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# Energy Diplomacy in BRICS Countries

## Energy Policies and Investments under BRICS Enlargement

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# Energy Diplomacy in BRICS Countries

*Energy Policies and Investments under BRICS Enlargement*

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# Contents

# I. Introduction

Energy diplomacy in international relations is defined as "the strategic use of energy resources, policies, and international cooperation to achieve foreign policy goals, ensure energy security, and advance economic and environmental interests"[1]. It includes negotiations, institutional arrangements, and partnerships through which states and other actors (such as multinational corporations and international organizations) make efforts to succeed in ply security, shaping global markets, and promoting technological and sustainable development. in a global energy landscape that is characterized by high interconnection and competitiveness. In a global energy landscape that is characterized by high interconnection and competitiveness, energy diplomacy combines energy policy and foreign relations and serves as both a tool of influence and a means of securing national interests[2].

The BRICS (originally Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has been an increasingly important platform for South-Southeast cooperation on trade, finance, and strategic governance[3]. Since 2024–2025, the group has expanded significantly, with several additional members and partners[4]. That enlargement changes the bloc's energy profile by including major oil and gas exporters, large energy consumers, and countries with rapid renewable uptake[5]. The initiative and its members, in particular but also as a unit under the BRICS umbrella, influence global energy investment flows, supply security, and governance debates (including discussions in BRICS leaders' declarations and ministerial statements)[6]. Based on the fact that energy is both an economic good and a geopolitical instrument, BRICS' enlargement makes the bloc a major factor in energy diplomacy, regional investment, and alternative governance initiatives[7] (through its financial arrangements, New Development Bank projects, and bilateral energy deals).

## Research questions and objectives

This thesis examines:

[1] DiploFoundation, "Energy Diplomacy," 2024, https://www.diplomacy.edu/topics/energy-diplomacy/.

[2] Andreas Goldthau, "The Governance of Energy," *Global Policy* 3, no. 1 (2012): 10–18.

[3] John Kirton and Marina Larionova, "The First Fifteen Years of the BRICS," *International Organizations Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (2022).

[4] Yaroslav Lissovolik, "BRICS Expansion," *BRICS Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–12.

[5] Obajinmi, O. J., and D. Garba, "BRICS Expansion and Its Challenges to the Global Economic Order," 2025.

[6] BRICS, "Joint Statement of BRICS Foreign Ministers on Global Governance and Energy Cooperation," 2024, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1955719/

[7] Carmody, Pádraig. "BRICS' Enlargement: Power Expansion or Contraction in a Changing World Order?" EconPol Forum 25, no. 1 (2024): 14–17. https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/284111/1/1882221397.pdf

- The ways that energy diplomacy operates within BRICS group, and how member states have used BRICS institutions and bilateral channels to improve their energy policy and investment goals.
- The extent to which BRICS' energy initiatives support energy transition goals (renewables, technology transfer, critical minerals).
- The effects that BRICS enlargement (2024–2025) has on the bloc's energy priorities, investment patterns, and external energy diplomacy toward third countries and markets.

## Methodology overview

The study has a mixed qualitative design. The primary analytical techniques will include (1) text and discourse analysis of official statements by BRICS leaders, ministerial communiques, NDB discussion papers and national energy strategies; (2) comparative case studies on selected member countries with distinct energy profiles (e.g., a hydrocarbon producer, major consumer and renewables leader); and (3) triangulation with secondary sources – academic literature on energy diplomacy, scholarship on BRICS investment policy and policy-orientated reports from think-tanks to unravel investment patterns/diplomatic initiatives. In addition, quantitative indicators (e.g., FDI into energy, NDB energy lending, trade in energy commodities) will be used to supplement the qualitative narrative. In general, the methodology follows international political economy and energy studies.

## Theoretical Framework

In the contemporary landscape of international relations, energy has emerged as one of the most important factors in shaping the foreign policy of states[8]. In the geopolitical scene of international relations there are "Major Players" such as the United States of America, Russia, and China, as well as "Smaller Powers," consisting of emerging economies or states with limited military or economic capacity, that are often compelled to follow the "willingness" of stronger actors in order to maintain their sovereignty, security, and independence[9]. In order to survive in this environment, a state must be self-sufficient not only economically and militarily, but also in terms of energy. A country's power today is no longer defined exclusively by military capabilities. On the contrary, the projection of power increasingly relies on hybrid means such as economic coercion, cyber warfare, space competition, religious influence, and, crucially, energy-related pressure[10].

This is where energy diplomacy becomes essential. Energy diplomacy refers to the set of foreign-policy practices, negotiations, and institutional arrangements through which states (and state-based actors) secure energy supplies, shape energy markets, promote exports and technology, and seek to align energy outcomes with strategic, economic, and environmental objectives. Energy diplomacy

[8] Michael J. Bradshaw, *Global Energy Dilemmas* (2014).

[9] Scholten, *The Geopolitics of Energy* (2015).

[10] Yergin, Daniel. "Ensuring Energy Security." Foreign Affairs 85, no. 2 (2006): 69–82.

thus covers both traditional state-to-state negotiations over oil, gas, and electricity routes, as well as contemporary activity around renewables, critical minerals, cross-border grids, financing, and standards. These interactions are carried out through diplomatic channels, multilateral fora, development banks, and commercial-state partnerships.

Taking into account the growing importance of the energy sector, international studies broadly characterize energy diplomacy as the strategic use of energy resources, policies, and international cooperation by states to achieve foreign policy goals, secure energy supplies, promote economic interests, and influence global affairs. It combines the two fields of energy policy and foreign relations, since countries act both as energy consumers and producers, depending on their energy capabilities. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), energy diplomacy is "the practice of governments and other stakeholders engaging in international dialogue and cooperation to ensure secure, affordable, and sustainable energy for their citizens."[11] In a similar way, the European External Action Service (EEAS) defines it as "the efforts of the EU and its Member States to secure energy supply, support energy market integration, and promote sustainable energy partnerships worldwide."[12] Other definitions pay further attention to the fact that "energy diplomacy includes all diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring energy security, managing geopolitical risks in energy trade and negotiating over energy infrastructure and technology"[13]. In this sense, energy diplomacy can also be understood as the interaction of foreign policy, energy policy, and security strategy, aimed both at maintaining reliable access to energy and at using it as a foreign policy tool[14].

As in traditional diplomacy, energy diplomacy involves diverse participants. First of all, the national governments that utilize the ministry of foreign affairs and the energy ministry to negotiate agreements and establish energy policies, most of the time, in cooperation with state-owned companies that strengthen these actions. On the other hand, multinational corporations, like SHELL, TotalEnergies, and ExxonMobil, by providing high technical expertise and financial influence, play an important role in energy discussions and decisions. In addition, international organizations have advisory and reference roles and can be considered as venues for dialogue[15]. More specifically, the International Energy Agency (IEA) plays the main role of advisor in consumer countries, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) promotes renewable energy issues, and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) coordinates oil-producing nations' interaction.

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[11] International Energy Agency, *Energy Security* (Paris: IEA, 2022), https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-security.

[12] European External Action Service, "Energy Diplomacy," 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/energy-diplomacy_en.

[13] DiploFoundation, "Energy Diplomacy," 2024.

[14] Bovan, A., VuÄ□enoviÄ‡, T., & Peric, N. (2020). Negotiating Energy Diplomacy and its Relationship with Foreign Policy and National Security. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, *10*(2), 1–6. Retrieved from https://www.econjournals.com/index.php/ijeep/article/view/8754

[15] Andreas Goldthau, "The Governance of Energy," *Global Policy* 3, no. 1 (2012): 10–18.

## Historical Context

Energy diplomacy made its appearance in the early 20th century, when the industrialized powers of Britain, France, and the United States, dependent on oil, pursued concessions in the Middle East through diplomatic engagement[16]. During this period, energy was already a part of foreign policy, but it was the crises of the 1970s that highlighted the importance of energy diplomacy for international relations. The Arab Oil Embargo of 1973, known as the First Oil Crisis, demonstrates how energy-dependent states were vulnerable to the new reserves and how record oil prices indicated that energy could serve as an instrument of foreign policy. According to Bovan, Vučenović, and Perić, "in 1979, the Iranian revolution, known as the Second Oil Crisis, confirmed that political instability in the producing states could create crises in the global markets, as well as that external special forces might sometimes be needed to protect the flows"[17].

Moreover, the Gulf War (1990–1991) underlined the strategic importance of energy in international affairs, reinforcing the link between energy security and military power[18]. The consumer states, after seeing the vulnerabilities that were brought to the surface by the First Oil Crisis, created the International Energy Agency (IEA) in 1974, "mandated to coordinate collective action in the face of supply shocks"[19]. However, the following decades showed that the risks extended beyond the Middle East region. Following the end of the Cold War, Russia's vast reserves and export routes began a new era of pipeline politics. The Russia–Ukraine gas crises of 2006 and 2009 showed that dependence on a single supplier could create direct risks to sovereignty and independence of the state[20].

In addition, the situation was similar to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, after Russia weaponized its gas exports against Europe[21]. In fact, when Russia threatened Europe that it would cut off supplies of natural gas, as a response to the sanctions imposed due to its invasion, the European Union and its member states were vulnerable and exposed to a crisis of energy dependence. As a result, it was demonstrated that the necessity of diversifying supplies, as well as investing in legal and institutional hedging[22].

Since the late 1990s, however, the rise of climate change as a global concern has introduced a new dimension to energy diplomacy. This challenge includes not only the manner in which the old geopolitics of fossil fuels work but also adapting to the changing dynamics of the low-carbon transition. More specifically, critical minerals, renewable technologies, and cross-border energy

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[16] Yergin, Daniel. The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power. New York: Free Press, 1991.

[17] Bovan et al. (2020)

[18] Michael T. Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet* (2008).

[19] International Energy Agency, *Energy Security* (Paris: IEA, 2022), https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-security

[20] Belyi, *Transnational Gas Markets* (2015).

[21] European External Action Service, "Energy Diplomacy," 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/energy-diplomacy_en

[22] DiploFoundation, "Energy Diplomacy," 2024

networks are playing an increasingly important role in international competition and cooperation[23]. Based on the aforementioned, the energy diplomacy reflects more than a century of transformation and evolution from oil concessions to the management of energy as both a strategic asset and a tool of global governance.

Indeed, the European continent has reshaped its energy dependence to ensure the diversification of its potential energy resources as much as possible. At the same time, the global green transition represents a new "great game". The major powers, thus the United States, China, and, following the European Union, are competing to dominate the industries of the future, including solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles, and batteries.

In developing countries, energy diplomacy is also an essential tool. For them, the initial goal was the oil reserves, but during the past decade, these countries have sought to control technology and participate in global chains, as well. Their main target is to build a clean and reliable energy system by creating alliances, attracting investments, developing technology, eliminating energy poverty, and promoting sustainable development.

[23] International Energy Agency, *Recommendations of the Global Commission on People-Centred Clean Energy Transitions* (Paris: IEA, 2021), https://www.iea.org/reports/recommendations-of-the-global-commission-on-people-centred-clean-energy-transitions

## II. BRICS Creation

The BRIC was formalized at the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 2006. The first BRIC Summit was convened in Yekaterinburg, Russia, on 16 June 2009, with leaders Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil), Dmitry Medvedev (Russia), Manmohan Singh (India), and Hu Jintao (China) attending. South Africa was invited to join the BRIC group at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in September 2010, was formally admitted on 24 December 2010, and attended its first BRICS summit (with the "S") in Sanya, China, on 14 April 2011, transforming the bloc into BRICS.[24]

The bloc serves as a political and diplomatic coordination forum for emerging countries from the Global South. At the 15th BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg in August 2023, South Africa announced plans to enlarge BRICS by including other countries operating in the BRICS+ framework[25]. Starting from January 1, 2024, four new members -Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt-.[26] Saudi Arabia was also invited at Johannesburg, but as of 2025-2026 the Kingdom has not formally joined: it remains under evaluation, balancing its strategic relations with both the United States and the BRICS bloc. It is also mentioned that Argentina was initially invited but later chose not to join the coordination, after a change in government policy under President Javier Milei[27].

On 6 January 2025, under Brazil's BRICS chairmanship, Indonesia was formally admitted as the bloc's 11th full member (or 10th if Saudi Arabia is excluded as a nonratified invitee).[28] Indonesia's accession had been approved at the 2023 Johannesburg Summit but was deferred until after the country's 2024 presidential election so that the new administration of Prabowo Subianto could confirm membership. With over 280 million people, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country and Southeast Asia's largest economy, with GDP exceeding US$1.3 trillion.[29] Crucially for energy diplomacy, Indonesia is the world's largest producer of nickel — a strategic mineral for batteries and renewable technology — and a major LNG and coal exporter.[30] President Prabowo declared during the 2025 Rio Summit his ambition for Indonesia "to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy within

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[24] BRICS, *"About the BRICS,"* https://brics.br/en/about-the-brics

[25] BRICS Summit Declaration, "Rio Declaration on Fair and Inclusive Energy Transitions," 2025, https://brics.br/en/documents/presidency-documents/250705-brics-leaders-declaration-en.pdf

[26] Yaroslav Lissovolik, "BRICS Expansion," *BRICS Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, https://brics-econ.arphahub.com/article/120071/

[27] Pádraig Carmody, "BRICS' Enlargement: Power Expansion or Contraction in a Changing World Order?" *EconPol Forum* 25, no. 1 (2024): 14–17, https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/284111/1/1882221397.pdf

[28] Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, "Brazil Announces Indonesia as Full Member of BRICS," January 6, 2025, https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2025/01/brazil-announces-indonesia-as-full-member-of-brics; Al Jazeera, "Indonesia Joins BRICS Group of Emerging Economies," January 7, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/7/indonesia-joins-brics-group-of-emerging-economies

[29] Geopolitical Economy Report, "BRICS Grows, Adding Indonesia as Member: World's 4th Most Populous Country, 7th Biggest Economy," January 7, 2025, https://geopoliticaleconomy.com/2025/01/07/brics-adds-indonesia-member-economy/

[30] Ibid

the next 10 years",[31] aligning Jakarta with BRICS' green-finance and South–South cooperation agenda.

At the 16th BRICS Summit (Kazan, 22–24 October 2024), members agreed on a new associate-tier called "Partner Country". Effective 1 January 2025, the following nations were announced as official partners: Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda and Uzbekistan, with Vietnam joining shortly afterwards.[32] Algeria and Türkiye were invited but had not formalized their status by the time of the Rio summit. Partner countries are entitled to attend BRICS summits, ministerial meetings and selected working groups, but lack voting rights at the leaders' level. Several partners — notably Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam — bring significant energy or critical-minerals weight to the wider BRICS architecture.

