

Understanding the BRICS framing of climate change: The role of collective identity formation

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Abstract

This article explores how the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) frame the issue of climate change. Based on constructivist insights, the article argues that the formation of collective identity has fundamentally shaped the BRICS framing of climate change. On the one hand, BRICS' connections to the developing world explain why BRICS has given voice to the arguments of developing countries with respect to climate change. On the other hand, BRICS' policy concepts, ideas, and discourse reflect the attributes associated with the identity of emerging powers. This article argues that emerging power status encourages the BRICS states to portray themselves as responsible actors on the global scale and conceptualize a climate-sensitive economic development model in contrast to the Western production paradigm that is regarded as unsympathetic towards the needs of developing nations. In this process, the perception of the developed world as the relational other supports the sense of we-ness among the BRICS states, thereby shaping their policy formulations with respect to climate change.

Keywords

BRICS, climate change, collective identity, emerging powers, developing world

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In 2001, Jim O’Neill coined the term “BRIC”—Brazil, Russia, India, and China—to highlight the investment potential of these countries.¹ Unlike other ideas encapsulated by catchy acronyms, the BRIC was able to transform itself from a mere concept into a club with annual leaders’ summits, ministerial meetings, and joint statements. Following the formal invitation in 2010, South Africa’s admission as the fifth member extended the acronym to “BRICS,” and the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014, “with the purpose of mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging and developing economies,” accelerated its institutionalization process.² Although economic development constitutes the main item of the BRICS partnership, the issues of environment and climate change have been on the BRICS agenda since its formal inception in 2009, and the environment ministers of the five BRICS countries have met and released joint statements since 2015.

The BRICS states’ involvement appeared as the key to success in global climate change actions. Yet, several studies in the literature point out the varying commitments rooted in their statuses within the climate change regime and their differing economic structures and emissions profiles as the dynamics limiting the BRICS in formulating a common vision and position in international climate negotiations.³ However, the BRICS states developed a cooperation agenda for climate change reflecting their shared desire to conceptualize international climate governance, which harmonizes economic growth with sustainable development models.⁴ The cooperation and institutionalization efforts within the BRICS platform hinted at a way for acquiring a position in the international scene.⁵

While the trust deficit between BRICS and the developed countries has explained why the BRICS states refrained from taking bolder actions in reducing greenhouse gas

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1. Jim O’Neill, “Building better global economic BRICs,” Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper no. 66, 30 November 2001.
 2. “Sixth BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration,” Fortaleza, 15 July 2014, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/140715-leaders.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).
 3. Augusto L. Rinaldi and Patricia N. Martuscelli, “The BRICS on climate change global governance,” *Meridiano* 47, no. 17 (2016): 1–10; Axel Michaelowa and Katharina Michaelowa, “BRICS in the international climate negotiations,” in Soo Yeon Kim, ed., *The Political Economy of the BRICS Countries: Volume 2: BRICS and the Global Economy* (World Scientific, 2020), 289–305; Deborah Davenport, “BRICs in the global climate regime: Rapidly industrializing countries and international climate negotiations,” in Ian Bailey and Hugh Compston, eds., *Feeling the Heat* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 38–56.
 4. Xu Xiujun, “The BRICS countries and international cooperation on climate change,” in Xu Xiujun, ed., *The BRICS Studies* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 196–214.
 5. Marco António Baptista Martins, “The BRICS commitment on climate change: Process towards an effective approach in the path of sustainable development,” in Tiago Sequeira and Liliana Reis, eds., *Climate Change and Global Development* (Cham, CH: Springer, 2019), 175–187; Christian Downie and Marc Williams, “After the Paris Agreement: What role for the BRICS in global climate governance?” *Global Policy* 9, no. 3 (2018): 398–407.

(GHG) emissions,⁶ the differences between the BRICS states and other developing states in terms of their capacities became the fundamental reasons for misalignment among them in the field of climate change.⁷ Accordingly, Christian Brüttsch and Mihaela Papa place the BRICS partnership somewhere between the developing countries and the developed states, but regard BRICS as an aspirational rather than practical grouping in discussing their cooperation on climate change.⁸ Still, the development and climate change policies of BRICS demonstrate a level of interest in sustainable growth and infrastructure investment in the developing world, especially in Africa.⁹

The BRICS platform has considered itself as an actor “conductive [...] to serving common interests of emerging market economies and developing countries.”¹⁰ So, it has recognized the need for combining “measures to protect the climate with steps to fulfill [their] socio-economic development tasks”¹¹ and advocated for the arguments associated with the developing nations, such as financial support and technology transfer.¹² These statements confirm the growing BRICS’ commitments and their overlapping developmental-multipolar discursive frame.¹³ Therefore, the study of Kathryn Hochstetler and Manjana Milkoreit—which explores the influence of a joint identity as emerging powers to analyze the relevance of the BASIC grouping¹⁴ and reveals their unique rights, obligations, and commitments—can be expanded to the BRICS states, as such an analysis speaks beyond international climate negotiations.¹⁵

Thus, the following questions are open to investigation: Why did the BRICS states further improve their partnership and coordination in the sphere of climate change? Why did the BRICS cooperation display similarities with the arguments of the

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6. Rafael Leal-Arcas, “The BRICS and climate change,” *International Affairs Forum* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1–5.
 7. Ramesh Thakur, “How representative are BRICS?” *Third World Quarterly* 35, no. 10 (2014): 1791–1808.
 8. Christian Brüttsch and Mihaela Papa, “Deconstructing the BRICS: Bargaining coalition, imagined community, or geopolitical fad?” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 6, no. 3 (2013): 299–327.
 9. Oliver C. Ruppel and Katharina Ruppel-Schlichting, “The BRICS partnership: Development and climate change policy from an African perspective,” in Oliver C. Ruppel, Christian Roschmann, and Katharina Ruppel-Schlichting, eds., *Climate Change: International Law and Global Governance* (Baden-Baden, DE: Nomos, 2013), 549–569.
 10. “Joint Statement of the BRIC countries’ leaders,” Yekaterinburg, 16 June 2009, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/090616-leaders.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. “XIII BRICS Summit: New Delhi Declaration,” New Delhi, 9 September 2021, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/210909-New-Delhi-Declaration.html> (accessed 29 May 2022).
 13. Marina Larionova and Andrey Shelepov, “Is BRICS institutionalization enhancing its effectiveness?” in Marek Rewizorski, ed., *The European Union and the BRICS* (Springer, 2015), 39–55; Fabiano Mielniczuk, “BRICS in the contemporary world: Changing identities, converging interests,” *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 6 (2013): 1075–1090.
 14. A bloc comprising Brazil, China, India, and South Africa to cooperate on the United Nations climate negotiations.
 15. Kathryn Hochstetler and Manjana Milkoreit, “Emerging powers in the climate negotiations: Shifting identity conceptions,” *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2014): 224–235.

developing world as well as self-reflecting angles? Guided by a constructivist approach, the argument of this study is that two aspects of the BRICS collective identity frame their understanding of climate change. For the first part, their long-lasting bonds with the larger group of developing countries constitute an important component of their collective identity and motivate them to represent the developing world's arguments. Equally, their shared identity as emerging powers influences their policy concepts, ideas, and discourse in the direction of acting responsibly and drawing a model responding to the needs of the broader developing world. At this juncture, developed countries remain as the relational Other of these two identity constructs.

