is to create synergies among these different initiatives so that connectivity projects become more economically viable and mutually beneficial. Better coordination could significantly enhance trade, attract foreign investment, strengthen regional value chains, and improve living standards in participating countries. There have already been efforts to link different connectivity strategies. Russia, for instance, has sought to promote greater alignment between the Eurasian Economic Union and the BRI. India, however, has not participated in the BRI and continues to have reservations about some of its projects. These differences highlight the need for greater dialogue within BRICS.

India’s BRICS Presidency in a Changing Global Order

As the Global South is poised to become a major force in the emerging world order, India is seeking to position itself as its voice through various initiatives

such as the Voice of the Global South Summits, the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA), and DAKSHIN–Global South Centre of Excellence, among others. In the context of emerging global changes, India’s key priority is to foster the emergence of a new multilateral order that upholds peace and promotes sustainable development. This is reflected in India’s 2026 BRICS presidency theme “Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability”.

In the run-up to the BRICS Summit in mid-September, there appears to be renewed momentum in BRICS activities. India’s G20 presidency is still remembered for New Delhi’s successful effort to bring the African Union into the grouping. The narrative surrounding the last two BRICS presidencies was similarly dominated by the group’s expansion. Despite an ambitious start and over 350 official meetings covering a wide range of issues, however, no single theme has yet emerged as a defining feature of India’s BRICS presidency.

India’s presidency has also coincided with growing difficulties in India–US relations. President Trump’s sceptical view of BRICS and his perception of the grouping as a challenge to US economic and strategic interests may have constrained New Delhi from championing far-reaching BRICS initiatives that could further irritate Washington.

The West Asian crisis has added another layer of complexity. US-Israeli military action against Iran—an important BRICS member—and the subsequent Iranian retaliatory strikes against the UAE and Saudi Arabia, both fellow BRICS members, have created additional political and diplomatic challenges for India’s BRICS presidency.

While the BRICS Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in May 2026 concluded without a joint statement—largely due to differences between Iran and the UAE

over the West Asia conflict—there remains a reasonable prospect that the Leaders’ Summit in September will produce a consensus communiqué. After all, during India’s G20 Presidency, Indian negotiators successfully secured a consensus declaration despite deep divisions over the Ukraine war. But how India’s 2026 BRICS Presidency will be remembered in the years to come remains to be seen.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Another Priority for Cooperation amongst BRICS?

Ruchita Beri

India is all set to host the BRICS summit from 11-13 September 2026 at New Delhi. This year BRICS is celebrating its 20th anniversary. From that day in September 2006, when the foreign ministers of four BRICS countries, Brazil, Russia, India, and China, met in New York, the grouping has expanded. It now consists of 11 member states and 10 partner states. This reflects the forum's growing footprint and influence in the geopolitics of the 21st century. From an Indian perspective BRICS represents and reflects the non-Western perspective on global challenges. The grouping is committed to advancing all issues dear to the Global South. This includes, the protection of the economic interests of developing and emerging economies, a just energy transition, and a place at the reformed institutions of global governance. BRICS countries also share goals of sustainable development and inclusive growth. As India hosts BRICS Summit with the theme of "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," it will be an opportune moment to enhance cooperation amongst member states on Indigenous knowledge systems.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and India

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) refer to a body of knowledge, skills, practices, and beliefs developed by indigenous communities. This knowledge may be transmitted either through old manuscripts or orally across generations and deeply rooted in local spirituality, culture, traditions ethics and social structures. IKS encompasses areas, such as, philosophy, agriculture,

medicine, biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, and conflict resolution. Unlike formal scientific knowledge, IKS is often contextual, holistic, and community based. It offers insights into resilience and adaptive strategies that have supported indigenous peoples for centuries. Indigenous knowledge is often dismissed as folklore by the dominant educational and scientific institutions of the West. However, India has taken a step towards recognizing the value of IKS through formal policy frameworks like the National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020.

It is true, Indian civilisation has attached great value to knowledge- seen in the rich collection of intellectual texts, world's largest collection of manuscripts, its tradition of texts, thinkers and schools in multiple domains of knowledge. Key ancient Indian texts on Indigenous Knowledge Systems include the Rigveda, Atharvaveda, Charaka Saṁhitā, Suśruta Saṁhitā, Arthaśāstra, Bṛhat Saṁhitā, and Sangam works like Tolkāppiyam, covering ecology, medicine, agriculture, and governance.

Indian knowledge traditions are not mere accumulations of information; they embody a holistic worldview in which knowledge is integrative, value-oriented, and deeply embedded in lived experience. Knowledge in the Indian tradition is relational rather than fragmentary—linking the material with the ethical, the human with the ecological, and the individual with the collective.

In its nature, Indian Knowledge Systems are dynamic. They are transmitted through a combination of textual traditions, oral histories, community practices, and embodied skills. Philosophically, Indian Knowledge System is grounded in the principle of interconnectedness and the idea of lokasangraha—the welfare of the world. Knowledge is thus understood as a means for collective well-being rather than as a proprietary or extractive resource. In terms of character, Indian knowledge traditions are plural

India's civilisational heritage—encompassing Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, tribal healing traditions, sustainable agricultural practices, ecological stewardship,

and community-based knowledge—provides a strong foundation for leadership in this sphere. India's initiatives, such as the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) agenda under G20 2023, the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), and the Gyan Bharatam portal for manuscript digitisation, represent globally recognised models for documenting, preserving, and protecting traditional knowledge.

In an era marked by geopolitical flux, environmental degradation and social fragmentation, there is an urgent need for frameworks that promote peace, sustainability and cultural rootedness. Indigenous knowledge, grounded in civilisational experience and accumulated ecological wisdom, offers an alternative paradigm to the dominant one-size-fits-all Western model.

It is observed that Indigenous or traditional knowledge systems have a growing global relevance, while much of this knowledge remains inadequately documented, insufficiently protected, and unevenly represented in international institutions. Many countries possess rich indigenous traditions that are vulnerable to loss, misappropriation, or oversimplification, particularly when viewed through narrowly regulatory or commercial lenses.

Towards BRICS Cooperation on IKS

All BRICS countries possess rich indigenous traditions that shape their societies, economies and environmental practices. China has effectively modernised and globalised Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). South Africa's oral traditions preserve ecological knowledge on soil health, seeds and climate-resilient agriculture. Russia's indigenous communities contribute unique artistic and ecological practices that require stronger legal protection. Brazil's Amazonian communities offer some of the world's most sophisticated knowledge on forest management, biodiversity conservation and medicinal plants.

A focus on Indigenous Knowledge Systems can significantly strengthen BRICS cooperation on climate resilience, sustainability and biodiversity. Traditional practices related to weather prediction, water conservation, farming, and herbal medicine complement modern science and can help countries adapt more effectively to climate change. Digital tools and community-led documentation can support the preservation, ethical use and exchange of this knowledge across BRICS nations.

It is critical for BRICS to focus on reviving indigenous knowledge systems and concepts such as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Ubuntu, and Maat that promote empathy, collective responsibility, peaceful conflict resolution, a shared future and sustainable existence beyond western perspectives of individualism and materialism.

Under India's BRICS presidency, cooperation in this vital sphere was discussed at the health, education and culture track. The BRICS health ministers meeting proposed the establishment of the BRICS Expert Working Group on Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM)¹. At the BRICS Education ministers meeting member states welcomed India's initiative on the BRICS guiding principles on strengthening academic collaboration on Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Systems.² Similarly, the BRICS culture ministers declaration called for safeguarding traditional knowledge systems.³

It is hoped at the BRICS New Delhi Summit 2026, the member states prioritise establishing a shared platform for documenting and protecting Indigenous knowledge, promoting joint research, and embedding Indigenous Knowledge system into broader climate, health, and development strategies. Recognising Indigenous Knowledge System as a partner—not a competitor—to scientific knowledge will create more inclusive and culturally grounded solutions globally.

Beyond Declarations: BRICS and the Challenge of Coordinated Global Governance Reform

Rajeesh Kumar

BRICS has consistently called for a more representative and equitable system of global governance. Since its initial years, its declarations have addressed reform of the United Nations, the IMF and World Bank, and the wider multilateral system.⁴ This continuity is evident in the New Delhi Declaration of 2021, the Johannesburg II Declaration of 2023 and the Rio de Janeiro Declaration of 2025.⁵ The central demand has remained broadly consistent: global institutions should better reflect contemporary political and economic realities and give emerging markets and developing countries greater voice and representation.

As the grouping has expanded, however, agreement on these broad principles has become harder to translate into common positions.⁶ The members now bring different economic interests, regional priorities and foreign-policy concerns to the table. The important question is therefore not whether BRICS supports global governance reform, but whether it can turn that support into coordinated strategies capable of influencing institutional outcomes. BRICS members may agree that the IMF, World Bank or United Nations needs reform without agreeing on the institutional arrangements that reform should take. They may also support greater representation for developing countries without agreeing on who should receive it or how voting power should be redistributed. So far, BRICS has been more successful in articulating common principles than in developing common negotiating strategies. The IMF and Security Council provide useful contrasts.