The BRICS alliance was driven by a shared aspiration between its members to assert greater influence in the global economic and political arenas, and based on that, they were initially focused on economic cooperation[33]. Over the years, in reaction to international occurrences and changes, the group's program has expanded to cover a wider variety of subjects. More specifically, the motivations of BRICS now comprise security cooperation, social interaction, technological research, and state-building among its member nations[34]. In other words, the geopolitical and economic alliance seeks to reshape global governance by promoting multipolarity and enhancing the influence of emerging economies[35].

The BRICS cooperation can be categorized into sectors:

- Political and Security Cooperation

The alliance consists of countries that target multilateralism and reforming global institutions, through diplomacy and advocacy for changes within the UN Security Council in a manner that challenges the dominance of traditional Western Powers. The agenda includes combating terrorism, preventing conflicts, and managing humanitarian crises[36].

- Economic and Financial Cooperation

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[31] Aude Darnal et al., "2025 BRICS Summit: Takeaways and Projections," Stimson Center, August 4, 2025, https://www.stimson.org/2025/2025-brics-summit-takeaways-and-projections/

[32] BRICS Brazil. "Nine Nations Announced as BRICS 'Partner Countries'." January 17, 2025. https://brics.br/en/news/nine-nations-announced-as-brics-partner-countries

[33] John Kirton and Marina Larionova, "The First Fifteen Years of the BRICS," *International Organisations Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (2022).

[34] Yaroslav Lissovolik and Evgeny Vinokurov, "Extending BRICS to BRICS+: The Potential for Development Finance, Connectivity and Financial Stability," *Area Development and Policy* 4, no. 2 (2019): 117–133, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23792949.2018.1535246

[35] Mark N. Katz, "The Geopolitical (In)Significance of BRICS Enlargement," *EconPol Forum* 25, no. 1 (2024): 10–13, https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/284105/1/1882218566.pdf

[36] BRICS, "Joint Statement of BRICS Foreign Ministers."

In the sector of the Economy, BRICS countries provide a significant portion of global GDP and trade. The alliance aims to increase trade among its members by promoting the use of local currencies and developing alternative international payment systems to reduce reliance on Western financial structures. Based on this, in 2014, the New Development Bank (NDB) was established. Since then, the NDB has financed over 100 projects totaling more than 34 billion US$. Most of the projects focus on infrastructure, clean energy, and sustainable development[37]. In addition, the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) provides financial support to members that face balance or payment pressures.

- Science, Technology, and Innovation

Considering that technology is rising rapidly and that it plays a major role in international relations, especially from the aspect of military equipment as a key to national security, BRICS collaborates in research and innovation, especially in areas of artificial intelligence governance, digital infrastructure, and security, as well as equitable access to it.[38] Their initiatives include the establishment of the BRICS Deep-Sea Resources International Research Center and the BRICS Digital Ecosystem Cooperation Network. In addition, they promote cooperation in space exploration and the use of outer space.[39]

- Education and social development

Socially, the alliance addresses health equity, education, and social development, targeting to improve the quality of life for citizens across member states by making investments to strengthen public health infrastructure, promoting global health coverage, and enhancing collaboration in vaccine research and development.[40] In the field of education, it focuses mostly on mutual recognition and the ethical use of technology, such as Artificial Intelligence.[41] Included in the field of education and social development are also the cultural and social connections that BRICS forums offer, encouraging civil society engagement, cultural exchange, and the integration of diverse perspectives into policy discussions. Examples of these forums are the Youth Council, Business Council, and Academic Forum.[42]

- Green Economy and Energy Cooperation

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[37] Dilma Rousseff, "Speech at the New Development Bank Annual Meeting 2025: Financing Sovereignty in the Global South," New Development Bank, July 4, 2025, https://www.ndb.int/insights/opening-remarks-by-h-e-mrs-dilma-rousseff-president-of-the-new-development-bank-at-ndb-10th-annual-meeting

[38] Michael Dunford, Weidong Liu, and Christophe Pompeani, "The Greater BRICS and a New World Order?" *Area Development and Policy* 7, no. 4 (2022): 365–379.

[39] Dunford, Liu, and Pompeani, "Greater BRICS and a New World Order?"

[40] John Kirton and Marina Larionova, "The First Fifteen Years of the BRICS," *International Organisations Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (2022).

[41] Dunford, Liu, and Pompeani, "The Greater BRICS and a New World Order?"

[42] John Kirton and Marina Larionova, "The First Fifteen Years of the BRICS," *International Organisations Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (2022).

One of the priorities of the Cooperation is energy security and sustainable development. The member states collaborate on clean energy projects, carbon reduction strategies, and investments in renewable energy initiatives.[43] The green energy projects aligned with each member's renewable resources are supported by the New Development Bank (NDB).[44]

## 1.Brazil

Brazil is the largest economy in Latin America and the Caribbean, the second-largest biofuels producer in the world, and the second-largest hydropower producer globally, according to the IEA's "World Energy Outlook Special Report, 2023". In 2024, Brazil had the world's largest increase in both wind and solar power. This is the outcome of Brazil's efforts to modify its international strategy and insertion into world energy markets over the last two decades.[45] This process has been a response to a multidimensional scenario that has been imposing qualitative shifts in its foreign policy and international outlook. Energy, in this context, is one of the most politically sensitive sectors in Brazil's economy, due to its strategic role in driving economic growth and ensuring national security, combined with the market's oligopolistic structure and natural tendency toward monopolies.

During the decade of the 2000s, Brazil succeeded in its "Pro-Alcool" ethanol program and introduced the flex-fuel vehicles, becoming a pioneer in biofuel diplomacy. By 2008, Brazil had achieved global leadership in ethanol production, and by promoting ethanol as a clean, renewable energy solution, it enhanced its international influence and strengthened its energy security through "Ethanol Diplomacy".[46] More specifically, it started cooperation with India, South Africa, West Africa, MERCOSUR, as well as bilateral partners like the EU, the U.S, and China.

Brazil's national energy diplomacy in the 2020-2024 period manifests a complex balancing of fossil fuel export expansion (especially pre-salt oil), renewable energy leadership (hydro, wind, solar, biofuels), and nascent critical minerals diplomacy. The following analysis examines Brazil's energy sources, foreign investment and diplomatic instruments, geopolitical strategy, diversification and critical minerals, and the challenges inherent in reconciling economic, environmental, and political objectives.

Official data indicate that in 2024, Brazil's crude oil and mineral oil exports amounted to US$44.8 billion, surpassing soybeans as the country's top export commodity. This rise was driven largely by pre-salt oil, which accounted for approximately 71.5% of Brazil's oil output from January through November, rising to 80.3% in the latter half of the year.[47] Petrobras and consortium partners like

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[43] BRICS Summit Declaration, "Rio Declaration on Fair and Inclusive Energy Transitions," Rio de Janeiro, July 6, 2025, https://brics.br/en/documents/presidency-documents/250705-brics-leaders-declaration-en.pdf

[44] Rousseff, "Speech at the New Development Bank Annual Meeting 2025."

[45] Lucas Horta, "Brazil's Energy Outlook: Biofuels and Regional Strategy," Brookings Institution, 2023.

[46] Lucas Horta, "Brazil's Energy Outlook: Biofuels and Regional Strategy," Brookings Institution, 2023.

[47] Agência Brasil, "Driven by Pre-Salt, Oil Becomes Brazil's Top Export," January 18, 2025 https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/economia/noticia/2025-01/driven-pre-salt-oil-becomes-brazils-top-export

Shell, TotalEnergies, and CNOOC remain central actors in pre-salt development, and the pre-salt fields are under a production-sharing regime overseen by the state via the Pre-Sal Petróleo (PPSA).

On the electricity side, the Summary Report of the Brazilian Energy Balance (BEN 2025, base year 2024) published by EPE (Empresa de Pesquisa Energética) and the Ministry of Mines and Energy provides that 88.2% of Brazil's power generation came from renewable sources in 2024.[48] Wind and solar together contributed ~23.7% of total electricity generation, with distributed (micro and mini) generation accounting for 5.6% of total generation.

Brazil's energy diplomacy leverages foreign investment both in its hydrocarbon sector and in renewables. The government continues to promote biofuels policy via instruments like RenovaBio, which includes mandatory blending standards and credit markets for decarbonization, aligning with Brazil's Paris Agreement commitments. Brazil is also increasingly active in international cooperative arrangements: the publishing of an English-language version of EPE's report "Critical and Strategic Minerals for the Energy Transition" (part of its Ten-Year Energy Expansion Plan 2034) indicates a strategy of transparency and engagement with global stakeholders. Moreover, Brazil's domestic policy to increase mandatory biofuel blends (such as the increase in the mixture content for diesel) reflects a diplomatic as well as economic strategy: reducing dependence on imported liquid fuels, while boosting export capacity of biofuels and strengthening negotiating leverage in climate and trade fora.

Brazil's pre-salt boom has had geopolitical implications: by increasing its share of global oil exports, Brazil has sought to enhance its diplomatic standing among oil-producing nations and within international producer forums. For instance, Brazil's export of crude oil as the top export in 2024 boosts its influence in markets previously dominated by other exporters. Simultaneously, Brazil has pursued diversification of its energy matrix and supply sources, both to mitigate risks of hydrological variability (which can affect hydropower output) and to bolster energy security. The growth of wind and solar, plus investments in distributed generation, are part of this approach.

Furthermore, a somewhat newer pillar of Brazil's strategy is strategic minerals. The EPE report "Critical and Strategic Minerals for the Energy Transition" (English version, 2023/2024) identifies minerals necessary for Brazil's low-carbon transition and electromobility, including lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earths, and assesses the challenges in mining, regulation, environmental permitting, and supply chain readiness. Brazil has a sizeable production of niobium (which is globally significant), tantalum, vanadium, and other metals, which underpins potential diplomatic leverage insofar as global demand for battery and clean tech inputs increases.

In 2025, Brazil simultaneously chaired the BRICS bloc and hosted COP30 in Belém. This gave Brasília an unprecedented platform to push its "just, orderly, equitable and inclusive energy transition"

[48] Empresa de Pesquisa Energética (EPE), "EPE Publishes the Summary Report Brazilian Energy Balance 2025," 2025, https://www.epe.gov.br/en/press-room/news/epe-publishes-the-summary-report-brazilian-energy-balance-2025

narrative — a phrasing that explicitly recognizes the continued role of fossil fuels for emerging economies.[49] Brazil also championed the Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF) and the Brazilian Mobilization Group (BMG) for climate finance, although both remain unfunded as of late 2025.[50] At the Rio Summit, the Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance — the first collective BRICS commitment under the UNFCCC — represented a novel attempt to harmonise the bloc's positions ahead of COP30.[51]

## 2. Russia

The economic collaboration between the BRICS states and their new members (Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates), especially in the energy sector, is designed to optimize the use of mutual strengths to promote a common target of sustainable development.[52] This collaboration is of high significance for the Western world since BRICS accounts for over 40% of the world's population and approximately 30% of global GDP.[53] From the members, Russia is a major player thanks to its vast energy resources and geopolitical influence regionally and globally.[54]

At the heart of Russia's energy policy is its vast hydrocarbon resources. Russia has been one of the world's leading energy producers and exporters in oil, natural gas, and coal, supplying substantial quantities of these resources to the other BRICS countries.[55] In this manner, Russia supports its industrialization, especially in the cases of China and India.[56] A notable example is the Power of Siberia pipeline, which not only secures a stable supply route for Russian natural gas but also strengthens China's efforts for its energy sources diversification away from coal.[57] On the contrary, Russia uses these energy supplies as a weapon and measure of pressure on countries dependent on them, in cases of disputes or war, for example, the case of Ukraine and Europe.[58]

Another crucial factor is the technological competence of Russia in the nuclear energy field. Russian state company Rosatom participates either as a constructor or as the qualification provider in the above-mentioned countries and especially India and South Africa. Through several projects, the

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[49] GEBRICS, University of São Paulo, "Balance of the BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro: Environment, COP30 and Global Health," 2025.

[50] Ibid

[51] Observer Research Foundation, "Rio Reset 2025: BRICS Bets Big on Sustainable Development," July 31, 2025, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/rio-reset-2025-brics-bets-big-on-sustainable-development

[52] BRICS Summit Declaration, "Rio Declaration on Fair and Inclusive Energy Transitions," Rio de Janeiro, July 6, 2025, https://brics.br/en/documents/presidency-documents/250705-brics-leaders-declaration-en.pdf

[53] Yaroslav Lissovolik, "BRICS Expansion: New Geographies and Spheres of Cooperation," *BRICS Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, https://brics-econ.arphahub.com/article/120071/

[54] Sergey Tkachenko, "Russia's Energy Strategy in the Global Market," *Russian Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (2019): 76–89.

[55] Andrei Belyi, *Transnational Gas Markets and Euro-Russian Energy Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[56] Rajan Menon and Eugene Rumer, "Russia and India: A New Chapter," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 20, 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/09/russia-and-india-a-new-chapter?lang=en

[57] Kevin Lo, "China's Energy Diplomacy: Oil, Gas and Beyond," *Energy Policy* 93 (2016): 313–321.

[58] European External Action Service, "Energy Diplomacy," 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/energy-diplomacy_en

countries not only meet their increasing electricity demands but also reduce their carbon emission, which is a critical global objective that concerns climate change and green transition.

In the diplomatic sector, through annual BRICS summits, Russia advocates policies that promote equitable access to energy resources and technological exchange among the member states.[59]

Russia has been a major energy source in the heart of Eurasia. However, its relations with the European Union, which has been a long-term ally of the North Atlantic Organization, and its support of the Western Partnership, have led Russia to search also for its own allies globally. China is another major power in the international arena, and its bilateral relationship can be characterized by the term "Pipeline Diplomacy".[60] A major project between these two giants is the "Power of Siberia Pipeline" that was announced in December 2019.[61] This massive infrastructure project connects Russian natural gas to China's northeastern province, providing a clear indication of how energy strengthens the bonds between these giants.

More specifically, the "Power of Siberia" project can be separated into two parts:

The Power of Siberia (PS-1) refers to the eastern route that is fed by the Eastern Siberian fields and links Russia's East to Chinese demand centers. The pipeline began its commercial gas deliveries in December 2019, operated by Gazprom. Based on the 2014 agreement, the contracted volumes reach up to 38 bcm/year at full capacity,[62] while targets and ramping schedules differ by source.

On 2 September 2025, during Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit and the WWII Victory Day commemoration, Gazprom and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed a legally binding "memorandum of construction" for the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline (PoS-2).[63] Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller described the deal as "the largest, most ambitious and most capital-intensive project in the global gas industry".[64]

The agreement covers a 30-year contract delivering up to 50 bcm/year of natural gas from the Yamal fields in West Siberia, transiting through Mongolia to northwest China; a simultaneous expansion of PoS-1 from 38 bcm/year to 44 bcm/year; and a combined potential of approximately 106 bcm/year

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[59] BRICS, "Joint Statement of BRICS Foreign Ministers on Global Governance and Energy Cooperation."