This article does not argue that the BRICS states act as a coherent bloc in international politics. In the case of BRICS, geopolitical disagreements exist and tensions also occasionally surface. However, it is not unique to BRICS that members of an international organization present dissimilar characteristics. According to Alexander Wendt, states may hold multiple social identity constructs simultaneously.¹⁶ These constructs vary from geographic locations to regime types or even nuclear possessions. Despite their differences, the BRICS platform promises its members a flexible and all-encompassing cooperation structure in pursuing their shared vision for promoting multipolarity in international affairs and forging a non-Western identity. As unilateral actions would not ensure progress in priority areas such as climate change and sustainable development, the significance of the BRICS states stems from the weight of their collective voice.

Of importance to note, this article does not argue that BRICS is a negotiation bloc in international climate change talks. We do not assess whether or not those international negotiations have produced any successful outcome. Rather, the purpose of this article is to discover BRICS' framing and understanding of climate change by applying the methodological principles of theory testing process tracing. To do that, the article relies on the official documents of the BRICS platform and high-ranking policymakers' statements, as those releases and political speeches are the means to measure collective identity and capture the shared ideas among the club.¹⁷ Still, revealing discursive and ideational positions of the BRICS states does not prevent one from exploring joint actions, such as the outcomes of the NDB, as reflections of the BRICS collective identity.

The article, first, develops its theoretical framework. It then sets the ideational bases of the BRICS states in understanding the topic of climate change before the initiation of their multilateral partnership. Then, taking 2009 as a critical juncture, the article intends to address how the collective identity as emerging powers shaped BRICS' policy and discourse on climate change after the establishment of the grouping. Lastly, the concluding section discusses the implications of the findings.

16. Alexander Wendt, "Collective identity formation and the international state," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 385.

17. Bentley B. Allan, "Recovering discourses of national identity," in Ted Hopf and Bentley Allan, eds., *Making Identity Count: Building a National Identity Database* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21–35.

Theoretical framework: Explaining the BRICS' climate change policy

According to constructivists, the international system is a social construction defined by intersubjectively shared ideas, values, and beliefs of actors. Once ideas and beliefs are held collectively, they give meaning to the material world and become part of the overall political structure by constituting its ideational dimension.¹⁸ While ideational structure constructs actors' identities and frames the way they define themselves, the ideas that underlie identity contain the Self and the Other.¹⁹ Defining the Self in the form of *We* rather than *I* in relation to the Other represents the social aspect of actors' identities. Identity takes form on the basis of the linkage between past and present social relations. Therefore, social identity enables actors to attribute sets of meaning to themselves and to think and act as collectives with the contributions of their past experiences in relation to other actors.²⁰ The histories of the five BRICS states present antagonism and contestation against Western supremacy in international politics by their "communist, non-aligned, or almost non-aligned" characters.²¹ At this point, a sense of *we*-group and the exclusion of the Other reify their social identity. According to Kristen Hopewell, the members of BRICS forged "a strong collective identity [...] in relation to the established powers,"²² which is the contextual Other of these countries.

Actors also affiliate themselves with the specific "names, ideal types, groups, statuses, and social categories."²³ By extension, self-placement in the international context shapes the way actors engage in global governance. For the BRICS states, their historical ties with the developing world explain why these five states take a stance that is closer to that of developing nations. These dynamics provide greater legitimacy for the club in the eyes of the Global South. Still, BRICS identifies itself with the concept of emerging powers, as they demonstrate active and persuasive participation in global governance along with the increase in their material capabilities.²⁴

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18. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 190; Wendt, "Collective identity formation and the international state," 389.
 19. Wendt, "Collective identity formation and the international state," 385.
 20. Klaus Eder, "A theory of collective identity making sense of the debate on a 'European identity,'" *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 4 (2009): 428; Seçkin Köstem, "Different paths to regional hegemony: National identity contestation and foreign economic strategy in Russia and Turkey," *Review of International Political Economy* 25, no. 5 (2018): 730.
 21. Theodor Tudoroiu, "Conceptualizing BRICS: OPEC as a mirror," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (2012): 34.
 22. Kristen Hopewell, *Breaking the WTO: How Emerging Powers Disrupted the Neoliberal Project* (Stanford University Press, 2016), 380.
 23. Colin H. Kahl, "Constructing a separate peace: Constructivism, collective liberal identity, and democratic peace," *Security Studies* 8, no. 2-3 (1998): 104.
 24. Michal Parizek and Matthew D. Stephen, "The representation of BRICS in global economic governance: Reform and fragmentation of multilateral institutions," in Soo Yeon Kim, ed., *The Political Economy of the BRICS Countries Volume 2: BRICS and the Global Economy* (World Scientific Publishing, 2017).

As argued by Wendt, an actor's sense of belonging to a specific group manifests itself in the form of concerns about the welfare of the other actors sharing the same social identity. In the face of a situation disrupting actors' ability to sustain their fitness and welfare, the perception of a common fate would emerge and actors would aim to address these challenges as a group. This level of connection with the broader community indicates the emergence of a collective identity among members.²⁵

In this context, the BRICS states favoured an approach to enhance the welfare of their partners in the developing world as well as among each other. Cultivating their collective identity, which is affiliated with the status of emerging powers and their close ties with the developing world, this ideational aspect encouraged the BRICS states to take an interest in sustainable methods of production without abandoning their developmental ambitions. At the same time, the BRICS collective identity has allowed the BRICS countries to respond to the challenges of climate change threatening socioeconomic development in both their countries and other developing nations.