From Reform Demands to Coordination: The IMF

The reform of international financial governance offers a useful example of BRICS moving towards a more specific common position. The 2025 *Rio de Janeiro Vision for IMF Quota and Governance Reform* went beyond the general demand for greater representation of emerging and developing economies. It called for quota realignment that better reflects members' relative positions in the global economy while protecting the quota shares of the poorest countries. It supported increasing the weight of basic votes, using a simpler and more transparent quota formula that includes factors such as GDP at purchasing power parity, and improving regional representation in IMF management.⁷ It also challenged the post-war convention surrounding the selection of senior IMF leadership and suggested consideration of an additional Deputy Managing Director from emerging and developing economies. Most importantly, the Vision stated that its members would **consider coordinating** to ensure that the 17th General Review of Quotas and subsequent reviews contain meaningful quota and governance reforms.⁸

This was not, however, the first instance in which the five BRICS countries coordinated within the IMF. In May 2011, the IMF Executive Directors representing Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa issued a joint statement setting out a **“common understanding”** on the selection of the IMF Managing Director.⁹ They called for a transparent, merit-based and competitive selection process and rejected the established convention that the Managing Director should be European. They also emphasized the importance of greater representation of emerging-market and developing-country members in IMF management.¹⁰ The episode is important because the coordination took place within the IMF itself, rather than only through BRICS declarations. It shows that coordination is possible, although the 2011 statement did not establish a formal BRICS mechanism.

The significance of the Rio Vision lies in whether this earlier coordination can be sustained on quota reform. The 17th General Review involves quota

shares, voting power and the quota formula, where national interests are harder to reconcile.¹¹ The issue is not simply whether BRICS members support the same objectives, but whether they have used the Finance Track, deputies-level discussions and their representation on the IMF Executive Board to develop and advance common positions. The 17th General Review therefore offers a useful test of whether BRICS can translate its growing political weight into sustained institutional influence.

The limit of Consensus: UN Security Council Reform

UN Security Council reform presents a more difficult case. BRICS members broadly support reform and greater representation for developing countries, but their positions differ on the composition of a reformed Council.¹² Brazil, India and South Africa seek permanent seats, while China has been cautious about endorsing specific candidates, and African members must also balance national interests with the common position of the African Union.¹³ The Johannesburg II Declaration supported the aspirations of Brazil, India and South Africa for a greater role in international affairs while also calling for greater representation of developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The 2025 Rio Declaration maintained this position and recognized the aspirations reflected in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

Agreement on the principle of reform, however, does not resolve the harder questions of who should receive permanent seats, how African representation should be accommodated, or whether and how the veto should be extended. Beyond these broad declarations and the aspirations of individual members, BRICS has yet to develop a concrete common proposal or coordination mechanism for Security Council reform. Its position therefore remains largely declaratory, without a clear mechanism for turning collective support into a common negotiating strategy. This points to a limitation of the BRICS reform agenda: members can agree on the need for institutional change even

when their interests do not allow them to agree on how that change should be achieved.

Selective Coordination and the Future of BRICS

The two cases suggest that BRICS does not need to seek consensus on every issue to become more effective. The grouping does not need to reach agreement on every issue to become more effective. What matters is whether it can identify areas where interests are sufficiently aligned to support sustained coordination. Selective coordination may therefore be more realistic than trying to construct a common position across the entire global governance agenda.

The IMF provides the clearest opportunity. The Finance Track already offers a channel for discussion, while the Rio Vision provides a substantive basis for coordination. Regular exchanges among Finance and Central Bank Deputies, consultation with BRICS representatives at the IMF, and reporting to Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors would help identify common priorities and maintain them through the quota process. The objective need not be identical national positions, but a common minimum position on issues such as greater representation for emerging and developing economies, protection of poorer members and more representative governance. Coordination should also extend beyond BRICS. IMF, World Bank and United Nations reform cannot be achieved by BRICS members alone. Where agreement exists, BRICS can also work with emerging and developing economies, the G77 and regional organizations to build wider coalitions. The aim would be to turn areas of BRICS agreement into broader Global South positions where possible. This would give BRICS greater negotiating weight than relying on its own membership.

Security Council reform requires a more flexible approach because national and regional interests are harder to reconcile. BRICS can maintain its common

support for a more representative Council while allowing members to work through different negotiating coalitions where their interests diverge. The aim should be to preserve areas of agreement without forcing a common position where none exists.

The IMF and Security Council cases reveal both the possibilities and limits of BRICS cooperation on global governance reform. BRICS has developed stronger positions on some institutional questions, but translating these positions into sustained coordination remains difficult. Its future influence will depend on whether members can identify areas of common interest, agree on minimum positions and carry them into the institutions where decisions are made. For an expanded BRICS, the challenge is therefore not to speak collectively on every issue, but to act collectively where coordination can produce results.

Customised Curriculum—The Key Missing Link in the BRICS Education Ecosystem

Atul Aneja

From modest beginnings, the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping is maturing into a self-reliant ecosystem of emerging economies that increasingly relies on its own institutional strengths rather than Western frameworks. Education has emerged as a central pillar of this shift. In the 2026 BRICS agenda, the emphasis falls squarely on higher education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), academic mobility, research clusters, AI ethics, and the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. Together, these strands represent an attempt to build human capital capable of powering the industrial and digital economies of the bloc's future.

The BRICS Network University: An Emerging Ecosystem

At the heart of this effort is the BRICS Network University (BNU), envisioned as the core of a wider University Network Ecosystem encompassing specialised alliances for leadership, research, skills development, and indigenous knowledge. Based on the latest available membership data, the BNU now links 176 institutions across the five member states, drawing in flagship national universities from each country.

Brazil's contribution includes research-intensive institutions such as the Universidade de São Paulo and the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, active respectively in energy and climate research and in engineering and innovation. Russian participation is anchored by universities such as the University of Tyumen, known for Arctic studies and digital governance, alongside institutions working on environmental science and agriculture.

India's presence spans traditional-knowledge and STEM strengths at institutions like Banaras Hindu University, development economics research at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, and engineering capacity contributed by the IITs and central universities. China brings research anchors such as Beijing Normal University, active in education and AI clusters, alongside institutions strong in economics and governance. South Africa's contribution includes the University of the Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University, prominent in health, innovation, agriculture, and governance research.

These institutions function as anchor nodes within the BNU ecosystem: they lead joint master's and doctoral programmes, host thematic research clusters spanning energy, ICT, climate, economics and security, drive student and faculty mobility, participate in the BRICS Rectors' Forum, and contribute to work on AI ethics and digital learning. Collectively, they form the backbone of an emerging academic architecture positioned outside traditionally Western-dominated networks.

Private Sector Engagement Across the Bloc

A distinguishing feature of the BNU initiative is the depth of private-sector involvement, which occurs not through a single formal structure but through sector-specific partnerships, joint laboratories, industry-funded chairs, start-up incubators, and skills alliances aligned with BRICS priorities in AI, energy, climate, manufacturing, health and logistics.

In India, companies such as Tata Group, Infosys, Wipro, Reliance Industries and Adani Group support engineering research, AI skilling platforms, cybersecurity labs and infrastructure studies. Chinese firms including Huawei, Alibaba Cloud, Tencent and BYD lead in AI, cloud infrastructure, EV research and digital public infrastructure. Russian contributors such as Rosatom, Gazprom, Sberbank and Yandex anchor strengths in nuclear and energy engineering, Arctic logistics, and AI governance. Brazilian companies including Petrobras, Vale and Embraer bring expertise in energy transition,

materials science and aerospace engineering, while Natura & Co supports indigenous-knowledge and biodiversity research. In South Africa, firms such as Sasol, MTN Group, Naspers and Anglo-American anchor contributions in energy systems, digital connectivity and mining sustainability.

This cross-sectoral industry interface gives the BNU ecosystem a practical dimension, opening channels to high-quality employment within BRICS economies themselves and reinforcing the link between education and industrial demand.

The Missing Piece: A Common School Curriculum

Despite these advances, BRICS education cooperation suffers from a significant structural gap. While the bloc has built substantial cooperation in higher education, TVET, academic mobility, research clustering, AI ethics and indigenous knowledge, it has not developed a unified school-level curriculum capable of rivalling globally recognised systems such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International, or the Advanced Placement (AP) framework.

This absence is not a marginal oversight. A shared curriculum functions as a strategic instrument of soft power, shaping common values, establishing comparable learning standards, enabling student mobility, underpinning mutual recognition of qualifications, and offering pedagogical frameworks rooted outside Western educational traditions. Without such a curriculum, BRICS countries remain structurally dependent on Western-origin K-12 standards for their international schools, for benchmarking pedagogy, for global university admissions, and for curriculum design more broadly. In effect, the bloc has built impressive tertiary and skills infrastructure atop a foundation still shaped by external frameworks.

Closing this gap would arguably require several coordinated instruments: a BRICS International Curriculum, a BRICS School Accreditation System, a

BRICS Teacher Training Framework, a BRICS Assessment and Evaluation Board, and a BRICS Indigenous Knowledge Core that could formally integrate traditions such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and African knowledge systems into structured learning content.

Early, Partial Signals

There are, nonetheless, incipient signs of movement in this direction. The BRICS Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ) initiative is arguably the closest existing approximation to a curriculum-building effort, though its focus remains recognition rather than curriculum creation. The BRICS Indigenous Knowledge Initiative holds potential to evolve into discrete curriculum modules, but currently falls short of a comprehensive K-12 offering. Similarly, the BRICS Digital Learning Platform may eventually host shared educational content across member states, yet it too stops short of constituting a curriculum in its own right.

Conclusion

BRICS has made genuine progress in constructing an alternative educational ecosystem anchored by the BNU, sustained by robust private-sector participation, and oriented toward the skills demands of the digital economy. Yet without a unified school curriculum, this architecture remains incomplete as a soft-power instrument. Besides, it is the missing link required in a seamless ecosystem, integrating school education with higher education in BRICS universities, research and employment in the grouping's enterprises. Higher education cooperation alone cannot substitute for shared foundational values and standards cultivated from the school level upward. Until BRICS addresses this gap, its educational ecosystem will continue to coexist with, rather than offer a genuine alternative to, the Western-origin frameworks that still define global school education.