[60] Kevin Lo, "China's Energy Diplomacy: Oil, Gas and Beyond," *Energy Policy* 93 (2016): 313–321.

[61] Reuters, "China Signs Border Demarcation Pact with Russia," July 21, 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-russia-border/

[62] TASS, "Gazprom Pushes Record Gas Volumes to China via Power of Siberia," November 6, 2025, https://tass.com/economy/2039905

[63] CNBC, "Power of Siberia 2: Russia Signs New Gas Pipeline Deal with China," September 2, 2025. https://www.cnbc.com/2025/09/02/power-of-siberia-2-russia-signs-new-gas-pipeline-deal-with-china.html

[64] The Moscow Times, "Russia and China Sign Deal to Advance Power of Siberia 2 Pipeline," September 2, 2025, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/09/02/russia-and-china-sign-deal-to-advance-power-of-siberia-2-pipeline-a90403

of pipeline gas from Russia to China — close to two-thirds of the volume Russia had previously exported to Europe before 2022.[65]

Crucial commercial details, particularly the price of gas and financing of the pipeline construction (estimated at US$13.6 billion), remained unresolved as of late 2025.[66] CSIS analysts note that the deal "raises significant implications, ranging from its effect on China's gas import profile to the U.S. role in the global energy markets."[67] The trilateral character of the project — with Mongolia hosting the Soyuz Vostok transit — also reflects a deeper geopolitical realignment around the China–Mongolia–Russia Economic Corridor, which was renewed for another five years (until 2031) at the same Beijing summit.[68]

For Russia, the PoS-2 deal partially compensates for the loss of more than 120 bcm/year of pipeline exports to Europe after 2022. For China, the pipeline reinforces its supplier-diversification strategy and reduces exposure to maritime LNG bottlenecks. For BRICS as a whole, the deal demonstrates intra-bloc energy interdependence at a scale that no Western institution can replicate.


Source: Financial Times, based on Gazprom and FT research; cartography by Steven Bernard. https://www.ft.com/content/541f8bcb-118a-419e-869f-3273fcc9ce92?syn-25a6b1a6=1&utm .

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[65] "Russia, China Sign 'Most Ambitious' Power of Siberia-2 Pipeline Deal," Kyiv Independent, September 2, 2025, https://kyivindependent.com/russia-china-sign-most-ambitious-power-of-siberia-2-pipeline-deal/

[66] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "China, Russia Sign Deal To Build New Siberian Gas Pipeline But Pricing Details Unclear," September 2, 2025, https://www.rferl.org/a/putin-xi-mongolia-power-siberia-china-gas-energy/33519697.html

[67] Jane Nakano and Leslie Palti-Guzman, "How the Power of Siberia 2 Deal Could Reshape Global Energy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 5, 2025 https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-power-siberia-2-deal-could-reshape-global-energy

[68] Bolor Lkhaajav, "China-Mongolia-Russia Agreement on Power of Siberia 2 Could Reroute Energy Trade," *The Diplomat*, September 6, 2025, https://thediplomat.com/2025/09/china-mongolia-russia-agreement-on-power-of-siberia-2-could-reroute-energy-trade/

Another important sector is the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), since Russia has expanded LNG output, via Yamal LNG, Arctic LNG-2, Sakhalin LNG, and Far East projects. In this sector, China is an important and growing buyer of Russian LNG cargoes. Except for the LNG, though, and the relationship with China, the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant highlights how Russia's expertise aids India's quest to expand.[69]

Regarding its National Energy Diplomacy Strategy, the institutional core of Russia's approach is a state-centered fuel-and-energy complex (FEC) composed of vertically integrated national champions, state policy instruments (notably the Energy Strategy to 2035), and diplomatic practice aimed at sustaining export markets, securing transit routes, and preserving geopolitical leverage over consumer states.[70]

Central to Russia's external posture is natural gas. Russia holds the largest proved gas reserves in the world and remains one of the largest gas exporters in the global until nowadays. Moreover, Moscow's state-associated enterprises and pipeline architecture, in particular Gazprom, have played a considerable role in providing the Russian Federation with the power to form regional energy dynamics. The crucial elements of Gazprom's strategy are the assigned export routes to Europe and potential routes to the Asian market.[71]

Another important sector is the oil policy that complements the gas strategy. Large state and quasi-state companies (Rosneft in particular) have preserved and expanded crude-oil production and refining capacity, thereby ensuring foreign-currency earnings and diplomatic reach through seaborne and pipeline exports.[72]

In general, the 2020 Energy Strategy (Energy Strategy to 2035) formalized these priorities by emphasizing the role of fossil fuels in sustaining economic growth while calling for infrastructure expansion (LNG capacity and east-bound pipelines) and selective modernization of the sector.[73] The strategy implies a commitment to continue, rather than a "reboot" in the direction of decarbonization.[74] In the period from 2020 to 2024, these policy instruments translated into expanding the country's gas and LNG export infrastructure, developing the Arctic hydrocarbon apolis, and developing import substitution in critical equipment and technologies. However, from February 2022 onwards, Russian energy diplomacy faced major challenges. Sanctions imposed as a result of

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[69] Rajan Menon and Eugene Rumer, "Russia and India: A New Chapter," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 20, 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/09/russia-and-india-a-new-chapter?lang=en

[70] International Energy Agency, "Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2035," 2020, https://www.iea.org/policies/14855-energy-strategy-of-the-russian-federation-for-the-period-up-to-2035

[71] Andrei Belyi, *Transnational Gas Markets and Euro-Russian Energy Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[72] Sergey Tkachenko, "Russia's Energy Strategy in the Global Market," *Russian Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (2019): 76–89.

[73] International Energy Agency, "Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2035," 2020, https://www.iea.org/policies/14855-energy-strategy-of-the-russian-federation-for-the-period-up-to-2035

[74] Enerdata, "Russia Adopts the Final Version of Its New Energy Strategy 2035," June 11, 2020, https://www.enerdata.net/publications/daily-energy-news/russia-adopts-final-version-its-new-energy-strategy-2035.html

the Ukrainian invasion led to a profound change in market and policy responses in the country's external energy relations.[75] This is translated into a reorientation of oil transfers, trade in LNG in the oil and gas industry, new logistical decisions, disruptions of existing pipeline relations with the EU, intensification of confrontation over European pipeline gas markets, increased dependence on state corporate instruments to fulfill Petroleum Revenue tasks, and sustaining production in the context of sanctions from the USA and the EU. Official company reports and sectoral statistics for 2022–2024 show continued high levels of hydrocarbon production and export earnings, even as export destinations shifted and logistical costs rose.

However, certain structural vulnerabilities remain. The country is exposed to potential risks stemming from declining demand, as well as from strategic shifts in consumer policies that promote diversification—such as the European Union's "REPowerEU" initiative.[76] Institutional rigidities, the capital intensity of new frontier projects (Arctic, eastern Siberia), and the increasing politicization of energy trade—especially in relations with Europe after 2022—constrain Moscow's maneuverability and may raise long-term fiscal and technological challenges.[77]

To conclude, Russia's energy diplomacy from 2020 to 2024 can be characterized by a combined and strong export-driven strategy. With the oil and natural gas at its center, Russia has made the necessary adjustments, always under a market focus and active diplomatic engagement with non-Western partners. The state retained centrality—via strategy documents, state companies, and intergovernmental diplomacy—as it sought to convert hydrocarbon advantage into strategic autonomy and sustained external revenue streams while adapting to a rapidly changing international market environment.

## 3. India

In general, India features an energy diplomacy based on cooperation rather than competition that can be characterized as multifaceted with bilateral, regional, and global dimensions. During the period 2020-2024, India has prioritized three interconnected goals. First of all, to ensure energy security for its economy and increasing demand that rapidly grows. Secondly, to promote energy transition into renewable energy sources and low-carbon technologies. Lastly, to reinforce its international influence through institutional initiatives and bilateral/multilateral cooperations. The strategy of New Delhi combines policy measures with external action, targeting diversification of supplies, development of "green" technologies, and building geopolitical commitments in Asia, Africa, and the Global South.[78]

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[75] Stefan A. Schirm, "Alternative World Orders? Russia's Ukraine War and the Domestic Politics of the BRICS," *The International Spectator* 58, no. 3 (2023): 55–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2023.2236937

[76] European External Action Service, "Energy Diplomacy," 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/energy-diplomacy_en

[77] Andrei Belyi, *Transnational Gas Markets and Euro-Russian Energy Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[78] D. Purkayastha and R. Sharma, "India's Energy Security and Diplomacy: The Road to Diversification," *Energy Strategy Reviews* 39 (2022): 100760.

Regarding India's Renewable Energy ambitions, it targets to enlarge its renewable energy capabilities to 500GW and 1 TW by 2030. According to data from November 2025, India's total installed renewable energy capacity reached approximately 253.96 GW, an increase of more than 23% compared to November 2024 (205.52 GW). The breakdown is as follows: Solar: 132.85 GW (up from 94.17 GW in November 2024 — a 41% increase), with solar capacity crossing the 100 GW mark in January 2025; Wind: 53.99 GW (up from 47.96 GW in November 2024), with wind capacity crossing the 50 GW mark in March 2025; Large hydro: approximately 47.5 GW; Bioenergy: approximately 11.6 GW; Small hydro: approximately 5.1 GW.[79]

In the first 11 months of CY 2025 alone, India added a record 44.51 GW of new renewable capacity — nearly double the 24.72 GW added in the same period of 2024. On 29 July 2025, India reached its highest-ever renewable energy share in electricity generation, with renewables meeting 51.5% of total electricity demand of 203 GW that day.[80] Globally, according to IRENA RE Statistics 2025, India ranks: 3rd in solar power installed capacity (overtaking Japan to become the world's third-largest solar producer); 4th in wind power installed capacity; and 4th in total renewable energy capacity. [81] India's solar module manufacturing capacity under the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) reached approximately 144 GW per year by November 2025, representing a near-doubling from 2024. However, grid integration challenges intensified in 2025: high-renewable states such as Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu reported curtailment levels of 10%–30% due to transmission unavailability.

In spite of the important investments in renewable sources, India continues to count on coal as the basis of its power generation system. Based on that it forms its external policy for sources and its commercial relations. According to official analyses of the International Energy Agency (IEA), it is highlighted that energy demand in India will rapidly increase in the next decade and that coal will remain important, while at the same time, it is expected that there will be a wide extension of solar and wind power, under different scenarios. The government's policy targets in balancing these trends, though investments in networks, storage of energy, and energy efficiency programs.[82]

In another sector the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was founded and promoted by India, under its target to lead in solar energy technologies. More specifically, ISA is an international, conditional, medium/long-term cooperation platform aimed at accelerating the development and financing of solar technology in countries with high solar potential. Through ISA and other diplomatic

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[79] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, "2025 Marks Highest-Ever Renewable Energy Expansion in India's Energy Transition Journey," October 29, 2025, https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2209478&lang=1&reg=3&utm

[80] Ibid https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2209478&lang=1&reg=3&utm

[81] Ibid, IRENA RE Statistics 2025, cited in PIB India press release (29 October 2025) https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2209478&lang=1&reg=3&utm

[82] International Energy Agency, *India Energy Outlook 2021* (Paris: IEA, 2021), https://www.iea.org/reports/india-energy-outlook-2021

mechanisms, India promotes technical assistance, manufacturing partnerships, and financing patterns for strengthening regional solar energy networks.

Furthermore, regarding fossil fuels, India has developed a dual perspective. On the one hand, it maintains and secures access to incoming oil and LNG through diversification of the supplies (Middle East, USA, Africa, and Russia), and on the other hand, it increases the production of natural gas within its territory as much as possible. In addition, the development of the LNG infrastructure, the long-term purchase contracts (offtake), and the investments in LNG terminal stations are major tools of energy diplomacy, especially taking into account that gas is considered a transitional fuel for the decarbonization of electric production.

The accumulation of LNG and the expansion of the pipeline network are major factors for the expansion of the natural gas supply. Despite the fact that many projects have been in the planning stage, only a small number have progressed to the stage of construction.[83] More specifically:

- Turkmenistan- Afghanistan - Pakistan and India (TAPI) Pipeline

The TAPI initiative is an energy project in the broader area of Central and South Asia, aiming to transfer natural gas from the Galkynysh deposit in Turkmenistan - the second largest deposit globally- through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India, covering a total distance of 1,800 km.[84] It was designed to diversify Turkmenistan's energy exports and strengthen energy security in South Asia, while Pakistan and India, as emerging economies with rapidly rising energy demand, aim to secure stable, long-term natural gas supplies through this initiative.[85] In addition, from a geopolitical aspect, TAPI aims to connect Central and South Asia, serving as a "bridge of cooperation" between the two regions that has major importance.[86] The success of the project depends on security issues in Afghanistan, the improvement of relations between India and Pakistan, and the stability of the investment interest from all parties.

- Iran, Pakistan, and India (IPI) Pipeline

The IPI initiative, also known as "Peace Pipeline", is one of the most characteristic examples of regional energy cooperation in South and Southeast Asia, which started during the 1990s, targeting to cover the increasing energy needs of two emerging economies.[87] The project aims to transport

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[83] D. Purkayastha and R. Sharma, "India's Energy Security and Diplomacy: The Road to Diversification," *Energy Strategy Reviews* 39 (2022): 100760.

[84] U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Turkmenistan International Energy Data and Analysis," 2023, https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/country/TKM

[85] International Energy Agency, *India Energy Outlook 2021* (Paris: IEA, 2021), https://www.iea.org/reports/india-energy-outlook-2021

[86] Michael T. Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008).

[87] D. Purkayastha and R. Sharma, "India's Energy Security and Diplomacy: The Road to Diversification," *Energy Strategy Reviews* 39 (2022): 100760.

natural gas from the South Pars deposit in Iran —the world's largest —to Pakistan and India, covering a total distance of 2,700 km.

In the sector if Hydrogen, based on official data of 2023, India started the National Green Hydrogen Mission as a pillar of its industrial and export strategy for low-emission technologies, including motivation for production, storage, and hydrogen export chains. The mission targets replacing imported fossil fuels, as well as obtaining a market share on a global scale for "green" hydrogen and ammonia. At the same time, the mission is reinforced by policies for biofuels and domestic blending mandates. Approximately 500 million Indians rely on solid biomass for cooking, while 304 million lack access to electricity.[88]

India has incorporated its energy policy into a wider economic diplomacy. For instance, the promotion of the domestic construction of photovoltaic, the equipment of wind infrastructure, and the production of electrolytes for hydrogen are strategic priorities, aiming to reduce dependence on imported components and expand export opportunities. Under this context, the cooperation with countries that produce technologies (for instance, the USA, the European Union, Japan, and the states of Southeast Asia), as well as the investment agreements with states of the Persian Gulf and Africa, are means for securing critical resources and funding.[89]

Despite the progress that India has made, there are important obstacles. First of all, there is a need for rapid electricity and network empowerment in order to address high levels of Renewable Energy Sources, while the persistent dependence on coal creates political and international pressures.[90] In addition, there are social-environmental problems, especially in infrastructure and mining projects for critical metals. A new constraint emerged in 2025 is China's tightening export controls on critical minerals and rare-earth elements essential for wind turbines, power electronics and storage technologies, exposing India's dependence on Chinese inputs even within the BRICS framework. Lastly, another issue is the management of commercial relationships with traditional energy suppliers that require transformation.