The increasing interaction and institutionalization process has forged a growing cohesion within the BRICS club, which has further consolidated the formation of a collective identity. These processes also reveal their collective interest in enhancing the welfare of the partner states' citizens and the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of BRICS and the developing nations. This disclosure offers evidence that collective identity influences states' collective actions and provides the basis for their joint policies.²⁶ For example, the investment in, and deployment of, renewable and clean energy and energy-efficient technologies are considered means of upgrading the living standards of citizens of the BRICS states. Kundapur V. Kamath, the first president of the NDB (2015–2020), defined the efforts within the framework of the NDB as evidence of the partner states' commitment to building a better and sustainable future for the citizens rather than a symbolic gesture.²⁷

Thus, identity as an analytical concept does not overlook states' actions. As a result, the article takes the practical outcomes into account through the BRICS states' emissions reductions and their installed renewable electricity capacities between 2010 and 2020. Additionally, a brief examination of the NDB is significant as it is an articulation of the BRICS collective identity.

25. Wendt, "Collective identity formation and the international state," 386; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 349.

26. Kahl, "Constructing a separate peace," 107; Bernd Bucher and Ursula Jasper, "Revisiting 'identity' in international relations: From identity as substance to identifications in action," *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 2 (2017): 392.

27. Kundapur V. Kamath, "Opening address by President K. V. Kamath at the third annual meeting of the New Development Bank," Shanghai, 28 May 2018, https://www.ndb.int/president_desk/opening-address-president-k-v-kamath-third-annual-meeting-new-development-bank-shanghai-china/ (accessed 28 September 2021).

The socially constructed nature of states also reflects a process where their representations are built through linguistic elements. Hence, the discursive presentation of an actor and its actions complement each other.²⁸ Having been constructed through texts, discourse enables and justifies certain activities, and gives meaning to states' actions. Its analysis reveals the dynamics between words and identity and actors' positions in relation to other states.²⁹ By incorporating official and secondary source documents, the article adopts an interpretivist perspective to examine BRICS' understanding of climate change, and traces the process of how the evolution and progress in their identity conceptions have produced an ideational structure and policy formulations in common.

Policy concepts before the establishment of the BRICS platform

For the developing world, the unequal distribution in material capabilities is rooted in the North-South dichotomy and limits countries' abilities to deal with climate change. Based on the interpretation of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), the Global South has emphasized the primary responsibility of northern industrialized economies in addressing climate change. Rejecting any externally dictated emissions reduction objectives, the developing world has considered financial and technological assistance of the developed states as an instrument to ensure social and economic development while scaling down GHG emissions.

By taking an active part in international debates on climate change, Brazil, India, China, and South Africa sought to give voice to the above-mentioned arguments of the developing states. Consequently, they endeavoured to earn a reputation as responsible stakeholders from the Global South. Although Russia did not air the arguments of the developing world at first, it sought to present itself as a constructive partner to gain international acceptance in the post-Cold War era.

While these states strove to portray themselves as responsible actors, South Africa in particular worked to negate the legacies left by the decades-long apartheid system. As its struggle against discrimination helped it to acquire the moral lead, South Africa intended to function as a *bridge-builder* between industrialized and developing countries.³⁰

28. Felix Berenskoetter, "Identity in international relations," in Robert A. Denemark and Renée Marlin-Bennett, eds., *The International Studies Encyclopedia* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-218> (accessed 4 November 2021).

29. "Language in qualitative research," chapter 22 in Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 521–541; Charlotte Epstein, "Who speaks? Discourse, the subject and the study of identity in international politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 2 (2011): 341.

30. Aaron Atteridge, "Multiple identities: Behind South Africa's approach to climate diplomacy," Policy Brief, Stockholm Environment Institute, 2011.

The early sign of acknowledgement of “unique roles” that can be played by “big developing powers such as Brazil, China and India in negotiations on the reduction of greenhouse emissions” was articulated by Brazil’s president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2007).³¹ The underlying reason why these states may have an exceptional status was similar to that of South Africa. Whereas Brazil intended to play the role of a *balancer* between the interests of the Global North and South, India took on a more dynamic, constructive, and central role to gain status as a *dealmaker* between the proponents from both hemispheres.³²

Likewise, Russia sent a meaningful signal to the international community as it emerged as the saviour of the Kyoto Protocol upon ratifying it in 2004.³³ On the one hand, appeals for establishing Russia’s identity as a major power open to cooperation and a responsible partner in the world community were some of the drivers of its action.³⁴ On the other hand, by closing the gap in reaching the least cumulative emissions share for the entry into force of the Protocol, Russia found an opportunity to improve its status from a country searching for international recognition to one whose contribution and cooperation were vital for global climate governance.

Before the establishment of the BRICS group, the notions of articulating the concerns of the developing world and appearing as key actors in forging international deals were the echoes of the BRICS countries’ social identity. Yet, the group identity would still rest on social and relational comparisons. Differentiating in-group attributes with reference to other collective identity entities would serve this process.

The report produced by the Centre for Science and Environment just before the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 put forward the argument that the Global South was the subject of environmental colonialism imposed by the Global North. The report differentiated the luxury emissions of the rich from the survival emissions of the poor for the first time.³⁵ This idea is the intellectual product of India, which encouraged Brazil, China, and South Africa to counter the actions of their Other.

31. “Brazilian president slams U.S. rejection of Kyoto Protocol,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 5 July 2001, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=xnews00020010912dx75001os&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).

32. Jeremy Kahn, “India cleans up its act: Manmohan Singh’s new stand on Copenhagen is just part of a plan to reposition India as a global power,” *Newsweek International*, 16 November 2009, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=NEWI000020091112e5bg0000e&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).

33. “Interview to the New York Times,” *The New York Times*, 4 October 2003, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22145> (accessed 29 June 2021).

34. Laura A. Henry and Lisa M. Sundstrom, “Russia’s climate policy: International bargaining and domestic modernisation,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 7 (2012): 1297–1322.

35. Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain, “Global warming in an unequal world: A case of environmental colonialism,” (first published 1991), in Navroz Dubash, ed., *Handbook of Climate Change and India* (New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 2011).

In this context, whereas South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki (1999–2008) protested this division and defined it as “islands of wealth surrounded by a sea of poverty,”³⁶ China was aware that “the new imperialist global order” resulted in “the plunder of local natural resources” from the developing nations.³⁷ Therefore, China's foreign minister Yang Jiechi (2007–2013) stressed the “increasing pressure of transfer emission” which revealed the pattern of exporting pollution-intensive industries to the developing world for satisfying the consumer demand in Western countries.³⁸ Equally, Brazil's foreign minister Celso Lafer (2001–2002) argued that developed countries needed to alter their “predatory production and consumption” methods rather than demand emissions reduction targets from developing countries.³⁹ These statements indicate that the issue of climate change was contextualized by counting on the social dimensions of economic production and relations. Defining developed countries as actors whose economic activities harmed the environment exposes the Other conceptualization of developing states.