India's BRICS Presidency at a Moment of Turbulence

Indrani Talukdar

India's 2026 BRICS chairmanship arrives at an unusually fraught moment—the Russia–Ukraine war continues to reshape global alignments, a US–Israel war on Iran has triggered an energy and maritime security crisis in the Gulf, and fresh border friction with China over Arunachal Pradesh has reignited domestic and diplomatic sensitivities just weeks before the summit in New Delhi. Yet, precisely because of these overlapping crises, India's presidency is well placed to steer BRICS toward a pragmatic, developmentcentred agenda that emphasises resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability—the official theme of its chairmanship—while avoiding maximalist geopolitical confrontations that could fracture the grouping.

The turbulent backdrop: Ukraine, Iran and a fractured global order

The war in Ukraine remains the defining geopolitical fault line of the decade, polarising the international system and testing the coherence of plurilateral groupings like BRICS. Russia's position as a core member, Western sanctions architecture, and the wider debate over sovereignty, territorial integrity and the rules of the international order all sit uneasily alongside the interests of other BRICS members, many of whom prioritise strategic autonomy and nonalignment. The May 2026 BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, held under India's chair, reflected this complexity—ministers reaffirmed commitment to the UN Charter, multilateralism and the peaceful resolution

of disputes, while noting “differing views”¹⁴ on several regional conflicts and calling for politicodiplomatic measures to lower conflict potential.

Even more immediately disruptive for the 2026 summit cycle has been the war involving Iran. By May 2026, the conflict had entered its third month, with the Strait of Hormuz—through which roughly a fifth of global oil and gas flows—effectively blockaded or severely restricted, triggering an energy shock that directly affects India, China and other BRICS economies dependent on Gulf supplies. At the May foreign ministers’ meeting, India’s External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasised “safe, unimpeded maritime flows¹⁵” through international waters, a formulation that sought to balance India’s energy security needs, its ties with Gulf partners, and its broader commitment to freedom of navigation without explicitly taking sides in the US–Israel–Iran confrontation. The ministers’ outcome document¹⁶ similarly underlined the importance of secure maritime commerce and called for diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of conflict, while acknowledging divergent national positions on West Asia/Middle East developments.

This context matters for India’s presidency because it frames the limits and possibilities of BRICS consensus. The Iran war has shown that despite the grouping’s eagerness for unified, granular positions on active hot wars somehow there has been some struggle. It is because of some members being a part of the war. However, like all the times, BRICS during the May foreign ministers meeting was able to park their divergences and shown their commitment on broad principles such as support for multilateralism, reform of global governance, opposition to unilateral coercive measures etc. One needs to understand that divergences does not mean that the grouping is failing. There are many examples of other groupings such as the European Union and ASEAN where despite the divergent strategic interests have been able to come together especially during trying times.

The BRICS May meeting of the foreign ministers under India’s chairmanship also highlighted the complimentary among the members despite the

challenges. To bring the best out of each member states, India's chairmanship has, therefore, leaned into areas where BRICS can deliver tangible value such as development cooperation,¹⁷ supplychain resilience, digital public infrastructure, climateresilient agriculture, and reforms of international financial institutions to better reflect the weight of emerging markets and developing countries. Under the presidency, New Delhi is also focusing on education, culture and people-to-people connectivity which are crucial ingredients to sustain peace and stability.

India, even before its independence, has proved time and again to be a consensus-builder that was well reflected during its G20 presidency in 2023 when the Ukraine war was at the peak. This quality of India has helped the country to garner good will all across despite the challenges it faces.

Arunachal Pradesh; India- China parleys

In midAugust 2026 it was reported¹⁸ that Chinese forces had denied the Indian Army access to key patrolling points and encroached on land in Upper Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh, with local communities alleging a gradualbutsteadyexpansion of Chinese presence and loss of ancestral hunting grounds. The report came just weeks before Chinese President Xi Jinping's expected visit to New Delhi for the BRICS summit on 12–13 September, raising the stakes for both capitals. Against this global turbulence, the India–China border dispute has flared again in the runup to the September summit.

The underlying dispute is structural. There have been many serious clashes, including the 2020 Galwan clash, on the border dispute between the two countries. The border has remained a persistent pressure point in bilateral ties; however, both sides have also reached out through diplomatic engagements and military disengagements to keep the communication channel open.

Official responses to the latest Arunachal reports have been carefully calibrated. MEA shared on 07 August that India and China held talks¹⁹ to assess the overall situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and also discussed issues related to boundary delimitation, border management and trans-border cooperation. The diplomatic talks between both the nations took place on July 6 in New Delhi under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC). India's foreign ministry reaffirmed that maintaining peace and tranquillity in border regions is of "utmost importance." Meanwhile, China, for its part, has described the border situation as "generally stable".²⁰ This language signals mutual interest in preventing escalation ahead of the summit.

On 25 August India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Beijing discussed on advancing talks on delimiting parts of the disputed border. The discussions were also on expanding bilateral cooperation, maintaining stability and ensuring peace and tranquillity in the border areas. The successful outcome of the talks was the 8-point consensus.²¹ Both sides seem to be optimistic on the on-going normalisation of relations.

The positive outcome of this meeting will reflect on upcoming BRICS Summit in New Delhi as Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to attend the 12th of September. The 8-point consensus outcome is crucial because it breaks from the previous recurring pattern in India-China relations. However, it seems that both sides have moved past their "managed strategic rivalry"²² where apart from improvement in economic and diplomatic engagement they seem to have a common ground on territorial dispute. For India's BRICS chair, this recent high-level breakthrough by Doval and Wang Yi served as a diplomatic bridge ahead of the major BRICS Summit scheduled in New Delhi in September 2026.

Why India is well positioned to drive its September presidency

India enters its September BRICS summit with several structural and diplomatic advantages that position it to shape outcomes constructively.

First, India's chairmanship theme—"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"—is deliberately calibrated to the current global moment. In a world of wars, sanctions and supplychain shocks, "resilience" speaks directly to energy security, food security and criticalminerals supply chains; "innovation" aligns with India's strengths in digital public infrastructure, health tech and affordable pharmaceuticals; "cooperation" underscores the need for coordinated responses to climate change, pandemics and financial instability; and "sustainability" anchors the agenda in just energy transitions and climateresilient development. These priorities are crucial for emerging market and developing countries.

Second, India has used its recent G20 presidency and continued engagement in multilateral forums to build credibility as a bridgebuilder between the Global South and major powers. The BRICS ministers' document saluted the legacy of consecutive BRICS presidencies in the G20 (Indonesia, India, Brazil, South Africa) and highlighted the accession of the African Union to the G20²³ during India's 2023 presidency as a step towards amplifying the Global South's voice. This track record allows India to frame BRICS not as an antiWestern bloc but as a platform for reforming global governance—UN Security Council expansion, Bretton Woods quota reforms, WTO dispute settlement restoration—in ways that benefit developing countries.

Third, on the most divisive issues—Ukraine and the Iran war—India's diplomatic posture of strategic autonomy and emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy aligns closely with the lowestcommondenominator BRICS position—support for the UN Charter, opposition to unilateral coercive measures, and calls for political solutions. The May outcome document

carefully recorded “differing views”²⁴ on West Asia while reaffirming shared commitments to international humanitarian law, civilian protection and unhindered humanitarian access. This approach allows India to host leaders like Russia’s and Iran’s presidents without forcing the grouping into a unified stance that would alienate other members or external partners.

Fourth, on the India–China front, New Delhi has both the leverage and the incentive to compartmentalise. Bilateral trade remains substantial, and both sides have shown willingness to maintain military to military and diplomatic channels even during standoffs. By reaching a consensus just before the BRICS summit, India and China has successfully demonstrated that they could avert any kind of bilateral tension and prevent it from hijacking the summit. The presence of Xi in New Delhi itself becomes a diplomatic asset.

Finally, India’s concrete deliverables under its chairmanship—energy ministers’ meetings focused on security and sustainability, work on local currency payment systems, digital public infrastructure cooperation, and initiatives on food security and traditional medicine—offer tangible outputs that can be showcased irrespective of geopolitical disagreements. In a turbulent year, the ability to point to practical cooperation on development, technology and resilience may be the most credible measure of a successful presidency.

Conclusion

India’s 2026 BRICS presidency is unfolding against a backdrop of war in Ukraine and a US–Israel–Iran conflict disrupting global energy flows. At the same time, the consensus reached between India and China last month is also a prove of successful diplomacy and the importance both countries put on each other. India will conduct the summit with a mixed backdrop of tensions (the on-going wars) and hope (the August India-China talks). These

developments are the perfect ingredients to India's emphasis on resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability both timely and strategically astute.

By anchoring BRICS in development-oriented cooperation and upholding multilateral principles without forcing consensus on every geopolitical fault line, New Delhi is well positioned to drive a substantive and credible September summit.

India, once again, is in the opportune position to reiterate its role as a consensus-builder not only on a regional but global level.

BRICS and the Gender Imperative: India's Chairship as a Turning Point

Shambhavi Anand

As India prepares to host the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi this September under its chairship, the group's evolution from a financial and geopolitical forum to a platform for people-centric cooperation is worth noting. The BRICS theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability", reflecting a people-centric and humanity-first approach, must be reinforced by inclusive development. This inclusive development would be incomplete without taking into account the women. Thus, women's empowerment has emerged as a pivotal area of cooperation within this broader BRICS vision of cooperation, sustainable development, and global harmony.