## 4. China

After examining the energy diplomacy of the Republic of China during the period 2020-2024, we notice that it is based on a dual perspective. On the one hand, its energy policies focus on securing reliable and economically efficient access to energy raw materials, but also on energy transmission. These two fields of access and transfer are of major importance in order to follow the country's broader economic growth.[91] On the other hand, it is based on a systematic promotion of "green"

[88] Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), "National Green Hydrogen Mission," Government of India, https://mnre.gov.in/en/national-green-hydrogen-mission/

[89] D. Purkayastha and R. Sharma, "India's Energy Security and Diplomacy: The Road to Diversification," *Energy Strategy Reviews* 39 (2022): 100760.

[90] International Energy Agency, *India Energy Outlook 2021*.

[91] Kevin Lo, "China's Energy Diplomacy: Oil, Gas and Beyond," *Energy Policy* 93 (2016): 313–321

technologies, where China leads, in order to succeed in economic and geopolitical influence.[92] In general, Chinese energy diplomacy is characterized by strong state guidance, in cooperation with active national companies and a combination of domestic policies with external action. This combination can be achieved through bilateral agreements, multilateral schemes, and investments abroad (notably Belt and Road energy projects that will be analyzed next).[93]

In order to better understand the energy diplomacy of China, we need to pay attention to Beijing's central declarations. The "Peak-before-2030" refers to the announcement of President Xi Jinping in 2020, regarding China's climate goal to reach a peak in its carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions before 2030.[94] More specifically, the target is by 2030, "the share of non-fossil energy consumption will reach the percentage of approximately 25%, and the carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP, will have dropped by more than 65%, in comparison to the 2005 level" (ACTION PLAN FOR CARBON DIOXIDE PEAKING BEFORE 2030), so that the target of carbon dioxide peaking before 2030 will be succeeded.[95] The second declaration, immediately linked to the first one, is "carbon-neutral-by-2060", by which the country pledged to achieve net zero emissions by 2060.[96] These two goals are crucial not only for China but for the whole world as well. Since China is the world's biggest polluter and consumer of fossil fuels, hitting its net-zero goal is also very important in order to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, to decrease global warming to below 2°C (preferably to 1.5°C) above pre-industrial levels.[97]

China is a country that grew from a predominantly rural and poor country into the second-largest economy globally, thanks to its rapid industrialization. It should be noted that since 1978, when China opened its economy, its yearly GDP growth has averaged more than 9% a year, according to the World Bank Group[98], while in 2007, GDP growth was an attention-getting 14.2%.[99] However, this rapid economic growth during the past two decades is linked to producing lower-cost goods for international consumers, in factories that were using large amounts of coal and oil, damaging the

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[92] International Energy Agency, *World Energy Investment 2024 – China* (Paris: IEA, 2024), https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-investment-2024/china

[93] The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future* (2023), http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/zfbps_2279/202310/t20231010_773734.html

[94] State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China Maps Path to Carbon Peak, Neutrality under New Plan," October 24, 2021, https://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/202110/24/content_WS61755fe9c6d0df57f98e3bed.html

[95] National Development and Reform Commission, "Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030," https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/policies/202110/t20211027_1301020.html

[96] State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China Maps Path to Carbon Peak, Neutrality under New Plan."

[97] Ministry of Ecology and Environment, "China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change" (2022), https://english.mee.gov.cn/Resources/Reports/reports/202211/P020221110605466439270.pdf

[98] Carl Dahlman, Douglas Zhihua Zeng, and Shuilin Wang, *Enhancing China's Competitiveness Through Lifelong Learning* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007), http://hdl.handle.net/10986/6702.

[99] Wayne M. Morrison, *China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States*, RL33534 (Congressional Research Service, June 25, 2019), https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33534.html

environment and increasing air pollution for the population.[100] Based on the aforementioned, there are two major factors for China to succeed in its environmental and energy plans. Firstly, the need to slow its economic growth, so that it will require less energy in the next decades, and secondly, the need for foreign manufacturers to shift their operations away from China, so that the emissions will decrease.

Regarding the first factor, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, during the period 2007- 2015, China's annual economic growth dropped to single digits, along with a noticeable slowdown in energy demand.[101] In addition, the World Bank expects China's economy to expand by about 4.5% in 2025 and 4% in 2026, down from an estimated 5% growth in 2024.[102] In addition, as for the second factor, political and economic tensions between China and the USA, as well as the targeted sanctions and trade restrictions that have been imposed on China, from the trade war 2018-2020 until the present, have also forced companies to diversify their operations away from China.

For succeeding in the two declarations of 2020, China has taken several action plans. The most important of them are 1) the actions for green and low-carbon energy transition and 2) the international cooperation. More specifically:

1. Actions for green and low-carbon energy transition:

a. Promoting coal substitution as well as transformation and upgrading

China aims to reduce its reliance on coal by strictly controlling consumption during the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) and phasing it down in the 15th FYP. New coal power projects will be heavily restricted, and all new units must meet world-class efficiency standards. Outdated capacity will be eliminated, while existing plants will undergo energy-saving and flexibility retrofits to serve as backup power sources rather than main generators. At least 50% of electricity transmitted through new power lines must come from renewable sources. The government will also promote the cleaner use of coal, gradually replacing and ultimately banning bulk coal burning.[103]

b. Vigorously developing new energy resources.

Large-scale, high-quality development of renewable energy will be pursued, with a strong focus on expanding both centralized and distributed wind and solar power. Innovative models such as "solar +" and smart photovoltaic technologies will be promoted, along with coordinated development of

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[100] Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, *China Energy Outlook 2022* (March 2022), https://eta-publications.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/ceo_2022_chapter_1_final_2.pdf

[101] U.S. Energy Information Administration, "China," *International Energy Outlook*, 2018, https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/ieo/china/

[102] World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2025), https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects

[103] National Development and Reform Commission, *"Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030,"* https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/policies/202110/t20211027_1301020.html

onshore and offshore wind systems. Complementary renewable energy bases combining solar thermal, photovoltaic, and wind power will be established, while biomass, biogas, geothermal, and marine energy will be developed based on local conditions. Mechanisms ensuring renewable power integration into the grid will be improved, and by 2030, the total installed capacity of wind and solar power will exceed 1,200 gigawatts.[104]

c. Developing hydro power according to local conditions

China will expand hydropower generation by developing major bases on rivers such as the Jinsha, Lancang, Yalong, Yellow, and Yarlung Zangpo, while promoting the green development of small hydropower projects. Hydropower development will be coordinated with environmental protection, supported by ecological compensation mechanisms. The country will integrate hydro, wind, and solar power generation —particularly in southwestern regions— to enhance system complementarity. Around 40 gigawatts of new hydropower capacity will be added during both the 14th and 15th FYP periods, forming a renewable energy system primarily based on hydropower.[105]

d. Actively developing nuclear power through a safe and orderly approach.

Nuclear power development proceeds steadily and safely, with a clear layout and timeline for construction. China advances demonstration projects for advanced reactors, including high-temperature gas-cooled, fast, small modular, and offshore floating reactors, while exploring the comprehensive use of nuclear energy. Efforts focus on strengthening domestic innovation, achieving breakthroughs in core technologies, and developing high-end nuclear equipment manufacturing. The strictest safety standards and regulatory oversight are enforced to ensure secure and reliable nuclear power growth. Except for that, the external dimension of Chinese energy policy also includes the export of nuclear technology (CNNC, CGN) and the promotion of Chinese financing and construction models in third countries.[106]

e. Rationally regulating oil and gas consumption.

Oil consumption will be kept within reasonable limits, with gradual adjustments to reduce gasoline use and promote cleaner alternatives such as advanced biofuels and sustainable aviation fuels. China will expand the development of unconventional oil and gas resources, including shale gas, coalbed gas, and tight oil and gas. Natural gas use will be prioritized for public needs and optimized through integration with other energy systems. The country will support local construction of natural gas

[104] NDRC, *"Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030."*

[105] NDRC, *"Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030."*

[106] NDRC, *"Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030."*

peak-shaving power plants and encourage the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as fuel for vehicles and ships to enhance efficiency and reduce emissions.[107]

f. Speeding up the development of the new electric power system.

China will build a modern electric power system that accommodates a growing share of renewable energy and ensures stable, flexible, and intelligent operation. The focus will be on enhancing grid resilience, incorporating flexible power sources, and coordinating generation, grid, load, and storage through the "new energy + energy storage" model. New policies will support the expansion of pumped-storage hydropower and advanced energy storage technologies. Structural reform will accelerate the creation of a unified national electricity market. By 2025, new energy storage capacity will exceed 30 gigawatts, and by 2030, pumped-storage hydropower will reach around 120 gigawatts, with provincial grids achieving at least 5% peak load response capacity.[108]

2. International Cooperation:

a. Participating in global climate governance

China takes an active role in shaping the global green governance system, upholding the principles of fairness and of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. It remains committed to multilateralism, safeguarding the UN-centered international order, and urging all parties to fully implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. China also engages constructively in international negotiations on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from aviation and shipping.[109]

b. Carrying out green cooperation in business, technology, and finance

China optimizes its trade structure and promotes the exchange of high-quality, high-technology, and high-value-added green products. The country strengthens international cooperation on green standards, advances the implementation of conformity assessment and mutual accreditation systems, and ensures alignment between green trade rules and import and export policies. In addition, it expands the import and export of energy-saving and environmentally friendly products and services. What is more, in deepening green technology cooperation, China fosters joint research and technological exchanges in areas such as renewable energy, energy storage, hydrogen power, and carbon capture, utilization, and storage, while actively participating in major international scientific initiatives such as the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor Project. Furthermore, China enhances global cooperation on green finance, takes part in carbon pricing and

[107] NDRC, *"Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030."*

[108] NDRC, *"Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030."*

[109] Ministry of Ecology and Environment, "China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change."

international coordination on green finance standards, and works with all parties to advance the global transition toward a green and low-carbon development model.[110]

c. Making the Belt and Road Initiative a green initiative

China follows the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, upholding openness, green development, and integrity in advancing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It strengthens cooperation with other participants in green infrastructure, green energy, and green finance, ensuring that overseas projects are environmentally sustainable. The country has developed a BRI energy partnership centered on green growth and inclusiveness, while expanding the export of new energy technologies and products. Through platforms such as the BRI International Green Development Coalition, China promotes the Green Investment Principles and advances the implementation of the Belt and Road South-South Cooperation Initiative on Climate Change and the Belt and Road Science, Technology, and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan.[111]

The Belt and Road Initiative was launched in 2013, by President Xi Jinping, consisting of two steps. The first one was in September with a "Silk Road Economic Belt" in Kazakhstan, while the second one came in October with a "Maritime Silk Road" in Indonesia. Subsequently, in December of the same year, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Central Economic Work Conference defined the BRI as a platform that could include new thinking on China's open development and outbound investments[112]. The combination of those two roads, which is known in the West as the "One Belt One Road" initiative, from the direct English translation of the Chinese language name "yidaiyilu", has transformed into the BRI.

The BRI initiative encompasses the cooperation of five sectors, thus a) development policies coordination, b) forging an infrastructure and facilities network, c) investment and trade relations strengthening, d) financial cooperation enhancement and e) deepening social and cultural exchanges.

In general, China is a major player in the rapid expansion of Renewable energy sources and especially in installed capacity and production of photovoltaic and wind turbines.[113] However, coal still has an important role in power generation and energy security in the short and medium-term (coal-first resilience).[114] Moreover, on the one hand, China invests in imported LNG and long-term contracts

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[110] Ministry of Ecology and Environment, "China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change."

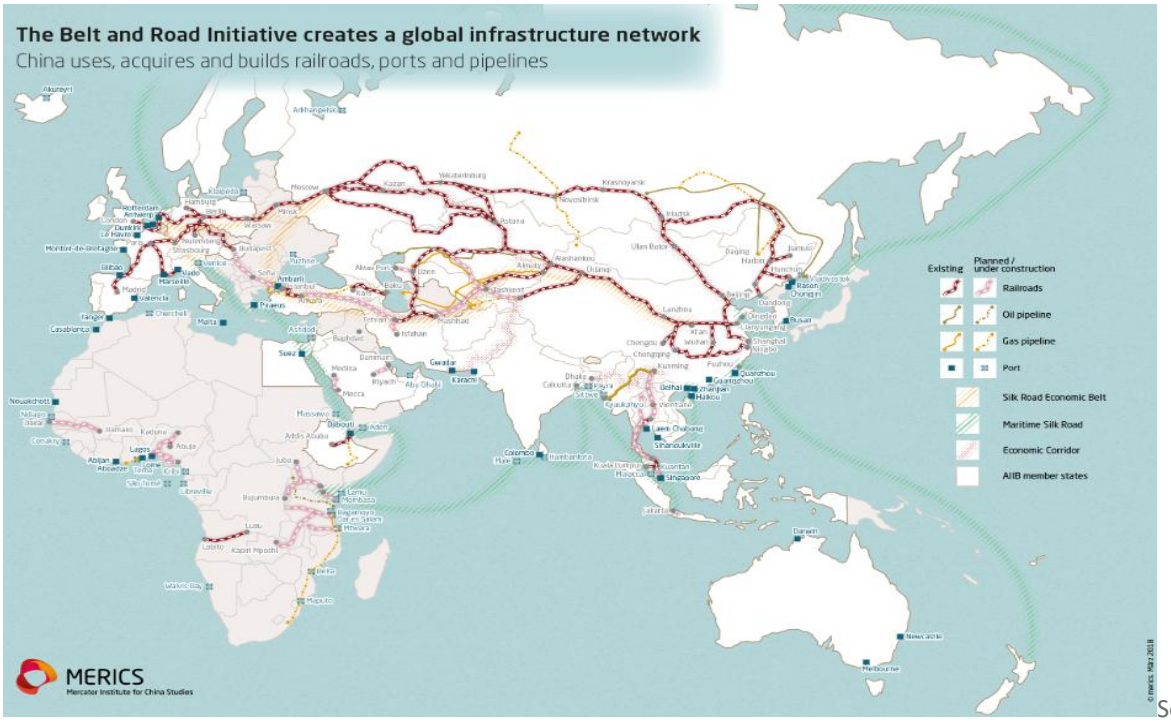
[111] The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future*.