Accordingly, a new mode of developmentalism which recognizes the environmental concerns started to take place on the basis of the perception of *we-ness*. This overlapping ideational outlook generated similar discursive stances among the future BRICS partners based on the collective identity of being part of the developing world by comparing the out-group's economic activities. For example, the announcement of Brazil's president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2011) demonstrates the tendency “for a new development paradigm that will meet the environmental and social challenges of the coming decades.”⁴⁰ For India's prime minister Manmohan Singh (2004–2014), the future models for development needed to embrace environmental obligations, and leave the Western-style development path and consumerist societal habits.⁴¹ Additionally, Russia's president Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012) considered “quality of the

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36. Joseph B. Verrengia, “World Summit opens with demands for serious action on poverty, the environment,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 26 August 2002, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=aprs000020020826dy8q00qe5&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).
37. Samir Amin, “From Bandung (1955) to 2015: Old and new challenges for the states, the nations and the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America,” *Interventions* 5, no. 4 (2017), 612–613.
38. “China tells developed world to go on climate change ‘diet,’” *Agence France Presse*, 12 March 2008, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=AFPR000020080312e43c002jp&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).
39. “Brazil asks rich nations for more aid, clean energies,” *Dow Jones International News*, 24 June 2002, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=dji0000020020623dy6n000jx&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).
40. “Comment & debate: Join Brazil in planting oil: Only radical solutions will overcome the energy and environmental crises while promoting equality,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2006, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GRDN000020060307e2370000j&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).
41. “Western styles of living cannot be copied blindly in India says Mammohan Singh,” *Hindustan Times*, 10 November 2005, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=HNTM000020051110e1ba001h0&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).

environment [as] one of the key factors in the competitiveness of the country.”⁴² These texts elucidate the discourse that emerging powers acknowledged the social and economic value of environmental protection whilst expressing their self-confidence by questioning the social and environmental acceptability of the prevailing Western development model and consumerism in achieving the wellbeing of the broader developing world.

Although the above quotation by President Medvedev does not confirm that Russia directly adopted the rhetoric pursuing a new development paradigm different from the old Western way, it still shows that Russia recognized the complementary relationship between proper climatic conditions and economic development. Delineating a profile of a constructive and responsible partner in climate change, Medvedev acknowledged the notion of responsibility-sharing and the “differentiated approach to the formation of obligations of developed and developing states.”⁴³ This conceptual reformulation indicates a level of tolerance for the arguments delivered by the developing world, which underline the limits of their material capabilities to assume obligations. This ideational orientation and its identity perception of being an internationally efficient actor brought a flexible understanding for Russia to assess new potential partnerships at the international level. The essential condition for building new relations was that advanced developing states would have adopted a policy close to Russia’s invitation to both developed and developing countries to contribute to global emissions reduction efforts.

2009 as the critical juncture for joint BRICS climate change framing

This article marks the year 2009 as a critical juncture because significant events such as the immediate effect of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the First BRIC Leaders Summit, and the Fifteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP)—the decision-making body of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change—took place in that year. Although the future BRICS partners had determined their policies in accordance with their attachments to larger coalitions, the GFC paved the way for re-exploring their status in international affairs. This trend not only motivated emerging powers to play a greater role in international governance,⁴⁴ it also compelled them to take new responsibilities and change their long-established policy concepts.

42. “Russia’s present, prospective leaders urge better action to protect environment,” *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 30 January 2008, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=BBCSUP0020080130e41u000ji&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).

43. “Climate problems should stimulate economy competitiveness-Medvedev,” *ITAR-TASS World Service*, 17 December 2009, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=TASS000020091217e5Sch0002t&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).

44. Matthew D. Stephen, “Emerging powers and emerging trends in global governance,” *Global Governance* 23, no. 3 (2017): 483–502.

In the 2009 Joint Statement, the BRIC leaders stated that they would disregard any unilateral pressures from developed states, but underlined their readiness “for constructive dialogue on how to deal with climate change based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, given the need to combine measures to protect the climate with steps to fulfill our socio-economic development tasks.”⁴⁵ These remarks demonstrate that although the BRIC countries confirmed their stance against the demands of developed countries in compliance with developing countries’ perspectives, emerging powers cooperating under the BRIC platform declared their separate readiness for taking actions prior to making non-binding commitments 6 months before the COP-15. Therefore, their manoeuvre in 2009 supported their prestige on global climate governance and brought other participants of the BRIC cooperation closer to Russia’s expectations.

Following the GFC, one of the first prominent international events would be the COP-15 in Copenhagen. Beyond the discussion on its outcomes, the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference is important for this article because it opened up a new era as the policy change among BRICS became more visible in its aftermath. President da Silva emphasized Brazil’s aspiration to reach an agreement to protect the future of planet Earth.⁴⁶ Similarly, Prime Minister Singh remarked that “[i]t’s a matter of life or death for the population of the globe. Our view is we are dealing with an issue that threatens the very survival of humanity.”⁴⁷ China’s vice-minister of state environmental protection administration, Wu Xiaoqing (2005–2016), also underlined that all countries of the world shared the burden to take action against environmental degradation.⁴⁸ These BRICS leaders’ statements show that the discourse of a *Common Future* was incorporated into emerging powers’ language and that they advocated that developing countries may play a greater role in forging a global solution to climate change. Such a discursive enlargement also indicates the emerging collective identity among BRICS based on the perception of a common fate.

Moreover, Minister Yang assessed the COP-15 as “not a destination but a new beginning.”⁴⁹ Coming to Copenhagen, China announced its goals for emissions reductions as other emerging powers did. Likewise, India’s special envoy on climate change, Shri Shyam Saran, expressed that New Delhi had consulted with all other major

45. “Joint statement of the BRIC countries’ leaders.”

46. “Interview by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the Financial Times,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, 4 November 2009, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/content-centers/speeches-articles-and-interviews/president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil/interviews/entrevista-do-presidente-luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-ao-jornal-britanico-financial-times-londres-10-12-2009> (accessed 29 May 2022).

47. “Factbox: Quotes from Copenhagen climate talks,” *Reuters News*, 17 December 2009.

48. “Wu Xiaoqing meets with the Special Advisor to UN Secretary General,” Ministry of Ecology and Environment (The People’s Republic of China), 25 April 2007, https://english.mee.gov.cn/Ministers/Activities/200711/t20071106_112629.shtml (accessed 29 June 2021).