The focus on women is significant because the BRICS agenda now actively works towards issues that directly affect communities and people rather than just conventional economic cooperation. In this regard, the catalytic role of past BRICS Chairships in steering the discussion on women is not new. The BRICS Women Track has focused on four priority areas, which include women in governance and leadership, women's digital and financial inclusion, women's entrepreneurship and skill development and women's role in climate action, food security and nutrition.²⁵ During the preparatory discussions of the BRICS Women's Working Group, these priorities were identified and carried forward in the meetings at Kochi. Thus, the Women Track is an important platform through which member countries come together to deliberate on issues relating to women's empowerment across all sectors and women-led development while advancing cooperation across these shared priorities.

The Fourth BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting, held in Kochi from 8-9 July, under India's BRICS Chairmanship 2026 was an important step in this direction. It also marked a significant breakthrough by adopting the first-ever Joint Statement in the Women Track, reflecting the shared commitment of BRICS Member Countries to strengthen cooperation in promoting women-led development in all spheres.²⁶ This was a historic milestone signaling a move beyond rhetoric and towards a substantive and outcome-oriented Chairship. This also highlighted that the future of BRICS depends on its ability to institutionalize women's empowerment not as a sidebar but as a core pillar of resilience, innovation and sustainability.

The Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Women Ministerial Meeting, 2026 is important as it recognized women as active leaders, decision-makers and drivers of economic growth, social transformation and sustainable development. It also reaffirmed the importance of recognition, reduction and equitable sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, and the implementation of policies that will lead to women-led development and women's all-round development.²⁷ This is important because it moves beyond representation to the conditions that shape women's participation in social and economic life.

In the realm of governance and leadership, the joint statement recognized that women's equal participation in governance and leadership, including in the workforce, can contribute to more inclusive and effective decision-making while also recognizing the vital role of women in peace building process in accordance with global Women, Peace and Security agenda.²⁸ This becomes an important link between women's participation and leadership, governance and resilience.

Another important pillar endorsed in the Joint Statement was financial and digital inclusion. It recognized that women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, rural, remote and hard-to-reach areas, continue to face barriers to economic empowerment due to exclusion from and difficult access to formal

and digital financial systems and the persistent gender digital divide, which limits access to inclusive financial services and digital skills, information, opportunities and meaningful digital inclusion.²⁹ The statement therefore encouraged greater access to formal financial systems, digital financial services, microfinance and diversified financial instruments, including affordable credit, guarantees, entrepreneurship support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and innovative financing mechanisms. It also encouraged exchange of experiences on digital public infrastructure, affordable digital connectivity and community-based financial inclusion models, as appropriate, to promote digital and financial capabilities, online safety, cybersecurity awareness and multilingual accessibility of information, along with investments in gender-responsive digital ecosystems that enable women's full participation.³⁰ Another important dimension was the recognition of the risks women and girls face in digital environments and calls for measures to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated abuse. Thus, digital inclusion was not just endorsed as access to technology but as meaningful, safe and effective participation in the digital economy and society.

In the realm of women's Entrepreneurship and Skill Development, the statement recognized that holistic skill development, targeted capacity building initiatives, mentorship and lifelong learning strengthen women's empowerment, economic agency and help mitigate poverty.³¹ However, the need to address barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing credit, markets and business support was also highlighted. Emphasis was placed on the importance of care responsibilities and comprehensive care policies. By recognizing unpaid and domestic work as an important part of women's economic empowerment, the link between social and economic policy will be strengthened and will enhance women's full participation in economic life.

Finally, the connection between women empowerment and climate action, food security and nutrition was also endorsed in the statement. The important role of women in food production, nutrition and traditional knowledge, while recognizing that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change and food insecurity was highlighted.³² It therefore emphasized the importance of enhancing women's participation, leadership and agency in climate action, disaster risk reduction and the green economy including the promotion of clean-energy solutions such as e-cooking and encouraged gender-responsive, climate-resilient agricultural and food systems. Most importantly, it acknowledged the important role of women from rural areas, local, traditional and indigenous communities, as appropriate, as agents of resilience and custodians of traditional knowledge.

The meeting at Kochi was important as it reflected the BRICS spirit of mutual respect, understanding, solidarity, openness, collaboration and cooperation on matters concerning women, within the BRICS framework. The session, chaired by Union Minister Annapurna Devi saw not just the unanimous adoption of the Joint Statement but also the proposal of two digital initiatives and endorsed by all the members: the BRICS Women's Digital Capacity Building Guidelines and the BRICS Digital Repository of Best Practices.³³ The BRICS Digital Repository of Best Practices will serve as a shared platform for documenting and exchanging successful policies, programmes and innovations on women's empowerment across BRICS Member Countries while the BRICS Digital Capacity Building Guidelines aims to promote institutional collaboration, facilitate knowledge exchange and strengthen capacity building to accelerate women's empowerment through sustained cooperation.³⁴

On the sidelines of the BRICS Ministerial Meeting, thematic panel discussions were organized that brought together policymakers, experts, practitioners and development partners to exchange experiences and best practices on

digital inclusion, women's entrepreneurship, financial empowerment, climate resilience, food security and nutrition.³⁵ As part of the programme, Union Ministers, dignitaries and foreign delegations also visited an exhibition showcasing India's women-led development initiatives across diverse sectors. The exhibition featured initiatives undertaken by various Ministries and Departments, including rural livelihoods through SARAS and the Lakhpati Didi initiative, women's participation in sports through ASMITA, women in STEM, financial inclusion initiatives, and flagship programmes of the Ministry of Women and Child Development such as SHE-Box, One Stop Centres and the Women's Helpline.³⁶ This highlighted India's achievements in women-led development across sectors such as rural development, STEM, nutrition and education while the panel discussions served as a platform to exchange ideas and strengthen partnerships for women's empowerment. These initiatives while upholding the 'Innovation Pillar' of the BRICS theme are also institutionalizing the principle of cooperation. By creating mechanisms of sharing knowledge, experiences and practices, they seek to translate cooperation into practical outcomes, which is the essence of India's Chairship.

The developments under India's BRICS Chairship indicate a growing recognition that women's empowerment is closely linked to wider goals of inclusive and sustainable development. The Fourth BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting in Kochi marked an important step in consolidating this perspective within the BRICS framework. In particular, the adoption of the first Joint Statement under the Women Track and the emphasis on digital cooperation signal an effort to move beyond broad commitments towards more structured and sustained forms of engagement.

This is particularly significant in the context of BRICS priorities relating to resilience, innovation and sustainable development. Women's participation in governance, entrepreneurship, economic activity, digital transformation,

climate action and peacebuilding can contribute substantially to stronger and more inclusive institutions. However, meaningful participation also depends on addressing persistent structural constraints, including unequal access to finance, technology and opportunities, as well as the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. The recognition of these concerns in the Kochi Joint Statement places women-led development within the wider economic and social development agenda of BRICS rather than treating it as an isolated policy concern.

India's Chairship has also highlighted the potential of knowledge-sharing and institutional cooperation among BRICS countries. Initiatives such as the proposed BRICS Digital Repository of Best Practices and the Digital Capacity Building Guidelines can provide practical mechanisms for exchanging policy experiences, institutional approaches and successful interventions. Their value will depend on whether such mechanisms are regularly used, updated and integrated into future cooperation among member countries. In this sense, the emphasis on institutional mechanisms is important for ensuring that commitments made at ministerial meetings are translated into continuing programmes of cooperation.

A further contribution of India's Chairship lies in strengthening the institutional position of the Women Track within BRICS. Greater continuity in this area could enable gender considerations to be incorporated more systematically into other areas of cooperation, including economic development, technology, climate action, entrepreneurship and social policy. Such integration would also help move the discussion beyond the representation of women towards a broader consideration of the conditions required for their substantive participation in development processes.

The broader relevance of these developments lies in the recognition that resilience and sustainability cannot be separated from questions of inclusion. Economic and technological progress is unlikely to produce equitable

outcomes when women continue to face barriers to resources, decision-making and institutional participation. Women-led development, therefore, is not only a question of social equity but also an important dimension of economic and institutional development.

India's BRICS Chairship has contributed to placing these concerns more firmly within the group's agenda and has created a basis for continued cooperation. The longer-term significance of the Kochi outcomes, however, will depend on implementation, institutional continuity and the ability of member countries to translate shared priorities into measurable progress. As BRICS continues to expand its role in global development discussions, the extent to which women participate as decision-makers, innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders will remain an important indicator of the inclusiveness of its development vision.

Event Report

BRICS: Role and Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order

12 August 2026 | New Delhi

On 12 August 2026, the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) hosted a discussion on “*BRICS: Role and Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order*” in New Delhi. The discussion brought together diplomats, scholars, experts and representatives from BRICS member countries to examine the evolving role of BRICS, India’s 2026 Chairship, and the grouping’s contribution to a resilient, sustainable and more representative global order.

Inaugural Session

Welcome Remarks: Dr Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF

Keynote Address: Shri Sudhakar Dalela

The Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF, who welcomed representatives from BRICS member countries and the keynote speaker, Shri Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (ER) and BRICS Sherpa, Ministry of External Affairs, India.

The address highlighted the substantive engagements undertaken across various BRICS tracks during India’s Presidency. The BRICS Foreign Ministers’ Meeting reflected consensus on global governance reform, counter-terrorism,

climate action, digital infrastructure and Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as energy and food security. The Health Ministers' Meeting adopted the 16th Health Ministers' Declaration, focusing on pandemic preparedness, digital health and mental wellness.

Progress was also recorded across sectoral tracks. The Energy Ministers' Meeting in Gurugram adopted the 11th Joint Communiqué and launched the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for smart grids and energy storage. The Transport Ministers' Meeting in Nagpur advanced cooperation on sustainable transport, fuel and logistics supply chains. The Women's Track adopted its first joint statement, while Justice Ministers agreed to strengthen cooperation on alternative dispute resolution and mediation.