[112] Weidong Liu and Michael Dunford, "Inclusive Globalization: Unpacking China's Belt and Road Initiative," *Area Development and Policy* 1, no. 3 (2016): 323–340, https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2016.1232598

[113] China National Energy Administration and National Bureau of Statistics, "Statistical Releases and Summaries on Electricity Production and Fuel Mix," 2021–2023, https://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202402/t20240201_1947122.html

[114] Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, *China Energy Outlook 2022*.

with suppliers, pipelines, and energy infrastructure abroad.[115] In fact, China's investments under the Belt &Road Initiative (in transportation, production stations, export harbors for oil and gas) strengthen its opportunities for power projection and permit it to secure supplies of raw materials and markets for Chinese energy products and technology. On the other hand, maintain its strategic capabilities for domestic production capacities and reserves.'



Source: https://merics.org/en/tracker/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand

Overall, China combines industrial politics and diplomacy, since the strong support for domestic manufacturing of photovoltaics, wind turbines, batteries, and electrolytes for hydrogen is accompanied by technology exports and investments in a production base abroad. In this way, it encourages global access to cheaper Renewable Energy technology and increases the dependence of third countries on Chinese products, a fact that can be considered a negotiating advantage in international discussions.

A relevant development for the cohesion of the BRICS — and specifically for China–India energy and minerals cooperation — was the resolution of the China–India border dispute on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan (October 2024). After more than four years of standoff in the Himalayan border areas, Beijing and New Delhi struck an agreement on patrolling arrangements, and Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi held their first bilateral meeting in five years.[116] The détente reduces a long-

[115] International Energy Agency, "China – Countries & Regions Profile," https://www.iea.org/countries/china

[116] Atlantic Council, "The Underestimated Implications of the BRICS Summit in Russia," November 1, 2024, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/the-underestimated-implications-of-the-brics-summit-in-russia

Ben Norton, "BRICS Grows, Inviting 13 New 'Partner Countries'," *Geopolitical Economy Report*, October 26, 2024, https://geopoliticaleconomy.com/2024/10/26/brics-13-partner-countries-summit-kazan-russia/

standing political obstacle to deeper Sino-Indian cooperation in critical minerals and renewable supply chains within BRICS.

## 5. South Africa

South Africa is one of the countries that is still dependent on a large scale on coal. According to data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), coal still covers approximately 70% of the total energy supply, while most of the electricity generation is based on thermal power plants.[117] However, the Energy Diplomacy of South Africa, during the period 2020-2024, is concentrated around two major goals: a) securing energy stability and economic growth, and b) a just energy transition to cleaner forms of energy. Based on them, the country pursues reducing emissions and, at the same time, attracting investments in renewable sources.

To support its energy policies, the government developed the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which can be defined as "a government-led strategic plan that outlines how the country will meet its future electricity demand by balancing energy supply and demand". It can be considered a roadmap for the electricity sector, determining the mix of energy sources (such as coal, nuclear, and renewables) and necessary capacity additions over a specific period, while considering factors like cost, security of supply, environmental impact, and economic growth. The last version of the plan (IRP 2023) foresees an increase in the share of RES, strengthening energy storage infrastructure, and introducing natural gas and hydrogen into the energy mix.

Except for the IRP, another factor of high importance for the energy diplomacy of South Africa is the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP). It was announced in 2021 and refers to a multilateral initiative that connects international funding and technical assistance from developed countries (such as the EU, the US, France, and Germany) to support a “just” transition away from coal. In addition, JETP aims to link public funding (e.g., donor countries and multilateral banking institutions) with private flows.[118] More specifically, the investment plan (JET-IP), for the period 2023-2027, describes the needs for capital to be used in decarbonization, grid reinforcement, development of green industries, and social support for areas affected by delignification.[119]

On a diplomatic level, South Africa has used its energy policy as a tool to reinforce its position, not only on the continent but globally as well. Through its cooperation with international organizations, like the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB), as well as its participation in forums, like JETP, the country aims to ensure access to funding, technologies, and technical support. At the same time, it makes efforts to attract private investments to develop construction capabilities for

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[117] International Energy Agency, *South Africa 2022: Energy Policy Review* (Paris: IEA, 2022), https://www.iea.org/countries/south-africa

[118] Energy Transition Partnership, *Report on JETP Experience in South Africa and Indonesia* (2023), https://www.energytransitionpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/20230508_Report-on-JETP-experience-in-SA-and-Indonesia_ENG.docx-1.pdf

[119] Republic of South Africa, *South Africa’s Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET IP) 2023–2027* (Pretoria, 2022), https://assets.bbhub.io/company/sites/63/2022/11/south-africa_s-just-energy-transition-investment-plan-2023-2027.pdf

large-scale PV, wind, and storage systems, especially through MoU, contests of the program Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Program (REIPPPP), which contributes significantly to the installation of new RES units, and collaborations with donor institutions.[120]

In comparison to the previously mentioned countries of the BRICS, South Africa faces multiple challenges. From a social aspect, several regions, like the province of Mpumalanga, are based on coal lignite, so the transition won't be easy for the local population. Moreover, from an economic perspective, the large investment gap and concerns about the solvency of the state supplier Eskom negatively influence the attractiveness of the private capital.[121] On a technical level, the problems in the transport network are a disadvantage to the rapid development of Renewable Sources. Lastly, the complexity of multiple donors under JETP (differences in terms of speed of disbursements) has slowed the full activation of some projects, as noted in analyses of 2023–2024.[122]

In general, despite the weaknesses, South Africa also has comparative advantages. Its high solar and wind dynamics, its developed mining base (critical minerals such as platinum, cobalt/nickel in limited quantities), and its geographic position serving as a hub for exports in sub-Saharan Africa, are of high importance.[123]

[120] Joel Kolker, Anton Eberhard, and James Leigland, *South Africa's Renewable Energy IPP Procurement Program: Success Factors and Lessons* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2014), http://hdl.handle.net/10986/20039

[121] Obajinmi, O. J., and D. Garba, "BRICS Expansion and Its Challenges to the Global Economic Order," 2025.

[122] Fair Finance Coalition Southern Africa, *Just Energy Transition Finance Report* (2024), https://www.fairfinancesouthernafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Just-energy-transition-finance-report_Final.pdf

[123] Critical Minerals and the Global Energy Transition," *Global Energy Law and Sustainability* (2023), https://doi.org/10.3366/gels.2023.0096

# III. BRICS Enlargement

The first wave of formal BRICS+ accession took effect on 1 January 2024 with the accession of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates as full members. [^104] Saudi Arabia was invited at the same time but has not formalized its membership. The second wave occurred on 6 January 2025 with Indonesia.[124] Beyond full membership, a new tier of "Partner Countries" was operationalized from 1 January 2025.

The five new full members and Indonesia substantially shift the bloc's energy and geopolitical profile. The combined territory now includes three of the world's largest oil exporters (Saudi Arabia — though not formally a member — UAE, and Iran), two of the world's largest energy importers (China and India), and a major nickel and coal producer (Indonesia), giving BRICS unprecedented coverage of the global hydrocarbon and critical-minerals value chains.[125]

## 1. Ethiopia

Ethiopia officially joined BRICS on January 1, 2024.[126] This integration reflects the country's general aspirations to expand international economic cooperation and raise finance for its developmental priorities, especially the agricultural, energy, and industrial sectors.

Ethiopia has developed strong ambitions to become fully integrated into NDB. The major aim is to finance projects in crucial sectors, with an emphasis on power generation, exploring new sources and ways to capitalize energy sources and energy infrastructures. Furthermore, the energy diplomacy of the country must be noted, as Ethiopia has improved bilateral relations with all the BRICS founding members, and it has enhanced the success of bilateral investments.[127] In addition, the group has provided Ethiopia with technical knowledge in the construction of hydroelectric, geothermal, and solar projects. Regarding cooperation with China, investment cooperation between them. What is more, China has been and continues to be a key partner in the construction of large hydroelectric power plants and electrical infrastructure in the grid, being a crucial investment partner for Ethiopia.[128]

The country has cooperated with India for decades, ensuring the mutual interest of the two countries in energy and electrification technology. There are discussions and presentations of signed and unsigned agreements and MoUs. Still, the most interesting cooperation has developed in microgrids

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[124] Critical Minerals and the Global Energy Transition," *Global Energy Law and Sustainability* (2023), https://doi.org/10.3366/gels.2023.0096

[125] BRICS Summit Declaration, "Rio Declaration on Fair and Inclusive Energy Transitions," Rio de Janeiro, July 6, 2025, https://brics.br/en/documents/presidency-documents/250705-brics-leaders-declaration-en.pdf

[126] European Parliament, *BRICS Expansion: A Quest for Greater Global Influence?* (2024), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2024)760368

[127] Obajinmi and Garba, "BRICS Expansion and Its Challenges to the Global Economic Order," 2025.

[128] The State Council of the People's Republic of China, *The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future*, 2023.

and solar projects, primarily due to the efforts of international forums such as ISA.[129] The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is the main tool of the country's soft power and energy diplomacy, which strengthens the position of Ethiopia in the region, as a producer of clean energy.[130] In fact GERD reached full inauguration in September 2025, when Ethiopia formally celebrated the project's completion, marking the largest hydropower facility in Africa with an installed capacity of approximately 6,450 MW.

## 2. Iran

Iran officially became a member of the BRICS on January 1st, 2024.[131] This move is considered an important step in its strategy in order to strengthen multilateral economic cooperation and diversify partnerships beyond traditional Western frameworks. Its accession aligns with Tehran's broader goal to expand the try's access to alternative development financing and to reduce its vulnerability against international sanctions.[132] Following its entry, Iran's interest in joining the New Development Bank (NDB), aiming to secure new funding mechanisms for strategic sectors (particularly energy infrastructure, upstream oil and gas development, and renewable energy projects) was evident.[133]

Iran's post-BRICS engagement is connected to energy diplomacy as a central pillar. Within the new framework, Tehran has actively deepened bilateral relations with the founding BRICS members, particularly China, Russia, and India, using the group as both a diplomatic and financial platform.[134] Cooperation with China remains "the cornerstone" of Iran's external energy policy. More specifically, Beijing continues to be Iran's primary crude oil buyer and a key investor in large-scale oil, gas, and refining projects, as well as in renewable and transmission infrastructure. These partnerships also include technology transfer and long-term supply agreements supported by the institutional umbrella of BRICS.

From another aspect regarding its relations with Russia, Iran has intensified collaboration in natural gas exploration, LNG technology, and pipeline development. Recent memoranda of understanding between Gazprom and the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), signed in June 2024, have shown a

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[129] Africa Energy Portal, "Africa Accelerates Solar Adoption with Support from India at 8th ISA Assembly," 2025, https://africa-energy-portal.org/news/africa-accelerates-solar-adoption-support-india-8th-isa-assembly

[130] James Fenton-Harvey, "BRICS Now Owns Egypt and Ethiopia's Nile Dam Dispute," *World Politics Review*, September 18, 2023.

[131] TV BRICS, "Iran's President Describes Joining BRICS as Important Achievement of Country in Foreign Policy," March 20, 2024, https://tvbrics.com/en/news/iran-s-president-describes-joining-brics-as-important-achievement-of-country-in-foreign-policy/

[132] Pádraig Carmody, "BRICS' Enlargement: Power Expansion or Contraction," *EconPol Forum* 25, no. 1 (2024): 14–17.

[133] Islamic Republic News Agency, "Iran Invites Head of NDB to Discuss Membership: Official," August 25, 2023, https://en.irna.ir/news/85210082/Iran-invites-head-of-NDB-to-discuss-membership-Official

[134] Mark N. Katz, "The Geopolitical (In)Significance of BRICS Enlargement," *EconPol Forum* 25, no. 1 (2024): 10–13.

shared interest in connecting regional gas networks and coordinating export strategies, a trend strengthened after both countries consolidated their positions within BRICS.[135]

Furthermore, relations with India have also been maintained, focusing on energy trade, port logistics (notably Chabahar), and renewable-energy cooperation. Through BRICS and platforms such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA), both sides have shown renewed interest in advancing microgrid, and solar projects suited to rural electrification.

Following the Israel-Iran armed conflict in June 2025, the BRICS Leaders' Declaration adopted in Rio on 6 July 2025 explicitly condemned Israel's attacks on Iran alongside the Russian aggression in Ukraine and the Israeli operations in Gaza.[136] The episode reinforced Tehran's strategic case for BRICS membership: the bloc emerged as one of the very few multilateral platforms willing to publicly support Iran. From an energy perspective, the war briefly disrupted Iranian oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz and accelerated Chinese efforts to lock in alternative supply routes — a factor that several analysts cite as having pushed Beijing to finally agree to the Power of Siberia 2 deal in September 2025. [137]

Overall, Iran's integration into BRICS provides political legitimacy and institutional channels in order to advance its energy diplomacy, to offer potential access to alternative financing, technology partnerships, and markets for its vast hydrocarbon and renewable resources. At the same time, the continuation of international sanctions and financial restrictions remains a key constraint, shaping how quickly Tehran can fully realize these new opportunities.[138]

## 3. United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The United Arab Emirates has formally joined the expanded BRICS alliance to explore, within this framework, to play a more active role in global energy diplomacy and energy infrastructure financing.[139] The UAE's participation is part of its broader agenda to diversify from traditional economic partners, in order to grow its financial clout, and speed up the transition to cleaner energy systems. Since becoming a BRICS member, the UAE has taken proactive steps to benefit from this group's trading and energy platforms. The UAE's post-BRICS engagement is primarily oriented towards energy diplomacy. More specifically, the UAE finalized several bilateral and multilateral

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[135] Reuters, "Gazprom Signs Memo with Iran on Russian Gas Supplies," June 26, 2024, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/gazprom-signs-memo-with-iran-russian-gas-supplies-2024-06-26

[136] BRICS Brasil, "BRICS Leaders' Declaration Condemns Wars and Calls for Reform of Global Governance," July 17, 2025 https://brics.br/en/news/collabs/collaborative-communication/brics-leaders-declaration-condemns-wars-and-calls-for-reform-of-global-governance?

[137] "Russia, China Sign 'Most Ambitious' Power of Siberia-2 Pipeline Deal," *Kyiv Independent*, September 2, 2025, https://kyivindependent.com/russia-china-sign-most-ambitious-power-of-siberia-2-pipeline-deal/?

[138] Nargis Kassenova, "Saudi Arabia and the BRICS+: Strategic Alignments in a Shifting Energy World," Carnegie Endowment, 2021.