49. Gillian Wong, “China praises Copenhagen’s International Climate Talks’ outcome as ‘significant and positive,’” *The Canadian Press*, 20 December 2009, <https://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=APRS000020091220e5ck0023f&cat=a&ep=ASE> (accessed 30 May 2022).

developing countries and improved the level of within-group coordination in the multilateral negotiations; therefore emerging powers made identical promises about reducing their carbon footprints, which distinguished them from other developing nations.⁵⁰ The speech of South Africa's president Jacob Zuma (2009–2018) in Copenhagen also invited developing countries to determine “nationally appropriate mitigation action” to take their part in emissions reduction activities and fulfill their moral obligations to future generations.⁵¹ South Africa's perspective confirms that its position overlapped with the overall stances of the BRIC countries and it employed a similar discursive style before it became a member of the club. Altogether, while these moves corresponded to their social identity which describes their status and image as responsible powers acting at the global level, this new perspective also led to the reinterpretation of the principle of CBDR and revived common responsibilities, which invites the contribution of all states in proportion to their domestic capacities.

During the Copenhagen Conference, President Medvedev remarked that Russia's desire to project the image of a responsible and constructive partner inspired it to employ a discourse based on fairness and common responsibilities.⁵² In light of the expectation for fair contributions, the president's aide Arkady Dvorkovich announced that Russia would welcome the active involvement of the BRIC states in international efforts.⁵³ This announcement proves that Russia attached weight to the cooperation of other BRIC countries in fighting climate change and regarded the platform as an influential entity. Accordingly, emerging powers' newly surfacing ready-to-take-responsibility approach to global climate governance differentiated them from the rest of the developing world, reshaped Russia's perception of these states, and presented them as new potential partners for Moscow.

Consequently, the formation of a collective identity has shaped the way the BRICS countries have participated in global climate governance. Their collective identity formation framed under the title of emerging powers compelled the BRICS states to act responsibly in their efforts to tackle climate change. BRICS thereupon renounced the strict interpretation of the principle of CBDR that refers to the obligations imposed solely on developed countries due to their historical role in emissions. In this context, they presented similar policy outcomes through taking voluntary pledges for emissions reductions, which is the implementation of common responsibilities complementing the principle of CBDR.

50. “Media briefing by Special Envoy of Prime Minister on Climate Change, Shri Shyam Saran,” The Ministry of External Affairs, 24 September 2009, <https://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?5184/Media+Briefing+by+Special+Envoy+of+Prime+Minister+on+Climate+Change+Shri+Shyam+Saran> (accessed 29 June 2021).

51. Jacob Zuma, “Address by President Jacob Zuma at UN Climate Change Conference; Copenhagen,” The Presidency, 18 December 2009, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/address-president-jacob-zuma-un-climate-change-conference-copenhagen> (accessed 29 June 2021).

52. Dmitry Medvedev, “Speech at Climate Change Conference Plenary Session,” The Kremlin, 18 December 2009, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/48541> (accessed 29 June 2021).

53. “Medvedev to participate in Summit of World Leaders in Copenhagen,” *ITAR-TASS World Service*, 10 December 2009.

By extension, they expanded their discursive toolbox with the integration of the concept of the *Common Future* of the planet while enhancing their reputation and international prestige. This change opened up a new chapter for their cooperation and coordination.

The issue of climate change within the BRICS platform

Immediately after Copenhagen, the BRIC began to favour more inclusive negotiations.⁵⁴ The emphasis on inclusivity demonstrated that each BRIC country stood against the unilaterally determined policy formulations of developed states, and that they saw themselves as responsible actors increasing the voice of the developing world in global governance. This perspective indicates the connection of the BRICS states' social identity to the larger developing world.

To address the poor's victimhood in terms of environmental deterioration arising from the unsustainable and inequitable consumption of resources, the BRICS environment ministers revived the motto of *Leave No One Behind (LNOB)* during their second meeting in 2016. *LNOB* upholds that no party shall be left alone in its struggle with the disadvantageous consequences of the unfair exploitation of natural resources or in its endeavours to overcome climate change challenges and initiate climate-resilient development.⁵⁵ The adoption of the motto *LNOB* by BRICS expresses their interest in articulating the expectations and needs of the larger developing nations to the extent of their social identity.

However, the recent speeches of the representatives of Brazil, Russia, and China contend that all of humankind is equally responsible for combatting climate change.⁵⁶ As part of the process of an ideational transformation among the BRICS states, they gradually began to focus on common responsibilities and recognized that every single party needed to do its part in fighting climate change. In light of Wendt's equation "desire plus belief equals action," interest is providing the actor

54. "2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement," Brasilia, 15 April 2010, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/100415-leaders.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).

55. "Goa Statement on Environment: Second meeting of BRICS environment ministers," 16 September 2016, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/160916-environment.html> (accessed 29 June 2021); Edna Molewa, "Statement by Minister Molewa to high level segment of UNFCCC Climate Change Conference (COP23/CMP13/CMA1-2)," The Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries, 16 November 2017, https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa/cop23_highlevel_segment (accessed 29 June 2021).

56. Joaquim Leite, "'Vamos engajar o mundo rumo a uma economia verde,' afirma ministro do Meio Ambiente ['We are going to engage the world towards a green economy,' says Minister of the Environment]," Federal Government, 14 October 2021, <https://www.gov.br/mma/pt-br/noticias/201cvamos-engajar-o-mundo-rumo-a-uma-economia-verde201d-afirma-ministro-do-meio-ambiente> (accessed 22 May 2022); Vladimir Putin, "Leaders Summit on Climate," The Kremlin, 22 April 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/65425> (accessed 22 May 2022); Jinping Xi, "Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at Climate Ambition Summit," Xinhua, 16 December 2020, http://english.mee.gov.cn/News_service/media_news/202012/t20201216_813364.shtml (accessed 22 May 2022).

Table 1. Mitigation and adaptation efforts of BRICS.