These developments were presented as evidence of BRICS' gradual transition from dialogue to delivery. Existing institutional mechanisms, including the BRICS Business Council, Women's Business Alliance, Think-Tanks Council and sectoral centres, provide platforms for translating policy ideas into practical cooperation.

Financial cooperation was identified as another important priority, particularly through greater use of local currencies and efforts to build a more resilient international monetary system. At the same time, geopolitical conflicts, economic volatility, debt, inflation, fragmented trade and persistent digital and AI divides continue to pose challenges to developing economies.

The address emphasised that as BRICS seeks greater reform of global institutions, its own mechanisms must demonstrate effectiveness, inclusivity and practical outcomes. The Delhi Summit was therefore expected to consolidate these efforts and advance feasible, outcome-oriented cooperation.

The Keynote Address was delivered by Shri Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (ER), Ministry of External Affairs and BRICS Sherpa. The address reflected on

BRICS' evolution, India's Chairship and the progress achieved across various thematic tracks.

BRICS has evolved from an idea into a major platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries, representing nearly half of the world's population and around 40 per cent of global GDP and PPP. What began as a platform for economic cooperation and financial governance reform has expanded into a broad strategic partnership covering trade and investment, sustainable development, energy security, health, digital transformation, science and technology, security, business-to-business (B2B) and people-to-people (P2P) exchanges.

With the expansion of BRICS, its role in advancing an inclusive multipolar global order has further strengthened. India's previous Chairships coincided with periods of profound global change, including the Eurozone crisis in 2012 and the unprecedented disruption caused by COVID-19 in 2021. India's 2026 Chairship, guided by the hon'ble Prime Minister's vision, has sought to redefine BRICS around the theme of Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability, while advancing a people-centric approach in the spirit of humanity.

India has translated its Chairship priorities into an ambitious engagement programme, with over 400 meetings planned across 33 ministerial and heads-of-agency tracks in nearly 30 cities. The programme reflects the diversity of the BRICS agenda and a commitment to a substantive and outcome-oriented Chairship. It also reflects a whole-of-nation approach involving Central Government Ministries, State governments, industry, academia, think tanks, youth and other stakeholders. More than 350 meetings had already been concluded, generating substantive progress across different areas.

India's initiatives have been guided by two complementary objectives: consolidating progress from previous Chairships by integrating the expanded

membership with greater coherence, and translating the Chairship theme into practical outcomes through digital platforms, operative frameworks and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

Under the resilience pillar, cooperation is being strengthened in secure supply chains, resilient infrastructure, climate adaptation and sustainable food systems. Under innovation, greater collaboration is being promoted among startups, entrepreneurs, research institutions and technology ecosystems. Under cooperation, partnerships are being pursued across economic, institutional, cultural and people-to-people domains. Under sustainability, cooperation covers sustainable agriculture, clean energy and responsible lifestyles.

In agriculture, new platforms and frameworks are strengthening cooperation on digital agriculture technology, regenerative agriculture and food security. In trade and finance, efforts focus on resilient trade, internationalisation and financing of MSMEs, global value-chain cooperation, invoice discounting mechanisms for MSMEs, and cooperation on growth, development and taxation.

In industry, cooperation on MSMEs, photovoltaics, startups and logistics has been supported through new frameworks and action plans, including the proposed BRICS incubator network and the possibility of a startup innovation initiative. In energy, initiatives include guiding principles and a digital centre of excellence on smart grids and energy storage, along with cooperation on hydrogen value chains.

In health, priorities include healthy lifestyles, mental wellness, and traditional, complementary and integrative medicine, supported by knowledge-sharing and capacity-building frameworks. In culture, members have advanced cooperation in cultural and creative industries and the promotion of traditional knowledge systems.

An important element of India's Chairship has been whole-of-society engagement through Jan Bhagidari, or people's participation, including initiatives celebrating the cultural traditions of BRICS through music, theatre, arts, crafts, sports, yoga and the environment. These initiatives reinforce the importance of people's participation in diplomacy.

At the Summit, the focus would be on translating months of consultations and consensus-building into a forward-looking and action-oriented agenda with tangible outcomes. The Summit would reaffirm BRICS' commitment to reforming global governance institutions, inclusive multilateralism, global peace and security efforts, the fight against terrorism, and practical cooperation on the development priorities of the Global South.

India also looked forward to welcoming outreach countries and heads of international organisations, recognising the importance of synergies in addressing shared global challenges. The overall endeavour was to strengthen institutions, deepen partnerships and deliver practical, people-centric outcomes.

Session 1:

BRICS Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order

Chair: Amb. Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Former Secretary (CPV & OIA) & BRICS Sherpa, MEA

Speakers:

- **Amb. Kenneth Felix Haczynski da Nobrega, Ambassador of Brazil to India**
- **Amb. Xu Feihong, Ambassador of People's Republic of China to India**
- **Mr. Roman Babushkin, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of the Russian Federation in India**
- **Mr. Cedrick C. Crowley, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of South Africa in India**

In the session, *BRICS Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order*, BRICS origin and evolution was discussed. How a dialogue among emerging economies has evolved into a dynamic and influential forum that now represents a substantial share of the world's population, economic output and development potential. Over these 20 years, BRICS' evolution has demonstrated that cooperation among the emerging markets and developing countries can shape global discourse, advocate for reform and offer practical solutions grounded in mutual respect, sovereignty and shared growth.

In the current time when world is witnessing several regional conflicts with global-level implications, BRICS importance as a multilateral organisation with its diverse and broad geographical footprint and growing influence was underlined. Session also underscored the urgent need to reform global governance institutions so that they are more democratic, representative and responsive to existing multiple realities. It was stressed that BRICS

is not an international organisation or supranational institution, but an intergovernmental forum based on flexible integration and consensus. Expansion of BRICS membership across all continents reflects its principal strength which is its soft power and ability to build common positions.

The session also highlighted that the even with diversity BRICS member countries are united by the main objectives of advancing sustainable development through practical cooperation and reforming global governance institutions to better reflect a multipolar power dynamic. It was also emphasised that the nature of the organisation is pragmatic, consensus-building, that it is based on the search for common ground rather than the deepening of differences.

In the discussion evolution of BRICS was discussed. How over the period of two decades BRICS has evolved into a comprehensive platform of cooperation specially in three sectors: politics and security, economy and finance, and humanitarian affairs. Session highlighted that expansion of BRICS membership has brought clear benefits emanating from new opportunities for cooperation and a stronger BRICS voice on the world stage to support the establishment of just and equal multipolarity.

Role of founding principles like consensus, continuity, sovereign equality and mutual respect as well as the central role of the UN has been the basis of BRICS work. It was also highlighted that from strengthening the multilateral trading system to artificial intelligence, international terrorism and cyber and information security, it's natural to strengthen BRICS coordination in the framework of multilateral forums given current geopolitical turmoil happening across the globe.

BRICS: Multilateralism and Global South

In this session, role of BRICS as a platform for Global South was discussed. It was highlighted that since its inception, BRICS has grown into a major

force in the world that safeguards peace, promotes development and uphold justice. It was also stressed that BRICS member countries should act on the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, jointly uphold multilateralism, advance greater BRICS cooperation and build a community with a shared future for mankind. During the session, a new acronym 'MAGIC' was proposed for navigating BRICS cooperation in coming decades. 'M' stands for 'multilateralism. 'A' stands for action. 'G' stands for global governance. 'I' stands for inclusiveness and 'C' stands for cooperation.

BRICS as a multilateral platform should always hold high the banner of multilateralism, safeguarding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, unequivocally oppose hegemonism, unilateralism and protectionism and steadfastly safeguard the common interests of the Global South. In the last two decades, BRICS has achieved outcomes in areas such as economy, trade, finance, science, technology, education, health and culture since its inception. To continue and improve in this regard, it was stressed that BRICS should strengthen coordination of macroeconomic policies, adopt more trade and investment facilitation measures, advance cooperation in local currency and cross-border payment systems and yield more tangible outcomes.

During the session, underrepresentation of Global South was highlighted. It was called out that BRICS countries should come together and become active participants in sphere of global governance and become voice of Global South. Expansion of BRICS membership was also underlined. It was stressed that BRICS should ensure more Global South countries participation in BRICS cooperation and share the fruits of development. It was also mentioned that only through joint efforts of member states greater BRICS cooperation will succeed.

It was highlighted that BRICS occupies a vital place in the current fast-changing global landscape as well as has it has a greater role to play in upholding the principles of global governance. At the same time, it should

strengthen its voice in the pursuit of global peace and security. The link between peace and security and development is indivisible. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of conflict, including underdevelopment, inequality and exclusion. With this regard BRICS has always emphasized on dialogue, regional solutions and diplomacy to maintain international peace and upholding sovereignty and international law.

BRICS and Economic Cooperation

This session emphasized that how The New Development Bank plays a central role in financing infrastructure and sustainable development, while central bank cooperation and local currency financing enhance resilience. Initiatives such as BRICS Clear, reinsurance capacity, investment platforms, and the grain exchange reflect the grouping's relevance in diversifying global settlement systems and advancing digitalisation. It was mentioned that New Development Bank has approved 120 projects providing robust financial support for member states.

BRICS is advancing cooperation across energy, MSME support, ecommerce, outer space, innovation, youth exchanges, food security, water management, urban development, healthcare (including nuclear medicine), and cultural ties. The Comprehensive BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy 2030 is set to guide future collaboration. By prioritising reform of global governance institutions, promoting inclusive development, and supporting emerging markets, BRICS contributes to building a just, sustainable, and multipolar world. Its collective potential forms a solid foundation to address 21st century complexities and shape a future that benefits all nations. These efforts send the clear message: inclusivity, cooperation, solidarity and the principles of multilateralism remain indispensable to securing a peaceful, equitable and sustainable future all.