[139] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates, "United Arab Emirates Joins BRICS Group," August 25, 2023, https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/mediahub/news/2023/8/25/25-8-2023-uae-brics

agreements with participating BRICS countries, as well as joint financing of renewable energy projects, energy infrastructure investments, and technology transfer.[140]

The UAE also shared with its partners its unique energy investment frameworks, including its leading-edge financial and technology transfer instruments. The UAE has a multi-dimensional approach to BRICS collaboration. It exports its practices in designing and managing public-private renewable energy projects and directs capital from country-run funds into energy projects in the global South. During the 2025 World Governments Summit in Dubai, the UAE delegation reported summitting participants on the UAE's several-year investments in BRICS projects in the definitions and logistics fields and offered collaboration with NDB on a large project in the energy sector. The UAE leverages its role in BRICS to become the main cross-regional energy and logistics hub.[141]

It should be noted that UAE negotiators were negotiating investment in the construction of facilities in the countries and requested support first, from India, the Chair of the annually rotating BRICS presidency. Secondly, the UAE seeks to connect its energy diplomacy to macro strategic corridors and mega-logistic projects. For instance, the recent UAE-India high-level meeting analysis reveals that the two countries plan to build a direct power connection between the energy systems and the IMEC (India – Middle East – Europe) economic corridor.[142]

In conclusion, the UAE's becoming a BRICS member presents the latter with an exciting opportunity to: (1) apply its energy investment and financing capacities to fulfill purported global energy transition targets; (2) distribute its energy project structuring experience and grid integration across BRICS participants, and (3) become a key node in trans-regional energy connectivity and mega-logistics projects.

## 4. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's relationship with BRICS represents one of the most distinctive cases in the bloc's expansion process. The Kingdom was invited to join at the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg (August 2023), with full membership formally meant to take effect on 1 January 2024 alongside the other invitees.[143] However, Saudi Arabia did not accept the invitation by that deadline and, as of mid-2025 and confirmed again in early 2026, has not formally joined BRICS.[144]

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[140] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates, "United Arab Emirates Joins BRICS Group," August 25, 2023, https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/mediahub/news/2023/8/25/25-8-2023-uae-brics

[141] World Governments Summit, "WGS Panelists: UAE Leverages BRICS Membership to Boost Global Trade Resilience, Infrastructure Leadership," February 11, 2025, https://www.worldgovernmentssummit.org/media-hub/news/detail/wgs-panelists-uae-leverages-brics-membership-to-boost-global-trade-resilience-infrastructure-leadership

[142] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates, "UAE, India Issue Joint Statement on Visit of Indian Prime Minister," February 15, 2024, https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/mediahub/news/2024/2/15/15-2-2024-india2

[143] Carmody, Pádraig. "BRICS' Enlargement: Power Expansion or Contraction in a Changing World Order?" EconPol Forum 25, no. 1 (2024): 14–17. https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/284111/1/1882221397.pdf

[144] Reuters, "Saudi Arabia Sits on Fence over BRICS with Eye on Vital Ties with US," May 8, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-sits-fence-over-brics-with-eye-vital-ties-with-us-2025-05-08/

In an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos (January 2025), the Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Al-Ibrahim explicitly stated: "We've been invited to BRICS, similar to how we've been invited to many other multilateral platforms in the past historically. We assess many different aspects of it before a decision is made and right now, we are in the middle of that". [145] Reuters reported in May 2025 that two sources familiar with the matter confirmed Saudi Arabia "had not formally joined the alliance" despite its participation in BRICS meetings and notwithstanding the fact that the official BRICS website lists the Kingdom among members.[146]

Riyadh's hesitation is widely interpreted as a strategic balancing act between China — its largest oil customer — and the United States, with which it is negotiating sensitive nuclear cooperation and security guarantees. [147] President Donald Trump's threats in late 2024 and again in mid-2025 to apply 100% tariffs on BRICS countries pursuing "anti-American policies" have reinforced the Kingdom's caution.[148]

Despite the absence of formal accession, Saudi Arabia continues to engage actively with BRICS structures. The Kingdom uses its rank as one of the world's largest oil producers to offer BRICS a ground for more attractive bilateral cooperation based on trade, investments, technology transfers, and infrastructure funding.[149] India is a case in point, where the Kingdom focuses on a more extensive supply of crude and LPG, co-investing in infrastructure, and long-term contractual relations.[150] The Kingdom's relationship with China, its principal trade partner, is redefined within a BRICS framework with a focus on power grid, downstream investment, and overall energy security.[151] Following these considerations, Saudi Arabia's energy diplomacy also extends to the finance-infrastructure track promoted by the BRICS institutional structure. The Kingdom's intent to join the NDB or any other financial body set up by BRICS governments is designed to allow the country to tap into non-Western-based funding and bring Saudi Arabia's agenda in the area of energy-infrastructure in line with the developing countries' investment structure.

From a bigger perspective, while externally the Kingdom is publicly emphasizing its "going east" strategy and its Vision 2030 agenda, which include the centrality of energy export diversification alongside natural gas development and renewables, energy diplomacy under the BRICS framework

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[145] Ibid https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-sits-fence-over-brics-with-eye-vital-ties-with-us-2025-05-08/

[146] Reuters, "Saudi Arabia Sits on Fence over BRICS with Eye on Vital Ties with US," May 8, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-sits-fence-over-brics-with-eye-vital-ties-with-us-2025-05-08

[147] Oliver Stuenkel and Margot Treadwell, "Why Is Saudi Arabia Hedging Its BRICS Invite?" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 21, 2024, https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2024/11/brics-saudi-arabia-hedging-why

[148] Ismail Shakil, "Trump Repeats Tariffs Threat to Dissuade BRICS Nations from Replacing U.S. Dollar," Reuters, January 31, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/markets/currencies/trump-repeats-tariffs-threat-dissuade-brics-nations-replacing-us-dollar-2025-01-31/

[149] Nargis Kassenova, "Saudi Arabia and the BRICS+: Strategic Alignments in a Shifting Energy World," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021.

[150] Harry Jivrag, "India Settles First Crude Oil Payment to UAE in Local Currency," *Investment Monitor*, 2023, https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/news/india-settles-first-crude-oil-payment-to-uae-in-local-currency/

[151] Kassenova, "Saudi Arabia and the BRICS+."

pursues several goals: generic growth objective consolidating Saudi Arabia as a partner of choice for big infrastructure projects, leveraging its energy commodity base into a broader economic partnership, and securing additional clout in a multipolar global system.[152] However, a number of downsides mitigate the pace and scale of this evolution. Not only is the Kingdom heavily interconnected with the international oil economy and dollar-based trading regime, but it is also transitioning to the BRICS regime, which requires bargaining with established institutional systems and market realities. Equally, full BRICS membership, including full participation in NDB frameworks, is possible only on the condition of additional negotiation and ratification. Lastly, while the scope for energy diplomacy is considerable, the successful translation of this endeavor into bankable cross-border projects, long-term PPAs, and affordable technology transfer is functionally challenging.

In conclusion, between the environmental and security concerns, Saudi Arabia's engagement with BRICS marks a qualitative reorientation of its energy diplomacy: the Kingdom wants to be not simply a provider but also a partner; not merely an exporter but also a chain maker. Whether this ambition may be shown in concrete projects and organizational affiliations, energy-export structures and partnerships in the coming years remains an open question.

## 5. Egypt

Egypt became a member of the BRICS on January 1, 2024. This membership was a strategic step in the interests of the country in the context of the ambitious plan to extend international economic cooperation, perspective to diversify partners, and grant to alternative forms of financing of crucial sectors, including energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and industry.

Post-BRICS, Egypt has secured comprehensive cooperation with the BRICS institutions, and especially the New Development Bank, to utilize development funding and fund large-scale projects in the sphere of energy.[153] After this move, Egypt's key goal came to be energy diplomacy. Cairo seeks to enhance collaboration opportunities and has intensified multilateral and bilateral participation with BRICS' founding and other emerging economy partners, groups celebrating energy transition and establishing grid systems and energy commerce and has increased technology transfer. It accentuated a balanced approach between fossil fuels and renewables, opening research to define an agenda of cooperation between BRICS and NDB to channel investment in the journey of energy choice. Egypt's negotiation with Russia includes energy, as its Minister of Petroleum and Mineral

[152] Pádraig Carmody, "BRICS' Enlargement: Power Expansion or Contraction in a Changing World Order?" *EconPol Forum* 25, no.1 (2024):14–17.

[153] New Development Bank, "NDB Explores Financing Airports, Energy, Water and Social Infrastructure in Inaugural Visit to Egypt," February 1, 2024, https://www.ndb.int/news/ndb-explores-financing-airports-energy-water-and-social-infrastructure-in-inaugural-visit-to-egypt/

Resources, Tarek El Molla, met with Russia's energy minister in March 2024 to deliberate on gas and methane emission reduction and the BRICS agenda.[154]

In addition, Egypt is expected to use its membership to secure resources from BRICS partners and NDB, which have intensively evolved sources of finance by the Global South. Another critical factor is that it will also use its geographic position and infrastructure quality to bridge energy between the North and South in Africa.

## 6. Indonesia

Indonesia formally joined BRICS on 6 January 2025, becoming the bloc's 11th full member (or 10th, excluding the not-formally-acceded Saudi Arabia). [155]This made Indonesia the first Southeast Asian state in the bloc and a particularly significant addition for two reasons: its sheer demographic and economic weight (over 280 million inhabitants and a GDP exceeding US$1.3 trillion), and its centrality to the global critical-minerals supply chain.[156]

From the energy and minerals dimension, Indonesia is the world's largest nickel producer by a wide margin, controlling more than half of global mined output. It also produces significant volumes of cobalt and is a leading exporter of coal and LNG. Since 2020, Jakarta has banned the export of raw nickel ore, forcing in-country processing — much of it through Chinese-financed High Pressure Acid Leaching (HPAL) facilities. This policy has transformed Indonesia into a key node in the global EV-battery supply chain, with significant implications for BRICS' aspiration to build a parallel critical-minerals architecture.[157]

President Prabowo's renewable-energy commitment. During his speech at the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio (July 2025), President Prabowo Subianto declared Indonesia's goal "to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy within the next 10 years".[158] Although analysts have questioned the feasibility of this target — given that coal currently accounts for approximately 60% of Indonesia's electricity generation — the announcement signals Jakarta's intent to align its energy diplomacy with BRICS' green-finance and climate-cooperation agenda.

Geopolitical positioning. Indonesia's foreign minister Sugiono explicitly framed BRICS membership as consistent with the country's traditional "free and active" foreign policy, stating: "It does not mean

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[154] Egypt State Information Service, "Egypt, Russia Review Efforts to Secure Energy Sources," March 2, 2024, https://sis.gov.eg/en/media-center/news/egypt-russia-review-efforts-to-secure-energy-sources/

[155] Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, "Brazil Announces Indonesia as Full Member of BRICS," January 6, 2025, https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2025/01/brazil-announces-indonesia-as-full-member-of-brics; Al Jazeera,

[156] "Indonesia Joins BRICS Group of Emerging Economies," January 7, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/7/indonesia-joins-brics-group-of-emerging-economies

[157] Geopolitical Economy Report, "BRICS Grows, Adding Indonesia as Member: World's 4th Most Populous Country, 7th Biggest Economy," January 7, 2025, https://geopoliticaleconomy.com/2025/01/07/brics-adds-indonesia-member-economy/

[158] Aude Darnal et al., "2025 BRICS Summit: Takeaways and Projections," Stimson Center, August 4, 2025, https://www.stimson.org/2025/2025-brics-summit-takeaways-and-projections/

that we are joining a certain camp, but we actively participate in all forums".[159] This positions Indonesia as a likely "swing player" within BRICS, simultaneously deepening ties with China while preserving relationships with the United States and ASEAN partners.

Implications for BRICS energy diplomacy. Indonesia's accession opens three new vectors. First, it brings ASEAN — the most dynamic emerging-economy regional bloc not previously represented — directly into the BRICS conversation. Second, Indonesian nickel and cobalt strengthen BRICS' control over inputs critical to renewable technology. Third, Indonesia's proximity to Australia and the South China Sea sea-lanes adds a maritime-strategic dimension to BRICS energy security debates.

[159] Sebastian Strangio, "Indonesia Officially Becomes First Southeast Asian Member of BRICS," *The Diplomat*, January 8, 2025, https://thediplomat.com/2025/01/indonesia-officially-becomes-first-southeast-asian-member-of-brics/

# IV. BRICS in a multipolar international system

BRICS creation can be characterized as an effort of establishing an alternative economic and political framework, able to challenge the long-standing traditional dominance of Western Countries. This cooperation is seen by global community and international relations specialists, not only as a counterweight to the western dominated world, but also as a direct challenge to Western hegemony.[160]

When the group was introduced in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, the chief economist at Goldman Sachs, he identified Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) as the fastest-growing emerging economies. More specifically, he described China as the "factory" of the world economy, India as the "service provider", Brazil as the "grocery store", and Russia as the "Gas Station".[161] Since 2001, China and India have significantly expanded their weight in the world economy, while the enlarged BRICS bloc today represents roughly 35 – 38% of global GDP at PPP, a share that increases to over 41% when partner countries are included (October 2024 IMF data).[162]

The BRICS agreement, despite the fact that it began as an economic classification, has evolved into a political and institutional coalition targeting in advancing the shared interests of developing countries and emerging market economies.[163] Cooperation and dialogue are emphasized between the group, not only to promote economic growth but also to foster a prosperous world. Based on that, the BRICS engage with a broad range of regional and global issues, including conflicts in Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iran, while also prioritizing reforms to the IMF, the fight against illicit drug trafficking, and the development of information and communication technology. In parallel, BRICS seeks to create conditions for barrier-free trade and greater economic integration among its members.[164] In addition, the growing presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within BRICS represents a common ambition to share global governance and helps in member's international influence expansion. More specifically, China and India have become key drivers of the world economy, while Russia and Brazil, have strengthened their geopolitical influence by capitalizing

[160] Pádraig Carmody, "BRICS' Enlargement: Power Expansion or Contraction in a Changing World Order?" *EconPol Forum* 25, no. 1 (2024): 14–17, https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/284111/1/1882221397.pdf

[161] Deutsche Welle, "BRICS: Still an Alternative Power Bloc?," November 14, 2019, https://www.dw.com/en/brics-still-an-alternative-power-bloc/a-51279559

[162] Statista, "The Global Clout of the New BRICS," October 22, 2024, https://www.statista.com/chart/33311/brics-share-of-global-gdp-and-population/

[163] John Kirton and Marina Larionova, "The First Fifteen Years of the BRICS," *International Organisations Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (2022).