Country	Targets for 2020 under the Copenhagen accord ⁵⁸	Country performances ⁵⁹	Installed renewable electricity capacity (2010–2020) ⁶⁰
Brazil	Reducing its projected emissions incl. LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry) by between 36.1% and 38.9% in 2020.	Reduced GHG emissions from 2.27 Gt in 2010 to 1.58 Gt in 2020 but exceeded 0.35 Gt to meet the target.	Increased by over 67.54% equal to 150.045.904 MW.
Russia	Limiting emissions by 15–25% below 1990 levels.	Decreased GHG emissions by 36.69% in 2020.	Increased by 16.96% equal to 56.216.933 MW.
India	Reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20–25% by 2020 in comparison to the 2005 level.	Reduced GHG emissions per GDP from 2.375 CO ₂ e/million \$ GDP to 1.172 CO ₂ e/million \$ GDP from 2005 to 2019.	Expanded by 157% equal to 134.454.725 MW.
China	Decreasing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 40–45% by 2020 compared to the 2005 level.	Decreased 3.034 kt CO ₂ e/million \$ GDP to 844 kt CO ₂ e/million \$ GDP from 2005 to 2019.	Expanded by 285% equal to 899.624.673 MW.
South Africa	Reducing emissions growth trajectory below Business As Usual by 34% in 2020.	Limited total GHG emission by 550 MtCO ₂ e, which stays in the range of the target of 414–599 MtCO ₂ e.	Jumped from 992.793 MW to 9.517.913 MW.

with motivational force, and identity gives direction to its motivation.⁵⁷ Therefore, the following table contributes to the argument that the BRICS states' identity of emerging powers motivates their interest in (desire for) pursuing their economic development in the direction of (belief in) a non-zero-sum understanding between developmental targets and environmental concerns to take action against climate change.

58. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Nama Map - Pre-2020 Action by Countries*, n.d., <https://unfccc.int/topics/mitigation/workstreams/nationally-appropriate-mitigation-actions/nama-map-pre-2020-action-by-countries> (accessed 25 May 2022).

57. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 231.

This article does not present a normative overview of countries' steps to reduce emissions. It contends that the targets under the Copenhagen Accord constitute the basis for climate change mitigation since it outlined how states should adjust their actions until 2020. Table 1 shows that the BRICS members, despite Brazil's slight deviation, acted responsibly to fulfill their voluntary pledges. Discourse creates a path for action but does not determine it completely.⁶¹ Still, the BRICS states' discourse of taking responsibility has produced meaningful action for emissions reduction efforts. In line with their discursive responsibility framing and the idea favouring the sustainable development paradigm, the BRICS states have also markedly increased their renewable electricity capacities.

Although the idea of designing an environment-friendly economy is not new, the GFC and blindness to environmental degradation over the years called attention to the need for sustainable development.⁶² Unlike industrialized countries, which had gained their prosperity by exploiting the environment, emerging powers and developing states comprehended the necessity to not repeat the mistakes of industrialized states, the relational Other of emerging powers.⁶³ In their Fifth Declaration, published in 2013, the BRICS partners also stated their joint commitment to explore "new models and approaches towards more equitable development and inclusive global growth."⁶⁴

In this direction, whereas South Africa's president Cyril Ramaphosa (2018–ongoing) and India's prime minister Narendra Modi (2014–ongoing) continued to highlight the importance of working towards sustainable development,⁶⁵ Brazil's president Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016) confirmed the urgency of embracing a new

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59. International Monetary Fund, *National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories and Implied National Mitigation (Nationally Determined Contributions) Targets*, 19 April 2022, <https://climatedata.imf.org/datasets/72e94bc71f4441d29710a9bea4d35fd/explore> (accessed 23 May 2022); Climate Watch, *Climate Watch Historical GHG Emissions 2022*, World Resources Institute, Washington, D.C., <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions> (accessed 22 May 2022).
60. IRENA, *Renewable Capacity Statistics 2022*, International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi, <https://public.tableau.com/views/IRENARETimeSeries/Charts?:embed=y&:showVizHome=no&publish=yes&:toolbar=no> (accessed 21 May 2022).
61. Kevin C. Dunn and Iver B. Neumann, *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 8.
62. Jeongwon Park, "The evolution of green growth policy: An unwelcome intrusion on global environmental governance?" *Journal of East Asian Economic Integration* 17, no. 2 (2013): 208.
63. "On the BRICS of collapse: Why emerging economies need a different development mode," Center for the Study of Governance Innovation, South Africa, 2014, 16.
64. "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for development, integration and industrialisation: eThekweni Declaration," Durban, 27 March 2013, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).
65. Cyril Ramaphosa, "Statement by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa during the opening session of the 13th BRICS Summit," The Presidency Republic of South Africa, 9 September 2021, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/statement-his-excellency-president-cyril-ramaphosa-during-opening-session-13th-brics-summit> (accessed 23 May 2022); Narendra Modi, "PM's speech at World Sustainable Development Summit," The Ministry of External Affairs, 10 February 2021, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-speech-at-world-sustainable-development-summit/?comment=disable&tag_term=pmspeech# (accessed 22 May 2022).

Table 2. The BRICS framing of climate change.

	Pre-BRICS formation period	Critical juncture	Post-BRICS formation period
Policy concepts	Gain reputation and prestige	Take on new responsibilities in fighting climate change	Replace environmentally insensitive Western development paradigm
Ideas	Support the established arguments of the developing world	Offer tangible contributions	Overcome the incompetence of existing international institutions
	Attain a unique position by bridging the geographic disconnections	Underline common responsibilities completing the principle of CBDR	Represent the common interests of emerging powers and developing countries
	Act as key and constructive actors on the global scale	Build the image of ready-to-take-responsibility	Recognize the need for every single party to do its part in fighting climate change
Discourse	Distinction between survival and luxury emissions	<i>Common Future of the planet</i>	<i>Leave No One Behind</i>
	Differentiated responsibilities under the principle of CBDR		
Policy outcome	Dialogue among like-minded emerging powers	Pledges for non-binding GHG emissions reduction	Shared responsibility for combatting climate change
			GHG emissions reduction efforts, investments in renewable energy, initiatives within the NDB

paradigm attached to a sustainable development agenda for the 21st century.⁶⁶ Also, Russia's president Vladimir Putin (2012–ongoing) stressed the importance of achieving a global development aligning green and sustainable practices with eradicating poverty and alleviating development gaps.⁶⁷ Likewise, China's foreign minister Wang Yi (2013–ongoing) noted that “the old way of ‘pollution first, treatment afterwards’” should be replaced by a contemporary approach combining economic growth, environmental protection, clean energy, and social issues for the common good of the international community and future generations.⁶⁸ At this point, the BRICS states conceptualized a model that would incorporate renewable and clean energy resources to build a new path to economic growth, find a balance between economic activities and the collective socio-economic welfare, and adopt the *Circular Economy* approach to ensure job creation.⁶⁹

These ideas reveal the collective identity of BRICS as emerging powers as the BRICS countries seized the initiative to promote a new development paradigm different from the conventional model. This paradigm would also contribute to their preparedness for overcoming the challenges to their socioeconomic and environmental wellbeing. Providing another link between the BRICS discourse favouring the sustainable development paradigm and the practical realm, large-scale investments in renewables contributed to the transition to the *Circular Economy* by producing positive externality in the labour market. The renewable energy sector in 2020 employed 1.202.224 million in Brazil, 73.104 thousand in Russia, 725.783 thousand in India, 4.731.574 million in China, and 53.990 thousand in South Africa.⁷⁰

Table 2 summarizes how the BRICS countries' social identity, which is a blend of their ties with the developing world and their collective status as emerging powers, has expressed itself in their framing of climate change.