Session 2:

The Future of BRICS: Strengthening Cooperation in an Evolving Global Order

Chair: Amb. Dammu Ravi, Former Secretary (ER) & BRICS Sherpa, MEA

Speakers:

- **Mr. Maulana Syahid, Minister Counselor, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in India**
- **Dr Omid Babelian, IPIS Representative in India, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in India**
- **Amb. Anil Trigunayat, Distinguished Fellow, VIF**

The second session examined “*The Future of BRICS: Strengthening Cooperation in an Evolving Global Order.*” The discussion assessed BRICS against shifts between unipolarity, bipolarity and multipolarity and highlighted its growing importance as a platform representing the interests and aspirations of the Global South.

The expansion of BRICS was viewed as an indication of its increasing relevance and attractiveness. At the same time, the diversity of political and economic interests among members makes sustained dialogue important for managing differences and identifying areas of convergence. The discussion emphasised the need to move beyond BRICS as primarily a platform for dialogue towards practical and outcome-oriented cooperation.

Energy, Food Security and Connectivity

Energy security, renewable energy and food security emerged as important areas for cooperation. The need to address critical choke points in global

supply chains and ensure reliable access to essential resources was emphasised. Greater cooperation in green energy could support sustainable development, while stronger agricultural and food-supply chains could help address food-security challenges, particularly in Africa and other developing regions.

Infrastructure and connectivity, including roads, transport networks and economic corridors, were also identified as areas requiring greater investment. The New Development Bank (NDB) was highlighted as an important instrument for financing such projects. Expanding its resources and reach could enhance its contribution to global development.

Trade, Finance and Technology

The discussion explored greater use of local currencies in intra-BRICS trade. This was viewed as a gradual process rather than simply an effort towards de-dollarisation. Appropriate benchmarks, financial mechanisms and incentives could encourage businesses and institutions to make greater use of local currencies.

Digital technologies, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), digital currencies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) were identified as additional areas for cooperation. Such cooperation could improve transparency, communication and citizen empowerment. Technological cooperation would, however, need to be accompanied by investment in skills and human resources, particularly to develop a workforce capable of effectively using and deploying AI technologies.

BRICS and the Global South

The session also provided a comprehensive assessment of Indonesia's perspective on joining the BRICS bloc. It discussed the importance and

implications of BRICS expansion and how BRICS as an institution can effectively operate amid global uncertainty.

Three critical points were raised regarding the basis of BRICS. First, the expanded grouping represents over 40 per cent of global GDP. Second, it provides representation to the Global South and gives developing countries greater power to engage with the wider developing world. Third, it provides an avenue for institutional development among developing countries.

The expanded BRICS coalition was highlighted as representing substantial economic weight, with over 40 per cent of global GDP output, while serving as a primary platform for advancing the collective interests, voice and bargaining power of the Global South. Its value was seen in championing the development priorities of emerging markets and developing countries, particularly as trade fragmentation and geopolitical volatility challenge the traditional multilateral architecture.

Regional integration within Southeast Asia was also addressed. Indonesia was noted as the only nation from the Southeast Asian region that is part of the BRICS bloc.

The expansion of the New Development Bank and its local currency initiative for cross-border settlements was advocated as a potential safeguard against external financial shocks amid an uncertain and fragmented trade regime. The discussion also highlighted Indonesia's readiness to contribute tangible best practices to BRICS, particularly in the areas of Digital Public Infrastructure and supply chain resilience during periods of trade uncertainty and the breaking of international rules.

Multilateralism, Multipolarity and People-to-People Connectivity

The session also emphasised the growing importance of BRICS amid the current global crisis, noting that it is a unique grouping that brings together some of the world's largest economies and democracies. BRICS also represents a challenge to some of the established assumptions underlying the existing international system and provides greater space for the Global South in global decision-making.

The discussion underlined that rather than allowing differences to prevent engagement, areas of convergence should be identified and pursued in the interest of global good and national security. The continuing conflicts and wars across different regions were also discussed, with concern over the inability of the international community to bring them to an end. In this context, the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity were emphasised as important foundations for a stable international order. The need for a “bank of ideas” and sustained dialogue among BRICS countries was highlighted. Such a platform could enable members to exchange ideas, identify common challenges and develop solutions that could benefit both the grouping and individual member states. People-to-people connectivity was also identified as an important area, with e-visa and visa-related challenges recognised as practical barriers to greater cooperation and interaction.

The discussion also noted that geopolitics cannot be avoided in the functioning of BRICS. The challenge is to accommodate geopolitical differences while building cooperation based on shared civilisational values and common interests. Multilateralism, multipolarity and multi-alignment can be strengthened through mutual trust, sensitivity towards each other's concerns and a focus on mutual benefit. Lastly, the session also underlined the importance of moving from dialogue to delivery, with greater inclusivity and

practical outcomes. BRICS can contribute to a more balanced global order by strengthening trust among its members, addressing shared challenges and creating mechanisms for cooperation that respect diversity while pursuing common interests.

BRICS and the Emerging Global Order

The discussion positioned BRICS as an important platform for shaping an emerging, more representative international order, particularly from the perspective of the Global South. A significant theoretical dimension of the discussion was its framing of the contemporary international system as an interregnum, a period in which the existing order is weakening. In contrast, a new order has yet to emerge fully. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci, this transition was characterised as a period in which “the old is dying” while “the new is struggling to be born,” highlighting the uncertainty and contestation surrounding the emerging global order.

The discussion further employed Jacques Lacan’s concept of the ‘gaze of the Other’ to examine the politics of identity and representation in the Global South. It argued that societies of the Global South have often understood themselves through externally produced narratives and frameworks, making control over narratives an important dimension of power. It emphasised that the growing distribution of economic, political and technological power has not been matched by corresponding reforms in global governance institutions, creating a crisis of legitimacy. BRICS was therefore presented not merely as an economic grouping but as a platform for strengthening the voice and agency of the Global South, including through greater recognition of diverse historical, civilizational and developmental perspectives.

The discussion also stressed that the credibility of BRICS will finally depend on its ability to convert its collective strength into tangible practical outcomes.

Some priority areas include food and energy security, climate change, digital development, AI, health, financial cooperation and resilience amid global instability and volatility. A broader need for a representative multilateral order was emphasised.

Special Remarks

Shri Shambhu L. Hakki, Joint Secretary, Multilateral Economic Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, and India's G20 and BRICS Sous Sherpa, delivered the special remarks virtually at the roundtable discussion on "BRICS, Rules and Priorities in Building a Resilient and Sustainable Global Order." He congratulated the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) for convening the discussion and appreciated the participation of distinguished speakers and delegates. During his remarks, Shri Hakki touched upon several themes which are as follows:

Changing Global Environment and the Need for Resilience

The contemporary global order is characterised by growing volatility and interconnected risks. Economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, climate change, public health emergencies and technological disruptions are increasingly interconnected and capable of transmitting shocks rapidly across borders. Disruptions in one part of the world can affect supply chains and markets elsewhere, while environmental shocks can have consequences for food security, livelihoods and economic stability far beyond their immediate location. Similarly, technological advancements can generate significant opportunities while simultaneously creating new vulnerabilities, particularly when their benefits and risks are unevenly distributed. Against this backdrop, resilience should no longer be understood merely as reactive crisis management. Instead, it should involve proactive preparation and the ability to anticipate risks, absorb shocks and recover from disruptions without

allowing temporary setbacks to become long-term crises. Building resilience requires stronger institutions and infrastructure, resilient supply chains, improved preparedness and, most importantly, a people- and community-centric approach.

Climate Change and Development

The urgency of strengthening resilience is particularly evident in the context of climate change. Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, water stress and declining agricultural productivity are already imposing significant economic and social costs. Estimates indicate that a substantial proportion of the global population remains vulnerable to welfare losses arising from extreme weather events, with developing economies particularly exposed to such risks. For countries such as India, climate-related shocks can reverse development gains and deepen existing vulnerabilities. Resilience should therefore be treated as an integral component of development rather than simply a response to disasters. Development planning must incorporate preparedness and the capacity to withstand and recover from climate and other shocks.

Sustainability as an Enabler of Development

Sustainability is about ensuring that the development and progress achieved today do not compromise opportunities available to future generations. For BRICS economies, achieving this balance is particularly important, as these countries are simultaneously pursuing greater energy access, industrialisation, employment generation and higher incomes while facing increasing environmental and climate pressures. Sustainability should therefore not be viewed merely as a constraint on development. Instead, it should increasingly shape the manner in which development is pursued through cleaner energy, efficient use of resources, resilient infrastructure, sustainable production and

consumption, sustainable agriculture, greater attention to communities and consideration of the interests of future generations. The objective, therefore, should not be to choose between development and sustainability, but to ensure that development itself becomes more sustainable and sustainability becomes an enabler of development.

The Role of BRICS

Resilience and sustainability cannot be achieved in isolation because many of the challenges confronting countries are inherently transboundary. Addressing them requires the exchange of knowledge and experience, access to technology and finance, capacity building and stronger partnerships. In this context, BRICS has an important role to play. Since its origins in 2006, when the four founding countries began consultations at the foreign ministers' level, BRICS has evolved into an important platform for cooperation among emerging and developing economies. The strength of BRICS lies not only in its economic weight but also in the diversity of experiences, capacities and development pathways represented within the grouping. This diversity provides an opportunity for countries to learn from one another, exchange successful approaches and identify areas where collective action can produce practical results. The recent expansion of BRICS has further broadened this pool of experience and expertise.