[164] BRICS, "BRICS Approves Joint Declaration for Fairer, More Inclusive Global Trade," May 27, 2025, https://brics.br/en/news/brics-approves-joint-declaration-for-fairer-more-inclusive-global-trade

their natural resources. Moreover, South Africa, has used its membership to elevate the representation and influence of Africa in the global decision-making.[165]

From an economic aspect, BRICS has become a significant force in the global economy, since it accounts for approximately 35% of global GDP (measured by purchasing power parity). More specifically, based on the data from Statista, shown on the diagram below, the BRICS countries have overtaken the G7 countries' share of the world's total gross domestic product (GDP) again in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2018. Furthermore, by 2024, the difference had increased even further, the BRICS now holding a total of 35 percent of the world's GDP compared to 30 percent held by the G7 countries. As of July 2025, including the 10 partner countries, the BRICS+ group accounts for approximately 45% of global GDP (nominal) and over 50% at PPP, representing more than half of the world's population and controlling significant shares of global energy reserves and critical mineral resources.[166]

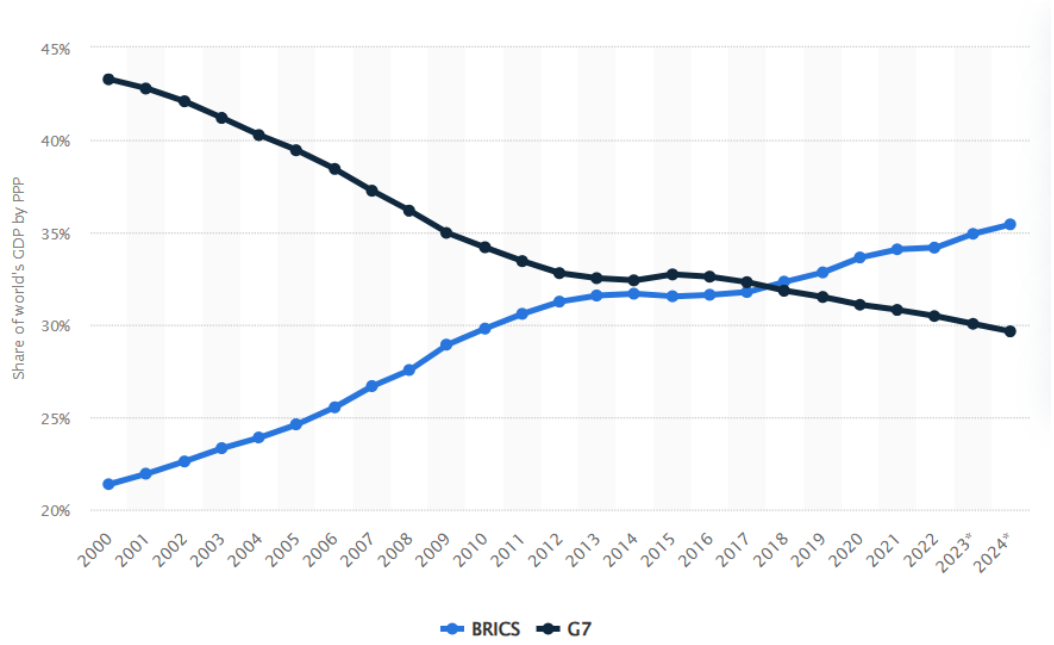


Figure: Share of G7 and BRICS in Global GDP (PPP), 2000–2024.[167]

[165] Michael Dunford, Weidong Liu, and Christophe Pompeani, "The Greater BRICS and a New World Order?" *Area Development and Policy* 7, no. 4 (2022): 365–379.

[166] International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2024, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO

BRICS Brazil, "About the BRICS," 2025, https://brics.br/en/about-the-brics.

[167] Statista, "BRICS Plus and G7 Countries' Share of the World's Total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) from 2000 to 2024," 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1412425/gdp-ppp-share-world-gdp-g7-brics/

| GDP of expansion BRICS+ states | | |
|---|---|---|
| **BRICS States** | **2023 GDP (USD billions)** | **Share of Global GDP** |
| China | $19,374 | 18% |
| India | $3,737 | 4% |
| Brazil | $2,018 | 2% |
| Russia | $2,063 | 2% |
| South Africa | $399 | 0.4% |
| Saudi Arabia | $1,062 | 1% |
| Argentina | $641 | 0.6% |
| UAE | $499 | 0.5% |
| Egypt | $387 | 0.4% |
| Iran | $368 | 0.4% |
| Ethiopia | $156 | 0.2% |
| **BRICS+ Total** | **$30,767** | **29%** |

**Table:** GDP of Expansion BRICS+ States. Source: Visual Capitalist, *Charted: Comparing the GDP of BRICS and the G7 Countries*, October 23, 2023.[168]

It also represents about 3.25 billion people, over 42% of the world's population. The majority of these people live in either China or India, which have a population of more than 1.4 billion people each, while the other three countries have a combined population of just under 420 million. With Indonesia's accession in 2025, the bloc adds another 280 million people, bringing the total above 3.6 billion.

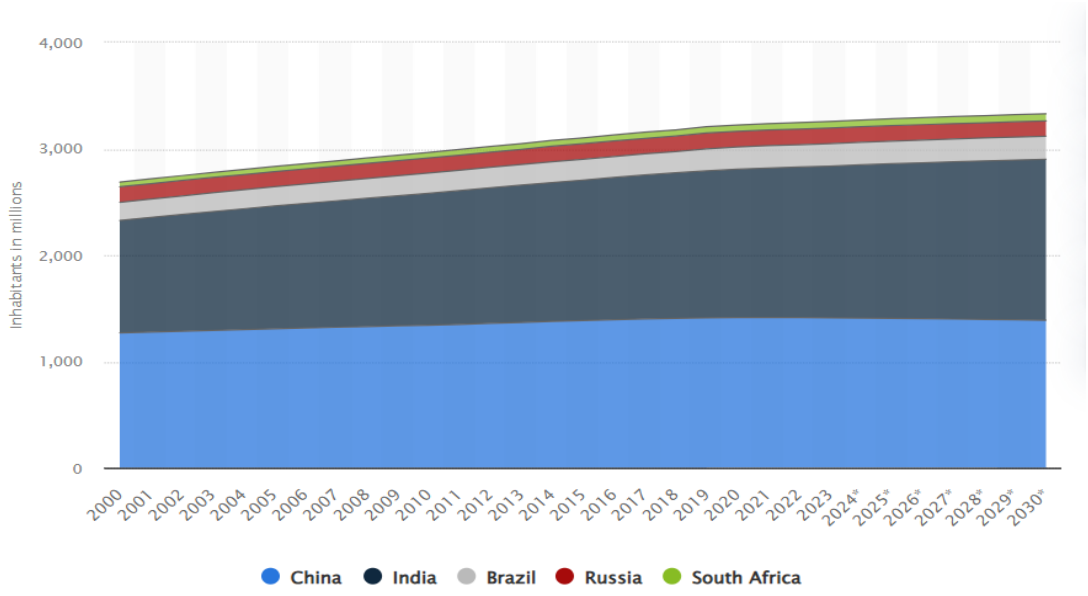


**Figure:** Total Population of the BRICS Countries, 2000–2030. Source: Statista, Total Population of the BRICS Countries from 2000 to 2030 (based on United Nations population projections).[169]

[168] Visual Capitalist, "Charted: Comparing the GDP of BRICS and the G7 Countries," October 23, 2023, https://www.visualcapitalist.com/charted-comparing-the-gdp-of-brics-and-the-g7-countries/

[169] Statista, "Total Population of the BRICS Countries from 2000 to 2030," 2024, https://www.statista.com/statistics/254205/total-population-of-the-bric-countries

All this economic strength has enabled the group to challenge the political and financial dominance of the West, through institutional Innovations, such as the New Development Bank, designed as an alternative to the World Bank and IMF, and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, a liquidity mechanism aiming to support member states facing economic instability.

The growing influence has strengthened even more, with their expansion, firstly in early 2023, when the Foreign Minister of South Africa, reported that 12 countries (among them Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Algeria, Mexico, and Nigeria), had expressed interest in joining the initiative. [170] Indeed, the formal admission of the five new members as mentioned above, thus Ethiopia, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, has enhanced BRICS' strategic force and reinforces its role as a platform for promoting the interests of the "Global South."[171]

After the enlargement, BRICS+ has included many counties that have in many cases common skepticism toward the US-led international order, reflecting a broader shift in the global balance of power and highlights the bloc's role in promoting a more multipolar world system.[172] The challenge that BRICS has introduced does not refer only to an economic level, but also to areas like digital technology, financial innovation and alternative payment systems, for instance the launch of BRICS Pay (announced at the Kazan Summit in October 2024), shocking global political economy. It should be mentioned that despite the fact that the group has an heterogenous character consisting of states with diverse political systems and, from time to time, competing interests, their unity under the bloc's umbrella comes from a shared commitment to elevating state sovereignty and resisting the dominance of Western norms and values.

For better understanding of this shift in the international system into a multipolar world, it is crucial to analyze how each member contributes in particular and how the war in Ukraine has affected their policies, separating the world into "Political West" and "Political South".

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[170] Prange de Oliveira, Astrid. "BRICS Summit: Seeking a Counterweight to the West." *Deutsche Welle*. August 22, 2023.

[171] Yaroslav Lissovolik, "BRICS Expansion: New Geographies and Spheres of Cooperation," *BRICS Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, https://brics-econ.arphahub.com/article/120071/

[172] Mark N. Katz, "The Geopolitical (In)Significance of BRICS Enlargement," *EconPol Forum* 25, no. 1 (2024): 10–13, https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/284105/1/1882218566.pdf

## V. "Political West" and "Political South"

The invasion of Russia in Ukraine in February 2022, has become a crucial "test" for the contemporary international system, since it revealed political and normative divisions between what is described as the "Political West" and the "Political South".

The term "Political South" refers to countries that pursue a non-Western conception of world order, prioritizing national autonomy, non-intervention in internal affairs and state-permeated economies. While "Political South" focuses on international strategies of emerging powers and middle-sized countries, the term "Global South" focuses more in development and centers on developing countries. On the other hand, "Political West" refers to the geopolitical concept that defines a bloc of countries that share specific ideologies, institutional ties and security interests, without taking into account strict geographic boundaries. The core principals of Political West, are Liberal Democracy, Market Capitalism and Individualism, while key institutions are considered the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the EU (European Union), the G7 (consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and the USA), as well as the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund).[173] The politics of the BRICS group of emerging powers is especially important for understanding the "Political South's" alternative conceptions of world order.

At the beginning of war in Ukraine, the Political West, represented by the United States and the European Union, responded through applying coordinated sanctions along with diplomatic isolation against Russia, while at the same time supporting Ukraine with military equipment, treating the conflict as a systemic challenge to the international law and the liberal international order. However, many states characterized as parts of the Political South have rejected full alignment with this response and diverged in their policies, as evidence of a rising alternative world order. Rather than acting as a cohesive counter-hegemonic bloc, BRICS have adopted differentiated positions based on their domestic political coalitions, economic dependencies, and regime-specific interests. More specifically, we examine the position of the three major members, except for Russia that participates in the war.

BRAZIL

Brazil, as part of BRICS political economy patterns, features both liberalizing and protectionist lobbies within its industrial sector.[174] A major field of interest for Brazil's economy and external relations is the agricultural sector, which is highly competitive and of great significance. China is the major importer of Brazilian agricultural products, while at the same time Brazil depends on Russian

[173] Stefan A. Schirm, "Alternative World Orders? Russia's Ukraine War and the Domestic Politics of the BRICS," *The International Spectator* 58, no. 3 (2023): 55–73

[174] Eugénia C. Heldt and Laura C. Mahrenbach, "Rising Powers in Global Economic Governance: Mapping the Flexibility-Empowerment Nexus," *Global Policy* 10, no. 1 (2019): 19–28, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1758-5899.12643

fertilizers, making good relations between the two states critical. In foreign trade, China is Brazil's first trading partner, accounting for 28.7% of exports and 25.9% of imports. In second place comes the European Union, with 14.3% of exports and 17.6% of imports, followed by the United States with 10.9% of exports and 16.3% of imports.[175] Based on these economic interests, Brazil is obliged to pursue a dual strategy involving both China and the West.

However, public opinion is not fully aligned with external policy, as voters support the liberalization of trade while at the same time favor the protection of the domestic economy. Regarding the war in Ukraine, which has divided global public opinion, Brazilian voters believe largely that Russia has responsibility, while a significant percentage supports Brazil's neutrality between the two powers. Society is therefore divided between supporting the West and identifying with the Global South.

Due to the country's high dependence on Russian fertilizer imports and the political importance of agricultural exports, Brazilian governments, however, have avoided participation in sanctions against Russia. On the contrary, since the election of Lula in 2023, Brazil has strengthened its relations with the Global South, China, and the BRICS initiative.[176] This shift indicates support for South–South cooperation and for a multipolar world order. Another major strategic move for Brazil has been the proposal to use the yuan in trade transactions, as well as its growing engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative through investment and cooperation projects.

Despite this orientation, Brazil's ties with the West remain strong. While the country has rhetorically affirmed principles such as sovereignty and peaceful conflict resolution, it has avoided putting the war in systemic terms or endorsing Western narratives of global order. This reflects Brazil's long-standing emphasis on autonomy, multilateralism, and the avoidance of great power. Consequently, Brazil's position does not represent alignment with an alternative world order, but rather a strategy of selective engagement shaped by domestic political economy.

INDIA

The economy of India is divided into two sectors with different perspectives. On the one hand, there are the services and pharmaceuticals sectors, which are highly competitive and favor the LIO's (Liberal International Order) liberalization. On the other hand, there are less competitive manufacturing and agricultural sectors that support protectionism and South-South trade.[177]

India's exports are shaped significantly by the competitive services sector, and more specifically, the IT services, with large exports to many Western countries. The trading sector with the Republic of China often faces difficulties due to the highly competitive Chinese manufacturing products. The

[175] World Trade Organization, "Brazil – Tariff and Trade Profile," https://ttd.wto.org/en/profiles/brazil

[176] Government of Brazil, "Brazil and China Expand Bilateral Relations During State Visit," November 21, 2024, https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202411/21/content_WS673e5422c6d0868f4e8ed436.htm

[177] Debasish Purkayastha and Ritu Sharma, "India's Energy Security and Diplomacy," 2022.

Republic of China accounted for approximately the percentage of 18.4% of Indian imports, Russia the percentage of 9.7%, while the USA and the European Union were sharing the percentage of 12.6% as well. At the same time, 18.3 and 17.8% of Indian exports had a destination to the USA/EU respectively, and only 3.4% to China.[178] In general, trading with China can be considered important for India; however, it creates pressure on the economy that triggers protectionist interests.

Regarding the relations with Russia, importing weapons from Russia strengthens the strategic bonds between the two members of the BRICS. However, India has also cooperated with the West, through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which is a grouping of Australia, India, Japan, and the USA, maintained by talks between member states aiming for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.[179] It is thus noted that India is in a strategic position between cooperation and autonomy against the West, as well as between cooperation and competitiveness with China.

Within this in-between position, some in India support the de-dollarization of global trade, arguing that the USA and its west allies have weaponized globalization, trade, and the dollar system. Others, however, express their concerns that the weakening of the dollar's dominance would mainly benefit China, since any alternative international currency is likely to be dominated by the renminbi. This internal debate shows that geoeconomic rivals within the Political South can limit deeper coordination against the Liberal International Order and create attritions even among BRICS members.