However, we should also note that the calls of the BRICS group do not constitute an attempt to offer an ideological alternative to the prevailing neoliberal economic structure. The BRICS states even owe their rise in the international system to “neoliberalism with

66. Dilma Rousseff, “Speech by President Dilma Rousseff on the occasion of the opening of the General Debate of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” Federal Government, 07 October 2014, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/content-centers/speeches-articles-and-interviews/president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil/speeches/statement-by-h-e-dilma-rousseff-president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil-at-the-opening-of-the-general-debate-of-the-67th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly> (accessed 29 June 2021).
67. Vladimir Putin, “Leaders Summit on climate,” The Kremlin, 22 April 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/65425> (accessed 29 October 2021).
68. Wang Yi, “Sustainable development—The road to achieve Chinese dream and human progress,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 24 September 2013, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1081238.shtml (accessed 29 June 2021).
69. “Sixth BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration”; “10th BRICS Summit: Johannesburg Declaration,” Johannesburg, 26 July 2018, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180726-johannesburg.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).
70. IRENA, *Renewable Energy Employment by Country*, International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi, https://irena.sharepoint.com/:x:/s/statistics-public/ESRgZnXiwi5LvKwVQNCyTl8BUpFE73v1fd6u_yMvTS3MCw?e=T0dc2b (accessed 23 May 2022).

Southern characteristics.”⁷¹ One could, however, argue that a new set of multilateral and interstate relations had taken form, harvesting imperialist relations through the Bretton Woods institutions.⁷² Thus, some peripheral states found historic opportunities to become new actors producing surplus capital and search for new outlets in other peripheral markets. The BRICS states’ growing profits have highlighted discussions about neo-colonial exposure of other peripheral economies in the age of neoliberal globalization.⁷³ The BRICS states have also received criticisms that they have become the new imperialist players benefitting from the deals made in Copenhagen and Paris and have allowed the interests of the existing international climate governance to prevail.⁷⁴ Deepak Nayyar indicates that BRICS may overcome the criticisms related to new imperialism by providing new financial sources for development.⁷⁵

The BRICS states articulated a discontent with the Bretton Woods institutions’ refrainment from funding infrastructure investments and argued that developing states desperately needed to eradicate poverty while at the same time ensuring environmentally friendly development.⁷⁶ As a result, the five members of BRICS proposed a new institution different from the Western-dominated models, prioritizing investments in infrastructure and sustainable development projects.⁷⁷ Corresponding to Nayyar’s assumption about which BRICS actions may counter the accusations of new imperialism, this initiative also confirms the argument of this article that their close ties with the developing world embody the BRICS collective identity as emerging powers, whose discourse links the notion of acting responsibly with their insightful understanding of the needs of developing states.

71. Vijay Prashad, *Neoliberalism with Southern Characteristics: The Rise of the BRICS* (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2013) https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/sonst_publicationen/prashad_brics.pdf (accessed 4 October 2022).

72. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003): 181.

73. Deepak Nayyar, “BRICS, developing countries and global governance,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2016): 585; Patrick Bond, “Subimperial BRICS enter the Bolsonaro-Putin-Modi-Xi-Ramaphosa era,” in Vishwas Satgar, ed., *BRICS and the New American Imperialism* (Johannesburg, SA: Wits University Press, 2020), 80–81.

74. Steffen Böhm, Maria Ceci Misoczky, and Sandra Moog, “Greening capitalism? A Marxist critique of carbon markets,” *Organization Studies* 33, no. 11 (2012): 1633; Bond, “Subimperial BRICS enter the Bolsonaro-Putin-Modi-Xi-Ramaphosa era,” 90.

75. Nayyar, “BRICS, developing countries and global governance,” 588.

76. Eric Helleiner, “Restoring the development dimension of Bretton Woods,” in Alfredo Fernando Calcagno et al., eds., *Rethinking Development Strategies After the Financial Crisis* (United Nations, 2015), 45–54; Montek S. Ahluwalia et al., *Multilateral Development Banking for This Century’s Development Challenges: Five Recommendations to Shareholders of the Old and New Multilateral Development Banks* (Center for Global Development, 2016); Karin C. Vazquez, Supriya Roychoudhury, and Caio Borges, *Building Infrastructure for 21st Century Sustainable Development: Lessons and Opportunities for the BRICS-led New Development Bank* (Delhi: Jindal School of International Affairs – Center for African, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 2017), 14.

77. “Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration,” New Delhi, 29 March 2012, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).

As of May 2022, 43 out of 80 approved NDB projects have financed environment-related initiatives.⁷⁸ To expand the activities of the NDB, various memoranda of understanding were signed with the International Bank for Economic Cooperation, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Eurasian Development Bank, International Investment Bank, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.⁷⁹ Also, the NDB displays the innovative capability of BRICS in generating its capital base. In this sense, the BRICS leaders expressed their appreciation of the successful issue of the first set of green bonds, which are instruments to provide funds for climate and environmental projects and produce creative responses to climate change.⁸⁰

Apart from analyzing BRICS activism with respect to the new imperialism discussion, counterfactual thinking can also be employed in examining whether their dynamism is unique to them or whether it exemplifies a more general pattern in global politics. For example, a comparison between BRICS and MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey) might be useful. Although it has not experienced a former institutionalization process, MINT is also a representation that brings together emerging market economies. Additionally, “MINT” is an acronym proposed by Jim O’Neill, just like “BRIC.”⁸¹

Among the MINT countries, Mexico was the most ambitious state to be recognized as a global frontrunner with respect to climate change. Although Mexico under the presidency of Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) pursued a high-profile strategy to earn the title of an environmental leader, Mexico’s association with the inefficient Environmental Integrity Group in Copenhagen and its lesser position in the post-Paris period demonstrated a downgrading of climate change in its foreign policy agenda.⁸² While Indonesia during the presidency of Suharto (1968–1998) considered its involvement in climate change talks as an opportunity to look beyond Southeast Asia, and its participation in the G20 in 1999 encouraged it to modify the business-as-usual implementations, its inability to

78. “List of all projects,” *New Development Bank*, <https://www.ndb.int/projects/list-of-all-projects/> (accessed 22 May 2022).

79. “List of current MoUs,” *New Development Bank*, <https://www.ndb.int/partnerships/list-of-current-mous/> (accessed 22 May 2022).