India's BRICS Presidency 2026

India's BRICS Presidency in 2026 has sought to build upon this potential. India's approach has been guided by the vision of building resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, anchored in a people-centric approach and the spirit of "Humanity First." Under the resilience pillar, the focus has been on early warning systems and preparedness, disaster risk reduction, resilient infrastructure, health security, resilient supply chains,

agriculture and livelihoods. Under the sustainability pillar, India has sought to approach the transition towards sustainable economies not merely as an environmental necessity but also as an opportunity for innovation, investment and development. Areas of cooperation include clean energy, smart grids, energy storage, sustainable agriculture, the circular economy, landscape restoration, biodiversity and sustainable lifestyles. Resilience, sustainability, innovation and cooperation are interconnected priorities that can help BRICS countries manage uncertainty while securing a more sustainable future for present and future generations.

Emphasis on Practical Cooperation

A central focus of India's BRICS Chairship has been to move beyond discussion towards practical and implementable outcomes. The Chairship has focused on knowledge-exchange platforms, capacity-building programmes, sharing of best practices and technical cooperation. These initiatives are intended to create an enabling environment that produces tangible benefits for people. The BRICS Friendship Cities event in Mumbai, for instance, provided an opportunity for BRICS countries to discuss environmental pollution, including air pollution, and share national experiences and solutions. Countries can learn from each other's experiences and develop context-specific solutions rather than relying exclusively on expensive and potentially unsuitable external solutions.

BRICS and Innovation

As an example of practical cooperation, the recent meeting of BRICS Industry Ministers highlighted discussions surrounding support for startups and the proposal for a BRICS Startup Innovation Fund. This initiative demonstrates how discussions within BRICS can translate into concrete institutional mechanisms for cooperation. Such initiatives also highlight the potential

of BRICS to connect the capabilities of its member countries and develop practical solutions to common challenges.

BRICS as a Continuing Process

The relevance of BRICS will ultimately be measured by its ability to transform the collective strengths of its members into practical solutions. The challenges confronting the global community are complex and constantly evolving, but the capabilities available within BRICS are also expanding. The objective should therefore be to connect these capabilities, learn from one another, develop practical partnerships and ensure that cooperation remains responsive to the realities facing societies and economies. Building a resilient and sustainable global order is not a one-time exercise but a continuing process requiring stronger institutions, trust-building, knowledge-sharing and sustained efforts to ensure that development can withstand shocks and endure over time.

Closing Remarks

In concluding remarks, Dr Arvind Gupta emphasised that BRICS should not be viewed as a process with a definitive endpoint, but rather as a continuing exercise that evolves with changing global circumstances. The themes discussed during the roundtable were identified as ongoing areas of cooperation, reflecting the expanding scope and relevance of BRICS. The discussions also provided an encouraging assessment of India's Presidency, highlighting its progress and the momentum generated across various areas of engagement.

The evolution of BRICS was also discussed in the context of its expansion. While the enlargement of the grouping had initially raised questions about its future direction and ability to accommodate diverse members, the

developments so far suggest that the process is progressively taking shape. The participation of both original and new member countries demonstrated how the platform is becoming broader and increasingly enriched by diverse perspectives. The perspectives shared by South Africa, Indonesia and Iran illustrated the value of bringing together both the original members and newer members of the grouping.

A significant degree of consensus within BRICS was noted despite differences on certain geopolitical issues. While complete consensus may not always be possible, there is substantial agreement on a range of issues affecting member countries, including health, education, and other areas of practical cooperation. The large number of ministerial meetings and other BRICS-related engagements during India's Presidency reflects the breadth of this cooperation. Geopolitical differences remain a challenge, but they should not prevent BRICS countries from addressing issues of common concern, particularly those affecting the Global South.

Two important dimensions of BRICS cooperation were highlighted: the philosophical dimension, relating to norms, principles and ideas for the future global order; and the practical dimension, relating to concrete cooperation among member countries. While implementation remains a challenge because of constraints relating to resources and institutions, it should not become an impediment to cooperation. Even partial implementation of agreed initiatives can contribute meaningfully to the objectives of the grouping.

Strengthening Cooperation within the Global South

An important opportunity for BRICS lies in making greater use of the knowledge, capabilities, resources and best practices available within its own membership. With the expansion of BRICS, the grouping now encompasses a wider range of experiences and expertise. This creates significant scope

for members to learn from one another and develop solutions without depending exclusively on external models or expertise. The emergence of BRICS as a platform for sharing best practices can be particularly valuable in areas such as environmental protection, pollution control and waste management. Cities and countries within BRICS have developed diverse approaches to these challenges, creating opportunities for peer learning and practical cooperation.

Financial and Economic Cooperation

Financial cooperation was identified as another area with considerable potential. While issues such as cross-border payments and reducing dependence on the dollar remain complex and contentious, there is scope to explore mechanisms that can reduce such dependence in critical areas. Existing developments in payment systems demonstrate that practical alternatives can be developed incrementally rather than requiring an immediate transformation of the entire system. The approach should therefore remain pragmatic and focused on identifying areas where greater financial cooperation among BRICS members is feasible.

Shaping New Global Norms

BRICS also has an opportunity to contribute to the formation of new norms for the emerging global order. The current period of geopolitical turbulence and transition provides an opportunity for BRICS countries to engage in discussions on the norms and principles that could shape the international system in the future. Artificial intelligence governance was identified as one such area. Since AI is increasingly influenced by a relatively small number of countries and actors, BRICS countries have an opportunity to participate actively in shaping discussions on its governance and contribute to the development of more inclusive global norms. Other areas with significant

potential for cooperation include health, education and skills, which are particularly important to the Global South. BRICS countries possess considerable experience in these areas and can contribute to developing practical approaches and shared frameworks.

Civilisation, Culture and Norm-Making

The role of civilisation and culture in shaping the emerging global order was identified as another important dimension of BRICS cooperation. With major civilisations represented within the expanded BRICS grouping, there is considerable scope to draw upon diverse civilisational experiences and ideas. Rather than viewing civilisations through the framework of conflict or competition, BRICS can promote civilisational dialogue and exchange as a means of contributing to global norm-making. Ideas emerging from different civilisations can enrich discussions on a people-centric global order. India's civilisational ideas, including "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" — One Earth, One Family, One Future, and "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah", were highlighted as examples of ideas that emphasise collective wellbeing and the welfare of all. Such principles could contribute to discussions on future global norms and potentially inform the development of new frameworks for international cooperation. The concept of "Swasthi," understood in terms of wellbeing and global wellbeing, was also identified as an idea with potential relevance to the broader BRICS discourse. Such civilisational concepts can help place human wellbeing at the centre of discussions on the future global order.

Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity

Greater people-to-people connectivity was identified as an important area for strengthening BRICS. One practical step could be to facilitate easier travel among BRICS countries through measures such as simplified visa procedures and e-visas. Improved mobility would strengthen connectivity and create

greater opportunities for interaction. Similarly, BRICS could significantly expand scholarship opportunities for students and young people. Rather than limiting such programmes to a small number of scholarships, the scale could be increased substantially, drawing upon the universities, institutions and centres of excellence available across BRICS countries. Existing national programmes and experiences could be brought together under a BRICS framework to increase their visibility and impact. Greater attention could also be given to facilitating youth exchanges, tourism, cultural exchanges and, where feasible, easier work-related mobility. Such initiatives would help BRICS become more visible at the level of ordinary citizens rather than remaining primarily an intergovernmental platform involving officials and experts.

BRICS as an Emerging Platform for Cooperation

The discussions reinforced the view that BRICS has evolved considerably from its origins as an acronym into a substantial platform for cooperation and exchange. While it cannot be expected to resolve all global problems, nor was it responsible for creating them, it has an important role to play within the emerging global order. Geopolitical tensions remain one of the major challenges confronting the grouping. Nevertheless, the discussions reflected a considerable degree of optimism regarding the future of BRICS. The diversity of its membership, the expansion of its areas of cooperation and its growing ability to facilitate the exchange of ideas provide a strong foundation for its continued development. The overall assessment was that BRICS has arrived as an important platform for cooperation among emerging and developing countries. Its evolution, however, is far from complete. The future of BRICS lies in continuing to expand cooperation, strengthen practical partnerships, facilitate people-to-people connectivity and contribute to the development of norms and ideas for a more inclusive global order.

Recommendations

The Way Forward for BRICS: Cooperation, Resilience and Inclusive Development

1. Transition from dialogue to delivery by developing concrete, time-bound BRICS projects in areas of common interest.
2. Prioritize tangible projects such as the New Development Bank, climate change initiatives, AI collaboration, and counter-terrorism platforms.
3. Strengthen practical South-South cooperation beyond political declarations and expand practical cooperation in renewable energy, food security, infrastructure, health and resilient supply chains.
4. Develop joint mechanisms for food, energy and health security and crisis resilience.
5. Strengthen and expand the New Development Bank (NDB) and expand its financing for infrastructure and connectivity projects in the Global South to showcase BRICS' tangible contributions.
6. Enhance digital cooperation through Digital Public Infrastructure, digital payments and responsible AI, alongside greater investment in skills, technology access and finance.
7. Share successful digital models across members, scaling innovations like India's digital systems.
8. Develop a stronger BRICS role in AI governance and contribute to shaping inclusive international norms on emerging technologies.