Another important factor shaping India's position is energy dependency. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, India has significantly increased its imports of Russian oil, reaching approximately 23% of its total oil imports by the end of 2022. This growing reliance has provoked criticism from the USA, yet it reflects India's pragmatic approach to securing affordable energy supplies. At the same time, this material dependency strengthens India's incentive to maintain stable relations with Russia despite international pressure.

Public opinion in India also reflects this dual positioning. A large percentage of the population believes that the war in Ukraine should not be a matter of interest for them, while they are also divided regarding the responsibility for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. A relatively high share of Indian voters supports that responsible for the war is the West, while a smaller part considers Russia primarily responsible.

In sum, India's domestic politics are characterized by divided interests and conflicting ideational expectations. While export-oriented sectors and parts of the political elite benefit from strong ties with the West and the Liberal International Order, other economic sectors favor autonomy, protectionism, and closer relations with the Political South. India's position on the war in Ukraine,

[178] World Trade Organization, "India – Tariff and Trade Profile", https://ttd.wto.org/en/profiles/india

[179] U.S. Department of State, "The Quad," https://www.state.gov/the-quad/

therefore, does not represent a clear alignment with either the Political West or an alternative world order, but rather a strategy of balancing shaped by domestic political economy, energy and security considerations, and regional competition with China.

CHINA

China has played a leading role in the creation of the SWO (Southern World Order) and at the same time, has strongly integrated into the LIO (Liberal International Order). Beijing therefore follows a dual approach marked by strategic ambivalence, which can be linked to domestic societal foundations even though China is not a democracy. The government appears responsive to domestic demands so far as economic performance and development are treated as conditions for social stability and, ultimately, the survival of the regime. At the same time, domestic interest groups also matter, since export-oriented sectors and actors linked to international capital markets can discourage policies that would substantially damage economic performance. As the global "rival" of the US, China is simultaneously deeply entangled with it economically and has benefited for decades from export-led growth directed heavily toward Western markets.[180]

However, President Xi has also pursued a shift aimed at reducing dependency on Western markets and strengthening a more Southern-centered course. This strategy has had some success, since ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) has surpassed the EU as Beijing's most important trading partner. Yet the West in total still accounted for one-third of China's exports in 2020, meaning that a breakdown of the trade relationship with the West would still substantially harm the Chinese economy. For this reason, large export sectors and financial interests can be assumed to constrain an openly confrontational policy towards the West, even as China rhetorically challenges Western dominance.

At the same time, China has clearly documented ambitions to build an alternative Southern Order through projects and institutions such as the BRI, the AIIB and the SCO, aiming at independence from international organizations dominated by the West across political, economic, and security dimensions. Ideationally, national autonomy and the rejection of "universal values" are strongly emphasized, with narratives of colonial humiliation shaping broad societal predispositions. Regarding Russia's war against Ukraine, public attitudes appear strongly aligned with the government's orientation: three-quarters of the population agree with the PRC's support for Russia and deem this to be in China's national interest, and view Russia as either an "ally" or a "partner". For the Chinese government, Russia is attractive due to energy resources, but foremost because both states share an interest in undermining a rules-based order seen as tied to US dominance, while simultaneously using

[180] Taylor, Ian, and Zhang Xuecheng. "China as a 'Rising Power': Why the Status Quo Matters." *Third World Quarterly* 43 (2022): 244–258.

institutions of the LIO such as the UN Security Council in a double-track way (for example, emphasizing the UNSC's authority on sanctions).

Despite the ideational and political closeness to Russia, the PRC's policy remains bounded by material constraints. Beijing will not risk its economy by confronting Washington in order to give unwavering support to Moscow, but it will also not move away from Russia toward the West. In sum, domestic material interests in China are heterogeneous and split between the West and the South, while ideational predispositions appear more clearly oriented toward national autonomy and solidarity with the Political South than in Brazil or India. This combination helps explain why China can simultaneously support elements of an alternative order and remain substantially embedded within the LIO, maintaining a dual strategy rather than choosing one camp in absolute terms.

Summarizing, China abstained at the UN and underlined its friendship and close economic relations with Russia. Brazil on the other hand, condemned Russia's war at the UN but emphasized its strong economic relations with Moscow. India abstained at the UN and continued getting a large part of its weapons supplies as well as increasing its oil imports from Russia. South Africa abstained at the UN as well, criticized Western sanctions against Russia and staged naval exercises with Russia and China in February 2023. None of the BRICS countries supported Western sanctions against Russia and Western help for Ukraine.

The BRICS emerging powers, along with many developing countries, refused to implement sanctions against Russia and positioned themselves to differing degrees against Western ideas of world order. Many of these countries favor an alternative conception of world order based on multipolarity, national sovereignty and the rejection of a continued dominance of Western values and interests. Several countries straddle the camps (such as Turkey) and seek to obtain advantages from both sides and try to play them off against each other in a transactional approach to geopolitics. Many countries of the Political South are autocracies and reject Western demands to democratize their political systems. This, however, does not apply in all countries of the Political South. For instance, the large emerging powers Brazil and India, as well as some mid-sized emerging powers such as Mexico, can be considered democratic political systems.[181]

The Ukraine war thus highlights the limits of bloc-based interpretations of global politics and the continued link between domestic political economy and shaping foreign policy.

[181] Dhika Sanjaya et al., "The Rise of BRICS: Economic and Military Progress Toward Challenging Western Dominance," 2025.

# VI. Conclusions

The 21st century has seen a significant transformation of the global energy landscape after the creation and evolution of BRICS. The BRICS initiative is characterized, among others, as an energy cooperation marked by the rise of emerging economies, serving as major actors in shaping energy governance and geopolitical balance, in contrast to the West.[182] More specifically, Russia, as one of the world's largest producers of oil and natural gas, plays a central role in this initiative, especially after the war in Ukraine and the international sanctions imposed on it. Based on its large energy reserves and technical expertise, Russia features the ability to collaborate on an extensive level with the other BRICS members, laying the foundation for a collective strategy. The main targets are to strengthen energy security, promote economic stability, and advance technological innovation across the members. Except for traditional hydrocarbons, these collaborations include renewable sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower, reflecting a multidimensional energy cooperation.

BRICS highlights the importance of innovation and sharing the "know-how" through the establishment of platforms such as the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform and joint research initiatives in many domains like sustainable extraction, advanced drilling, and renewable technologies. The Rio Summit 2025 added the BRICS Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025–2030 to this institutional toolbox. Through these mechanisms, BRICS aims to coordinate energy production and trade, but also to build an independent and resilient framework for managing effectively the energy transition. From a strategic aspect, this cooperation aligns with the common aspiration of its members to create a multipolar world order, reducing high-level dependence and reliance on Western markets, and reconstructing the institutional architecture of global energy governance.

This initiative marked a critical turning point with the 2024 enlargement of BRICS - welcoming Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt – and the 2025 accession of Indonesia as the bloc's first Southeast Asian member. With this expansion, the Middle East, Africa, and the Horn of Africa, regions pivotal to hydrocarbon supply, renewable energy potential, critical minerals and maritime trade routes, are connected through membership. This geographic and strategic diversification strengthens the group's ability to influence both traditional and emerging energy markets, while reinforcing its long-term goal to establish a multipolar, South–South energy order in action.

The case of Saudi Arabia, which was invited but has not formally acceded by 2025–2026, illustrates that BRICS' attractiveness is not unconditional: states deeply embedded in U.S. security and dollar-financial structures may opt to engage as observers rather than members.

Despite the differences in their economic structures, the new BRICS members share the common goal of leveraging the organization as a platform for energy diplomacy, combining access to the New

[182] Andreas Goldthau, "The Governance of Energy," *Global Policy* 3, no. 1 (2012): 10–18.

Development Bank (NDB), technology exchange, and infrastructure investment with geopolitical diversification. Furthermore, except for economic cooperation, the 2024–2025 enlargement reflects a steady and methodical strategy to integrate regional alliances capable of balancing Western dominance, particularly after the sanctions imposed on Russia. More specifically, by incorporating energy-rich and strategically located states such as the UAE, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, BRICS expands its capacity to shape global energy security, transition, and governance across regions.

The group's official statements have underlined the aforementioned direction. First of all, the 2024 Joint Statement of BRICS Foreign Ministers called for "strengthening energy value chains" and ensuring "global energy security and market stability" while promoting technological neutrality and equitable access to energy.[183] Similarly, in the Rio Declaration of 2025, BRICS leaders reaffirmed their commitment to "fair, balanced, and inclusive energy transitions".[184] It should also be noted that the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov emphasized clearly and directly that BRICS must develop autonomous financial mechanisms that will be resilient to Western sanctions and reduce dependence on U.S.-dominated payment systems.[185] Complementing this stance, NDB President Dilma Rousseff stated that the Bank's mission is to strengthen financial sovereignty and provide alternative sources to finance the Global South.[186]

These declarations and goals of the BRICS are strengthened by some recent institutional measures. The establishment of a BRICS Guarantee Fund, the operationalization of partner-country status (1 January 2025) and the admission of new NDB members reinforce this pursuit of autonomous regional development and diversified investment. The September 2025 Power of Siberia 2 deal between Russia and China — signed at the trilateral Russia-Mongolia-China summit in Beijing — represents the single most consequential intra-BRICS energy infrastructure development of the year and potentially redirects up to 50 bcm/year of Russian gas eastward over the next 30 years.[187] In this way, the BRICS expansion embodies both an energy and a geopolitical project. A coordinated effort to forge South–South alliances reduce exposure to Western leverage and redefines the norms of global economic governance.

The enlarged BRICS now unites major producers, resource holders, and consumers, fundamentally reshaping the global distribution of energy resources. More specifically, the expanded block features a total of 72% of global rare earth elements, 75% of manganese, 50% of graphite, 28% of nickel, and 19% of copper, minerals essential to renewable energy technologies and advanced manufacturing.[188]

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[183] Pádraig Carmody, "BRICS' Enlargement," 2024.

[184] BRICS Summit Declaration, "Rio Declaration," 2025.

[185] Sergey Lavrov, "Remarks Following the BRICS Summit," 2025.

[186] Dilma Rousseff, "Speech at the NDB Annual Meeting," 2025.

[187] Reuters, "Russia and China Bless Vast New Power of Siberia 2 Pipeline, Gazprom Says," September 2, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russia-china-bless-vast-new-power-siberia-2-pipeline-gazprom-says-2025-09-02/

[188] Critical Minerals and the Global Energy Transition," *Global Energy Law and Sustainability* (2023), https://doi.org/10.3366/gels.2023.0096

It also brings together three of the world's largest oil exporters—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran—accounting for 42 % of global oil supply, along with two of the world's largest energy importers, China and India. With Indonesia's accession in 2025, the bloc's nickel share rises substantially, given that Indonesia alone produces over half of global mined nickel. BRICS now also brings together major oil exporters — UAE and Iran (as members), with Saudi Arabia engaged as observer — accounting for a significant share of global oil supply, along with two of the world's largest energy importers, China and India. This configuration situates BRICS as a comprehensive energy coalition including producers, consumers, and transit states, with both hydrocarbon and renewable capacities.

The bloc's existing strengths are impaired by the fact that each new member contributes distinct advantages. Summarizing the reanalyzed data, Ethiopia represents the renewable and developmental dimension through major hydropower and geothermal projects, notably the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and aims to export electricity across East Africa with support from China and India. Egypt, strategically located at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, positions itself as an energy hub, expanding LNG, renewables, and interconnection networks while deepening cooperation with the NDB. Iran, being rich in oil, gas, and minerals, seeks to diversify export markets and bypass the US sanctions by reinforcing trade and energy ties with Russia, China, and India, thus advancing BRICS' potential as an alternative to Western-led financial institutions. The UAE, leveraging financial power and technological innovation through entities such as Masdar and Mubadala, reinforces renewable energy collaboration and promotes de-dollarized trade within the Global South. Finally, Indonesia brings ASEAN connectivity, a critical-minerals (especially nickel) industrial base, and President Prabowo's stated ambition for 100% renewable energy within a decade.

The inclusion of African and Middle Eastern states enhances BRICS' representational scope and global influence, from both geopolitical and economic perspectives. Africa's participation, in particular, grants the continent a stronger voice in multilateral decision-making, while its vast resource base attracts investment from Asian and Persian energy powers. The integration of these new members also transforms the financial and trading architecture of BRICS energy cooperation. By uniting key exporters and importers that have refrained from joining Western sanctions regimes, the bloc seeks to establish mechanisms for energy trade independent of the G7 financial system. Efforts to conduct transactions in local currencies rather than the U.S. dollar—exemplified by the India–UAE trade agreement—signal a coordinated move toward de-dollarization and the creation of alternative financial pathways. The October 2024 launch of BRICS Pay (a decentralised payment messaging system facilitating local-currency transactions) and the July 2025 finance-ministers declarations on IMF reform mark concrete institutional progress in this direction.[189] Despite the fact that dollar-denominated trade remains dominant, because of its liquidity and convertibility advantages, the

[189] BRICS, "Kazan Declaration," 16th BRICS Summit, October 2024,

expanded BRICS possesses both the political will and the resource base to challenge this status quo and gradually operationalize a parallel, sanctions-resistant trading framework.

Furthermore, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) will continue to play a central role in oil market management, and the expanded BRICS could increasingly influence pricing, investment, and trade flows. This could be succeeded by aligning producer and consumer interests outside the traditional Western-dominated financial sphere. This evolution reflects a broader systemic shift and, more specifically, the determination of emerging economies to reclaim sovereignty over their development pathways and to design cooperative models that balance resource security, environmental sustainability, and geopolitical autonomy.

To conclude, the cooperation between the original BRICS members and the 2024 enlargement signifies the group's evolution from a partnership of emerging markets into a global platform for energy diplomacy and governance. At this point, BRICS possesses the strategic depth and capabilities to shape global energy transitions and financial norms, since they consist of hydrocarbon producers, mineral-rich economies, and renewable energy innovators. This evolution reflects thus the growth of a multipolar, efficient, and sustainable energy system built on South–South cooperation, technological transfer, and a collective responsibility to stability and sovereignty.

Looking ahead to 2026, India’s BRICS chairmanship will test whether the bloc can convert its rhetorical achievements (Rio Declaration, Climate Finance Framework, AI Statement) into concrete project pipelines. The structural tensions identified in this thesis — between hydrocarbon producers and renewable-leadership rhetoric, between Chinese centrality and other members’ autonomy, between de-dollarization ambitions and dollar-denominated reality — will define the limits of BRICS’ transformation into an integrated governance actor.

As BRICS continues to expand economically and geopolitically, its actions will play a significant role in redefining and reconstructing the architecture of global energy governance and the distribution of power in the 21st century.

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