80. “8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration,” Goa, 16 October 2016, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/161016-goa.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).

81. Jim O’Neill, “Who you calling a BRIC?” *Bloomberg View*, 13 November 2013, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2013-11-12/who-you-calling-a-bric-> (accessed 29 October 2021).

82. Jorge Alejandro Silva Rodríguez de San, “Climate change initiatives in Mexico: A review,” *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal* 29, no. 6 (2018): 1045–1049; Patricio Yamin, “Status matters: Brazil and Mexico in climate change negotiations from Kyoto to Copenhagen,” Institut Barcelona d’Estudis Internacionals, 2014; Gustavo Sosa-Nunez and Simone Lucatello, “Analysing political discourse: Mexico’s climate change policy,” *L’Europe en Formation* 2 (2016): 75–77.

produce a position different from the G77 prevented Indonesia from being as bold as BRICS during and after Copenhagen.⁸³

Nigeria's involvement has rather remained limited, being concerned about its vulnerability to climate change and becoming a signatory of the different treaties, protocols, and agreements.⁸⁴ Finally, Turkey appeared as a developing state among developed countries owing to its *special circumstances* as recognized in the Kyoto Protocol. Whereas its *special circumstances* have been used as an excuse to promote the government policies in pursuit of economic development, its inclusion among Western countries has satisfied Turkey's *aspiration for a European identity*. However, its laggardness in the international climate regime has left Turkey isolated, so its increasing need for international legitimation and the lapse of its *special circumstances* eventually pushed Ankara to ratify the Paris Agreement.⁸⁵

This comparison shows that the MINT countries have had varied policy perspectives on climate change and no intention to develop a shared discursive position. Unlike BRICS, MINT could neither mobilize their predicted capacities and adopt a ready-to-take-responsibility understanding in emissions reduction efforts, nor acquire a leadership status capable of representing the arguments of the developing world.

Conclusion

This article has put forward two arguments. First, that the BRICS collective identity is constituted by their existing affiliation with the larger coalition of developing countries and their status as emerging powers. Second, that this collective identity has shaped the BRICS framing of climate change. Their incentives to advocate for the needs and concerns of the developing world have defined their positions. We also demonstrated that Copenhagen was a critical juncture since the discourse, ideas, and policy concepts of the BRICS states underwent a fundamental change after the Conference. Paris and Glasgow have

83. Budy P. Resosudarmo, Fitriani Ardiansyah, and Lucentezza Napitupulu, "The dynamics of climate change governance in Indonesia," in David Held, Charles Roger, and Eva-Maria Nag, eds., *Climate Governance in the Developing World* (Polity Press, 2013): 75; Awidya Santikajaya, "Walking the middle path: The characteristics of Indonesia's rise," *International Journal* 71, no. 4 (2016): 563–586.

84. Bashiru Salihu, "Climate change and environmental sustainability in Nigeria," *Crawford Journal of Politics* 1, no. 2 (2020): 58; Defne Günay et al., "Media framing of climate change action in carbon locked-in developing countries: Adaptation or mitigation?" *Environmental Communication* 15, no. 5 (2021): 668.

85. Günay et al., "Media framing of climate change action in carbon locked-in developing countries," 668; Ethemcan Turhan, Semra Cerit Mazlum, Ümit Şahin, Alevgül H. Şorman, and A. Cem Gündoğan, "Beyond special circumstances: Climate change policy in Turkey 1992–2015," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 7, no. 3 (2016): 453–454; Semra Cerit Mazlum, "Turkey and post-Paris climate change politics: Still playing alone," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 56 (2017): 148.

reinforced the collective BRICS identity. For instance, despite receiving criticisms because of the manoeuvre watering down the language of the final agreement adopted in the COP-26,⁸⁶ India did not evade responsibility for endorsing a text which explicitly targets fossil fuels for the first time. And India's environment minister Bhupender Yadav (2021–ongoing) underlined the importance of the BRICS platform for India and its “very significant role in addressing [...] climate change.”⁸⁷

The collective identity of BRICS members as emerging powers has shaped their policy concepts and ideas and restructured their discourse regarding climate change. Still, their perception of developed countries' practices contributes to the sense of *we-ness* among the BRICS states from the angles of two complementary identity frameworks. Ideational factors evince increasing BRICS eagerness to act as responsible and constructive stakeholders concerning climate change as well as to align their discourse around the contexts of *Common Future* and *LNOB*. The COVID-19 pandemic may also have important implications for BRICS cooperation. As a litmus test for whether BRICS policies and responses would be in line with their collective identity formations, the COVID-19 pandemic has so far urged BRICS to put the slogan of *LNOB* at the heart of its post-pandemic recovery plan to the end that “no one is left behind and those furthest behind are helped first.”⁸⁸ Thus, this article lays the groundwork for future studies that would explore how the BRICS collective identity can shape a joint discursive position and potential policy coordination on issues such as global health, food, and agriculture.

By accepting the social dimension of economic activities, moreover, the article provides insight into the BRICS perception of Western practices and institutions. In the social identity construction process, BRICS regards developed states as the Other. The implications of this conceptualization for the NDB are its design for being a model in the climate-resilient production paradigm and its target-oriented financial resource allocation. One important issue to closely observe in the near future is whether the NDB will expand its financial pool towards non-BRICS states and whether the norms and practices guiding NDB projects will also have an impact on the collective identity perception among the BRICS partners as well.

Finally, BRICS includes members such as China and India, whose bilateral ties are marked by geopolitical tensions and rivalry.⁸⁹ In fact, the BRICS members have multiple identities in global politics that change depending on their geopolitical and economic priorities. Thus, the BRICS collective identity does not always result in cooperation and policy coordination. However, becoming a military alliance is not an

86. Joanna Depledge, Miguel Saldivia, and Cristina Peñasco, “Glass half full or glass half empty? The 2021 Glasgow Climate Conference,” *Climate Policy* 22, no. 2 (2022): 147–157.

87. Bhupender Yadav, “BRICS environment ministers adopt the New Delhi Statement on environment,” 27 August 2021, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1749687> (accessed 25 May 2022).

88. “XII BRICS summit Moscow Declaration,” Moscow, 17 November 2020, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html> (accessed 29 June 2021).

89. For a critical view on the BRICS, see Harsh V. Pant, “The BRICS fallacy,” *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (2013): 91–105.

objective on the BRICS agenda. Moreover, the BRICS states are capable of putting aside their geopolitical differences and the dispute areas at the bilateral level in order to act collectively on the global scale and respond to common problems in regard to global governance. The future will most likely witness increasing and deepening cooperation among the BRICS members in addressing climate change.

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