9. Create a BRICS “Bank of Ideas” to facilitate regular exchange of policy solutions and best practices among member countries.
10. Strengthen intra-BRICS knowledge sharing by systematically exchanging best practices, expertise, technologies and successful national experiences, particularly in areas such as climate resilience, energy, agriculture and environmental management.
11. Expand practical capacity-building programmes that enable member countries to adapt solutions to their own national and local contexts.
12. Create mechanisms to support startups, innovation and technology development, including through initiatives such as the proposed BRICS Startup Innovation Fund, and build an incubator network for startups.
13. Deepen cooperation on environmental challenges such as air pollution, biodiversity, landscape restoration, sustainable agriculture and the circular economy.
14. Greater collaboration is needed on clean energy, smart grids, energy storage and other technologies that can support both sustainability and energy security.
15. Focus policy efforts on energy security, AI integration, climate change mitigation, and digital transformation, addressing pressing challenges through coordinated BRICS platforms.
16. Shift from reactive to proactive resilience: Countries should strengthen their capacity to anticipate, prepare for, absorb and recover from economic, environmental, technological and geopolitical shocks.
17. Integrate resilience into development planning: Resilience should be treated as an essential component of development rather than only as a disaster-response mechanism.

18. Promote people and community-centric resilience: Policies for resilience should place people, livelihoods and communities at the centre, particularly those most vulnerable to climate and economic shocks.
19. Use BRICS diversity as a strategic strength: The diverse development experiences and capacities of BRICS countries should be leveraged as a source of policy learning, innovation and collective problem-solving.
20. Promote cooperation in areas such as health, education, transport, environmental protection, pollution control and waste management.
21. Improve people-to-people connectivity by simplifying visa procedures and expanding e-visa arrangements, while encouraging greater academic, professional and cultural exchanges.
22. Substantially expand BRICS scholarship programmes, particularly for young people, by bringing together existing national programmes, universities and centres of excellence.
23. Explore greater work-related mobility among BRICS countries where feasible, in order to strengthen professional and economic linkages.
24. Promote civilisational dialogue among BRICS countries and draw upon diverse cultural and civilisational traditions in discussions on global norms.
25. Integrate women-led development into BRICS agendas, ensuring economic opportunities, healthcare access, and representation in decision-making.
26. Increase public visibility of BRICS so that its benefits and activities extend beyond official and institutional circles to ordinary citizens.

27. Establish and reinforce platforms for collaboration on terrorism, cybersecurity, and climate change.
28. Continue ministerial-level meetings (Foreign Ministers, National Security Advisers, etc.) to ensure efficient coordination and practical outcomes.
29. Formalize regular consultations to align positions on climate and other global challenges.
30. Member and partner states should deepen cooperation and present unified positions to increase collective credibility and influence.
31. Promote reforms towards more inclusive and representative global governance and actively advocate for greater representation of developing countries in international forums to strengthen BRICS' global influence.
32. Defend and strengthen the WTO as the central framework for trade and investment cooperation, while advocating reforms within its negotiating structure.
33. Encourage local currency payment systems and digital innovations (e.g., PIX) to provide alternatives without mandating currency shifts, avoiding sensitive framing around de-dollarisation.
34. BRICS should pursue expansion carefully to broaden influence, focusing on internal cohesion rather than external concerns.
35. Ensure expansion remains open to new members and embed inclusivity principles, including women-led development and equal participation in trade and healthcare.
36. Use the expanded membership to supplement the global agenda, ensuring diverse representation across continents.

37. Implement inclusivity through expansion and institutional reforms, including strengthening the Secretariat, and gradually reform BRICS institutions to adapt to expansion while maintaining efficiency and inclusivity.
38. Preserve consensus and flexible integration as the foundation of BRICS decision-making and maintain BRICS as an intergovernmental forum based on flexible integration and consensus, avoiding supranational structures like a permanent Secretariat for now.
39. Continue dialogue as the central mechanism, even if progress is gradual, to build trust and long-term cooperation.
40. Strengthen trust and inclusivity by using multilateralism, multipolarity and multi-alignment to build cooperation based on mutual sensitivity and mutual benefit.
41. Leaders should adopt mechanisms that balance cooperation with healthy competition to drive innovation and progress.
42. BRICS should position itself as a stabilizing force that promotes cooperation in a world increasingly dominated by conflict.
43. Use BRICS' soft power to supplement global dialogue, focusing on inclusivity and cooperation rather than pressure or confrontation.
44. Continue building mechanisms that anticipate future needs, including financial transactions and digital cooperation, to keep BRICS relevant.
45. Treat BRICS as a continuing process, with sustained efforts to expand, enrich and deepen cooperation rather than viewing its development as a concluded exercise.

Endnotes

- 1 16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting Concludes Successfully under India's BRICS Chairship 2026, Ministry of Health, PIB, 23 July 2026 at <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2288267®=3&lang=1&v=1>
- 2 Union Minister for Education Reaffirms India's Commitment to a People-Centric and Humanity-First Approach to BRICS Cooperation, at the 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Meeting Ministry of Education, PIB, Government of India, 7 August 2026 at <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2296094®=48&lang=1>
- 3 BRIC, 'Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders,' Yekaterinburg, Russia, 16 June 2009; '2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement,' Brasília, Brazil, 15 April 2010.
- 4 BRIC, 'Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders,' Yekaterinburg, Russia, 16 June 2009; '2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement,' Brasília, Brazil, 15 April 2010.
- 5 The New Delhi Declaration (2021) reaffirmed BRICS's commitment to multilateralism centred on the United Nations and called for a more inclusive, equitable and representative international system. The Johannesburg II Declaration (2023) further emphasized inclusive multilateralism and greater representation for emerging markets and developing countries. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *XIII BRICS Summit—New Delhi Declaration, New Delhi, 9 September 2021*; *BRICS Information Centre, XV BRICS Summit—Johannesburg II Declaration, Sandton, South Africa, 23 August 2023*.
- 6 Gustavo de Carvalho, Jaimal Anand and Sanusha Naidu, 'BRICS expansion: Adaptive response or proactive restructuring of global governance?' *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 32(1–2), 9–32.
- 7 BRICS Information Centre, 'BRICS Rio de Janeiro Vision for IMF Quota and Governance Reform,' Brasilia, July 2025.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 International Monetary Fund, 'Statement by the IMF Executive Directors Representing Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa on the Selection Process for Appointing an IMF Managing Director' 24 May 2011.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Colodenco, Asef Horno and Zucker-Marques, 'A Challenging Imperative: IMF Reform, the 17th Quota Review and Increasing Voice and Representation for Developing Countries,' <https://www.bu.edu/gdp/files/2025/04/GEGI-GCI-Quotas-Report-2025-FIN.pdf>
- 12 Anja Jetschke and Pascal Abb, 'The Devil is in the Detail: The Positions of the BRICS Countries towards UN Security Council Reform and the Responsibility to Protect', in Matthew D. Stephen, and Michael Zürn (eds), *Contested World Orders: Rising Powers,*

Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Politics of Authority Beyond the Nation-State, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019.

- 13 Dmitriy Kiku, 'Positions of BRICS Nations on UN Security Council Reform,' <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/positions-of-brics-nations-on-un-security-council-reform/>
- 14 "Chair's Statement and Outcome Document at BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting (May 15, 2026)", *Ministry of External Affairs*, May 15, 2026. <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents?dtl/41144> .
- 15 "India says safe, unimpeded maritime flows vital for global economic well-being", *The Economic Times*, May 14, 2026. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-says-safe-unimpeded-maritime-flows-vital-for-global-economic-well-being-us-israel-war-strait-of-hormuz/articleshow/131085550.cms?from=mdr>
- 16 "Chair's Statement and Outcome Document", *op.cit.*
- 17 "BRICS Summit 2026 Explained: Agenda, Challenges and India's Priorities", *Asian One*, 06 August 2026, <https://asiaone.co.in/brics-summit-2026-explained-agenda-challenges-and-indias-priorities/>.
- 18 Prashasti Satyanand Shetty, "India rejects Chinese border intrusion claims along LAC, emphasises un-demarcated boundary issues continue", *Wion*, 19 August 2026. <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/india-rejects-chinese-border-intrusion-claims-along-lac-cites-un-delineated-boundary-issues-1787162280555> .
- 19 Vinay Prashad Sharma, "India, China hold talks on Line of Actual Control (LAC) situation, border management", *Wion*, 08 August 2026. <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/india-china-hold-talks-on-line-of-actual-control-lac-situation-border-management-1786175997603> .
- 20 Satyanand Shetty, "India rejects Chinese border intrusion claims along LAC", *op.cit.*
- 21 Rishika Singh, "China This Week | From SCO to upcoming BRICS summit in Delhi, diplomacy in focus for Beijing", *The Indian Express*, 6 September 2026. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/china-this-week-from-sco-brics-xi-visit-10865830/lite/>
- 22 Remya R., "From Cooperation to Managed Rivalry: India-China Relations After Galwan and the Future of Asian Regional Order", *IJRISS*, vol. 10/7, pgs-3313-3326 and here pp.3322-3323. <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/view/from-cooperation-to-managed-rivalry-india-china-relations-after-galwan-and-the-future-of-asian-regional-order>.
- 23 Chair's Statement and Outcome Document", *op.cit.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 News on AIR, "India to BRICS Women's Working Group Meeting under BRICS Chairship in Kochi," *News on AIR*, <https://newsonair.gov.in/india-to-brics-women-working-group-meeting-under-brics-chairship-in-kochi/>

- 26 Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Fourth BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting," July 9, 2026, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2282843®=48&lang=1>
- 27 "Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting," July 9, 2026, <https://d2jiw2zrmmyqt8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/09094219/brics-women.pdf>
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 News on AIR, "BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting Welcomes India's Proposals for BRICS Digital Capacity Building Guidelines," News on AIR, <https://newsonair.gov.in/brics-women-ministers-meeting-welcomes-indias-proposals-for-brics-digital-capacity-building-guidelines/>
- 34 News on AIR, "BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting Welcomes India's Proposals for BRICS Digital Capacity Building Guidelines," News on AIR, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2282843®=48&lang=1>
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Ibid.*

